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Hays, Robyn

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

School of Human and Community Development

Inclusive education: educators' perceptions of teaching learners with emotional, cognitive and physical barriers to learning

Robyn Hays

0003268F

A research report submitted to the Discipline of Psychology, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES iv

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS v

ABSTRACT vi

DECLARATION ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 8

2.1 The medical model 8

2.2 The ecological framework 11

2.2.1 The ecological approach in psychology 11

2.2.2 The ecological model approach in education 12

2.2.3 Application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to inclusive education 18

2.2.3.1 Chronosystems level of analysis 18

2.2.3.2 Macrosystems level of analysis 18

2.2.3.3 Localities level of analysis 20

2.2.3.4 Organisational level of analysis 20

2.2.3.5 Microsystems level of analysis 21

2.2.3.6 Individual level of analysis 22

2.3 Conclusion 23

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW 24

3.1 International perspective on inclusive education policy 24

3.2 Inclusive education policy in South Africa 26

3.3 Factors that affect the learners in inclusive classrooms 29

3.3.1 Physical barriers to learning 30

3.3.2 Cognitive barriers to learning 30

3.3.3 Emotional barriers to learning 31

3.3.4 Environmental barriers to learning 31

3.4 Factors that affect the educators in inclusive classrooms 32

3.4.1 Attitudes 32

3.4.2 Knowledge, experience and training 34

3.4.3 Teaching methodology 36

3.4.4 Resources and support 38

3.5 Conclusion 39

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY 40

4.1 Aims of the study 40

4.2 Research questions 40

4.3 Research design 40

4.4 Research instrument 41

4.5 Participants 43

4.6 Procedure 44

4.7 Data analysis 45

4.8 Ethical considerations 46

4.9 Conclusion 48

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 49

5.1 Results 49

5.2 Discussion 54

5.2.1 Main theme: Educators' perception of training and knowledge 54

5.2.2 Subtheme a) educators' perceptions of learners' physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to learning 57

5.2.3 Subtheme b) educators' perceptions of collaboration and support 58

5.2.4 Subtheme c) educators' perceptions of current coping strategies 60

5.3 Conclusion 62

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS 65

6.1 Limitations 67

6.2 Recommendations for further research 68

6.3 Conclusion 69

REFERENCES 70

APPENDIX A: School information sheet 75

APPENDIX B: Participant information sheet 76

APPENDIX C: Consent form for interview 77

APPENDIX D: Consent form for recording 78

APPENDIX E: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Educators 79

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Illustrative matrix of success factors for inclusive education 5

Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model 14

Figure 3: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model applied to the education context..... 16

Figure 4: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model within the applied model to education 17

Figure 5: Clustering of educators in the matrix of success factors for inclusive education 29

Figure 6: Relationship of themes 52

Figure 7: Relationship of identified themes..... 53

Figure 8: Clustering of participants in the matrix of success factors for inclusive education 63

Figure 9: Perceptions that lead to the failure of inclusive practices 64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participants' biographical information 49

Table 2: Frequency table of themes 51

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit and Hyper Activity Disorder
DI	Differentiated Instruction
DBST	District-Based Support Teams
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDP	Individual Development Programme
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LBTL	Learners who experience barriers to learning
NCESS	National Committee for Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Education Needs and Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
OT	Occupational Therapy
SI	Sensory Integration
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

This study explored foundation phase educators' views on including learners with barriers to learning in their classrooms. All of the nine educators worked in the same private school. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the educators to explore their perceptions of learners with barriers to learning, their views on teaching such learners in their mainstream classrooms, and their perceptions of current strategies used to cope with such learners in schools. Through content analysis of the interview data the main theme arose depicting that the educators believed that they needed more skills and knowledge relating to the difficulties and impairments of learners with barriers to learning and the techniques required to successfully include such learners in their classrooms. Secondary themes of class size, collaboration between parents and support staff and classroom management strategies also emerged. From the results it appears that the educators' perceptions affect the way in which the educator relates to the learner and how they define inclusion in the classroom. The findings also suggest that if inclusion is perceived negatively by the educator, he/she is unlikely to manage diversity in his/her classroom effectively. This then also impacts on the relationship between the educator and the support staff. The limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions for further research made.

DECLARATION

I, Robyn Mary Hays, hereby declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Masters of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.



Robyn Mary Hays

03/09/2009

Date

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study was developed as a result of my experiences as a special needs educator. Many of my colleagues within special education and within mainstream education expressed strong negative opinions about inclusive education. They attended many conferences, talks and courses regarding inclusion and yet they voiced serious doubts about whether it would work as a system of education.

To overcome the above a suggestion is made by Dantas (2007) that educators need to develop their knowledge and skills to cope with the increasing amount of diversity and complexity in classrooms. It is hypothesised that this belief is fundamental to successful inclusion.

It is not certain whether this applies to all school contexts or to a specific context, such as the private school contexts only. Therefore it was decided to implement the study in the private school context to take away the variable of lack of resources and to see if the belief or perception of the educators would be different. It is widely thought that private schools are better resourced than state schools for inclusive practices, as they serve a higher income community. However, according to Walton (2006), the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) reported in 2005 that its South African membership consisted of 476 schools with 47% of its members within the high-fee category. ISASA schools therefore serve various socioeconomic communities, not only the high-income community. The outstanding commonality of independent schools is that they are private and not that they serve high-income groups. ISASA has a published policy on diversity and equity and encourages inclusive practices, but schools are not compelled to implement such practices (Walton, 2006). The school in this study does specifically serve a high income community and claims to practise inclusive education.

In order to understand what it means to practice inclusive education the conceptual understanding needs to be developed. Inclusive education in South Africa has developed

as a post-apartheid strategy to give all learners a chance to participate in education so that they can become contributing members of society.

According to White Paper Six (2001) and the NCSNET/NCESS (1997) report, the primary aim of an inclusive education system is to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the classroom, workplace, social environment, political sphere and sports arena. Other aims of an inclusive education system are to acknowledge that disabilities or 'special needs' often arise as a result of factors external to the person and that these learners should therefore be referred to as learners who experience barriers to learning (LBTL) rather than learners with special needs.

It is however one thing to understand what inclusive education means and another thing to understand what it entails to practice it. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (2003) point out that the implementation of inclusive education will not be easy as the existing paradigms of education are generally conservative. They add that it is the responsibility of all educators to create the necessary conditions for inclusive education.

Additionally Prinsloo (in Moolla, 2005) point out that one of the many problems facing South African educators in implementing the principles of inclusive education is managing learning diversity. Not all learners experience the same barriers to learning and their individual learning styles have to be catered for.

Learner diversity refers to the different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds of the learners. The educator needs to consider what kind of family the learner is from and what experiences have shaped their lives. For example, has the learner been a witness to or victim of crime and/or a trauma? And with whom does the learner reside? This information may be helpful in explaining the way the learner behaves within the classroom and towards his/her peers. These are generally factors external or extrinsic to the learner. A factor that is intrinsic or internal is the cognitive learning style of the learner. For example, does the learner process information as a whole and need the context to be presented? Does the learner rely on details and need the visual information

of the concepts being taught to be visually presented? How much time does the learner need in order to process the information being taught? (Kruger, Burden, Dednam, Levitz and Landsberg, 2002).

The answers obtained from such questions are used by the educator to formulate specific goals and learning objectives for a particular learner. Educators therefore need to be skilled in multiple methods of teaching and have knowledge of the different learning styles of the learners in their classrooms. This implies that successful inclusive education will be largely dependent on the educator's ability to employ different teaching techniques and to manage the diversity in his/her class, thus highlighting the importance of the educator in the inclusion process.

According to Reynolds (in Moolla, 2005), it is the educator's knowledge, beliefs and values that help create an effective learning environment for children. It is also the educator's perceptions that determine his/her ability to manage inclusive classrooms. It is hypothesized that should the educator perceive their training and/or knowledge to be inadequate, their belief will be that they are unable to manage an inclusive classroom. Their belief in inclusion as a whole may also be affected by their perceptions and experiences. According to Romi & Leyser (2006) educators' level of training, years of experience and their individual culture impact their self-efficacy beliefs.

Smith & Smith (2000) maintain that the perceptions, experiences and beliefs of mainstream educators are central to successful inclusion. Therefore it is necessary to explore the relationship between perception, knowledge and beliefs. Are these constructs related and if so, how are they related?

According to Gestalt psychology, our perceptions are formed by an interaction between the experience of reality through our senses and one's previous knowledge and experience (Sternberg, 2003). For example, an educator may have heard a negative review from a colleague about an inclusive education training programme they are about to attend. This preconceived knowledge then becomes an unavoidable bias and the

educator believes the programme was of little value regardless of whether it was valuable in reality. According to Loose (1997) human background and experience strongly influence what is being observed in reality and therefore bias is unavoidable. Perceptions are therefore not simply objective observations. Furthermore, knowledge is an important factor in inclusive education as educators' perceptions are formed by an interaction of their previous knowledge and their experiences. Beliefs are facts or propositions which are accepted as being true without being based on actual evidence. They form part of a person's background and therefore also influence perception. Therefore educators' perceptions are influenced by their experience, knowledge and beliefs (Rheams & Bain, 2005).

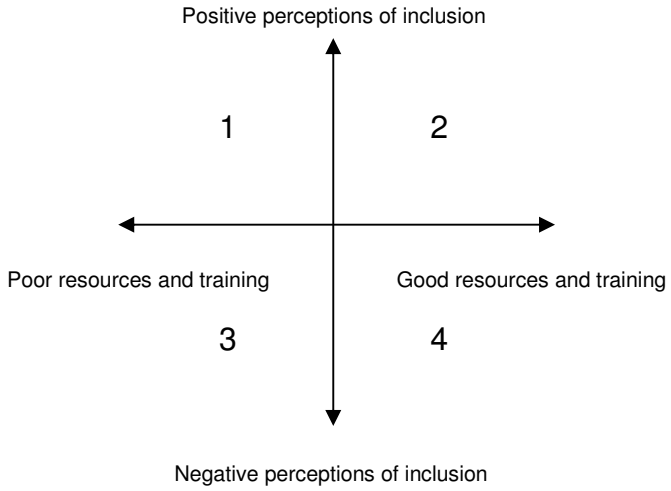
It is presumed that in order for successful inclusion to occur within the classrooms, the educators must first perceive that they have knowledge and skill. Without the perception that they are skilled and able to cope, the educators have little self-efficacy or self-belief and will not be able to manage their diverse classrooms regardless of the resources that they have (Brownlee & Carrington, 2000).

