

**EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE  
PINETOWN DISTRICT SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF LEARNERS'  
EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CLASSROOM  
ENVIRONMENT AT A SELECTED SCHOOL**

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**RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN  
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

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## DECLARATION

*I, Patrick Mweli, declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university.*

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*Signature*

*Date*

*I Mrs. R. Kalenga the candidate supervisor hereby agrees to the submission of this dissertation.*

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*Supervisor*

*Date*

## *DEDICATION*

*To my family*

*Fortunate, Thabiso and Asande Mweli*

*Thank you for love, patience and support during the long  
hours  
I spent working on this dissertation.*

## *ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*

*I thank God for giving me power and grace to go through this learning process. I would like to extend my gratitude to our study group: all the members, the chairperson especially Prof. Buthelezi who sacrificed her time to attend our sessions and guide us through all the problems we encountered in our study.*

*I thank my supervisor who has always been there for me whenever I needed help. Thanks for your motivations and the support you gave when I was on the verge of nervous breakdown.*

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## ABSTRACT

The study intends to contribute to successful implementation of Inclusive Education in South African Schools, by exploring learners' experiences within the classroom and teachers views about the classroom environment. A combination of these two factors will indicate the extent how far inclusive education is being implemented in the classrooms.

The school that was selected to participate in this study is located in the semi-rural area in Pinetown district. Learners participated in three focus group sessions. These sessions aimed at gathering data on learners' experiences within classroom environment. Each group consisted of eight learners; that is, four males and four females. Focus group one was selected from grade seven; the second focus group from grade eight and the third group from grade nine.

The class teachers of the selected classes were requested to take part in the interview sessions. The sessions intended to gather information on teachers' views about classroom environment and how it impacts on their implementation of Inclusive education.

The study reveals that in South Africa the problem of inclusive curriculum implementation still exists and need special attention

from all stake holders involved in education. What learners experience in the classroom result from how teachers conduct their practice. It is also evident that teachers have not been properly prepared for a paradigm shift and implementation of inclusive curriculum.

As a result teaching practice has not change to accommodate the requirements of inclusive education. Consequently, the losers in the process are the learners, as they continuously have negative experiences within the classroom which causes barriers to learning.

# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1. Rationale of the study

School buildings that existed during the previous apartheid education system still exist, and little has been done to change the classroom design to fit in with the new education system. It is worthwhile finding out how the classroom environment has been organized and designed to deal with change arising from the transition from an apartheid education system to an inclusive education system, rooted in democratic values such as social justice and inclusion, within the South African context.

The problem is that inclusive education was introduced and gazetted in South Africa at the introduction of democracy in 1994, yet teachers, including myself, are still finding difficulty in implementing inclusive education within the classroom. Consequently, I am interested in finding out how far inclusive education has been implemented in Pinetown district schools by exploring learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions about classroom environment.

## 1.2. Problem Statement

Large numbers of learners who experience learning difficulties and experiencing disability are included and are being accommodated in classrooms, hence, the context in which learning and teaching takes place requires a considerable change to cater for learners' diverse needs within the classroom. Lomofsky, Roberts, and Mvambi, (1999) alluded to the above idea when stating that teaching has become more demanding and challenging to educators. This refers to the way the classroom environment is organized to include learners who have been marginalized by the previous education apartheid system.

How teachers deal with the situation and how they view the classroom context is a matter of concern in this study. The reason for such a concern is that, as stated by Green, Forrester, Mvambi, Janse Van Vuuren, and du Toit, (1999) teachers are the ones who make learning possible. Teachers are the implementers of the curriculum in the classroom. Their practice impacts on the experiences learners have of the classroom environment. In other words the exploration of learners' experiences in this study will in turn give us an understanding of how teachers implement inclusive curriculum in the classroom and how teachers themselves view their practice within the classroom.

As human beings, teachers have certain beliefs, attitudes and skills which are important contributing factors to how they view the learning context and perform their duties. The statement made by Naidoo (2008) when reporting on the issue of teaching climate change in South African schools highlights the importance of educators' perceptions and skills in the implementation of inclusive education.

The report states that a lack of knowledge amongst educators, and difficulties in implementing the new curriculum, are hampering efforts to educate South African learners about the global warming caused by climate change. The relevancy of Naidoo (2008) report to inclusion is that it points out the situation where learners are alienated from the curriculum.

This report raises the question of how inclusion is implemented in the classroom. I intend exploring answers to this question by listening to the voices of learners about how they experience learning within the classroom, and teachers' views of how they deal with the issue of inclusion in the classroom.

I intend, in this study, to interrogate this situation by finding out what is happening in the classroom and examining how learners experience learning activities; what interactions and relationships prevail within the classroom; how teachers organize and view the classroom environment and how this learning space facilitates the implementation of inclusive education.

### **1.3. What the thesis presents**

#### **1.3.1. Learners experiences within classroom environment**

The study presents learners' experiences within the classroom. These experiences are viewed according to Lorenz's (2002) assertion that children bring to the classroom knowledge and skills that have been learnt from home and society. Considering this idea learners construct knowledge in the classroom by referring or building on the knowledge and skills learnt from home and their society. The knowledge the learner bring to school incorporates values and norms inherent in their society.

Moreover, Bennett and Dunne (2001) advocate the idea that what children learn in the classroom depends to a large extent on what they already know. These ideas indicate that learners do not come to school as clean slates but already possess knowledge on which formal education needs to build, to further develop the learner. Hence, education and activities taking place within the classroom has to accommodate the diverse experiences, norms and values the learner bring to the classroom. This notion is also echoed in Rowlands (2006) discussion on Vygotsky's view that learning progresses from the known to the unknown. This idea originate from Vygotsky's theory of learning, which states that the learner begins formal learning at school having some knowledge that was

acquired informally at home or in the community. Formal learning at school thus, progresses from what the learner already knows towards construction of new knowledge.

It is evident in Pritchard (2005) that learners have different styles of learning which need to be accommodated in their education. Pritchard (2005) states that there are different kinds of learners: visual learners; auditory learners; kinesthetic learners; extroverted learners; introverted learners; intuitive learners; thinking learners and feeling learners. Hence, the classroom community consists of individuals with different abilities and diverse learning needs. Recognition and accommodation of these special learning needs in the classroom is of paramount importance.

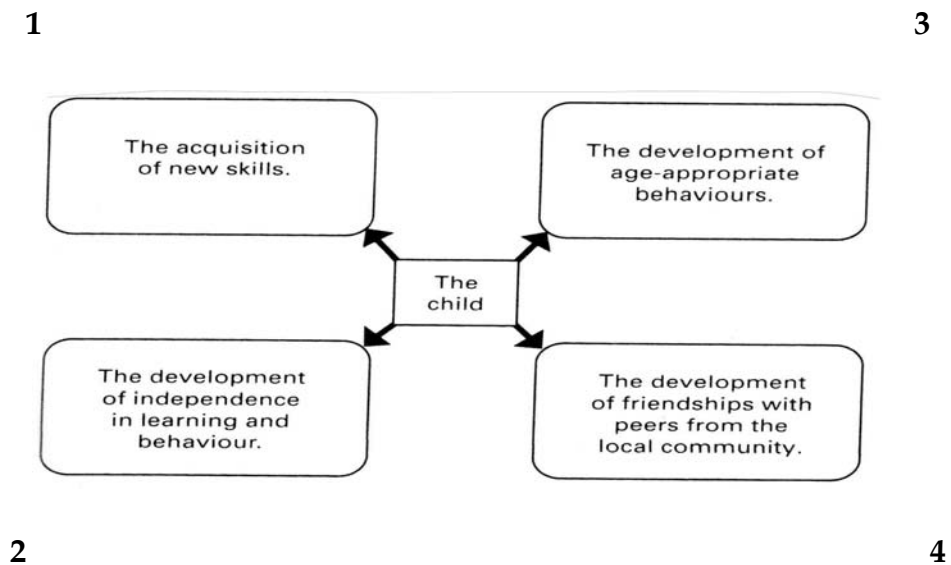
The learning environment is also a vital factor that needs serious attention, since it sets the scene for the type of experiences that occur during the learning process. Inclusion in the classroom in this study refers mainly to the accommodation of learners with special needs. How these different styles are accommodated within the curriculum (teaching and learning) implemented in the classroom is my main concern in this study. The learner is presented as an active agent in his or her own learning and development.

Lorenz (2002) exhibits the benefits of inclusion within the classroom. This description will enable me to show the products of inclusive classrooms emanating from the experiences that the

learner encounters as he or she is engaged in the inclusive learning process, that is, the learning process which caters for special learning needs within the classroom.

Hence, the learner acquires knowledge and skills through interacting with significant others (peers and teachers) and the classroom environment provide the context for learning. The relationships, communications and mediations that occur within the environment are important factors in the process of learning, since they assist the learner to develop knowledge and skills which the learner has already acquired towards new skills and the acquisition of new knowledge.

**Figure 1: Benefits of inclusion within the classroom. Adapted from Lorenz (2002)**





According to the diagram above (1) the learner within the inclusive classroom environment acquires new skills; (2) develops independence in learning and behavior; (3) develops age-appropriate behavior and (4) develops friendly relations with peers in the classroom community. These factors have an important consequence in terms of nation building in South Africa, since the primary aim of education is to prepare learners to become fully functional, tolerant and peace-loving citizens of this country.

Karagiannis and Stainback (1996) stress this idea when pointing out that inclusion in education prepares learners for life in the community, and enables them to operate according to the social value of equality for all people, with the consequent results of enhancing social peace. Moreover, in integrated classrooms learners are enriched by having the opportunity to learn from one another, grow and care for one another and gain the attitudes, skills and values necessary for our community to support the inclusion of all citizens.

Hence, learning together and acquiring new skills through interaction with other learners develops independence in learning and behaviour. In this process learners also develop age-appropriate behaviour and social relations in the form of friendship with peers, thereby creating a healthy community in the classroom. These will in turn be translated to social relations in society when they become adults.

These developments occur as the learner interacts with knowledgeable others as he or she progresses through Vygotsky's Zone of proximal Development (ZPD). The term 'Zone' in this theory refers to the space between that which a learner cannot do alone and that which he can do later with the help of capable others, such as peers or teachers. The tasks that are set for the learners to progress through the ZPD are those which a learner cannot do independently, but can do with the assistance of capable others. Thus, the classroom environment should provide conditions that will facilitate the optimum development of the learner, thereby ensuring that inclusive learning processes are effectively implemented.

Dwyer (2001) suggests that all kind of good learning may require an initial buzzing confusion, the opportunity to shuffle and search, to read and reflect, to argue and to express doubts. This process requires the teachers to tap learners' intrinsic assets, such as values, interests and skills already mastered, and extrinsic assets like learning resources that are available in the classroom to stimulate higher achievements in learning tasks.

In Vygotsky's terms, the implementation of inclusion requires mediation by teachers and capable others to enable learners to develop independence in learning behavior, and to develop healthy relationships with peers in the classroom (Vygotsky, 2001).

### **1.3.2. Teacher's role in facilitating inclusion**

Teachers are confronted by inequalities within the classroom, which Rose (2005) calls 'the moral order in our classroom'. She argues that teachers are ill- prepared by their professional training to manage and to overcome these inequalities in the classroom. The findings of her study are that only a minority of learners are consistently able to engage actively in classroom activities, to respond successfully to teachers' questions and to succeed in assessment tasks, while the majority of the group will fail to achieve these learning outcomes.

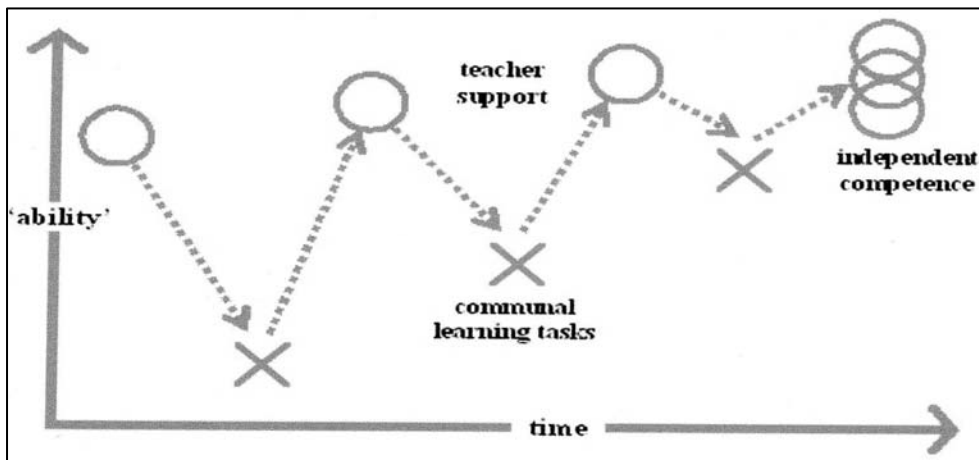
For this reason the relative position of learners within the classroom is unequal. Such inequalities are the result of the power of knowledge, to which some learners have full access while others have limited access due to learning barriers that exist in the classroom. This issue also extends to the teachers, since they possess knowledge; hence have authority and power within the classroom.

What then is the role of the teacher in facilitating inclusion in the classroom? Inclusion is about recognizing and respecting the differences and building on the similarities among learners, by overcoming the barriers within the classroom that prevent the meeting of the full range of learning needs (Department of Education, 2001).