Resources are another factor that is often mentioned along with knowledge. Educators and school management teams speak of a lack of funding for training and a lack of resources[1] for development and therefore it is no surprise that educators feel unprepared for the challenges of inclusion (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

The model in Figure 1 below illustrates how perceptions and resources, particularly training, are independent variables of each other.

[1] A resource that is considered necessary for inclusion is funding, as money is needed for adaptations to buildings, such as wheel chair ramps. It is also needed for teaching equipment and training of the school personnel. Another important resource is human-based such as skilled staff, therapists and other personnel involved at the school. Resources that stretch across context and impact on the school environment are community based such as parents and non-governmental organizations (Engelbrecht et al., 2003).

Figure 1: Illustrative matrix of success factors for inclusive education



In quadrants one and two of the diagram educators perceive that inclusion is feasible and can be implemented in their classrooms, despite the resources available to them. In quadrant three and four of the diagram educators perceive that inclusion is not valuable in their classrooms. They do not believe in the principles of inclusion and therefore they will not be able to effectively manage a diverse classroom of learners. One of the aims of this report was to be able to graphically represent the participants in this study on the above diagram.

In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the educators' perceptions, it is necessary to first explore what kinds of educators are involved in the process of inclusive education. One such group that comes to mind are the mainstream early childhood development (ECD) educators as they are often the first to diagnose LBTL (Smith et al., 2000), as they are responsible for teaching preschool children who are just starting to learn in an informal setting. ECD educators as well as foundation phase educators, who teach children in their first formal school years, have to manage learners who are perceived as difficult to teach. Twenty-five years ago, such learners would have been

excluded from the mainstream education system (Lopes, Monteiro, Sil, Rutherford & Quinn, 2004). Today, however, educators have to meet the needs of all learners and maintain classrooms of a good academic standard. . These needs may include barriers to learning that are either intrinsic (cognitive or physical difficulties) or extrinsic (behavioural difficulties) to the learner (Engelbrecht et al., 2003). It appears that some educators are coping better with this new and challenging reality than others.

It must be pointed out that resources and perceptions are not the only factors that are important in inclusive education. Klitzing (2002) comments that there needs to be collaboration between the various professionals for successful inclusion. Such professionals include the educators, the therapists, the management of the school, and the policy makers.

In any collaborative approach, the different levels of systems within education have to be taken into account. Educators need to share their perceptions and experiences so that policy is holistically informed thereby enabling educators to provide education that meets the needs of all the learners in their classrooms. This research explored how the educators in the study perceived inclusion and how they managed the LBTL in their classrooms.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical paradigm for viewing the findings of the research on inclusion and the educators' perceptions of its implementation.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature internationally and in South Africa on inclusive education and the factors that are involved in this system of education.

Chapter 4 deals with the aim of the research, the research questions, the sample, the procedure, the research design and the method of data analysis.

Chapter 5 considers the results of the research in the context of the literature review.

Chapter 6 lists the limitations of the study and presents some conclusions as well as implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores an ecosystemic framework of thinking that forms the basis for inclusive paradigms in education and the broader society. It explains the paradigm shift in thinking about special and mainstream education. This shift has moved from a medical model approach in which learners were referred to as disabled, to a more systemic approach where learners are referred to as facing different kinds of barriers to learning.

Inclusive education in South Africa has been influenced by international and national trends regarding disability. There have been major shifts in the attitudes and paradigms of people working with disability in recent years. Specifically, one of the major shifts has been to move away from a medical model approach to one centred on rights (Engelbrecht et al., 2003).

2.1 The medical model

In order to understand this shift in paradigms, the medical model approach needs to be explored. The medical model is a conceptual model. This kind of model is used when considering a topic such as special education. Conceptual models are used to shape the way one thinks about the topic. It guides educators and policy makers in decision making about which practises to follow (Kauffman, 1997).

According to Zaretsky (1995) conceptual understandings of special education and disability are informed by other professional fields. In particular, the medical and the social sciences fields played a large role in shaping educational practises. Kauffman (1997), Engelbrecht et al. (2003) and Kiel, Miller & Cobb (2006) argue that the medical model and law have been the most prominent fields that effected educational practices.

The medical model approach to education has influenced people's views on disability and on education in a number of ways. People who are disabled are seen as different from their peers and in need of medical treatment (Brownlee et al., 2000). They have an illness or a problem that manifests in a way that makes them physically disabled compared to their peers. Diagnosis of their disability leads to the treatment and

classification of their symptoms. This kind of classification allows for the grouping of similar individuals with similar disabilities. This can lead to a society that is segregated on the basis of ability. Learners' symptoms are seen as inherent to the learner and are not seen as a result of their environment (Forness & Kavale, 2001). Learners in the medical model are labelled as handicapped or slow. Emphasis is placed on the learner's deficit as opposed to their abilities (Brownlee et al., 2000).

Barton (in Brownlee et al., 2000) argues that by conceptualising disabled learners according to the medical model, discriminatory practices may develop. The reason for this development is that individuals are not given access to the same opportunities based on their ability. According to Kiel et al. (2006, p. 170) in the medical model the emphasis is on the "within-child factors". This means that not only are the children being discriminated against on the basis of ability but those children who are at risk because of environmental factors, such as poverty, are overlooked. Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties do not fit easily into models of disability and may also be overlooked by the medical model (Kiel et al., 2006).

However, Kauffman (1997) argues that the medical model is necessary as this approach is the most empirically based and decision making should based on evidence. The article also argues that learners diagnosed with behaviour disorders generally do have some neurological basis for the behaviour, particularly those that present with extreme symptoms.

Kiel et al. (2006) also examines how the medical model influenced policy makers in their decisions regarding special educational needs and disability. The authors comment that the special educational needs framework that was based on the medical model could not cope with learners with behavioural or social deficits and needed to be reformed. Kauffman (1997) explains that when there is social disparity, the fields of medicine or law take the forefront. In this case when the medical model showed cracks, legislature started to change.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DfEE, 1995) in the United Kingdom arose to acknowledge that poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by disabled people was not as a result of their deficits but due to environmental factors such as attitudes and behaviour of people without disabilities. This legislature arose from a social model view which conceptualised disabled people as an under-privileged group who were as in need of equal access to opportunities as their better-abled peers (Brownlee et al., 2000 and Kiel et al., 2006).

Forness et al. (2001) argue that there needs to be acknowledgement of both the inherent and the environmental factors in the way that disability is conceptualised. This thinking marks the shift in paradigms from medical model to a more inclusive and systemic framework for conceptualising disability and special educational needs.

Brownlee et al. (2000) discusses the change from a medical model to a sociological model and how this change has led to a different way of conceptualising disability. In this social model disability is conceptualised as existing within a person but influenced by social interactions. In this model there is social acceptance of people with disabilities and this acceptance into society has become known as inclusion. Disability was now conceptualised as a barrier, preventing the person from being included into society, that could be as a result of intrinsic or extrinsic factors. This new paradigm informs decision making about education and inclusive education has started to develop as a result of a paradigm shift.

According to Koutrouba et al. (2006) inclusive education involves collaboration between the school and the family environment. It is necessary to use a conceptual model for inclusive education that considers different environments. The model should also be able to factor in the collaboration of and the interactions between the different role-players involved in inclusive education. For example, educators should consider the needs of the current learners in the class as well as the needs of future learners. They should also explore the perceptions of educators and the socioeconomic status of the schools

concerned. A conceptual framework that accounts for all these factors is an ecological approach (Swick & Williams. 2006).

2.2 The ecological framework

This section provides an in depth examination of the ecological approach towards inclusive education. It looks at an application of this approach generally in other fields such as psychology and then moves to an application of this model within education. Examining this approach in other contexts illustrates its value in conceptualising inclusion practises beyond education and into society as a whole.

2.2.1 The ecological approach in psychology

According to Herman, Merrell, Reinke & Tucker's (2004) study into depression, there are socio-cultural influences on mental health problems that cannot be addressed by focusing solely on factors that occur within or inherently to the individual. An ecological analysis involves an exploration of various systems (individual, family, schools and organisations) to see how they interact to result in individual risk for mental health problems.

Swick et al. (2006) used Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective to understand family stressors. This ecological framework allowed the authors to understand the context in which the families were emerged and the dynamic relationships between the family and the contexts which influence the family and vice versa. Bronfenbrenner's framework allows for a greater understanding of the complex social and environmental interactions. This increased understanding allows role-players to become empowered and identify strengths and needs of the various systems.

From the above description it is apparent that Bronfenbrenner's ecological model could be useful when conceptualising barriers to inclusion. A closer examination is needed of this model and how it has been used in the educational context.

2.2.2 The ecological model approach in education

According to Mahoney, Lord & Carryl (2005) an ecological conceptualisation is necessary when looking at participation in after-school programmes in the USA. The authors needed to use a conceptual model that included the factors that related to the individual learners and those that related to their context, such as socioeconomic status.

Riggs & Greenberg (2004) also conducted research into after-school development programmes in the USA. They too used Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to account for the environmental and inherent factors that the students in their study presented. From this study and Mahoney et al.'s study (2005), it appears that their research into the education system has relied on an ecological model to conceptualise the various levels involved. The field of education is involved at every level of social interaction and therefore requires a model to encompass the dynamic relationships (Engelbrecht et al., 2003). Herman et al. (2004) explain how implementing an intervention at a grassroots level, such as the school level, can be spread across into the broader social contexts by using the interactions between the different levels of analysis.

The above study explains how Bronfenbrenner's framework places the different social systems in relation to one another and how they interact. According to Hook, Watts and Cockcroft (2002), Bronfenbrenner's theory also incorporates the concept of perceived environment. This model accounts for how the environment is not conceived by the individual in a realist or objective sense, rather it is conceived by how the individual perceives and experiences it. This means that people create their perceptions based on reality and subjective experience. It is then understandable that educators, despite being well resourced, can have negative perceptions of inclusive education. They may have had excellent training in reality but perceived it to be insufficient. One possible reason for such a perception could be that the training might not have met their expectations.