I shall discuss the role of the teacher in the implementation of inclusion according to the Vygotskian model of social learning as portrayed by figure 2, which is adopted from Rose (2005). The diagram below illustrates that the learner comes to school with some abilities that have been learned at home and in society. The teacher in the inclusive classroom, together with the support from peers, assists the learner to develop until he or she reaches the independent competence where learners can tackle any task without the assistance from others.

In other words, the role of the teachers is to mediate the learning process and support the learner towards achieving the optimum level of his ability. In this process learners are given communal tasks. Through interaction with one another and their environment, learners will develop and learn new skills with the support and mediation by their teachers until they reach their optimum development, which Rose (2005) in figure 2 indicated as independent competency.

Figure 2: Scaffold learning model, equitable outcomes



Moreover, the teacher's role is to guide learners and give them support by providing 'scaffolding', which is, learning that moves up as the level of tasks operate at a higher level. Scaffolding supports all learners to do the same higher level tasks, but provides the greatest support for the weaker learners, thereby ensuring that inclusion in the learning process is implemented (Rose, 2005).

### **1.3.3. Relationship between learning and development**

The position I have adopted in this study is that learning and development of the child are inseparable Bennett and Dunne (2001). In this sense, to affirm that learning has taken place is synonymous with the notion that development within the child has occurred. This idea is confirmed when considering that development can be viewed as the mastery of conditioned reflexes and so the process of learning is completely and inseparably blended with the process of development (Ackermann, 2001).

Pritchard (2005) pointed out the constructivists' view of learning as the result of mental construction. That is, learning takes place when new information is built into and added onto an individual's current structure of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Moreover, what the child can do without any assistance, reflecting the skills and knowledge that the learner brings to school, is indicative of the learner's mental development, and points to

experiences that have been acquired. Through interaction with peers and teachers during the learning process in the classroom, the learner acquires new skills and further develops holistically (mentally, emotionally and physically) during this process (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999).

#### **1.4. Focus and purpose of the study**

Firstly, the study focuses on learners' experiences within the classroom since they are the recipients of the education provided, and have direct experience of classroom conditions. The classroom is conceived as a pedagogical space where learning and teaching takes place. It is also understood that learning can take place outside the classroom such as under a tree or in the playground. This study limits its scope to the classroom. Secondly, the study focuses on teachers' perceptions about the classroom, since teachers are the implementers of education policies within the classroom.

In this case the focus is on how teachers view the classroom environment in terms of their teaching within an inclusive education system, according to which, as White Paper 6 Department of Education, (2001) states, all children have the right to quality education and all learners can learn.

The purpose of the study is to collect data from the learners' point of view about the type of education they receive in the classroom. Combining the learners' experiences with the teachers' perceptions, the study will ultimately provide a true picture of how inclusion, in all its forms, is implemented within the classroom situation.

### **1.5. Key research questions**

- What are the experiences of learners within the classroom?
- What are the views of teachers about classroom environment in relation to the implementation of Inclusive Education?

### **1.6. Arrangement of chapters**

#### **Chapter 1**

This chapter elaborates on the background of the study by spelling out the rationale, the problem statement and themes presented by the study, and conclude by summarizing how the chapters are arranged in the study.

## **Chapter 2**

An examination of literature on inclusion; the learning experiences of learners in the learning environment; inclusive education, and teachers' roles and attitudes towards inclusion is undertaken in this chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

Section A of this chapter discusses the concepts as well as the theoretical background of the study. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) together with the asset-based theory is also discussed at length within the constructivist paradigm. Section B deals with the research methodology and research design which is situated within a qualitative paradigm. The research field, choice of the sample, data collection, analysis techniques, ethical consideration and trustworthiness are discussed in this section.

## **Chapter 4**

This section discusses the findings of the study and the analysis of the collected data in relation to Vygotsky's theory, namely the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and the Asset-Based theory.



## **Chapter 5**

This chapter deals with conclusions and recommendations to improve teaching practice and learning within inclusive classrooms. These recommendations are based on the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter examines the existing research findings on inclusion, learning environment, inclusive education, and teachers' attitudes and roles in facilitating inclusion. These concepts are discussed in the light of these findings to establish the framework and parameters of the study.

#### **2.2. Inclusion**

The philosophy of inclusion in the South African education system is rooted in our constitution, which is grounded in the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom (Republic Of South Africa, 1996). With regard to this idea, all learners, regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, language and disability, have a right to quality education and respect ("South African Schools Act", 1996).

Hence, the move towards inclusion in the South African education system aims at maximizing the participation of all learners in the curriculum, and developing them to become fully functional citizens who can participate meaningfully in our economy and compete globally.

Moreover, the findings of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) regarding barriers to learning strengthen the move towards inclusion in South Africa. This committee pointed out key barriers to learning as being rooted in socio-economic factors; attitudes; inflexible curriculum; language and communication; inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services; lack of enabling and protective legislation and policy; lack of parental recognition and involvement, and disability (Department of Education 1997).

This report contributed to an understanding of the nature of the barriers to learning within the South African context (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). These learning barriers have a unique historical and political orientation, that is, they are the product of the apartheid education system which inclusive education aim to redress in South African schools.

According to British researchers Davis (2003) and Lorenz (2002) there is no single definition assigned to inclusion, meaning that

definitions depend on the political goals and societal values that are inherent within the country. Davis (2003) in her work points out the distinction between the terms *inclusion* and *integration*. She argues that the term integration is associated with the medical model of disability, in which problems in education are considered as residing with the individual.

On the other hand, inclusion is in line with the social model of disability which implies that disabilities are the product of the environment, attitudes and institutional practices (Engelbrecht, 1999). Lorenz (2002) also defines inclusion as celebrating diversity and responding positively to the challenges that are present. This refers to the acceptance of individual differences and building on their strengths to ensure full participation of all learners in the education system.

Swart and Pettipher (2001) elaborated that the concept of inclusion embraces the democratic values of liberty, equality and human rights, and recognizes and accommodates diversity thereby respecting the rights of all learners. This definition is in line with the South African approach to inclusion as it is stated in White Paper 6 (Department of Education 2001) that inclusion changes the attitudes, behavior, teaching methodologies, curricula and environment to meet the diverse learning needs of all learners.

This idea is echoed by Rouse and Florian (1997) that schools have to undergo change to become a good fit with the diverse learners they serve, rather than learners having to fit in with an unyielding curriculum and organization. Hence, this marks a shift from seeing learners as the problem, to the realization that the educational problems reside within the education system.

The Department of National Education (1999) alludes to the above notion that the move towards inclusive education shifts the focus from learners having to adjust to the demands of the system, to the system being capable of accommodating the diverse needs of all learners as inclusively as possible. In line with the aforementioned notion, Zelaleta (2004) suggests that inclusion relates to the principles and processes that are involved in increasing a school's capacity to respond to learners' diversity and promote greater participation for all learners. It is therefore evident from research that inclusion is deeply concerned with accommodating learners' diverse learning needs, with the aim of ensuring the holistic development of these learners.

### **2.3. Learning experiences**

A study done by Selvam (2004) in a South African school revealed that the majority of learners who experience learning difficulties or are physically disabled have negative experiences within the school environment. Learners are being laughed at by their peers and are

labeled and excluded in peer group tasks and activities assigned in the classroom.

These issues raises the questions of why the majority of learners encounter such experiences and what the root causes of this situation are. These incidents violate the rights of learners as stated by the South African Schools Act (1996) which states that all learners have a right to decent education and respect. This study explores the meanings that learners attach to their experiences in the classroom, with the view to understanding how the classroom environment impacts on the implementation of inclusive education.

Moreover, Bhengu (2006) in her study, while investigating the influence of teaching facilities and teacher training on the attitudes of primary school educators towards the implementation of inclusive education, found that children with disabilities are not easily accepted in regular classes. She suggested that much needs to be done to change the attitudes of teachers and society as a whole so that inclusive education can be implemented successfully. This poses a problem since inclusive education is a working education system in South Africa. If the curriculum is not effectively implemented in the classroom, the greatest losers in the process are learners.

## 2.4. Learning environments

Lomas (2006) points to the tensions that exist between classroom design and the ability of learners to be actively involved in the learning process. He states that classrooms have relatively straightforward requirements: line of sight, good acoustics and a focal point at the front. This implies the traditional arrangement of the classroom physical environment, that is, desks arranged in a linear fashion, facing the front, with the teacher in the front of the class where all focus is directed.

The classroom is also designed to allow good sound to circulate within. However, this organization might limit learners' full participation in group work, discussion activities and other interactive activities. The aforementioned dilemma is further expressed by Tanner (2003) when raising the fact that there is an important aspect of education which is taken for granted in education, that is, the way schools are planned, designed and built.

Considering Lomas's (2006) discussion of classroom design as a limiting factor in learners' active involvement in the learning process, Graetz (2006) on the other hand, points out the importance of environment as the basis for learning. He asserts that all learning takes place in a physical environment with physical characteristics, and that learners are engulfed by environmental information.

For example, when the learner enters the science laboratory, the arrangement of furniture, science apparatus, charts on the walls, the colour of the walls and the neatness of the classroom, set the scene and the atmosphere for the type of learning that occurs within that environment. Moreover, the Department of Education (2001) describes inclusion as involving a reciprocal encounter between the learner and the space created for learning. The policy on special needs education calls for the creation of an environment that will cater for the needs of all learners.

Furthermore, Dittoe (2006) argues that learning environments need to be created in such a way that they facilitate the learning process. This idea states that the classroom environment needs to be supportive to learners during the learning process, and stimulate active participation, creativity and critical thinking.

Considering the aforementioned idea, Brodin and Lundstrand (2007) discuss the principle of normalization, that people attach meaning to their reality and that these meanings determine what behavior is accepted and regarded as normal within a society. The principle of normalization gives insight into the fact that the meaning learners and teachers attach to their classroom environment affects the behaviors, relationships and interactions that occur within the classroom environment.

This is consistent with Champion (2004) on the use of space in 21<sup>st</sup> century education where the editor notes that the younger



generation of this era deserves a schooling environment that is inspirational and designed to motivate the teaching and learning that will enable learners to compete in the global economy. This idea emphasizes the intention of inclusive education in South Africa to produce competitive citizens in our local as well as global economy. The question needing some answers is: Do classrooms facilitate the development of competitive learners who will take part in our economy? These questions are the main concern of this study.

## **2.5. Inclusive education**

The move towards inclusive education is marked by a paradigm shift in education systems both internationally and in South Africa. As Engelbrecht (1999) and Sebba (1996) argue, inclusive education deals with restructuring schools and education systems so that they can accommodate the learning needs of individual learners. South African schools are characterized by vast differences in physical structure (school buildings), infrastructure and distribution of learning resources, which is the legacy inherited from the apartheid education system. Therefore, restructuring is vitally needed in schools to meet the requirements of inclusive education.

Naicker (2000) elaborates on the paradigm shift within the South African education system. He argues that rethinking around disability, race, class and gender is needed. This statement calls for

change in belief systems and attitudes towards learners who were marginalized by the previous apartheid education system thereby recognizing their right to quality education and respect as full citizens of South Africa. For example, some schools that were privileged by the apartheid system still hold fluency in the English language as the entry requirement to these schools. This factor inhibits learners who were disadvantaged by the apartheid system from admission to these schools.

Nind (2005) highlights the importance of pedagogy and curriculum in inclusive education. She argues that inclusion and exclusion occur in the context of the curriculum and that differences in learning arise because learners fail to meet the requirements of a given curriculum. In this sense the curriculum becomes a barrier to learning and excludes most of the learners.

Hence, teaching and learning in the classroom should be designed and planned in such a way that learners' diverse learning needs are accommodated, and full participation in the learning process is achieved. This will maximize learner performance and ensure that all learners succeed in their learning tasks. In line with this idea, Collins, Harkins and Nind (2001) pointed out that we need to de-centre and see the world through learners' eyes so that the curriculum and learning experiences are relevant and meaningful. This idea highlights the importance of identification of barriers to learning and of having a flexible and accessible curriculum for all learners.

Corbert and Norwich (2005) and Nind (2005) point out that inclusive pedagogy aims to connect with the individual learner and connect the learner with the wider community of the classroom. In this regard, activities that take place in the classroom environment should take into account the values, skills and knowledge that learners bring to the classroom, and should allow the learner to communicate with peers and have a sense of belonging within the classroom community. On the contrary, Goodlad (2004) found out that much classroom practice is driven by teacher talk and does not even engage students.

This result in high drop-out rates and academic failure linked to the boredom of classroom-based instruction, where learners are sitting in class and listening to a teacher talk rather than thinking and talking with others. This notion points out to the outcomes of passivity of learners in the learning process which is contrary to the expectation and objective of inclusive curriculum which this study intends to explore. Inclusive education is based on collaboration and active participation of learners in the learning process (Florian & Rouse, 2005).

Rix, (2005) highlights the importance of thinking with others, drawing from others and the creation of meaning with others within inclusive education. This notion emphasizes the need for collaboration between teachers and amongst learners. Teachers'

thinking with others ensures maximum participation in the creation and use of learning materials, beginning with team teaching and working with assets available within inclusive classroom.

Learners also need to working and think with other learners and support each other during learning process. The previous mentioned idea is facilitated by the creation of learner support teams or study groups. In this way learners are encouraged to work and develop together. Hence, self confidence in dealing with learning tasks will develop in learners who are experiencing learning difficulties, as a result of full support by peers and teachers.