Dalton et al. (2001) describes the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's model as depicted in Figure 2. The individual level of analysis is where the person is considered. This is the inner most level of the diagram. At this level the person, to an extent, chooses their

environment and relationships that they wish to have. The chosen environment and relationships influence the person and as a result the person may adapt or change the way they behave in order to make the relationship more meaningful and vice versa, the person may have an impact on their environment or relationships in which they participate.

The microsystems level of analysis is the environment in which the person interacts directly with others and forms relationships over time. This is the second ring on Figure 2.

The next ring on Figure 2 is the organisational level of analysis which consists of smaller microsystems, for example committees and subgroups of people which form organizations.

The localities level of analysis usually includes geographic or regional districts. Other examples at this level are community relationships.

The macrosystems level of analysis examines different societies and cultures. Macrosystems form contexts within which other levels function, thus influencing all levels that occur within this level.

Another level that is not mentioned by Dalton (2001) but is considered by Hook et al. (2002), is the chronosystems level. At this level time is considered. Time is important as it accounts for the transitions over periods in history. It also accounts for factors in the individual's life which change. For example, the loss of a loved one is felt more severely initially and fades over time, thus the interactions between the various levels would be different say from one year to the next.

Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model

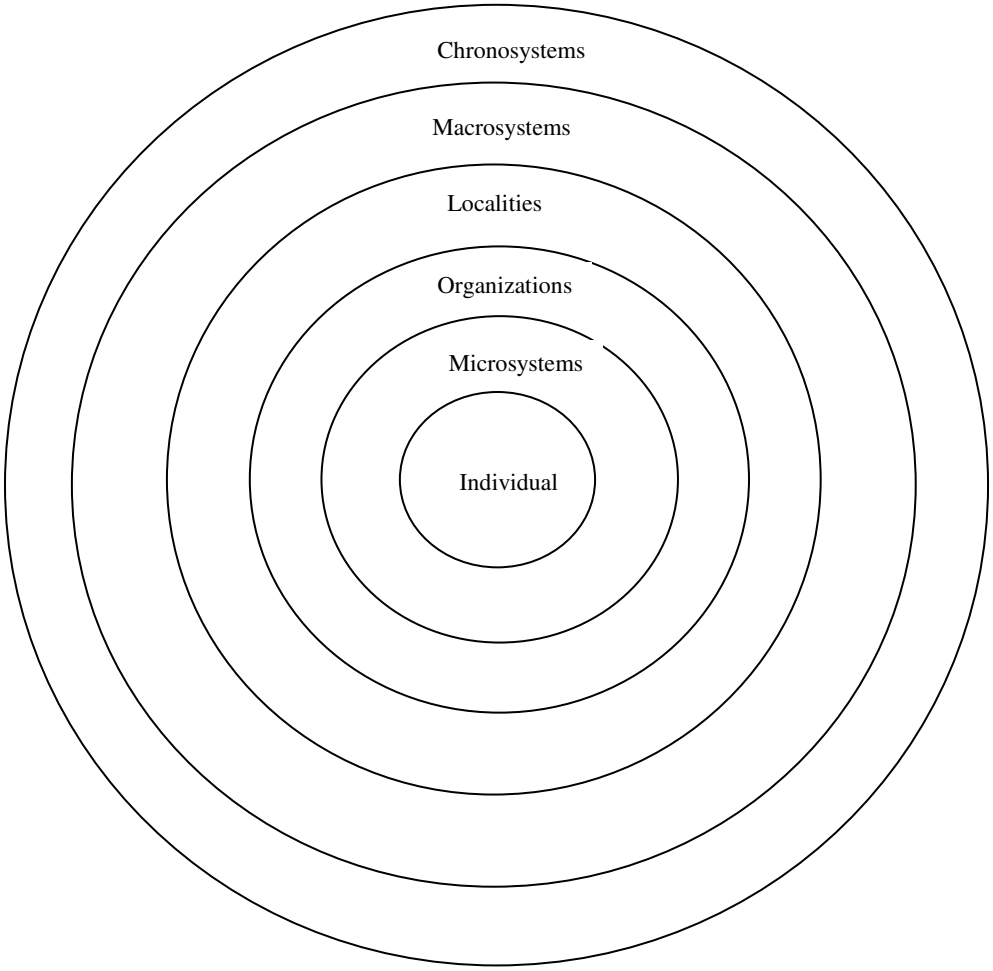


Figure 3 on page sixteen, shows an application of this model in the educational context.

At the individual level, the learners are examined and analysed. Their individual needs are taken into account, such as what kind of disability they have. At this level, the disability or barrier to learning is intrinsic to the learner.

The microsystems level includes the educators, the class, the parents and any other people that the learner interacts with. It also looks at the interactions and relationships between the classes, the staff and the parents. The learner-educator relationship is explored at this level, as well as the educator's ability to manage the diversity in the class.

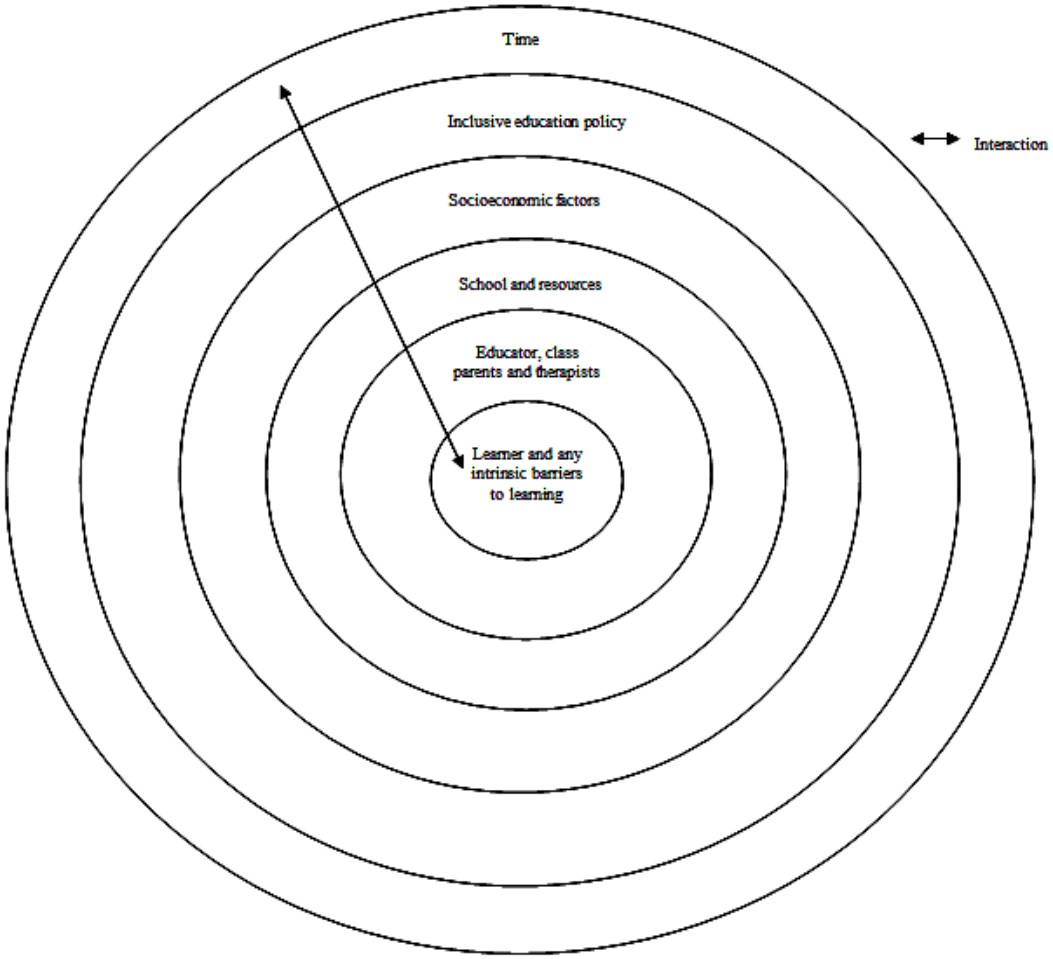
At the organisational level of analysis the staff, the school and the board members are analysed. Here the school's policy of inclusive education would be explored as well as their management of the inclusive process. Educator training and school resources are taken into account.

At the localities level of analysis the community in which the school is located and all the socioeconomic factors are analysed.

The macrosystems level looks at education policy, the policy makers and sets the context, such as inclusive education.