Karagiannis and Stainback (1996) echo this idea by stating that there are three interdependent practical components in inclusive schooling. These are support networks, the organizational component which involves the coordination of teams, and individuals who support each other through formal and informal connections. These support teams are evident in our South African system. We have office-based educators, who are specialists in learning areas and are assigned to service schools by providing guidance and support to the teachers.

Drawing from my experience as an educator in Pinetown district schools, we have learning area clusters within the ward, where all

teachers of the same learning area in a circuit meet and share ideas and support each other. This support filters to the school in the form of teaching area (subject) committees which involve teachers of the same learning area within the school.

Rix (2005) stated that drawing from others involves collaboration which is based on inclusive principles and allows one to draw on the strengths, interests and learning styles of different members of teaching and learning groups. In this process meanings are constructed, and an inclusive classroom community is established. Sapon-Shevin (1996) explains that inclusive communities are ones in which all members feel that they belong and that they can make a contribution.

In this way learners are empowered to be responsible for their own learning and have a sense of ownership of their own development. In contrast, learners cannot become a community, cannot be comfortable, if they feel that the price of belonging is ignoring their own differences or those of their classmates.

Furthermore, Schaffner and Buswell (1996) state that if we want society to be a place where diverse groups of people get along with each other, where people are valued as contributors to the common goal, and where all people share basic rights, then schools must reflect those values by providing environments in which values are

modeled by teachers and learners, and in which teaching practices and curricula reflect and model such values.

In other words, inclusive classrooms should provide the context where learners develop together and care for each other. Teaching and learning in this sort of environment would promote the holistic development of the learner through an inclusive curriculum that stimulates and instills the values of democracy and social justice. Regarding the implementation of the South African education policy, Stofile and Green (2007) state that there have been attempts since the publication of Education White Paper 6 (2001) to facilitate the effective implementation of an inclusive education system. These initiatives involve support structures for educators, learners and institutional level support teams in the form of district support teams, ward learning area clusters, learning area committees and institution based support teams.

However, the report by Engelbrecht (2003) reveals that not all of these support teams are functioning effectively. According to this report, the district teams are not yet well established due to the culture of non-collaboration that was inherited from the apartheid education system. This hinders the smooth functioning of inclusive education in South Africa and is a challenge to the implementation of inclusion in the classroom faced by many.

Bothma, Gravett, and Swart (2000) highlighted another challenge, namely, that in order for Inclusive education to be implemented successfully in South Africa, there is a need for capacity development of the teachers and other stakeholders in education. This idea implies the need for proper training of the teachers that will enable them to understand the inclusive curriculum in a deeper sense and implement it with confidence in the classrooms.

South Africa is lacking with regard to this issue. This is further emphasized by Naicker (2005) when arguing that the one-week training sessions that were offered to prepare teachers for implementation, did not offer a theoretical framework and failed to emphasize the epistemological differences between the old and the new curricula. Hence, teachers remained in the dark, without a thorough understanding of the new curriculum. The paradigm shift towards inclusive education became the biggest challenge.

Stofile and Green (2007) further argue that implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is a challenge in terms of the time frame and resources needed for implementing changes, and the urgency of issues that need to be addressed at the implementation sites. It is evident from this argument that the time frame of the policy dissemination was too quick, since teachers were not properly trained to implement the new curriculum and the resources needed in most schools, more especially in the classroom, were lacking. It is on the basis of these findings that this study explores the implementation of inclusive education, focusing

mainly on what is happening within the classroom where the actual implementation of the policy takes place.

## **2.6. Parental involvement in inclusive education**

Parental involvement and responsibility is an integral part of developing a more inclusive education system. This idea is highlighted in the study of Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher, and Oswald (2004) who point out that the inclusion process demands involvement, dedication and commitment from parents, since parents share a special relationship with their children, have a deep understanding of the child's needs and are readily available to offer personal support where necessary.

Moreover, Carpenter (2000) points out that, families themselves provide key support and effective collaboration with disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties. Parents and other family caregivers of the learner provide the bases for the child's self-esteem and confidence, which is necessary in the child's learning process and further development.

Bauer and Shea (2003) elaborate on the aforementioned idea that positive home conditions are the responsibility of families, suggesting that schools can help families become informed and



skilful at understanding their children and supporting learning at home. Thus, if the learners' home environment is positive and supports learning, the child is likely to bring that experience to school as one of the strengths to build on for further development.

Wolfendale (2002) emphasis the important of parental involvement in inclusive education when stating that parental partnership enables parents of learners with special learning needs to have access to information, advice and guidance in relation to the educational needs of their children, so that they can make appropriate and informed decisions about their child's learning and development. Hence, in this way, collaboration between parents and schools will accelerate the implementation of inclusive education.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

In South Africa, the philosophy of inclusion in education is rooted in our Constitution (1996) and is grounded in the values of social justice, human dignity and democracy. This involves the process of identifying barriers to learning and addressing these barriers within the education system and in the classroom.

The classroom is the context in which the implementation of inclusive education takes place and should uphold the principles of inclusion to facilitate its successful implementation. The classroom

design and the atmosphere that prevails in this environment are important since they stimulate teaching and learning (Dittoe, 2006 & Campion, 2004).

In education, consideration of the implications of the curriculum is vital, since an inflexible and inaccessible curriculum can become a barrier to learning for all learners and can hinder learner participation in learning tasks, resulting in their exclusion and alienation. Also parental involvement in education is vital for the learning and development of the learner within inclusive education (Nind, 2005; Cobert & Norwich, 2005).

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1. Introduction

Section A of this chapter discusses the concepts as well as the theoretical background of the study. Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) together with the asset-based theory is also discussed within the constructivist paradigm. Section B deals with the research methodology and research design which is situated within a qualitative paradigm. Research field, choice of sample, data collection and analysis techniques, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study are discussed in this section.

### **SECTION A: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### 3.2. Inclusion within the classroom

The notion of inclusion is conceptualized according to the perception of Armstrong, (2003) that inclusion is not only about giving access to learners who have been marginalized before, but also about change of attitudes, physical factors and curriculum. These factors are the basis for the position I adapted in this study.

This idea means that inclusion requires not only restructuring (change in physical school buildings) but also re-culturing (a paradigm shift of attitudes, beliefs and value systems). Hence, inclusion is contextualized within educational situations where the diverse needs of learners need to be catered for, whereby barriers to learning are identified and addressed, to enable all learners to cope with their learning tasks.

The account of learners' experiences and teachers' views about classroom environment is also contextualized in the definition of inclusion by the Department of Education (2001) in White paper 6, which states that inclusion is about recognizing and respecting the differences in all learners, and building on their similarities which are learners' strengths; that inclusion focuses on overcoming barriers in the classroom which prevent the meeting of the full range of learning needs.

In this sense, it is worth noting that learners come to school with their individual experiences, values and belief systems. They also have unique needs with regard to how they learn. Some learn by seeing things, others by touching and manipulating things, and others by listening. These activities all take place within the classroom environment.

Furthermore, the implementation of inclusive education must be underpinned by changes in attitudes, behaviors, teaching methods and curriculum within educational institutions so that diversity can

be recognized and the needs of all learners met (Department of Education, 2001). Therefore, classroom environments need to be inclusive in the sense that all activities taking place in this space must respect the differences in learners whether due to age, gender or ethnicity and accommodate them with a view to developing learners' abilities from their strength. This means that learning activities need to be age appropriate, not gender or ethnic biased so that the learner can identify himself or herself in learning activities. In this way learners' intrinsic and extrinsic assets will be tapped and stimulate further development. Moreover, this condition will make learners to feel acceptable and part of the classroom community.

The inclusive classroom community is conceptualized as being characterized by respect, acceptance, collaboration and mutual support, where every member of the group has a sense of belonging and actively participates in all activities. (UNESCO, 2001) also defines inclusive education as a process of identifying any barriers within and around the school that hinder learning, and of reducing or removing these barriers. I will apply the aforementioned ideas within the classroom to understand learners' experiences of inclusive education and how teachers view the classroom as a pedagogical space where inclusive education is implemented.

The classroom environment is conceptualized as having inherent tensions with regard to power relations. Inequalities in this sector

exist between learners. Some learners who hold more power than others, such as the class-monitors and those who possess more skills than others, might consider themselves superior to other learners. This might be characterized by a culture of competition rather than co-operation in the learning process.

Moreover, teachers have authoritative powers as managers of the classroom. How they exercise their authority has a vital impact on the activities and relationships that occur within the classroom. Knowledge that is imparted in the classroom also has an element of power, since those who are more knowledgeable than others seem to have an influence on those who are less knowledgeable. The social context and the interactions during the acquisition of knowledge in the classroom are of great importance, since this may indicate whether all learners' needs are accommodated and diversity amongst learners is respected (Lomofsky, Roberts, & Mvambi, 1999).

Hence, the classroom is conceived as a place where most interactions that contribute entirely to the development of the learner take place. In other words, the classroom is a social phenomenon with inherent relationships and interactions, which are the basis for the learners' optimal development. This phenomenon needs to allow all learners to develop by interacting confidently and freely with other learners as well as significant others without being marginalized or excluded in any way.

Christie (2002) affirms the aforementioned ideas by viewing the classroom activity as a structured experience and associated notions of classroom work as social practice. Classroom activities are structured in the sense that the participants engage themselves in specific interactions and relationships, which are determined by the social context in which they took place as well as the curriculum and teaching methodologies that are implemented. The occurrence of such activities within a social context involving interactions and relationships qualifies classroom work as social practice.

I will explore how far inclusive education has been implemented in Pinetown district schools by contrasting the current notions about classroom environment: firstly, as having inequalities in power relations, and as defined by Christie (2002) that activities occurring in the classroom are structure experiences, and secondly, classroom work as social practice with the requirements of inclusive classrooms, of accommodating and respecting diversity in the classroom. Hence, relevant data will be gathered through learners' experiences and teachers' views about classroom environment.

### **3.3. Asset-Based theory within Social Constructivism**

The manner in which classroom environment is being experienced (activities, interactions and relationships) by learners and how the teachers view classroom environment (resource materials, organisation, design, teaching methodology and the number of learners in a class) in relation to the implementation of inclusive education is theorised within the social constructivist's paradigm. The classroom is conceived as the social context for learning, where learners acquire knowledge and skills through interaction with capable others (peers and teachers). The context in which these activities occur is of prime importance since it sets the scene for the type of learning and teaching that will take place.

Classroom environment is theorized according to Gouws (1998) view of the characteristics of constructivist theories. Gouws stated that learners actively construct understanding and they must be actively engaged in learning tasks; learning is facilitated by social interaction, meaning that the primary goal of constructivist educators is to foster critical thinking and this is done through groups of learners taking responsibility for their own learning through co-operative activities and that meaningful learning occurs within authentic learning tasks. In this sense, authentic learning tasks stimulate real life problems and provide learners with practice in thinking in realistic situations.



Considering the point made earlier, the environment within classroom must stimulate communication between learners and teachers. This involves the organisation of sitting patterns and relations where learners are able to communicate freely with each other and value norms of co-operative learning where competition is discouraged. Every learner in this context should feel accepted and part of the group and motivated to contribute to meaning constructions in a collaborative manner. This will in turn facilitate learning as a social action and enable learners to take responsibility of their own learning (Gagnon & Collay, 2006).

Related the idea previously mentioned, teachers' skills to organise and prepare meaningful activities will enable learners to develop critical thinking and be able to transfer the knowledge learnt in the classroom to real situations outside the school context.

Thus, I utilised constructivism as a broad paradigm, considering its main assumptions that children construct their knowledge; development cannot be separated from its social context; all higher functions originate as social relationships, and that language plays a central role in mental development (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 1997).

These assumptions are clearly spelled out in Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where mediation is central to developmental process of the learners and stresses the importance of communication with knowledgeable others in the

process of meanings construction. Development in this case occurs within a social context where social relationships take place. In this process new skills and higher mental functioning are produced. Asset-Based theory is used within constructivism to spell out learners' intrinsic and extrinsic assets. The former refers to learners' interests, values, knowledge, skills and other strengths, and the latter involves the structures within the learning environment that facilitate the learning process.

The relevancy of constructivism in this study stems from the idea pointed out by Green (2001) that the conception of knowledge underpinning Curriculum 2005 is one of constructivism, hence, the study focuses on the experiences of learners and the perceptions of teachers of the current curriculum (National curriculum statement).

Constructivists also believe that knowledge is not passively received by human beings, but is actively constructed and developed to higher levels in each learner. This is achieved through engagement in experiences, activities and discussions which challenge learners to make meaning of their social and physical environments. Moreover, knowledge is created and re-created between people as they bring their personal experiences and information, derived from other sources, to bear on solving a particular problem (Wells, 2000).

In other words, understanding is constructed during the process of people working together to solve the problems that arise in the course of shared activities. This notion highlights the fact that

learners come to school, not as a clean slate (*tabula rasa*) but as having knowledge that they have acquired from home and their community. This knowledge is used by learners to relate to the school environment and the learning activities within the classroom.

According to the Vygotskian perspective, dialogue is central to the process of knowledge construction. Language is the key instrument that drives meaningful interactions within an activity and produces deeper understanding of the phenomenon with which the learner is engaged. Vygotsky (1986) saw language as a primary mediator of knowledge for humans. Lee (2000) also pointed out that, according to the Vygotskian perspective, language serves as a conceptual organizer, a primary medium through which thinking occurs.

On the contrary, researchers like Galton, Simon, and Croll.P, (1980); Lemke (1990); Nystrand and Gamoran, (1991) found out that, in most classrooms, dialogic interaction is not evident. Such behavior is rooted in the belief about the nature of knowledge, that is, that it is a commodity stored in individuals' minds, books or artifacts. In terms of this thinking, the learner becomes a passive recipient of knowledge that is transmitted to him or her during the learning process.

The aforementioned idea is contrary to the objective of inclusive education as explained by the Department of Education White

Paper 6 (2001) that collaboration, support and active engagement of learners in the learning process is the heartbeat of inclusive education. Thus, to achieve this objective education requires the use of teaching methodologies that are driven by theories that promotes collaboration and active participation. The constructivist approach provides a framework for understanding the role of learners, teachers, parents and significant others as mediators in the process of learning.

The learner in this case is actively involved in the meanings construction with the assistance of the teachers, peers and parents. The teacher plans activities and organizes scaffold learning process for the learner to progress and develop to his or her full potential. Parental role in this process is to provide support the learner by giving them love, respect and acceptance which is the basis for the development of self-esteem and self-confidence needed in the learning process within the classroom. Moreover, support as emphasized by the Department of Education ((2001) is correlated to mediation which Vygotsky refers to as the amount of support or intervention the learner receives from more knowledgeable others.

Moreover, Kukla (2000) pointed out that social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. In this sense, knowledge is also a human product, and learning can be regarded as a social process. In this sense learning needs to take place in a social context that will allow social interactions and communication that will lead to the construction of new meanings

and further development. The classroom in this case is the social context for learning. Classroom environment has to allow learners to develop together, think and draw knowledge from each other. Consequently, new skills are developed as learners interact and communicate with each other in the learning process.

Thus, Vygotsky theory of the Zone of proximal development (ZPD) provides the framework for effective inclusive teaching and learning in the classroom. According to this theory, learning is a path through the zone of proximal development. The term 'Zone' in this theory refers to the space between that which a learner cannot do alone and that which he can do later with the help of capable others, such as peers or teachers (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999).

In other words, the learner will be moving from the known to the unknown with the help of the capable others in his or her environment. Rowlands (2006) highlights what Vygotsky believes, that teaching happens most effectively when assistance is offered at those particular points in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where the learner requires help, and that there is a distinction between what the learners has mastered and where they are in the process of learning.

According to Vygotsky (1986) there are four stages through which learners must progress to reach their optimal development. Stage one is where the learner has the ability to perform the task but has no understanding of how to do it. This stage can be compared with

a child who, for the first time, is learning to ride a bicycle and has no idea where to start. In this stage the learner needs assistance from more knowledgeable others to mould his behavior and provide direct instruction until such time that he is able to balance himself on the bicycle and use the pedals properly. This understanding develops through conversation during the performance of the task. Support rendered to the learner at this stage is vital for further development of the learner (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999).

The second stage is where the learner performs the task without assistance from others, even though performance has not fully developed. The learner uses his [see previous paragraph] inner speech (overt verbalization) that is, the verbal instructions that have been passed on to the learner by more capable others. The learner, at this stage, talks to himself to direct his own actions, in order to remind himself of what to do in the task (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999).

The third stage is where performance is developed and a task is carried out smoothly and in an integrated way, which implies that performance has been internalized. Assistance from capable others is no longer needed. Learning at this stage is self-directed. The learner is able to attempt and finish the tasks alone without mediation from the capable others. For example, if the learners is given a research project, he or she possess the skills to carry on the task and knows all the necessary steps and procedures to conduct a

research project, will be able to complete it without the assistance from others (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 1999).

The fourth stage occurs when the learner may have fully developed a particular task, but suddenly discovers that they can no longer perform the task automatically due to intrinsic factors such as stress or illness, and any extrinsic factors which might hinder the successful completion of the task or the learning environment is not conducive for effectiveness of task completion. Considering the latter, if learning environment does not provide the necessary equipments or learning materials to carry on the task. The learner at this stage might need some assistance (Lee, 2000).

It is worthwhile noting how educators and other capable others in the classroom, such as peers, intervene in this situation. The theory of Vygotsky (1986), Zone of Proximal Development will assist in understanding learners' experiences as they progress through this path, and also in exploring the role of teachers and peers in this process. The implementation of inclusive education will be explored through learner interaction with peers, teachers and the classroom environment as they progress through the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Reid (2005) points out Vygotsky's suggestions with regard to the issue at hand that at any moment of the child's learning there are some skills and knowledge that are attainable. At the same time

some skills and knowledge cannot be accessed by the learner because he or she is not at the stage of preparedness to understand and implement these skills or knowledge. Reid states that the skills that are attainable according to Vygotsky can be described as the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD).

This means that teaching in the classroom need to ensure that the learner is presented with tasks within his/her ZPD. Teachers in this sense have the obligation to develop activities that will extend the learners current knowledge to new knowledge which can be absorbed by the learner and should be located within the learners' ZPD.

To achieve the aforementioned factor teachers need to be aware of the learners' previous knowledge on the task to be tackled. Then teachers need to implement the process of scaffold learning. This is like a series of steps that helps the learner reach the ZPD needed in order to tackle the task effectively.

The following excerpt adopted from Reid (2005, p.8) indicates how a learner can access ZPD through scaffolded learning:

#### Accessing ZPD through scaffolding

- Learning aims- understanding content knowledge of the task
- ZPD- Need to know the learner's previous knowledge and current skills such as:



- ✓ Reading level
- ✓ Ability to locate informational text
- ✓ Previous knowledge on the theme/task

### Scaffolds

- Materials that focus on the task- e.g. maps, group work, teacher questioning, fieldwork and discussion to ensure that learning has taken place so the learner can use this for new learning. The use of reciprocal question-and-answer technique with learners. Ensure that the learner has the same understanding of the task and the concepts involved as the teacher.

The vital factor to consider in relation to scaffolding is language of teaching and learning. Communication is central in this process and learners need to be able to communicate freely with confidence with each other and the teacher. In this case knowledge is exchanged through the use of language. This is the reason why Vygotsky suggest that the role of language is crucial to learning and to cognitive development (Reid, 2005).

Central to the zone of proximal development is the concept of 'mediation' which Vygotsky (1986) in his theory, considers central to development. Mediation means a process of rendering assistance through intentionally intervening and directing, but not telling. Language and social interactions are the most important factors in the process of mediation, since intervention strategies require

communication and interaction with the situation (Lee, 2000). Therefore, the path through the zone of proximal development through which learners have to go requires teachers and capable others to be mediators in the process, thereby assisting learners to construct a new level of understanding.

This theory is relevant to the study since it focuses on learners as active participants in the process of learning as they interact with each other and capable others to construct new understandings of their reality. This theory also allows the study to explore teacher involvement in learning and teaching, with the view to finding out how the classroom environment assists them in implementing inclusive education.

Furthermore, learners and the classroom are conceived according to the asset-based theory of Kretzmann and Macknight (1993). This theory focuses on the issue that every individual have intrinsic and extrinsic assets. Intrinsic assets are the interior strengths of the individual. These interior strengths may involve the individual's interest, norms, values, knowledge and skills that have been acquired in the past. Extrinsic assets refers to everything outside the individual that can promote further cognitive growth or can be of help to promote the smooth functioning of a system or a project that is undertaken in that context. Extrinsic assets of the individual are predominantly context based.

Considering the classroom environment, there are two aspects which play a vital role in learning and teaching, these are the identification learners' intrinsic assets and assets available within the classroom that might facilitate the learning process. Primarily, Asset-based theory concerns itself with appreciation and recognition of all learners for what they know and are able to do, more especially, approaching them with trust when a need is felt for participation, advice or assistance (Eloff, 2003).

This means that from an Asset-based approach all learners are valued; if there is a need for participation in an activity the mediator or the teachers will tap on the strengths of the learner, thereby stimulating and motivating interest in the project. For example, a learner who is good in soccer and lacks in mathematics, the mediator in this process can prepare mathematical learning activities based on soccer themes. In this way the learner can utilize, skill and knowledge of soccer to master a mathematical tasks. This will eventually help the learner to approach mathematical tasks with confidence. This idea affirms the notion that all learners can learn (Department of Education, 2001).

Secondly, from an Asset-based perspective the classroom have facilities that can be utilized to promote learning and teaching. These facilities can also be regarded as learners' extrinsic assets. Books, furniture, chalkboard, human resources and other learning materials are assets available within the classroom which need maximum utilization by the teachers and learners. Creativity and

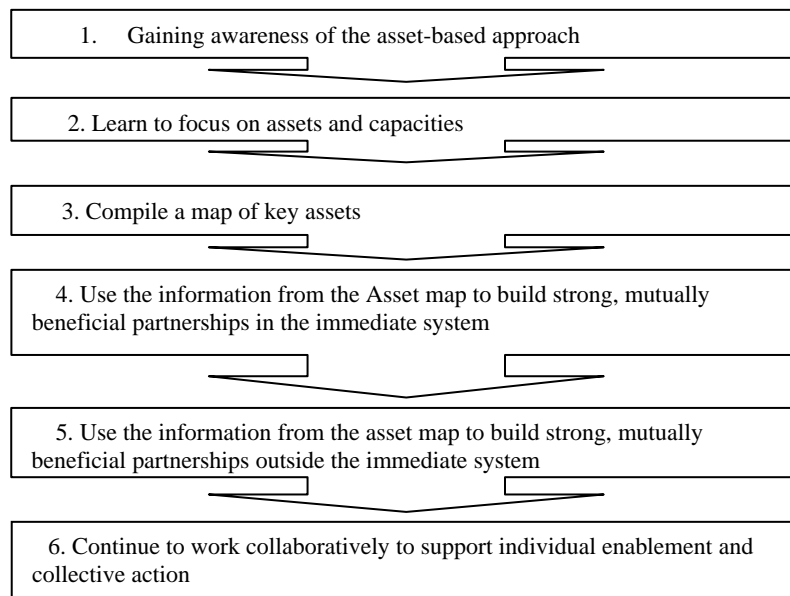
innovation for the teachers to organized the classroom environment and learning materials is of prime importance in this instance (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001).

Eloff (2003) argues that everybody has assets and every system has assets even though they may not be recognized. Considering this, every learner has assets, which need to be tapped to enable optimum development and full participation in the learning process. Individual learner's assets are embedded in personal characteristics, which are referred to as core capacity for self-awareness and for self-regulatory behavior. These can be described as intrinsic will power, motivation, knowledge and skills, which have been internalized by the individuals. For example, learners' interests, values and experiences constitute inner strengths, which are vital in order for individuals to actualize their personal attributes to the optimum in a self-regulated manner.

Moreover, Bower (2005) points out that assets comprise all the extrinsic resources in an individual's life-world such as people, relationships, knowledge, facilities, expertise, resources and services. This notion accommodates assets that are external to the learner and have a vital role in learning and teaching within the classroom. The position I have adopted in this study is to synthesize Eloff's (2003) idea of learners' intrinsic assets and Bower's (2005) extrinsic assets as core influencing factors in learning and teaching in the classroom, and locate these ideas

within a social constructivist paradigm. The following diagram indicates Eloff's stages of the asset-based approach to intervention.

**Figure 3: (Eloff, 2003). The stages of an asset-based approach to intervention**



It is important to take note how assets are identified and what process is involved in doing so. Eloff's (2003) stages that are indicated in figure 3 show us the path to follow in identifying and utilizing assets within the individual and those external to the individual. Learners' assets, in this case, refer to learners' strengths that can facilitate optimum development in the learning process. These strengths promote collaboration and collective action, and mobilize the untapped capacities of the learner.

The first step in Eloff's path is understanding and awareness of the asset-based approach, which he regards as the first step towards

change. It is then followed by the stage of recognition of strengths and mobilization of untapped capacities. Thirdly, compilation of the asset map needs to be done to create an understanding of the context. The asset map is a tool for structuring thinking and gaining some sense of objectivity. Hence, the last stage involves the results of mapping.

The goodness of fit between the asset-based approach and the constructivist paradigm lies in the fact that the learner is considered as an active participant in the learning process. Furthermore, the context is regarded as an important contributing factor in the type of learning that is rendered to learners. Considering the aforementioned idea, Vygotsky's belief that cognitive abilities are formed through interaction with the social environment.

In line with this idea the asset-based approach affirms that within any social context there are assets which can be utilized to promote effectiveness and the success of the project undertaken within it. In the same way within any learning environment there are assets which can be tapped to stimulate effective learning. Considering that barriers to learning within the learning context hinder the cognitive and social development of learners. The asset-based approach aims at addressing these barriers within the context by tapping the assets within learners and learning environment to optimize achievement in the learning and teaching process.

Central to both the asset-based theory and social constructivism is the concept of collaboration amongst learners in the learning process. This is evident when learners are actively engaged in a learning activity and communicating with one another. Gagnon and Collay (2006) affirm the power of collaborative thinking by stating that different experiences, expertise and skill are combined to complete the task and enable participants in the activity to view alternative solutions to the problem from different perspectives.

This notion stresses the social constructivist belief that learners come to school with individual experiences and skills which they have learned from home or their society. It is these experiences and skills which the asset-based approach advocates need to be tapped during learning and teaching to enhance high performance in learning tasks.

Hence, learners who are exposed to constructivist learning principles, and are learning in an environment that allows them to utilize their personal assets and environmental assets (classroom environment) develop individual thinking skills, are able to think collaboratively with others to make social meaning of learning events, are able to pose and answer questions and think critically (Gagnon & Collay, 2006).