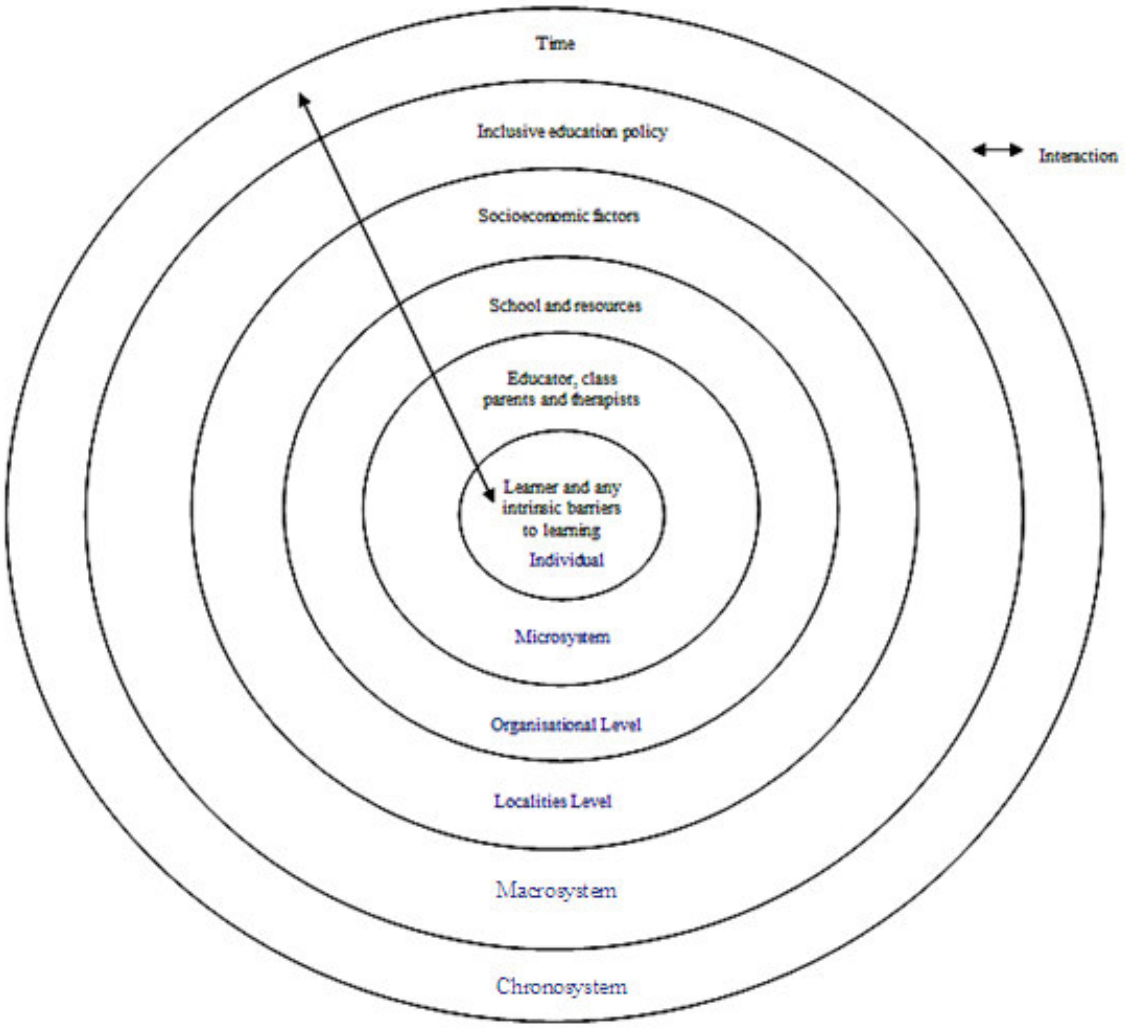
The chronosystems level looks as the development of inclusive education policy over time as there was a need for a new system of education in South Africa post apartheid. It also accounts for the learner and/or educator at any one point in time. For example, the model could be used to compare the educators' interactions on any level before or after attending a course on inclusive education to find out whether their perceptions changed.

Figure 3: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model applied to the education context



The literature reveals that the educators' concerns about inclusion occurred on various levels of the model and each will be further explored in the next section. Figure five on page 17 shows how the models work in relation to one another.

Figure 4: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model within the applied model to education



2.2.3 Application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to inclusive education

2.2.3.1 Chronosystems level of analysis

The chronosystem in South African education includes a history of the transition from a segregated education system to the development of an integrated education system for all, then to the development of inclusive education policy (Hook et al., 2002). The chronosystem also looks at the influence and interactions of each level at any one point in time. According to Swick et al. (2006) the historical context must be considered as it occurred at each level of analysis. It allows the immediate and past factors to be taken into consideration of both the learner and the educator. For example, the learner may have had an educator who repeatedly missed lessons or vice versa for one year and the next year the relationship was more stable, creating a better learning environment. It accounts for the years of experience the educators have had teaching and for the kind of training that educators received when they entered the education training system.

2.2.3.2 Macrosystems level of analysis

Lomofsky et al. (2001) reported that, due to the interactive effects of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, special educational needs in South Africa were increasing at more than double the rate in more developed countries. According to Lomofsky et al. (2001), the estimated local incidence of learners with special educational needs at the turn of the century was between 40% and 50% compared to 20% in developed countries (NEPI, 1992; Donald, 1994).

A pressing need therefore exists for educators to accept and deliver inclusive education over a broad front. Lomofsky et al. (2001) point out that inclusive education implementation in South Africa is about keeping abreast of rapid changes in policy and curriculum development and that inclusion is more than simply mainstreaming learners (Mittler, 2000, in Lomofsky et al., 2001). The educators have to positively perceive the concept and principles of inclusion and not simply put LBTL in mainstream classes. Although the policy and curriculum issues are important, an inclusive education model should ideally form part of a greater inclusive society where all members are treated with basic human respect and dignity (White Paper Six, 2001).

As part of treating people with respect and dignity, one of the aims of inclusion was to allow all members of the community to obtain a recognized level of education across contexts. A review of the literature on inclusive teaching methods currently used by educators confirms that the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was designed to reform South Africa's education and training system to accommodate all learners, including LBTL (Lomofsky et al, 2001).

Aims of the NQF:

- To create a bridge between mainstream education and vocational training and thereby provide an integrated national framework for learning achievements.
- To enhance the quality of education and training.
- To contribute to the full personal development of all learners and the socioeconomic development of the nation at large (South African Qualifications Authority, 1995).

Thus, instead of having specialised schools for learners with physical difficulties and separate schools for learners with cognitive difficulties, it is envisaged that all learners will be catered for in mainstream education by changing the assessment requirements and curriculum learning objectives.

According to Muller (1998), the function of the NQF is to enable all community members to enter the education system at any point and to receive good quality education. Under this system, specialised education schools and colleges would be discontinued, and educators would teach outcomes-based education curricula (OBE) (Jansen, 1998).

Spady (in Engelbrecht et al., 2003) states that an important function of OBE is to establish opportunities for all learners to achieve. This means that the learners are taught the skills that are required to perform certain tasks or outcomes. Educators are no longer simply giving information to learners that they have to simply recall; rather they are

teaching the learners the skills they require to learn the information for themselves. OBE has allowed a shift away from rote learning to learning that encompasses knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Premises of OBE:

- All learners work at their own pace and this allows for the inclusion of all learners.
- Each successful learning experience leads to further development.
- School environments are essential for creating the necessary conditions for success (Engelbrecht et al., 2003).

2.2.3.3 Localities level of analysis

In his article on the difference between private and public schools, Hommerding (2003) says that Benveniste & Luis (2003, in Hommerding, 2003) found that the difference between the schools depends more on the socioeconomic status of the community they serve than on whether they are managed privately or by the government. It is hypothesised in the present study that private school educators will have similar administrative difficulties to those in the studies discussed earlier but perhaps not to the same extent as privately managed schools in affluent urban areas that have more resources for educator training than government schools. However, the educators could still have concerns regarding how to manage learners with barriers to learning in their classrooms. This is due to the fact that the educators do not perceive that they are able to cope with diversity. With or without training, educators perceptions are an independent variable to successful inclusion and do not rely on interactions between the various levels of education to be influenced or change.

2.2.3.4 Organisational level of analysis

Smith et al.'s (2000) findings raise questions regarding the inclusion of LBTL in government mainstream schools as opposed to their placement in privately managed mainstream schools. The Smith et al. (2000) study was conducted in urban schools, but it is not indicated whether the schools were private or public.

The findings of Jelas' (2000) study in Malaysia were in line with those of Smith et al.'s (2000) study. Jelas (2000) investigated the perceptions of mainstream educators, special education educators and parents regarding inclusive education practices. He found a strong emphasis on the need for collaboration of all role players to facilitate successful inclusion of learners. The perceptions and expectations of the three groups generally differed, and it was concluded that collaboration was not as simple in practice as it was in theory. The study found that mainstream educators kept to their role boundaries and believed that specialist educators underestimated their ability. The issue of inadequate educator training was again mentioned. As Malaysia is a developing country like South Africa, it is contended that similar problems may be found within the local context broadly and within the privately managed education context specifically.

In a programme evaluation study of eight schools conducted by Idol (2006) in the USA, it was found that although the educators reported a positive attitude to inclusive practice and were willing to be collaborative in their approach, the qualitative data from the study reflected the same themes as indicated by Smith et al. (2000). The themes reflected that even in a developed country like the USA, the educators commented that they needed further training in inclusive practices and guidance in coping with the challenges of special cases. Good classroom management and good disciplining strategies were also emphasised as key factors in successful inclusion.

2.2.3.5 Microsystems level of analysis

At this level of analysis the learners' relationship with the educator is important. How the educator conceptualises the learner is important as it will impact their relationship with the learner (Swick et al. 2006).

OBE underpins the new Curriculum 2005 and provides a teaching methodology that allows the assessment of learners on their competencies (Jansen, 1998). According to Muller (1998), competence teaching and assessment enables educators to see learners' abilities as differences and not deficits and therefore allows learners of variant abilities to be taught together inclusively. Jansen (1998) states that dissatisfaction is growing among

educators as to whether OBE is an effective methodology for inclusive practice. According to OBE, learners with eyesight problems, for example, would be expected to achieve the same outcome as the regular learners but would be assessed differently through more auditory testing than paper-and-pencil tests.

Engelbrecht et al. (2003) propose that educators should also develop individual instructional programmes to achieve specific outcomes for individual learners. This adds to the dissatisfaction among educators regarding the effectiveness of OBE methodologies. Jansen (1998) argues that educators will find it difficult to develop individual programmes for every learner they teach. OBE may therefore fail as it is driven primarily by political motives and not the realities of the classroom. This reinforces the fact that perceptions are independent of resources and that with negative perceptions, educators will be unable to implement inclusive education and have meaningful relationships with the learner (Rheams and Bain, 2005).

Lomofsky et al. (2001) stress the importance of exploring educators' perceptions, as do Le Roux and Ferreira (2005, p. 12) who maintain that "educators perceived themselves to be too inexperienced to meet the demands of the new curriculum and they were reluctant to take the initiative in introducing new concepts and approaches to their teaching". This observation is supported by the findings of the Review Committee, which was tasked with reviewing the implementation of Curriculum 2005 throughout the country.

2.2.3.6 Individual level of analysis

At this level it is important to investigate the type of learners who are being included in mainstream. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2003), learner diversity in an inclusive classroom is inevitable. Learners have special educational needs as a result of intrinsic factors such as intellectual impairment and extrinsic factors such as emotionally based behavioural problems. These problems may be the result of conflict in the learner's home environment or the result of a poor fit between the learning style of the learner and teaching style of the educator, which could have led to low-self esteem in the learner.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter explored an ecological model that can be applied to the education context to conceptualise inclusive education (Mahoney et al., 2005 & Riggs, et al., 2004). A conceptual model is necessary as it informs decision making processes about education practice. Historically, the medical model approach to disability gave rise to a segregated society and emphasis was placed on the individuals' deficits rather than ability. This medical conceptualisation also affected the education context where special schools were designed to serve specific disability groups, for example, a separate school for the blind and a separate school for the deaf (Brownlee et al. 2000).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model was used to conceptualise inclusive education and the different levels of analysis were examined and applied to the education system. There has been a paradigm shift away from disability to barriers to learning.

Following this explanation of the theoretical framework, the literature review will specifically examine the types of barriers to learning that are affecting learners in this study and it will focus on the factors that impact on inclusive education development as perceived by educators globally and locally in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the development of inclusive education from an international and a local perspective. It explores the different barriers to learning the learners experience and discusses the factors that impact on the educators of inclusive classrooms. It ends with a consideration of some of the issues and challenges facing inclusive educators.

3.1 International perspective on inclusive education policy

According to Idol (2006), inclusion occurs when learners spend their entire school day in general education classes. This is different from mainstreaming, which occurs when learners spend part of their day in special classes and part of their day with general education learners. Often the terms inclusion and mainstreaming are used interchangeably and Booth & Ainscow (1998) comment on the lack of time spent on defining the concepts that are important in inclusive education. They argue that the way inclusion is defined impacts significantly on the way in which learner difficulties are perceived, which, in turn, affects the way in which the intervention in respect of the difficulties is conceptualised. This may then have implications for the effectiveness of the interventions and the way in which educators and policy makers respond to learner diversity. The above authors maintain that perspectives on inclusion are influenced by national and local circumstances.

This report refers to Booth et al's. (1998) definition of inclusion as the process marked by an increase in the number of learners participating in mainstream education and a decline in the exclusion of learners from mainstream education as a result of their special needs.

This discussion will now examine the development of inclusive education in a few developed countries such as the United States of America, Australia, Cyprus and Ireland.

According to Engelbrecht et al. (2003), ideas on inclusive education emerged from postmodern thinking. In the late 1980s in the United States of America (USA), diversity was accepted and LBTL were integrated into mainstream schools. Integration later developed into inclusion in the educational context and in the broader social context.

Mock & Kauffman (2002) critically discuss the notion of full inclusion in the USA. In their discussion the term 'all students' literally refers to every single learner. Thus in the USA all learners are taught in regular classrooms. This is in accordance with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004). This Act makes provision for learners with physical disabilities, cognitive disability or disorders and behavioural disorders.

According to Forlin (1997) the development of an inclusive education system in Australia mirrors the development in the USA. In Australia there is no explicit law that mandates the inclusion of learners into the mainstream, however, there are rapidly increasing policies on implementing inclusive practices in schools. The most important factor in determining the successful implementation of inclusive practice in the classrooms is educator efficacy. This includes the educators' knowledge and beliefs regarding inclusion.

Koutrouba, Vamvakari & Steliou (2006) argue that internationally the aims of inclusive education are to create a multilevel shift in the attitude of parents, educators, LBTL and learners without barriers to learning towards inclusion. Their study looks at the development of inclusive educational practice in Cyprus. The two major factors that were hindering the implementation of inclusion in the classrooms were a lack of infrastructure and a lack of knowledge, skill and self-confidence amongst the educators. As a result new legislature in Cyprus is focused on changing the attitudes of the various role-players in education towards accepting difference.

A similar change or shift in Northern Ireland's education policy is pointed out by Abbott (2006). The move is to create an environment in which individuality is respected, all learners' needs are considered and collaboration is emphasised. Abbott (2006) also reports that educators in Ireland felt ill-equipped to cope with LBTL and that this was a serious constraint on the implementation of inclusive education. Molto (2003) also reports that there is a shift in education policy towards inclusion in Spain, but that the

biggest factor hindering progress was the educators' perceived lack of knowledge and skill.

It is interesting to note that in these developed countries where resources are not as scarce as in developing nations, USA, Australia, Cyprus, Ireland and Spain, the educators' perceptions of their ability to cope was not based solely on resources, but primarily on their knowledge, skill and experience.

Conroy (2008) argues that whilst inclusive education is becoming increasingly popular in developed countries such as the USA, it may be the only way in which people with disabilities can be educated in developing nations. Hallahan (in Conroy 2008) points out that the special needs education requires more financial resources and more human resources than mainstream education. As a result, special needs education in developing nations has not been considered highly enough and the majority of LBTL are not educated.

In India, which is a developing nation, there has been a shift towards inclusive education since the signing of the Salamanca statement. This shift has taken place at a policy level, a school level and interestingly at a media level (Singal, 2005). Singal (2005) also argues that in a country such as India, where resources are scarce, adopting an inclusive system of education is the only viable economic option. In 1995 the Persons with Disabilities Act was launched in India to facilitate the greater numbers of children with disabilities are given opportunities for education.

3.2 Inclusive education policy in South Africa

South Africa too is a developing nation and like India, differs from developed countries in that there is a need for inclusion within the broader social context as well, and will be discussed in the next section.

> It is, therefore, another post-apartheid landmark policy paper that cuts ties with the past and recognizes the vital contribution that our people with disabilities are making and must continue to make, but as part of and not isolated from the flowering of our nation … race and exclusion were the decadent and immoral

> factors that determined the place of our innocent and vulnerable children. (Education White Paper Six, 2001).

According to the Schools Act of 1996, all learners have the right of equal access to basic and quality education without discrimination. Discrimination includes any disability, the language the learner speaks, learning difficulties or pregnancy. This Act was one of the first steps towards a single, inclusive education system for South Africa (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997). Support services became a compulsory element of inclusive education practice, which, in turn, became part of a unified system of education that accommodated the diverse needs of learners. Inclusive education policy requires the system to be structured in such a way that it provides opportunities for the integration and inclusion of all learners and accommodates their diverse needs irrespective of their demographics and abilities (Engelbrecht et al., 2003).

According to Education White Paper Six (2001), a key characteristic of the inclusive education policy is that learners with varying abilities and attributes take part in shared educational experiences, while following individual development programmes (IDPs) or individual education plans (IEPs). An important focus of the policy is to ensure that it meets the range of needs of all learners. Another key area is the provision of support systems[2] for learners, educators and learning institutions.

According to Potterton, Utley and Potterton (2002), an inflexible curriculum is an external barrier to learning and obliges educators to use different methods of teaching to support learning in their classrooms. In their study, Monteiro & Sil (in Lopes, Monteiro, Sil, Rutherford & Quinn, 2004) found that understanding educators' negative perceptions

of LBTL was critically important in deciding on the classification of learners and in overcoming placement challenges. Three different categories of schools apply: ordinary schools for learners who need low-intensive support, full-service schools for learners who

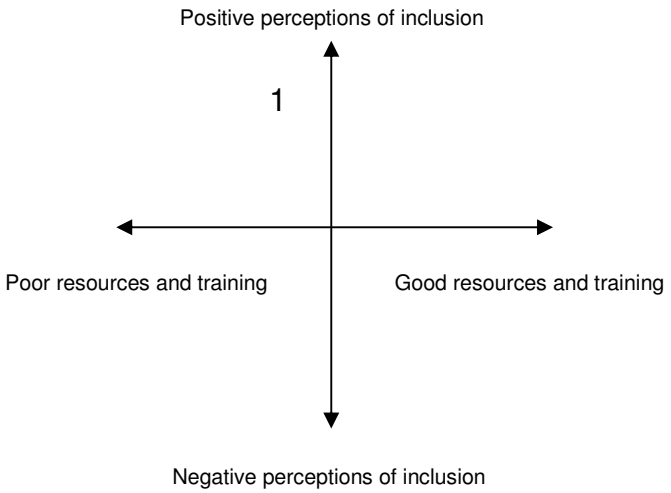
[2] According to White Paper Six (2001) district-based support teams (DBST) will comprise of staff from provisional and regional head offices as well as from special schools. Their function will be to provide training and build the capacity of school to accommodate LBTL.

need moderate support and special schools that offer high-intensive support (White Paper Six, 2001). However, in the present study, gaining knowledge of educators' perceptions in the South African context centered more on managing diversity in inclusive classrooms rather than on the placement or classification of learners.

This current research is also based on the hypothesis that educators with negative perceptions will find it harder to accept the notion of inclusion and will find it more challenging, if not impossible, to teach learners with barriers to learning.

In their study, Smith et al. (2000) interviewed six educators in regular ECD classrooms to explore their perceptions of factors that promoted or hindered inclusive education. This study defined inclusive education as the inclusion of learners who experienced emotional, physical and/or intellectual barriers to learning. The educators generally thought that the success of inclusive education hinged on administrative issues. They cited various concerns such as load (time management, class size and severity of difficulty) and adequate educator training and support. The study concluded that, on the whole, educators supported inclusive practice, but had concerns and reservations about its implementation. The educators are saying that the administrative issues are the critical success factors of inclusive education and they perceive that inclusion is a valuable system of education. These educators would cluster in quadrant one of Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Clustering of educators in the matrix of success factors for inclusive education



Although the working environment of the members of the sample in the present study was such that these concerns were unlikely, research has shown that educators, whether they experience difficult administrative issues or not, still find it difficult to cope with LBTL (Hommerding, 2003). This study therefore specifically investigated how the educators in a private educational setting perceived teaching LBTL. It is important to note that in this study the variables of resources and perceptions are two independent variables and that no matter where on the continuum of resources the educators fall, their perceptions of inclusive education are critical for its successful implementation.

3.3 Factors that affect the learners in inclusive classrooms

In this section the discussion focuses on the kinds of barriers to learning that the learners in inclusive classrooms face.

Conroy (2008) discusses a broad definition of special needs that includes learners with development and physical difficulties, as well as learners who have experienced trauma and separation, learners who are the heads of their households, street children and learners who have been subjected to negative socioeconomic forces.

For the purposes of this study LBTL include learners that experience physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to learning. It is important to define each of these classifications so that a thorough understanding of these learners' needs can be obtained. A fourth subsection on environmental barriers to learning will be included as it is relevant when considering an ecological approach to inclusive education. However, these factors do overlap with the other subsections, as physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to learning can all caused by environmental factors.

Kruger et al. (2002) discuss various types of barriers to learning, which will be explored in the subsections below. Disability, as conceptualised in the ecological model, refers to a social construct in the ecological approach and therefore the term barrier to learning will be used to describe a condition in which the learner is prevented from learning.