## **SECTION B: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.4. Research methodology**

This study is a qualitative case study. Qualitative case studies focus on a small scale studied with a small sample, but aim at in-depth study of a phenomenon and thereby provide rigor in explaining phenomenon in a deeper sense. This method is useful when collecting rich descriptions of people's experiences and the meanings they attach to reality (Maree, 2007). It is due to the aforementioned idea that the case study method is relevant in this study, since the design of this study has a small sample and aims at in-depth description of learners' lived experiences in the classroom and teachers' perceptions' of classroom conditions.

This study is interpretive in nature because I want to interpret how learners explain their lived experiences within the classroom environment and how teachers perceive classroom environment with regard to their implementation of inclusive education. Henning (2004) pointed out that, if the study is specified as a qualitative case, then qualitative methods will be used. When qualitative methods are used, the methodology will usually be located in the interpretive tradition. I have used focus group interviews to gather information about learners' experiences of the classroom environment, and semi-structured interviews to collect



data about teachers' perceptions of the classroom experiences. In this way I have utilized qualitative methods of data collection. Hence, according to Henning's (2004) aforementioned idea, this study falls within the interpretive tradition.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) explained that the strength of the case study method is that its effects are observed in a real context, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects. In this sense the classroom, as the context in which learning and teaching occur, is a powerful determinant of the failure and success of inclusive education. For example, if the curriculum that is being taught in the classroom is inflexible or not accessible to all learners, it becomes a barrier to learning and will have a negative impact on the implementation of inclusive education.

On the other hand, when activities taking place within the classroom create a sense of belonging for all learners, and thereby make the curriculum accessible to all learners, this situation creates an environment that promotes implementation of inclusion in the classroom. Such an environment leads to a solid foundation on which a healthy, inclusive and tolerant society can be built in South Africa.

## **3.5. Research design**

### **3.5.1. Research field**

This study is conducted in one school, situated in the Hammersdale circuit in the Pinetown district. The school is a mainstream school with a population of 1200 learners and 30 educators. It is located in a semi-rural area, where most of the schools were disadvantaged by the apartheid education system. The data that will be gathered in this site will indicate how schools in this district have transformed from the apartheid education system to inclusive education.

I have chosen this school randomly by listing all the schools in the Hammersdale circuit; the 8<sup>th</sup> school in my list becomes my research site. The reason for this choice is that I have access to schools in this circuit since I am teaching in one of the schools under the jurisdiction of Hammersdale circuit in the Pinetown district. Using one school as my research site will enable the study to generate a detailed version of learners' experiences and teachers' views about the classroom environment.

Hence, the research method employed in this study is a qualitative case study. In other words, this research is a case study of one school in the Pinetown district, and it focuses on the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom. The school

is not one of the satellite school chosen by the department of education but has been chosen with an understanding that all South African schools are expected to operate within the new curriculum and that dissemination of the curriculum has taken place. Teachers have been trained through workshops to implement the new curriculum. It is assumed in this study that learners are not fully aware of the concept of inclusion but their experiences within the classroom will provide valuable information on how the new curriculum is being implemented in South African schools.

An inclusive education system intends to accommodate all learning styles and make the curriculum accessible to all learners by accommodating their diverse learning needs during the learning process. In this way, it is important to hear the voices of learners about their classroom experiences and how teachers view classroom environment in terms of implementing inclusive education. The school selected for this study is a combined primary school.

### **3.5.2. Participants**

The sample size of the study is 12 learners from the senior phase (grade 7, 8 and 9) and 3 teachers. The age of the learners is between ten years and thirteen years. The total number of classes per grade is four. One class from each grade will be selected randomly. Four learners from each selected class will form a focus group. The

selection of classes will be as follows: four cards, with numbers 1 to 4, will be placed in a box. One card will have a different colour (red) from the rest and that will be the colour for the chosen class to be included in the sample. I shall then choose the first learner from the class list of each of the four classes in a grade and request them to put a hand in the box and pick up one card. The class of the learner who picks up the red card will be included in the sample.

After the three classes have been identified, that is one class per grade (7, 8 and 9); I shall select four participants from each of these classes to form three focus groups. The selection process will be as follows: I shall write on a piece of paper the number of boys and girls in a class. There will be a box for the girls only, as well as a box for boys to ensure gender balance in the sample. In each box, two numbers will be written on yellow pieces of paper. The two boys and girls in each class who picked up numbers written on yellow paper will be included in the sample.

Each session of the focus group interview will be 25 minutes in duration. Purposive sampling will be used to select teachers. Class teachers of the selected classes will be requested to participate in the interview sessions. The purpose for doing this is to ensure that learners and teachers who participate in the study have direct experience of the same classroom environment. Teacher-participants in this study teach at the same school.

### **3.5.3. Data collection techniques**

Henning (2004) argues that the nature of a qualitative case study requires the utilization of qualitative data collection methods to obtain rich descriptions of learners' experiences and teachers' views about the classroom environment in which inclusive education is implemented. Hence, learners will participate in the focus group interviews, while the teachers will take part in semi-structured interviews.

#### **3.5.3.1. Focus group interviews**

The relevance of focus group interviews in this study is clearly stated by Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, and Robson (2001) that focus groups provide access to group meanings, processes and norms. In other words, data that is generated by using focus group interview techniques provides rich information regarding what the group believes in, what processes lead them to construct meanings associated with a given issue and what norms are held by the group.

For example, using focus group interviews to study learners' experiences within the classroom will produce data that contains collective meanings about their classroom experiences. In this way a detailed account by learners will reflect the process of how interactions and relationships occur within the classroom

environment, and how they experience the curriculum that is being taught.

Similarly, Cohen, Mannion, and Morrison (2007) emphasised the aforementioned idea when stating that the research phenomenon, when discussed by the group, eventually yields a collective rather than an individual view. The following are some advantages of using focus group interviews, which are mentioned by Bloor et al (2001) that triggered my interest in using focus groups in this study. These are as follows:

- During focus groups, participants feel more relaxed and less inhibited in the presence of friends and colleagues
- During focus group interview sessions, participants may feel empowered and supported in the co-presence [see previous] of those similarly situated to them
- Focus groups can be used to generate data on the group meanings that lie behind such collective assessments, on the group processes that lead to such assessments, and on the normative understandings that groups draw upon to reach such assessments

The latter idea points to the ability of focus groups interviews to provide data that is rich in the sense that it reveals the meaning behind the stated beliefs or ideas about the phenomenon being studied. These meanings stem from, or are highlighted through, the

processes that are involved and the norms from which understandings of the groups are drawn.

For example, in the case of learners' experiences, explanations that learners provide about their reality can be understood in a deeper sense when the processes that are involved in meaning constructions, and the norms from which learners draw their understanding, are taken into consideration .

Specific to this study, focus groups will allow learners to discuss their experiences freely, without any fear of the authority figure amongst them. Moreover, Morgan (1998) pointed out that the goal of focus groups is to gain insight and understanding by hearing from people in depth, and requires selecting a purposive sample that will generate the most productive discussions. In this case, the choice of learners to participate in focus groups is purposive, since they are the ones who experience the classroom environment and are in a position to tell a story about their experiences.

The sample in these sessions is eight learners per grade, focus group. The aim of having a small group is that having fewer participants gives them more time to tell their personal stories or express their heartfelt opinions. For the purpose of this study, focus group interviews will be conducted by a learner-facilitator. I will not be present during these sessions but shall, beforehand, train some learners to facilitate the discussion. I will prepare

discussion questions beforehand and give them to the facilitators to start the sessions. Data in these sessions will be tape-recorded.

### **3.5.3.2. Semi- structured interviews**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers (appendix 1). This technique is relevant in the sense that it will allow the researcher to probe and get a deeper insight into the phenomenon that is being studied. Dunne (1995) emphasised that in face-to-face interviews surroundings, body language, facial expression and actions within a known environment, can all provide potentially useful information to the study. In this manner, interviews that I conducted with the teachers provided not only verbal information, but the actions and the attitudes during the sessions also tell a story.

Biklen (1992) elaborated on the use of interviews, stating that they are useful for gathering descriptive data in the participants' own words, so that the researcher can develop insight on how participants interpret their reality. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews enable the interviewer to rephrase the questions in the process and clarify issues which are not clear to the participants. According to Freebody (2003) interview responses need to be treated as accounts rather than as straightforward reports. In this sense, there is a need to go beyond what the participants are saying in order to generate thick descriptions of reality.



For example, the interviewee can give superficial information and hide certain facts, but in such a situation the interviewer can pick up the body language and certain actions which add to the participant's verbal account. The information collected in this process will also be tape-recorded. Unstructured observation will be conducted by the researcher to observe how learners relate to each other. The information gathered in this process will strengthen the study in the sense that one might notice things that one might not elicit by means of an interview, such as inequalities in power relations between boys and girls, or amongst learners.

#### **3.5.4. Process of data analysis**

Atkinson and Coffey (1996) argue that qualitative data occurs in a variety of forms. Data can take the form of field notes, interviews, transcripts, transcribed recordings and naturally occurring interactions, documents, pictures and other graphic representations. Therefore, there is no single way of approaching these materials. In this study I have used focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews to collect data.

Firstly, I would like to define the term *analysis* as Dey (1993) used it. Analysis is a process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal their characteristic themes and patterns. This is done by coding and recoding the data and revealing themes that are evident in the data. In other words it is the process of searching

for meanings and the interpretation of information in the data to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied.

According to Dey (1993) qualitative analysis has three related processes: describing, classifying and connecting. Hence, analysis must first offer thorough and comprehensive descriptions that include the context of action, the intention of social action and the process in which the social action is embedded. Secondly, data should be classified in order to give meaning. This means the categorization of data and the assigning of data bits to themes and codes. Thirdly, categorized or coded data is analyzed in terms of the patterns and connections that emerge. This is where the pieces of data are put back together again.

Walcott (1994) argument differs from Dey's (1993) in the sense that qualitative data is transformed in different ways and to different ends. Walcott breaks up these methods into three types: description, analysis and interpretation. Thus, description follows from an underlying assumption that data should speak for itself. The analytical account of data should stay as close to the data as they are originally recorded.

Walcott (1994) describes his third way of transforming qualitative data as interpretation. This is where the researcher attempts to offer his/her own interpretation of what is going on. Walcott heralds

interpretation as the threshold in thinking and writing at which the researcher transcends factual data and begins to probe into what is to be made of them.

Hence, in this study I have used Walcott (1994) method of analyzing qualitative data. The distinction between Walcott's and Dey's method of analysis lies in their second and third steps in the analysis process. Dey focuses on classifying that into groups and finally connecting the bit of data in the last stage. Data in this case stays as original as possible and speaks for itself.

On the other hand, Walcott's second step deals with analyzing data and revealing its meaning. This process aims at transforming data and reveals its hidden meanings and leads to thick descriptions and interpretation of data. Hence, the aim of this study is to arrive at thick description of learners' classroom experiences and teachers views of the classroom environment with the purpose of transforming this data to understand how far Inclusive education is being implemented in the classroom.

Firstly, I have offered a full description that includes the context of learning and teaching. The context in this case is the classroom where learners interact with each other, teachers, the environment and the curriculum. Moreover, I have included the intention of the social actors (learners and teachers), which is meaning construction and acquisition of new skills that will lead to further development

of learners. In this case, learning and teaching is rooted in inclusive education's principle of inclusion in the classroom.

Data which was tape-recorded during focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews will then be transcribed. The transcripts will be made available to the participants of the study (learners and teachers) to read and verify that it is a true reflection of the information they have given.

Secondly, the qualitative method of categorizing and coding information into themes will be utilized to analyze data since this process is systematic and allows for the interpretation of information to provide explanations of a phenomenon (Niewenhuis, 2007) . The researcher will categorize the information that has been gathered into themes and assign codes to the themes for the purpose of analysis. This is done through the process of open coding. In this way I shall engage with the data and develop the codes during the process. This process involves asking questions about why interviewees have stated what they have and what it means, and trying to define the meanings attached to participants' statements.

I then come back to the codes that are similar, and group them together, developing them into phrases; this is the code-recoding stage. Thirdly, categorized or coded information will be analyzed in terms of the patterns and connections that emerge. I shall then

identify what these phrases mean and develop the meanings into themes. This will then lead to a thick description of the data.

### **3.5.5. Trustworthiness**

To ensure the credibility of the findings in this research, the methods for collecting data will be triangulated. The methods used are focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. During the research process, the study will be submitted to peers and the supervisor of the study for cross examination in order to test the veracity of the issues that have arisen. The study will also be sent to an independent auditor for scrutiny.

Data that is collected will be made available to the participants of the focus group and interview sessions, to be read and verified as to whether they are a correct version of the information given by them. The reliability of the findings will be ensured by the use of verbatim accounts (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1993). This means direct quotations from the data, expressing the participants' understanding of the phenomenon being studied, will be used in this study. Furthermore, low-inference descriptions (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1993) will also be utilized to ensure reliability within the study. This idea means that terms and phrases that are used and understood by the participants will be utilized in the discussion of findings.

### **3.5.6. Ethical consideration**

Learner participants in the study have been given consent letters requesting parental permission for them to participate in the study. Letters to teachers requesting them to participate in the study were also issued. I will also assure participants of confidentiality and their anonymity in the study before the focus groups interviews for learners, and semi-structured interviews for teachers, begin.