3.3.1 Physical barriers to learning

A physical impairment can be neurological as in the case of a cerebral palsy or epilepsy or it might be skeletal and/or muscular as in the case of muscular dystrophy and deformed limbs (Kruger et al., 2002). It is important to note that whilst the impairment is biological in nature, it may not be as a result of biological cause. For example, a person may loose a limb or become paralysed in a car accident as opposed to as a result of an infection or disease. Thus a physical barrier to learning may be as a result of external, environmental factors and not as a result of intrinsic, biological factors (Kruger et al., 2002).

3.3.2 Cognitive barriers to learning

In the medical model much emphasis was placed on categorising learners according to their IQ. In the ecological model assessing learners' abilities according to standardised tests is less popular (Kruger et al., 2002) Learners with an intellectual or cognitive impairment are described as having difficulty with the processing of information through their senses which impacts their ability to learn (Sternberg 2003). The causes of intellectual impairment can be as a result of a syndrome or as a result of an accident, for

example near drowning. Learners are described as having a mild, moderate or severe intellectual impairment.

According to Smith & Kruger (in Landsberg, 2008) learners who had learning impairments such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are also included in this category.

3.3.3 Emotional barriers to learning

For the purpose of this study, emotional barriers to learning lie in the socioeconomic and challenging behaviour classification areas listed by Landsberg (2008). Specifically, learners who fall into the socioeconomic category are learners who have experienced divorce and the disintegration of family life. Children rarely find emotional security in family life today. Single-parent households abound, and few support structures exist to help children develop safely and adjust socially. The violent and criminal situation in South Africa also means that children live in fear and have little peace of mind. Children who suffer deprivation of their basic needs have difficulty learning and developing to their maximum potential (Prinsloo in Landsberg, 2008).

According to Prinsloo (in Landsberg, 2008), difficult behaviour is a major challenge facing educators in South African classrooms. Such behaviour includes learners with negative attitudes and who are oppositional. He maintains that a general attitude of undisciplined behaviour and resistance to authoritative figures prevails, which leads to disempowered educators and unsuccessful learning. These learners are the least successful in the general education setting (Nickerson & Brosof, 2003).

3.3.4 Environmental barriers to learning

According to Engelbrecht et al. (2003), some of the barriers to learning in South Africa are socioeconomic barriers that include lack of funds and resources, negative attitudes to diversity, an inflexible curriculum and inadequate development of human resources. Within the South African context, Landsberg (2008) has classified barriers to learning into; educational factors, such as classroom management and learning support;

socioeconomic factors, such as divorce and trauma; literacy factors, such as first or second language problems; attitudes of family and community partnerships; health problems, such as chronic disease and disability; and challenging behaviour.

Therefore, inclusive practices need to be established at every level of analysis in order for environmental barriers to learning to be addressed (Engelbregcht et al., 2003). For example according to White Paper Six (2001), the best way of addressing barriers to learning that are a result of an inflexible curriculum are to establish a flexible curriculum, such as OBE and to make use of the DBST to assist educators in developing flexible teaching methods. Other steps being taken include a public awareness campaign and revision of all policies and legislature to include structures that facilitate the transformation process (White Paper Six, 2001).

Engelbrecht et al. (2003) and Landsberg (2008) maintain that the major challenge to inclusive education is to understand, assess and address these barriers to learning.

3.4 Factors that affect the educators in inclusive classrooms

3.4.1 Attitudes

Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi and Shelton (2004) define attitudes as educators' positive or negative perceptions of what is happening in their classrooms with regard to children who have been included in the mainstream environment. They believe that the educator's perception of whether it is to the learner's benefit or detriment to be included in a mainstream environment has a significant impact on the level of success experienced by the learner in question.

Odom and Bailey (in Guralnick, 2001) found that educators' attitudes were an important factor in the classroom and impacted on the success of the learners. According to them, in early childhood education, educators were positive about including children who had relatively mild disabilities rather than severe or multiple disabilities. They also found that educators had different definitions of inclusion and that the definitions affected the way in which they implemented inclusive practices in their classrooms. For example,

some of the educators conceptualised inclusion as simply integrating LBTL in their mainstream classrooms. These educators conceptualised the learner according to the medical model and categorized them according to their deficits. Other educators conceptualised inclusion as catering towards the needs of all the learners in the class to ensure each learner achieved their potential (Engelbrecht et al., 2003).

Idol (2006) conducted a programme evaluation that examined the degree of inclusion of special needs learners in general education. The educators' attitudes ranged from being willing to accept and try, to being very much in favour of inclusion. The evaluation also showed that educator attitudes were more positive when the educators were actively practising inclusion. This may suggest that once educators start to grapple with the practical issues of including a learner with a barrier or barriers to learning, they become more confident. Another possibility is that educators are apprehensive about taking on learners whose difficulties are unknown to them. Stoller (1992, in Downing, Eichinger & Williams, 1997) found that educators often commented on their lack of information about learners with disabilities, which could lead to negative attitudes about including such learners in the mainstream environment.

Anita and Levine (in Guralnick, 2001) found that educators had negative attitudes towards the inclusion of deaf or hard-of-hearing learners. The authors believed that educators opposed inclusion due to a lack of expertise, and they argued that inclusion would benefit only the LBTL in the class. York, Vandercook, Macdonald, Heise-Neff and Caughey (1992, in Downing et al. 1997), reported, however, that special needs educators and mainstream educators noted benefits to the non-disabled learners such as increased acceptance and understanding of learners who were different. Edelman and Schattman (1992, in Downing et al. 1997) also noted that learners without barriers to learning showed greater emotional and social development and flexibility when learners with disabilities were included in the classroom.

Anita et al. (in Guralnick, 2001) touched on an important theme that is echoed in all the studies mentioned above, namely educators' perceptions of their lack of expertise. In

South Africa, many educators have resisted the change in education policy towards inclusion largely because of their perceived lack of experience of people with disabilities (Engelbrecht et al., 2003). The theme of perceived experience and training will be explored further in the next section.

Davies & Green (1998, in Engelbrecht et al., 2001) found that South African educators were positive about inclusive education as they were already accommodating learners with diverse needs in schools. This could, in part, be due to the previous system of education where LBTL in previously disadvantaged schools were not provided for and had to be accommodated in mainstream schools (Donald, 1993, in Engelbrecht et al., 2001).

3.4.2 Knowledge, experience and training

An important factor that affects the inclusion of learners with high support needs is the educator's level of training, expertise and experience. In his study, Idol (2006) investigated the degree of inclusion of LBTL in general education. The schools in the sample ranged from not practising inclusion at all to practising inclusion to a large degree. The educators rated themselves in terms of three skills areas, namely: adaptation of instruction, curriculum adaptation, and student discipline and classroom management. The results showed that the educators generally felt skilled in adapting their instruction, however, interestingly, in the school where inclusion had been practised the longest, 21% of the educators believed they needed more practice in this area. A similar result was obtained in respect of curriculum adaptation. 33% of the educators at the school with the longest history of inclusive practice reported that they were still developing their curriculum modification skills. In the area of discipline and management, the results indicated that the educators generally believed themselves skilled in managing non-disabled and disabled learners. Idol (2006) further found that the educators thought that more information and training were required specifically on how to support educators of inclusive classrooms (Bishop & Jones, 2002). Topics for training included curriculum modification, such as OBE, consulting teaching with members of other professionals,

cooperative teaching, which could include networking educators of different schools and educators' assistance teams, such as the DBST.

In Arick and Krug's (1993, in Downing et al., 1997) study, 70% of the respondents reported that mainstream educators required training in collaboration with special instructors in order to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate LBTL.

According to Conroy (2008), many educators in developing countries do not have training in special education needs and are not equipped to cope with LBTL. Up to 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries in Africa and Asia. Trained educators are rare in developed countries let alone in developing countries. As South Africa is a developing nation, it is presumed that well skilled and knowledgeable educators will not be prevalent and that in South Africa there will be a need to emphasize educator training as a priority. Although the participants in this study work in a high-income environment, it is hypothesized that the necessary training is not coming from the training institutions at the macrosystems level and therefore they are also expressing a need for training.

As mentioned in the previous section, Engelbrecht et al. (2003) reported that South African educators had negative attitudes towards inclusion, because they were expected to cope with radical changes in the way they used to understand teaching and learning. Educators need to be supported in this process and given the opportunity to process all the new information. If Conroy's (2008) argument is accepted, that developing countries do not have the funding and resources to implement inclusive education successfully, then it is little wonder that educators perceive themselves to experience a lack of information about including LBTL into their mainstream classrooms, due to not having had the necessary training.

Landsberg (2008) argues that in a developing nation such as South Africa, educators need to be aware of their evolving role in the classroom and need to shift from their traditional, stereotypical role in teaching and trust and participate in the multidisciplinary team so that all learners can benefit optimally. Inclusive education is then most accessible as the

different levels of analysis can work together and share resources as the funds are not available to set up specialist schools as well as mainstream schools.

Both Conroy (2008) and Landsberg (2008) argue that educators need support. Landsberg (2008) argues in favor of a paradigm shift, whilst Conroy (2008) supports the notion that the educators require more knowledge, there is little discussion of how this could occur.

Uys (in Landsberg, 2008) reports on learners with severe and/or multiple disabilities and states that, while these learners present as a heterogeneous group with diverse needs and characteristics, there are similarities among them, and knowledge of the characteristics of these learners will increase educators' understanding of how to approach teaching them for their optimal development. For example, the implementation of therapeutic strategies will enhance the learners' development, and the extra training will have to be provided by the multidisciplinary team members.

The next section looks at the necessary teaching methodology in order to allow educators to accommodate diversity in their classrooms.

3.4.3 Teaching methodology

Cross et al. (2004) consider different types of teaching adaptations for successful inclusion of LBTL. Functional adaptations are necessary for children's safety and wellness. These adaptations are required in order to allow basic access and movement in the classroom. They include the acquisition of specialised equipment such as communication cards, wheelchairs, placement of furniture and computers. Changes to the existing educational aides for play and learning are needed to enable learners to participate in classroom activities and routines (Engelbrecht et al., 2003). All the learners in the class need to be able to use any learning equipment or toys. This kind of adaptation allows the LBTL equal opportunities for learning. Such adaptations include modifications to books and the development of schedule strategies, for example tidy up routine and classroom responsibilities, such as being a messenger. Finally, adaptations for socialisation are needed so that learners can engage in meaningful peer interactions. This includes verbal or card prompts for appropriate behaviour during snack time, such as

a hand signal for permission to leave the class or cards that can be given when a learner wishes to borrow from a classmate.

The literature indicates that the educators perceived adaptations for LBTL relating to play and learning the most difficult (Cross et al, 2004).

In Downing et al.'s (1997) study on the inclusion of LBTL, more than half the respondents said that adaptations needed to be made to traditional teaching methodology. The adaptations that they mentioned included hands-on learning; whereby learners engage directly with the constructs being taught, cooperative learning; whereby senior learners teach more junior learners and learning in small peer groups.

According to Broderick, Mehta-Parekh and Reid (2005), differentiated instruction (DI) is the only way of giving heterogeneous groups of learners in inclusive classrooms opportunities for valuable learning experience. DI involves the educator teaching a concept to a group of heterogeneous learners but setting different outcomes for them in line with their personal goals. For example the educator has different levels of questions for the reading comprehension they are teaching. Some learners will get assistance with reading, some will be able to give verbal instead of written responses and others will be allowed to consult their peers. The assessment of the task will be at an individual level. DI has met with resistance as it is argued that time-consuming modification of curricular content imposes an unfair burden on educators. Educators who use DI acknowledge the different learning styles of learners and accept their varied interests, experiences and abilities. DI includes adapting the content, the process and the product for the group as required.

Engelbrecht et al. (2003) argue that OBE emphasises educators' role in developing their own competence to identify and respond to local needs. In South Africa, many educators are unsure of the principles of OBE and have difficulty accessing materials that are relevant to each learner's unique needs (Landsberg, 2008). As mentioned earlier in this

literature review, Le Roux et al. (2005) maintain that educators are generally too inexperienced to meet the demands of the new curriculum and are reluctant to introduce new concepts and approaches to their teaching as they perceive themselves to be incapable of managing diverse classrooms.

Poorly skilled educators might perceive themselves as not able to manage an inclusive environment. The relationship between training and perception is entwined as the educator's experience of the training will depend on their previous knowledge and experience and their new knowledge will reshape their perceptions. However, it is important to note that even well trained educators can perceive themselves as not coping with the demands of an inclusive classroom and therefore perception is not necessarily a dependent variable on training. Another factor which impacts on the educators' perception of their ability is the amount of resources and support they receive.

3.4.4 Resources and support

Conroy's (2008) finding that developing countries have insufficient funding and resources to implement inclusive education successfully is a good introduction to the South African situation. According to Conroy (2008), a problem hindering inclusive education development is that special needs education is more costly than regular education, and most developing countries cannot afford to fund education for students without special needs, and even more funding is required for LBTL (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, in Conroy, 2008). Engelbrecht et al. (2003) argue, however, that inclusion can be seen as a cost-effective provision of education, as segregated education is more expensive. The latter is due because special education requires lower learner-educator ratios, highly skilled staff and specialised equipment. Developing countries cannot afford to set up special education institutions – it is more cost-effective to adapt what already exists and to share resources.

The participants in Downing et al.'s (1997) study all responded that support was needed in the form of a teacher assistant or aide. The majority of the respondents spoke about the importance of receiving training from special educators. Other important support mentioned by the participants was that of team members such as therapists;

administrative support in terms of supplies and materials and sufficient personnel; and parental partnership.

According to White Paper Six (2001), DBST should be set up to provide learner and educator support services. DBST should provide educational support services such as professional assistance in curriculum development and assessment to the institutional support teams. According to Lomofsky at al. (2001), a major challenge in South Africa is the establishment of these support structures to help the various role players work collaboratively.

3.5 Conclusion

This literature review indicates that mixed perceptions exist regarding the ability of educators to cope with LBTL in their mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, it appears that globally and locally, educators need better support and training. While educators and policy makers are striving towards a collaborative approach, a discrepancy exists between theory and reality. According to Zaretsky (2005, p.65) this is because there is "a lack of conceptual agreement about the nature of the field and this is coupled with the practical difficulty of meeting disparate stakeholders' needs despite a persistent scarcity of resources". Communication and a clear, shared vision between the different levels of analysis in the education system are needed for successful inclusion, and it is not clear whether this interaction is taking place sufficiently well.

Overall it is the educators' perceptions of their training, their resources and the support that they receive that leads to successful implementation of inclusion principles and practices into their classrooms. The reality of how much support and training they receive is not as critical to successful inclusion as their perceptions of the training, resources and experiences.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the design of the research and the methodology used in collecting the data. Educators from private schools were invited to participate in the study. In order to gain in-depth information of a personal nature, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This kind of sampling is non-probability, purposive sampling, which will be explained in detail later in the chapter.

4.1 Aims of the study

The primary aim of the study was to explore educators' perceptions of teaching LBTL in inclusive classrooms, specifically focusing on learners with cognitive, behavioural and/or physical barriers to learning.

A secondary aim was to investigate the coping strategies employed by educators to manage their inclusive classrooms.

4.2 Research questions

4.2.1 The primary question of the study was:

How do educators perceive teaching learners who have barriers to learning, which could be at an emotional, cognitive and behavioural level?

4.2.2 A secondary question that arose from the primary question was:

How do educators manage these learners in their classes?

4.2.3 A final question was:

Which teaching strategies do educators find useful in helping them manage learners with barriers to learning in their inclusive classrooms?

4.3 Research design

Devlin (2006) states that the use of qualitative methods of research in the field of psychology has increased in recent times. This kind of approach involves open-ended or

semi-structured interviews that are usually tape-recorded and transcribed. Averbach and Silverstein (as cited in Devlin, 2006) state that the transcripts are then analysed in terms of ideas, themes and theoretical constructs that are repeated.

In this study, qualitative data were gathered and analysed. Such data allow the researcher to investigate events as they occur, and the data are therefore located in the naturalistic paradigm. In other words, the data are not controlled or manipulated but merely recounted by the parties involved in the intervention (Burton, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, in Madaus, 1983 & Borkum, 1999). According to Factor (1995, in Borkum, 1999), the goal of qualitative research is to understand and interpret the meaning and intentions that form the basis of the daily interactions and experiences of people. The research in the present study was therefore exploratory in nature with the researcher capturing the perceptions of the educators through interviews. With a view to understanding and interpreting the data, the common themes were highlighted and discussed.

4.4 Research instrument

To determine how the educators in the study perceived the inclusion of learners who experienced barriers to learning in their classrooms, semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions, were conducted with each participant. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005), researchers use a semi-structured interview when they wish to obtain a detailed picture of an individual's perceptions and beliefs. Conducting interviews is a more natural form of interacting with participants and fits well with the interpretive approach to research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The interpretive approach is aimed at deriving meaning from human experience within the context of the experience (De Vos et al., 2005). Academic journals are increasingly publishing qualitative work whereas, previously, publications consisted primarily of statistics-based research (Kelly, 1999, in Terre Blanche et al., 1999).

According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), when attempting to explore people's feelings or experiences in depth, a researcher should plan a semi-structured interview in which a few open-ended questions are written down beforehand in a sequence of topics and subtopics. The researcher should consider what kind of interview will take place by determining the kind of information that he/she is seeking. Information about a person's experiences and feelings is best obtained through unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are useful for eliciting the kind of data the researcher is interested in analysing (De Vos et al., 2005).

The interview schedule for the present study was arranged in five key sections. As the interviewer and interviewee were not familiar with each other, the introductory section of the interview was aimed at building rapport and gathering biographical information. This allowed the interviewee to be a co-enquirer and not just a research subject. Making the interviewee comfortable enables a more open-ended conversation to take place rather than a rigid question and answer forum. This, in turn, enables the researcher to gather richer, more in-depth information from the interviewee (Terre Blanche et al., 1999).

Probing questions were asked once the interviewee was comfortable with the interview process. The questions were designed to elicit more specific information from the interviewee and could be used to clarify what the interviewee was saying (Greeff, in De Vos et al., 2005).

The second section explores the educators' perceptions of the learners in their classrooms. It enabled the interviewer to explore what kinds of difficulties the learners in the school experienced and how the educators perceived these learners. The third section explores the educators' views on teaching learners with barriers to learning. Probing questions were asked about the practical aspects of teaching learners who were struggling in the classroom. The fourth section explores the teaching strategies the educators used to manage the diversity in the classroom. The fifth section explores the relationship between the educators and other educational organisations such as the Gauteng

Department of Education and the Independent Board of Education. The interview schedule is attached as Appendix E.

4.5 Participants

Six private schools in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg were invited to participate in the study. The sampling technique was non-probability, purposive sampling whereby the researcher identified a group with a specific purpose in mind (De Vos et al., 2005). Nine foundation phase educators from a Gauteng private school were interviewed as the researcher specifically wanted to interview foundation phase educators in a private school context. According to Lomofsky et al. (2001), learners who should be accommodated in the education system include those with disabilities, disaffected youths, school dropouts and over-age learners some of whom have not progressed beyond Grade 1. Foundation phase educators consequently have an important role to play in helping learners who are not yet at a grade-appropriate level for their age. Primary educators, such as foundation phase educators, are often the first to know whether a child has special needs or any form of barrier to learning (Smith et al., 2000). It is important to note that educators in government-managed schools may have different perceptions to educators in privately managed schools (Lomofsky et al., 2001).

The research took place in a private education milieu where it was thought that educators had fewer challenges in setting up and practising inclusive environments. This perception exists as private schools have considerably more resources and lower learner/educator ratios than government schools (Walton, 2006).

The only criterion for the participants was that they had to be part of the permanent staff and had to have received training in OBE teaching methodology. The educators should have been teaching inclusively for two years or more to be able to comment on the teaching strategies they were using.

4.6 Procedure

The researcher made telephonic contact with six private school principals or vice-principals to invite their schools to participate in the research. The researcher left messages for the principals to return the calls, but none of the calls were returned. The researcher also made several personal calls to the schools and left messages before the invitations were declined. Only one of the six schools accepted the invitation, and this was due to a social contact the researcher had at the school. The contact acted as a messenger between the head of department (HOD) and the principal. A further five schools were contacted by the researcher but without positive response. Reasons given for the reluctance of the schools to participate included;

- The schools were not inclusive,
- The educators were too busy with report writing, and
- The educators were simply not interested.