Participants have also been informed of their right to quit the study at any time they want to, without any fear of marginalization or retribution. I will explain beforehand that the participants have the right to refuse to be tape-recorded by indicating to the facilitator or the researcher their intention. A letter requesting access to conduct the study in the school will be forwarded to the school principal. The university writes a block letter to request permission from the department of education to allow student researchers to conduct their studies in the schools. Ethical clearance has also been received from the university to embark on the study.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

According to Armstrong's (2003) inclusion is not only about giving access to learners who have been marginalized before, but also about change of attitudes, physical factors and curriculum. Social constructivism as a paradigm involves the realization that learners are active participants in the process of learning. Vygotsky's theory of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) provides the methodology of teaching and learning that accommodates all learners in the learning process, and allows them to develop to their full potential through mediation by knowledgeable others and peers.

The Asset-based theory draws on the strengths of the learners and builds on these strengths so that learners achieve their full potential and development in the learning process. This theory also enables the realization by teachers and others of learners' intrinsic and extrinsic assets, and leads to the full utilization of these assets.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion of the findings**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the findings based on the data I have gathered during focus group interviews about learners' classroom experiences, and information from semi-structured interviews on teachers' views about classroom environment. The voices of the participants are primarily heard in the discussion and an interpretation of the data in relation to the theoretical background of this study is given.

#### **4.2. Social interaction within the classroom context.**

Learning and teaching in this case occurs within the classroom environment. It is evident that learners bring to the classroom the experiences that they have learnt from home and society. Similarly, Bennett and Dunne (2001) point out that what children learn in the classroom depends to a large extent on what they already know. Values and norms that govern their behavior are deeply rooted in their immediate society and home environment. Considering, for example, a child who has been taught the value of respect and tolerance at home will exhibit such behavior in the classroom.



Rowlands (2006) stresses the previously mentioned notion when stating that learning progresses from the known to the unknown.

Some learners are motivated and receive more support from home, enabling them to achieve academic excellence, while others are demotivated and have no idea what they have come to do at school. These aspects affect performance in learning tasks. This is due to lack of parental support, negligence or when the family is learner-headed rather than parent-headed. These aspects creates barriers to learning, which inclusive teaching practice aim at identifying and addressing them in such a way that learners diverse needs are accommodated within the inclusive curriculum that aims at preparing them to be fully functional citizen of the country.

Karagiannis and Stainback (1996) stress this point when stating that education prepares learners for life in the community, and enables them to operate according to the social value of equality for all people with the consequence of enhancing social peace. Activities and interactions that occurs in the classroom needs to provide situations where learners are able to develop norms and values that can be transferred to real life situation outside the school context.

For example collaboration, acceptance, tolerance and creative thinking should be developed within the classroom and carried over by learners to their communities and society at large. Lorenz

(2002) describe the learner within inclusive classroom as involved in the process of developing independence in learning and behavior, acquisition of new skills, and developing age-appropriate behaviors. The development of friendships with peers forms the local community where all members feel accepted and belong to the group. This in turn can be transferred to learners' community and society.

Sapon-Shevin (1996) explains that inclusive communities are ones in which all members feel that they belong and feel that they can make a contribution. This is the type of inclusive classroom envisaged by the new South African curriculum. The truly inclusive classroom can successfully be achieved through learning which takes place within Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where learners are assisted through mediation and communication with capable others (Rowlands, 2006).

### **4.3. Learners classroom experiences**

#### **4.3.1. Interactions and relationships amongst learners**

In general, learners live in fear of other learners. This is pointed out in one participant's response that, *"In the classroom there is a lot of gossip, jealousy and pretending which makes one uncomfortable in this environment. There is also stealing and fighting over small issues"*. It is

evident that the classroom environment, in this case, is the place where the fittest survive. It is not a welcoming and friendly environment to most of the learners. Thus the classroom is not an asset to the development of learners. It can therefore be seen that an unsafe environment poses a threat to free movement and effective communication between learners, and results in passivity and withdrawal behavior in most learners. Inasmuch as inclusion is desired in the classroom, this situation promotes exclusion and hampers learning in what should be an inclusive environment.

It is evident from the data that interaction and relationships among learners in the classroom are not good. One participant stated that, *“Learners treat each other badly, rudely if you cannot cope with the learning task, and will tease you and make fun of you”*. This means that learners who experience learning difficulties are being alienated and marginalized in the learning process.

The aforementioned idea was also expressed by another participant who stated that, *“When you have difficulty in understanding a task or maybe you have done something wrong because you did not understand the instructions, other learners call you a stupid and will say something like you do not have to do anything in our group because you are stupid”*. Such an environment does not encourage active participation in learning tasks and, because of this; collaboration in the learning process is hindered. This situation excludes rather than includes learners with special learning needs.

It is evident also that the attitudes of some learners towards special needs learners are very negative, and create a barrier to learning. Selvam's (2004) findings that learners who experience learning difficulties in the South African context have negative experiences in the school environment, in the sense that they are being laughed at by their peers and excluded in peer group tasks and activities, is confirmed by the participants' responses in this study.

This is contrary to Rix's (2005) argument that it is important to think with others, draw from others and creates meanings collaboratively in an inclusive environment. This notion highlights the important role of collaboration in development within inclusive education. Drawing from my experience as a teacher, I saw that the point made earlier (ridicule by peers) destroys learners' self-esteem and confidence in completing learning tasks, and results in the passivity of learners, stifling their development and creativity.

Relating this argument to Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, activities that take place within the classroom need to be based on mediation by capable others, (fellow learners and teachers) and communication between them which will enhance learning and development. When some learners are being labeled stupid, they are frustrated and excluded from learning tasks, as one participant mentioned: *"Some learners create jokes about us that make one feel embarrassed and frustrated within the classroom to such an extent that one feel he does not belong in this class"*. Hence, the sense of belonging in the classroom community is

lacking and learners who are victims in this situation are excluded rather than being accepted as members of the inclusive classroom community.

In this way, the aim of education to prepare learners to take part in an inclusive and tolerant society, and to develop them to be functional citizens, is hampered. This eventually results in the alienation and marginalization of learners within the classroom, and will eventually extend to society as a whole: the South African community as well as the global community.

#### **4.3.2. Learners' accounts of their experiences during the learning process**

In this section I give verbatim accounts of learners' experiences in the classroom, and elaborate on them by interpreting them in relation to Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development and Asset-base theory. These accounts are as follows:

*“Some teachers teach lessons in a very boring manner to such an extent that we get sleepy and bored. That is a very bad experience”*

This statement by one of the participants reveals a barrier in the curriculum which is not accessible to some of the learners. The

teaching methods used by the teacher alienated these learners as explained above that this is a very bad experience for them. Nind (2005) argues in favor of this notion, by pointing out that inclusion and exclusion occur in the context of the curriculum, and that differences in learning arise because learners fail to meet the requirements of a given curriculum.

In this case, the learner felt bored and sleepy because of the lack of a stimulating environment or pedagogy to stimulate his interest and motivate his full participation in the learning process. The aforementioned statement confirms Goodlad's (2004) findings that much classroom talk is driven by teacher talk and does not engage students. As a result, learners become bored and eventually drop out of school.

Learning should be scaffolded, allowing the learners to engage themselves with learning activities by communicating with capable others and teachers, to develop new skills and progress to the next level where they will be skilled to perform tasks independently. The argument above is further confirmed by participants' responses which were repeated a number of times that, *"Sometimes teachers come to the classroom not prepared for the lesson and teach something that they do not understand themselves"*.

In Vygotsky's terms, this statement means that teachers can obstruct mediation, which is the engine that drives development in

the learning process. Development, according to Vygotsky's (ZPD) theory, is the achievement of the space that lies just beyond a learner's present understanding, in which the learner cannot quite understand something on his own but has the potential to do so through interaction with another person who does have the capacity.

Considering the respondents' statement about lessons presented by teachers unprepared in Vygotsky's terms teachers who come to the classroom unprepared for the lesson are not in a position to engage learners in thinking forward into that space (ZPD) or act as mediators in shifting the learners' present understanding to a new level. This situation creates a barrier to learning since there is a lack of expertise to drive the development process. As a result, learners are not engaged in activities that will stimulate their learning.

Hence, they become alienated from the curriculum and are further excluded from the learning process. The end result will be frustration and loss of interest in further learning and development and lead to drop outs and other anti-social behaviors such as gangsterism.

This scenario implies the outcome of exclusion and alienation in the curriculum which the participants have spoken about. Such a situation is not in line with the principles of inclusive education, to address the diverse needs of learners in the learning process by

acknowledging the different learning styles, as mentioned by Pritchard (2005) that some learners are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, extrovert, introvert, intuitive, thinking or feeling learners.

Achieving this objective in a lesson needs thorough planning and preparation. Hence, it is impossible to implement inclusive education in the classroom without thorough preparation and understanding of an inclusive curriculum, which is designed to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. Without the identification and addressing of the barriers to learning, most learners are excluded in the learning process and alienated from the inclusive curriculum.

A number of the respondents spoke of experiencing good teaching and stimulating activities during the learning process in the classroom. For example, some said that, *"There are also very good teachers, we all know them and when the time come for their lesson everybody in the classroom behaves well and concentrate on the lesson, we respect them a lot"*. Learners are good evaluators of the curriculum and of how teachers implement it, since they are the recipients of this educational process and have direct classroom experiences of the activities taking place in this environment.

The attitudes and behavior of learners indicates that they realize that they are a direct part of the learning process. They are taking responsibility for their own learning and are involved in the meaning construction together with the teachers. Hence, the



classroom environment constitutes stimulation and promotes interest and concentration in the lesson. In this case, where learners are a direct part of the learning process and show interest and responsibility in their learning, there is an indication of some success in inclusion in the sense that learners have the sense of belonging and can realize themselves in the learning process.

In this way different learning styles of learners as stated by Pritchard (2005) have been accommodated, as there is evidence of collaboration and participation in learning tasks. The aforementioned discussion varies from class to class, depending on the expertise and knowledge of the class teacher about inclusive education and how to implement the inclusive curriculum.

Rix (2005) pointed out that drawing from others and creating meanings together involves collaboration that draws upon inclusive principles, and allows one to draw on the strengths, interests and learning styles of different members of the teaching and learning group. This idea is further expressed by a respondent's statement saying, *"When one of us is not feeling well, the monitor will come and ask him/her what is wrong and the class will give support. I have learned that we have to work with each other and that each one of us has a talent in something. For example, I may not be good in maths but good in other learning areas"*. Collaboration also involves mediation by knowledgeable others and communication to achieve the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is the gap just beyond learners' understanding, and which the learner has the

potential to reach but not without the help of capable others. This process proceeds through scaffolded learning until learners reach their full potential and development.

#### **4.3.2.1. Inequalities within the classroom**

Inclusion in the classroom implies that all learners are accepted within the classroom environment and that they receive respect, regardless of their language, race, religion, ethnicity or disability. Green, Forrester, Mvambi, Jan Van Vuuren & du Toit (1999) explained that teachers are central to the success of inclusion and that it requires changes in attitudes and practice. Moreover, the success of inclusion depends on broad factors such as social and educational conditions and attitudes and, equally, on the actions of specific teachers in a particular context.

Participants in this study pointed out that, *“Teachers do not treat us equally. For example, if one learner who is disliked by the teacher does wrong, the teacher will say who he or she thinks he is. But if the learner who is liked by the teacher does something wrong, the teacher will say 'Do not do it again' without shouting at that learner”*. This statement points out that favoritism is being practiced by the teachers in the classroom. This condition marginalizes some learners since they will lose interest in activities that occur in the classroom. As a result, they will feel disliked by the teachers.

Moreover, *“The right for equality is sometimes violated in the classroom because learners are not given equal opportunity in doing tasks. There are those who are always preferred over others by the teachers”*. Such a situation results in division and the creation of superior and inferior learning groups within the classroom.

Teachers can be judgmental in the classroom. This causes division amongst learners in the sense that there will be those who possess more power and tend to dominate over other learners. This idea is revealed in the participant's response that, *“There are some teachers who do not treat us equally, who judge us. When, for example, a learner raises a hand to respond or contribute to the learning task, the teacher will not allow that learner because he/she has judged that no good answer will come from that learner. Eventually the learner develops hatred for that teacher”*.

Instead of identifying the problems some learners have in the learning process and assisting them, teachers ignore the situation and give no support to enable the learner to achieve the learning objective. Thus, *“Teachers call us stupid and we feel embarrassed and insulted”*. This situation destroys the learners' self esteem and confidence in attempting learning activities. Hence, the assets within the learner, that is, the interests, values and skills already acquired that might stimulate and facilitate further development and learning are stifled and hindered.

This fact confirms Selvam's (2004) finding that learners have negative experiences in the classroom. They are being laughed at by other learners and not being accepted fully as members of the group. Selvam (2004) also mentioned that such a situation results from the attitudes of teachers who fear inclusion and respond negatively to learners with learning difficulties. Hence, exclusion of some learners is, in this sense, inevitable.

#### **4.3.2.2. Learner support during the learning process**

Support in education is central to inclusive education. The classroom is the context in which the inclusion of learners is implemented. All activities taking place in the classroom need to be supportive to learners in their learning process, especially peer and teacher interaction. Davis (2003) expressed the view that for classrooms to be more inclusive there is a need to develop teaching practices that lead to social inclusion in classroom learning activities. These eventually lead to increased access to the curriculum, development of the child's independence and equal opportunities for all learners.

According to the findings in this study, learners experienced the opposite of what has been recommended as necessary for them. One participant responded as follows with regard to support they receive in the classroom: *"Some teachers, if you do not understand*

*instructions in the task and come to them, they will tell you they are busy, come back again. When you return, they will tell you the same story”.*

In this way, learners are not given support to complete learning tasks. Consequently, learners will get frustrated and lose interest in learning. Thus, teachers can be barriers to the child's learning and development. This is contrary to what is expected of them since their role is to interpret the curriculum and engage learners in classroom tasks, ensuring that good relationships exist and that interaction that occur in the classroom lead to learning and development. Hence, teachers are the ones who implement inclusive education and must render support to learners during the learning process.

Thus, there appears to be evidence that no intervention or mediation is taking place to assist learners to develop to their maximum abilities. Hence, instead of supporting learners through mediation, learners are and frustrated by the activities taking place in the classroom. This idea is also confirmed by some responses of the participants that, *“Sometimes you will find that the teacher knows that the learners did not understand the task but will do nothing in order to help that learner to carry on”.*

This situation leaves much to be desired of the competency of the teachers in implementing inclusive education as they are inadequately competent. The role of the teacher is to create a

supportive learning environment that facilitates learning and inclusion. Support is the heartbeat of inclusive education. Support in learning is achieved through the teacher's role as mediator in providing activities that will challenge learners to create meanings around the aspects of their learning and progress along the ZPD, and achieve their optimum development.

Lack of support within the classroom creates an environment that alienates and excludes learners with learning difficulties. They will not feel part of the classroom community and will become withdrawn and passive in the learning process. This is not the objective of inclusive education. Rather, it aims at realization of the barriers in education and addressing them by accommodating diverse learner needs. According to the principles of inclusive education, all learners need to actively participate in the learning tasks, construct meanings together with capable others and reach the level of self-directed learning and development.

It is also evident that teachers push their roles as mediators onto learners. One participant responded angrily as follows: *“From my experience, teachers put the blame on us when learners in our group are unable to finish the task, but if such a person does not want to do their work, there is nothing that we can do. We cannot force them to do it, but the blame from the teachers will be on us for not teaching that person to do it properly. I get very angry about that since I am not the one responsible for that person's learning difficulty. But if the person comes to me really serious about their work, I can help them with everything I have”*.

Hence, collaboration in group work is a good thing but learners require intervention by the teacher in the form of mediation to help them think forward and achieve the outcomes of the lesson. Learners are not supposed to take full responsibility for assisting learners with learning difficulties in their group, since this can demotivate and frustrate learners.

#### **4.4. Capacity development of the teachers and learning resources**

Teachers need to receive thorough training in inclusive education, and how to implement an inclusive curriculum. It is evident from their responses during the interview sessions that there is a lack of insight about inclusive curriculum and how it is to be implemented. One teacher responded that, *“it is difficult to teach in these classes because there are no resource materials except books and the chalkboard, and “It is hard to implement this new curriculum because we were not trained during our professional training in inclusive education”*. This is a serious situation since teachers are central to the success of inclusive education. Consequently, learning activities that take place in the classroom frustrate and alienate learners as they do not respect and accommodate the diverse needs of learners in the learning process.

Some teachers are trying to implement inclusion but failing to produce the results as intended by inclusive education. This is evident in a respondent's statement that, *"We are trying to do the best we can to implement inclusive education, but the two weeks training that we received did not equip us to understand and implement inclusion in the classroom"*.

This idea is further expressed by Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000) that in order for inclusive education to be implemented successfully in South Africa, there is a need for capacity development of the teachers and other stakeholders in education. This involves the adoption of an inclusive approach by changing the attitudes of the stakeholders involved in education and making them more knowledgeable on inclusive practices.

Furthermore, Naicker (2005) stated that the one week training sessions that were offered to prepare teachers for the implementation of inclusive education did not offer a theoretical framework, and failed to emphasize the epistemological differences between the old and the new curricula. Hence, teachers are caught up in the situation where they think they are implementing inclusive education and are actually not. They are still stuck in teaching methodologies of the apartheid education system that were taught to them during their training.



Drawing from my experience as a teacher, inclusive education is implemented on paper in the form of lesson plans, but the presentation of the content material in the classroom takes the form of traditional teaching methods where the teacher dominates the discussion and learners play a more passive role in the process of meaning construction. One of the respondent pointed out that the lessons that are being presented in the classroom are very boring to such an extent that learners feel very sleepy. This notion indicates that learners are not actively involved in the learning process and the teachers are dominating the talk within the classroom. This idea confirms Goodlad's (2004) findings that much classroom practice is driven by teacher talk and does not engage learners. Hence, such a situation is contrary to inclusive education principles, where learners are regarded as active participants in meaning construction during the learning process.

Furthermore, one teacher responded that, *"The classrooms that we have do not allow us to implement inclusion. They are crowded and have no resource materials, except books and the chalkboard"*. This statement indicates the lack of learning resource material in the classroom. I think, in a situation like this, teachers need to be creative in generating resource material and be more open minded to realize the available assets within the classroom to the fullest, to assist in the learning process.

Stofile and Green (2007) elaborated on this issue by stating that the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is a

challenge in terms of the timeframe and resources needed for implementing changes, and the urgency of issues that need to be addressed at the implementation sites. In this sense it is evident that dissemination of the policy was too quick, since teachers are not properly prepared to implement the new curriculum. Moreover, resources that are needed in the classroom to facilitate learning are lacking.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Learners have negative experiences in the classroom. The majority of them does not feel comfortable and free within this environment, since they are being labeled 'stupid', and are being excluded from most of the learning tasks by peers and some teachers. Support for learners experiencing difficulty with a learning task is lacking. Some teachers ignore and do nothing to assist learners who are struggling with understanding learning material and this situation results in frustration and embarrassment for the majority of learners.

There is inequality in power relations amongst learners and between teachers and learners. This situation is aggravated by the attitudes and practices of favoritism by some teachers. Thus, inclusive education is not successfully implemented in classroom due to ignorance on the side of teachers about the inclusive curriculum and how to implement it resulting from curriculum

dissemination not properly communicated to the teachers by the department of education. This is the result of the lack of sufficient training to prepare them for implementation.

## Chapter five

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Conclusion

Inasmuch as we have inclusive education in South Africa, it is evident from the findings of this study that the principles of inclusion in the learning process are not implemented in the classrooms. Learners' experiences, such as frustration, caused by inaccessibility of the curriculum, embarrassment resulting from being labeled 'stupid', and being laughed at by peers, create barriers to learning and prevent learners' full participation in learning tasks. These findings affirm Selvam's (2004) point that, in South African schools, learners experiencing learning difficulties have negative experiences within the school and classroom environments.

These aspects reflect that most of the learners are being alienated from the curriculum and excluded in the learning process and classroom community. These circumstances violates learners' rights as stated in the South African Schools' Act (1996) that all learners have the right to decent education and respect. Hence, inclusion in education is not a privilege but a right that all learners must enjoy. Swart and Pettipher (2001) elaborated on this issue by stating that the concept of inclusion embraces the democratic values of liberty,

equality and human rights, and recognizes and accommodates diversity, thereby respecting the rights of all learners.

Practice in teaching has not changed from the traditional methods inherited from the apartheid education system, as mentioned by Welch (2002). Teachers were trained differently during the apartheid era. The purpose of training in this era was to implement principles of segregation in education and produce a fragmented society. Teachers who received such training have not been prepared for transition during policy dissemination to incorporate the principles of inclusive education nor empowered to implement it successfully. Consequently, practice in teaching has not undergone change; it is still the same as during the apartheid era.

Welton (2001) elaborated on this aspect by stating that it is a fundamental aspect of education that people learn to teach in the way that they have been taught. Hence, teachers who are not trained in inclusive education and have the training of the apartheid system are likely to teach in the way they have been taught.

This aspect seriously hinders the successful implementation of inclusive education in South Africa, since the teacher is the one who interprets the curriculum or learning program guidelines, decides on what will be taught and learnt, chooses and design activities, arranges the class in various ways and interacts with

learners in particular ways, for example through the type of question he/she asks, through eliciting ideas from learners (Bertram, Fotheringham & Harley, 2000).

Inclusive education implementation is only evident on paper in the form of lesson plans, but presentations of these lessons are still dominated by teacher talk, leaving learners passive in the learning process and not involved in meaning construction during learning tasks. This is due to the fact that the one week training that the teachers received focused mainly on the development of lesson plans and paper work that is required by the department of education. Nothing that involves the fundamental issues of inclusive curriculum and strategies to implement it is covered by the one week training session.

According to Nind (2005) teaching and learning in the classroom should be designed and planned in such a way that all learners' diverse learning needs are accommodated, and full participation in the learning process is achieved. The participants mentioned that some lessons presented in the classroom are very boring. The case might be that the teacher is teaching below the capacity of the learners or may be using traditional methods of teaching where learners are passive and only listening to the teacher talk.

Teachers are not fulfilling their roles as facilitators or mediators in the learning process. Participants expressed that teachers do

nothing, even if they know that learners are struggling and have problems in understanding learning tasks. They do not have the skills to assist learners to think forward and move through the Zone of Proximal development to achieve their full potential in learning and development, due to insufficient training in inclusive education. According to Reid (2005) one of the key aspects to ensuring that inclusion is effective in terms of practice is to ensure that the tasks that are set for learners and the outcomes that have to be met actually match learners' needs and, importantly, that learners have the means to achieve these needs and outcomes.

To achieve what Reid (2005) stated above that teachers need thorough training and understanding of inclusive education principles and curriculum. Most importantly, a paradigm shift from the practices of the apartheid education to inclusive education is needed to understand the objectives of the curriculum in a new sense that acknowledges learners as active in the learning process, and that they have different learning styles that need to be respected and accommodated in the curriculum.

It is worth noting that a paradigm shift requires considerable time since it is a developmental process that goes beyond workshops and in-service training. The experience and skills of the teacher are important factors influencing the classroom practice of the teacher and these, in turn, are influenced by factors such as the amount of teacher education and training a teacher has received, the support teacher receive and available resources. (Bertram, Fotheringham &

Harley, 2000). Hence, teachers need time and continuous support from the district services to develop confidence and coping strategies in implementing inclusive education in the classroom.

Teachers indicated that learning resources are lacking within the classroom, meaning that the implementation of inclusive education is slowed down by this factor. The asset-based approach is useful in this case in the sense that teachers as mediators during the learning process should identify the assets within the classroom, school and society to assist the learners in their practice. For example, learners can bring specimens that are available in their community that relates to the theme they are studying.

Finally, combining learners' experiences with teachers' views of the classroom environment, in terms of the implementation of inclusive education has revealed that inclusive practices are not taking place in the classrooms. The root cause of this situation is insufficient preparation of the teachers to implement the policy, and has resulted in their being unable to prepare and organize learning activities that accommodate learners' diverse needs in the classroom. Learners come to school from different backgrounds and have different learning styles, yet are treated the same.

Hence, classroom environment, particularly interactions and relationships amongst learners and between learners and teachers, has created a situation in which learners are frustrated and



excluded in the learning process. This situation also resulted from teachers' frustration at not understanding the principles of inclusive education and the methods of implementing the new curriculum. Much needs to be done in schools with regard to inclusion, since education is an important tool to prepare learners to be fully functional in South African inclusive society.

Schaffner and Buswell (1996) state that if we want society to be a place where diverse groups of people get along with each other, where people are valued as contributors to the common goal and where all people share basic rights, then schools must reflect those values by providing environments in which values are modeled by teachers and learners, and in which teaching practices and curricula reflect and model such values.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

Based on the finding of this study I would make the following recommendations.

In-depth training of the teachers in inclusive education is required to ensure that the paradigm shift from the apartheid education system to inclusive education is achieved. The content of the training should seriously focus on issues of inclusive curriculum

and its implementation, rather than the format of the lesson plan and other paper work that is required for administration purposes

Teacher support services need to be rendered by district officials, who are specialist in inclusive education on regular basis to enable teachers to develop coping strategies and confidence in implementing inclusion in the classroom. This process should be done in scheduled yearly programs and teachers need to be aware of these programs and comply with them

The department of education should ensure that there is enough personnel to provide psychological services in schools. These services are central to inclusive education as teachers are not trained professionals in this field. They can only identify the problem in the classroom and make necessary referrals to psychological professional or para-professionals.

The department of education needs to set the standards and requirements for inclusive classrooms and establish monitoring programs to ensure that these standards are met in all schools. These requirement need to be available to all educators, heads of department and principals. Training sessions are needed for the teachers and other stakeholders to empower them to implement and maintain these standards.

To conclude, inclusive education is a working education system in South Africa. Learners are still experiencing activities that exclude them from the curriculum rendered in the classroom. The classroom environment for many learners is not conducive for their optimal development and accommodation of diverse learning needs of learners is not achieved under existing classroom environment in the Pinetown district schools.

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# APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Interview session**

#### **QUESTIONS:**

- Tell me about your challenges and successes in implementing inclusive education in the classroom.
  
- What would you say about the classroom environment in which you implement inclusive education?
  
- How do you deal with learners who are experiencing learning difficulty within the classroom?

## **RESPONSES:**

### **Teacher A**

Question 1: Tell me about your challenges and successes in implementing inclusive education in the classroom?

Firstly, I will point out that inclusion in the classroom is a frustrating issue to think about and implementing it is like a mountain that we cannot climb. So it is difficult to be successful in implementing inclusive education and we do not understand what is all about, when talking about inclusive education we think only of the disability whereas it is not only about disabilities

Probe: Tell me more about this, what do you mean.

- I mean that we were not trained in inclusive education during our professional training and do you think it is possible to change the practice that one has been taught and practice for many years just like that. Besides, our

classrooms are very crowded, we have about sixty to sixty eight learners in one class. Looking at this situation it will be difficult to adopt a learner who is on wheel chair in these classes.

Question 2: What would you say about the classroom environment in which you implement inclusive education?

- It is difficult to teach in these classes because there are no resource materials except books and the chalkboard, and it is hard to implement this new curriculum because we were not trained during our professional training in inclusive education.

Question 3: How do you deal with learners who are experiencing learning difficulty within the classroom?

- I give them extra work which is simpler than the one they did not complete and sometimes I ask learners who understand the work to help those who are struggling in their group.

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**Teacher B**

Question 1: Tell me about your challenges and successes in implementing inclusive education in the classroom?

- My challenge in implementing inclusion in the classroom is that I never get training in the new curriculum during my professional training and the workshops I attended lasted for two to three days and did not give me a direction on implementing this education system.

Question 2: What would you say about the classroom environment in which you implement inclusive education?

- The classrooms that we have do not allow us to implement inclusion. They are crowded and have no resource materials, except books and the chalkboard.
- The learners in my class do not want to participate in the lesson; they expect most of the time answers from me. They also do not study on their own they usually depend on the teachers.

Probe: Do you think your classroom is conducive for inclusive education implementation.

- No because in my class I do not have resources to teach effectively and accommodate different types of learners. I use only chalkboard and textbooks as my teaching resources.

Question 3: How do you deal with learners who are experiencing learning difficulty within the classroom?

- I use to arrange extra lessons for those learners who did not cope with the lesson tasks and use simpler methods to explain to them.

### **Teacher C**

Question 1: Tell me about your challenges and successes in implementing inclusive education in the classroom?

- We are trying to do the best we can to implement inclusive education, but the two weeks training that we received did not equip us to understand and implement inclusion in the classroom.

Question 2: What would you say about the classroom environment in which you implement inclusive education?

- The classrooms that we have are too small for the number of learner we have. This creates a very noise environment and makes it hard to make a follow up on the work done by each learner. Moreover, the classrooms are very dull there are not teaching and learning resources except the chalkboard and books. For example, it is hard to teach lesson like natural

science and technology because they require hand on experience and manipulation.

Question 3: How do you deal with learners who are experiencing learning difficulty within the classroom?

- I normally call them to see me individually to deal with their problems and give them extra homework to practice and understand the content material in the task. Sometimes other learners who have mastered the task are asked to help them because they understand better when they talk to other learners.

**APPENDIX 2:**

**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**QUESTIONS:**

- Tell us about your experiences within the classroom
- Can you discuss inequalities that you have experience within the classroom between teachers and learners and amongst learners
- Elaborate on the support you have received from the teachers and other learners in your class
- Discuss the manner in which teachers and learners treat you and others during the learning process.



## **RESPONSES:**

### **Focus group A:**

#### **Question 1: Tell us about your experiences within the classroom**

- In the classroom there is a lot of gossip, jealousy and pretending which makes one uncomfortable in this environment. There is also stealing and fighting over small issues.
  
- Sometimes teachers come to the classroom not prepared for the lesson and teach something that they do not understand themselves.
  
- Learners are not treating each other well, they hate each other and they usually swearing at one other because of the fight over boys and other issues.

#### **Question 2: Can you discuss inequalities that you have experience within the classroom between teachers and learners and amongst learners**

- There are class monitors in the classroom and they do not treat us equally for example if you are the friend of the class monitor everything will go well for you in the classroom and if you are not you will be blame for things you have not done.

**Question 3: Elaborate on the support you have received from the teachers and other learners in your class**

- When you have difficulty in understanding a task or maybe you have done something wrong because you did not understand the instructions, other learners call you a stupid and will say something like you do not have to do anything in our group because you are stupid.
- Some teachers sit down when they are presenting their lesson; some learners in this case find it hard to understand what the teacher is teaching.
- Some teachers do not teach and they just give us a lot of notes and do not explain them.
- Some teachers when you ask them questions they do not know the answers

**Question 4: Discuss the manner in which teachers and learners treat you and others during the learning process.**

- Learners treat each other badly, rudely if you cannot cope with the learning task, and will tease you and make fun of you.
  - There are teachers who like to tease learners and do not listen to them when they give their views
  - Some of the teachers treat us fairly, but others always discriminate us, for example, they sometimes compare you with someone else and this hurts my feeling.
  - Some teachers do not treat us fairly because they like other learners and do not like other and I feel very angry about it because we are South Africans we have to treat us fairly
- 

### **Focus group B:**

#### **Question 1: Tell us about your experiences within the classroom**

- Some learners create jokes about us that make one feel embarrassed and frustrated within the classroom to such an extent that one feel he/she does not belong in this class.
- Some teachers teach lessons in a very boring manner to such an extent that we get sleepy and bored. That is a very bad experience.

- Learners steal from each other and make others angry and this end up in a fight
- Some learners use vulgar language and this is hurting and lead to quarrellings
- Some learners do not treat each other as family they treat us as if they do not know us at all.

**Question 2: Can you discuss inequalities that you have experience within the classroom between teachers and learners and amongst learners**

- The right for equality is sometimes violated in the classroom because learners are not given equal opportunity in doing tasks. There are those who are always preferred over others by the teachers
- Learners do not respect each other and everyone wants to be on top of the class, for example some learners bring their cell phone to the class and listen to the music create a situation where those who cannot afford to buy them feel embarrassed and belittled

**Question 3: Elaborate on the support you have received from the teachers and other learners in your class.**

- Some teachers, if you do not understand instructions in the task and come to them, they will tell you they are busy, come back again. When you return, they will tell you the same story
- Some teachers do accept us and help everyone who have problem in understanding the tasks
- Other teachers so their own work in the classroom while learners are struggling to understand the work
- There are cases where some of learners do not cope in the classroom and teachers just ignore them and focus to those learner who understand the work

**Question 4: Discuss the manner in which teachers and learners treat you and others during the learning process.**

- Teachers do not treat us equally. For example, if one learner who is disliked by the teacher does wrong, the teacher will say who he or she thinks he is. But if the learner who is liked by the teacher does something wrong, the teacher will say 'Do not do it again' without shouting at that learner

### **Focus group C:**

#### **Question 1: Tell us about your experiences within the classroom**

- There are also very good teachers, we all know them and when the time come for their lesson everybody in the classroom behaves well and concentrate on the lesson, we respect them a lot
  
- When one of us is not feeling well, the monitor will come and ask him/her what is wrong and the class will give support. I have learned that we have to work with each other and that each one of us has a talent in something. For example, I may not be good in maths but good in other learning areas
  
- I feel good when a teacher teaches a lesson and learning is very fun and when I can understand what the teacher is saying and if I do not understand they are able to explain it to me

#### **Question 2: Can you discuss inequalities that you have experience within the classroom between teachers and learners and amongst learners**

- There are some teachers who do not treat us equally, who judge us. When, for example, a learner raises a hand to respond or contribute to the learning task, the teacher will not allow that learner because he/she has judged that no good answer will come from that learner. Eventually the learner develops hatred for that teacher
- When something wrong happens in the classroom there are always scapegoats to be blamed for that although they are not responsible for that incident.

**Question 3: Elaborate on the support you have received from the teachers and other learners in your class**

- Sometimes you will find that the teacher knows that the learners did not understand the task but will do nothing in order to help that learner to carry on
- From my experience, teachers put the blame on us when learners in our group are unable to finish the task, but if such a person does not want to do their work, there is nothing that we can do. We cannot force them to do it, but the blame from the teachers will be on us for not teaching that person to do it properly. I get very angry about that since I am not the one responsible for that person's learning difficulty. But if the person comes to me really serious about their work, I can help them with everything I have

**Question 4: Discuss the manner in which teachers and learners treat you and others during the learning process.**

- Teachers call us stupid and we feel embarrassed and insulted
- There are learners who are not friendly to others for example when a teacher says something funny about the learner they will laugh at that learner
- Learners are scared to come forward and admit that they have the problem in understanding the content, they do not tell even their friends because they are scared to be called stupid
- Teachers are not the same, some treat us fairly and others unfairly; for example when you ask the teacher to go out to the toilet some teachers shout at you and you eventually feel as if he/she hates you, and that is when you start hating the teacher. As a result you will start feeling that you are not welcomed in the classroom



**APPENDIX 3:**

**CONSENT LETTER. (LEARNER PARTICIPANT)**

B165, Mageba Road  
Mpumalanga T/ship  
Hammersdale  
3701  
.....

**To Whom It May Concern:**

I am conducting research for a Masters course at the University of KwaZulu- Natal in South Africa. My research topic is: Exploring the implementation of Inclusive Education in Pinetown District Schools: A case study of learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment at a selected school

I will like to request you to take part in a *focus group interview session* of this study. The purpose of the research is to explore learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment. You will be required to share your experiences and your views about learning and teaching and other activities that occur within the classroom. Data from this session will be tape-recorded. There are no potential benefits derived from participating except the feeling of adding new knowledge to the existing knowledge about classroom environment. The information gathered in this process will be kept in a safe place at the University of KwaZulu Natal for five years, after this period the

documents containing research data will then be destroyed. Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no negative and undesired impact by so doing. As a participant in the study your identity will remain anonymous. All information shared in this session will remain confidential and will not be used for any other purpose other than for the purpose of this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage and it can be for any reason.

For more information feel free to contact us on the following contact numbers or E mails:

Yours truly,

P. Mweli

Contact No: 0722994420

E mail: 203400955@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor:

Mrs. R. Kalenga

031-2601438

kalenga@ukzn.ac.za

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I, ....., am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study and hereby agree to participate. I am also aware that the results will be used for course purposes only, that my identity will remain confidential, and that I can withdraw at any time, if I so wish.

---

Signature

---

Date

**APPENDIX 4**

**CONSENT LETTER. (TEACHER PARTICIPANT)**

B165, Mageba Road  
Mpumalanga T/ship  
Hammersdale  
3701

.....

**To Whom It May Concern:**

I am conducting research for a Masters course at the University of KwaZulu- Natal in South Africa. My research topic is: Exploring the implementation of Inclusive Education in Pinetown District Schools: A case study of learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment at a selected school

I will like to request you to take part in *an interview session* of this study. The purpose of the research is to explore learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment. You will be required to share your experiences and your views about learning and teaching and other activities that occur within the classroom. Data from this session will be tape-recorded. There are no potential benefits derived from participating except the feeling of adding new knowledge to the existing knowledge about classroom environment. The information gathered in this process will be kept in a safe place at the University of KwaZulu Natal for five years, after this period the documents containing research data will then be destroyed. Participation in this

research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no negative and undesired impact by so doing. As a participant in the study your identity will remain anonymous. All information shared in this session will remain confidential and will not be used for any other purpose other than for the purpose of this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage and it can be for any reason.

For more information feel free to contact us on the following contact numbers or E mails:

Yours truly,  
P. Mveli

Supervisor:

Mrs. R. Kalenga  
031-2601438  
kalenga@ukzn.ac.za

Contact No: 0722994420

E mail: 203400955@ukzn.ac.za

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I, ....., am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study and hereby agree to participate. I am also aware that the results will be used for course purposes only, that my identity will remain confidential, and that I can withdraw at any time, if I so wish.

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Signature

---

Date

**APPENDIX 5:**

***LETTER TO THE SCHOOL***

B165, Mageba Road  
Mpumalanga Township  
Hammersdale  
3700

.....

The Principal  
Intakemazolo Primary  
P.O. Box 162  
Hammersdale  
3701

Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby request permission to conduct a study in your school. I am doing Masters in education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The topic of my study is: Exploring the implementation of Inclusive Education in Pinetown District Schools: A case study of learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment at a selected school.

The purpose of the study is to gather data from learners experiences about classroom environment and teachers' perceptions on classroom conditions in relation to their

implementation of inclusive education. The aim of the study is to explore how far inclusive education has been implemented in Pinetown district school. I have selected your school as a site for this study randomly amongst Pinetown district schools. The findings of the study will help to add on existing knowledge about classroom environment and assist in creating inclusive classrooms, as well as, to provide information that will facilitate implementation of inclusive education.

Yours truly,  
Patrick Mveli

**Contact No:** 0722994420

**E-mail:** [203400955@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:203400955@ukzn.ac.za)

**For further information please contact the supervisors of the study at:**

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University of KwaZulu Natal  
Private Bag X03  
Ashwood  
3605

**Supervisor:** Mrs. R. Kalenga  
**Contact No:** 031- 2601438  
**E-mail :** [kalenga@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:kalenga@ukzn.ac.za)

## APPENDIX 6:

### ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL : [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

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28 NOVEMBER 2008

MR. P MWELI (203400955)  
EDUCATION STUDIES

Dear Mr. Mveli

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0764/08M**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

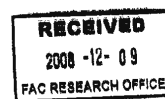
*"Exploring the implementation of inclusive Education in Pinetown District Schools: A case study of learners' experiences and teachers' perceptions of classroom environment at a selected school"*

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Mrs. R. Kalenga)  
cc. Mr. D Buchler



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**APPENDIX 7**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LETTER**