The school that agreed to participate was very enthusiastic about the project. The HOD mentioned that they had limited time, and once verbal permission from the principal had been obtained, an information letter was sent to him. The letter outlined the rationale for and the purpose of the study.

The foundation phase educators were invited to participate in the study once permission had been obtained from the principal. An email was then sent to the participants also outlining the rationale for and the purpose of the study. Once the participants had agreed to participate in the study, the researcher met with them at the school to further explain the purpose of the study and to answer any queries or concerns. No concerns were raised.

Each educator was interviewed by the researcher at a time and place specified by the foundation phase HOD. The school principal and HOD were informed that the interviews would last approximately an hour although the school schedule allowed for only 30-minute interviews. The school day is divided into 30-minute sessions and educators were unable to find another educator to sit with their class for a 60-minute

session whilst they attended the interview. Permission for the interviews and audio-tape recording of the interviews was also obtained before the interviews commenced.

4.7 Data analysis

A key aim of interpretive analysis is to provide thick description of the data and to place real-life events and phenomena in perspective (Terre Blanche et al., 1999). Once the interviews had been transcribed, content analysis of the data was carried out. Content analysis allows for systematic examination of the data to record the relative incidences of themes (Welman & Kruger, 1994). Common and recurrent themes in the text were identified by creating a list of categories that reflected the major themes.

The benefits of thematic content analysis are that the coding system can easily be developed and the categories induced from the data or deduced from a theoretical perspective. Often both approaches are used as a relationship exists between the theory and the data, which allows the researcher to add necessary or missing information (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996).

More specifically, Terre Blanche and Kelly's (in Terre Blanche et al., 1999) outline of thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data, which included a number of steps.

Once the data had been collected and transcribed, they were read through and reflected upon so that the researcher could formulate a preliminary understanding of the data and speculate on what kinds of interpretations would be found and where they would be likely to occur.

The researcher, in the language of the participants, labelled the categories that occurred in the data. She focused on the processes and functions in the data so as to avoid merely summarising the content. Each category comprised subthemes related directly to the focus of the research.

The data were coded, and, during the coding, the data were broken down into paragraphs, sentences, phrases and finally into words that contained the identified themes. The coded pieces were then clustered together according to the themes. This allowed the researcher to look at the data in a fresh, new way and then elaborate on the data. During elaboration, the data were examined more closely so that new insights could emerge.

Finally, the interpretations were put together on the basis of the thematic categories that had emerged. These were then linked to the theoretical knowledge so that conclusions could be inferred. During this stage, the researcher reflected on the interpretations to determine whether they were not overly subjective. The researcher acknowledges that true objectivity can never be achieved but that her interpretations were as objective as possible.

4.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to the ethical standards laid down by the University of the Witwatersrand Human Ethics Committee (non-medical) for research involving human subjects.

Written permission was obtained from the principal of the school to conduct the research, and an information letter was emailed to him (Appendix A). The participants were also given information letters (Appendix B) and invited to participate in the study. Consent forms were sent to the participants (Appendix C). Informed consent is a crucial aspect of research that places emphasis on accurate and complete information (Strydom in De Vos et al., 2005). The researcher met with the participants, at a time and place convenient to them, and divulged the following information:

- Participation in the study was voluntary, and there would be no benefit or disadvantage for participating in the study. According to Strydom (in De Vos et al., 2005), participants choose to participate for various reasons, most importantly fear of victimisation if they do not participate or the prospect of financial reward if they do participate

- The participants could withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences such as victimisation.

- The participants could refuse to answer any question they were uncomfortable with. The educators were being asked about their personal experiences and therefore may not wish to answer questions as this kind of information is sensitive. Participants may also fear criticism of their perceptions.

- No identifying information of the participants would be included in the report due to the sensitive nature of the data required. This is to protect the participants so that they may feel more comfortable about sharing their personal experiences and opinions.

- The researcher obtained permission to audio-tape the interviews. (Appendix D). The purpose of audio-taping the interviews is to obtain the information in a more natural way without intimidating the participant by writing and interrupting the flow of the interview. Audio-taping allows the researcher to analyse the data verbatim to avoid relying on memory and notes which are subjective (Terre Blanche et al., 1999). The audio-tapes would be processed only by the researcher for reasons of anonymity. The audio-tapes would be kept in a locked drawer by the researcher and destroyed post-qualification. According to Sieber (in De Vos, 2005), privacy is interpreted as something which no one else may view or have access to. For the purposes of this study, the participants consented only to the researcher recording and analysing their perceptions of inclusive education.

- The transcriptions were only seen by the researcher and supervisor, and the researcher used false names in the transcriptions.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter explains the nature of the data and the methods used in this study. According to Terre Blanche et al. (1999) paradigms such as the medical model approach or the ecological approach are important in the research design as they impact on the nature of what is to be researched and studied and how a topic is researched. As discussed in previous chapters of this report, the ecological approach is used to conceptualise perceptions regarding inclusive education and qualitative methods are frequently used in this paradigm (Zaretsky, 2005).

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Results

This chapter reports on and discusses the common and recurrent themes raised by the participants during their interviews. Table 1 summaries the participants' biographical information and Table 2 is a frequency table of the relevant themes.

Table 1: Participants' biographical information

PARTICIPANT	NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING	GRADE CURRENTLY TEACHING	EXPERIENCE IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS	EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
A	26 years	HOD and foundation phase life orientation	13 years	13 years
B	32 years	Grade R	20 years	12 years
C	40 years	Grade R	39 years	1 years
D	11 years	Grade 1	4 years	7 years
E	6 years	Grade 1	2 years	4 years
F	14 years	Grade 2	10 years	4 years
G	4 years	Grade 2	6 months	3and a 1/2 years
H	9 years	Grade 3	7 years	2 years
I	7 years	Grade 3	3 years	Overseas 4 years

The biographical information of these participants shows that all the educators have had experiences in both private and government schools which indicates that their perceptions will be formed on their experiences in both education contexts. The participants also range from having only a few years teaching experience to having more than 30 years of experience. Their perceptions of inclusive education were remarkably similar despite the range of experience. It appears as though educators who have taught

through numerous changes in education perceive inclusive education in a similar light to those who have been trained only in this paradigm.

According to Zaretsky (2005) a possible explanation for the above observation might be that there is much disparity between the policy makers at a macrosystems level in inclusive education and few educators, no matter the length of time they have been teaching, actually understand the theoretical underpinnings of the practice of inclusion.

The researcher found the main theme to be that all the participants perceived the biggest factor affecting inclusion in their school was their lack of training in and knowledge of the barriers to learning that the learners experience.

Table 2 on the next page, presents the themes that were identified in the data and presents them as they occurred relative to the interview schedule. As explained in chapter four, section one of the interviews was introductory. Section two explored the educators' perceptions of the kinds of barriers to learning that the learners in the class experienced. It can be seen in the table that the learners were perceived to be experiencing mainly physical or cognitive barriers to learning. Occupational Therapy (OT) addresses physiological impairments and remedial therapy addresses learning delays and cognitive impairments.

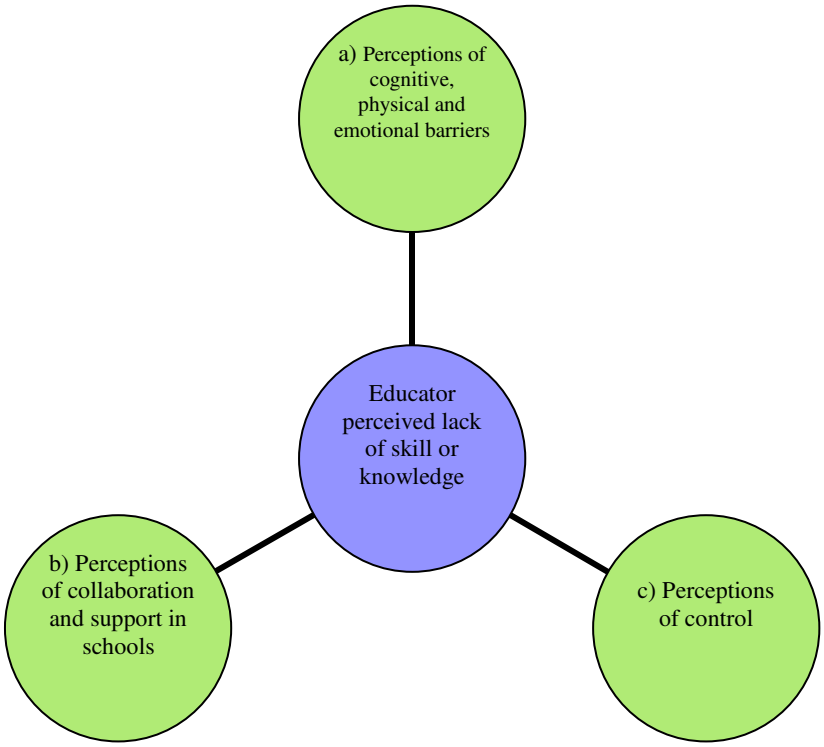
Table 2: Frequency table of themes

INTERVIEW SECTION	THEME	PARTICIPANT								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	EDUCATORS PERCEIVE THEY ARE NOT ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND/OR EXPERIENCED	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**
2.	**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEARNERS' BARRIERS TO LEARNING**									
	Learners requiring occupational therapy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Learners requiring remedial therapy and further intervention	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
3.	**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT IN TEACHING**									
	Lack of parental collaboration	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Reliance on referral to other professionals OT/Remedial/Psychologist/Neurologist	x	x		x		x	x	x	
	Assessment and referral to remedial schools is necessary	x	x	x		x			x	
4.	**PERCEPTIONS OF COPING STRATEGIES USED TO MANAGE CLASSROOM**									
	Class size is too big to meet needs of all learners	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Code of conduct effective method of discipline	x	x	x	x	x	x			
	OBE and group work are effective teaching methods	x		x		x	x	x		

The following subthemes were identified as revealing the educators' feelings of lack of competency.

a) Perceptions of the learners' barriers to learning. These were physical, cognitive and emotional.
b) Perceptions of collaboration and support in the school
c) Perceptions of the coping strategies and feelings of lack of control

Figure 6: Relationship of themes



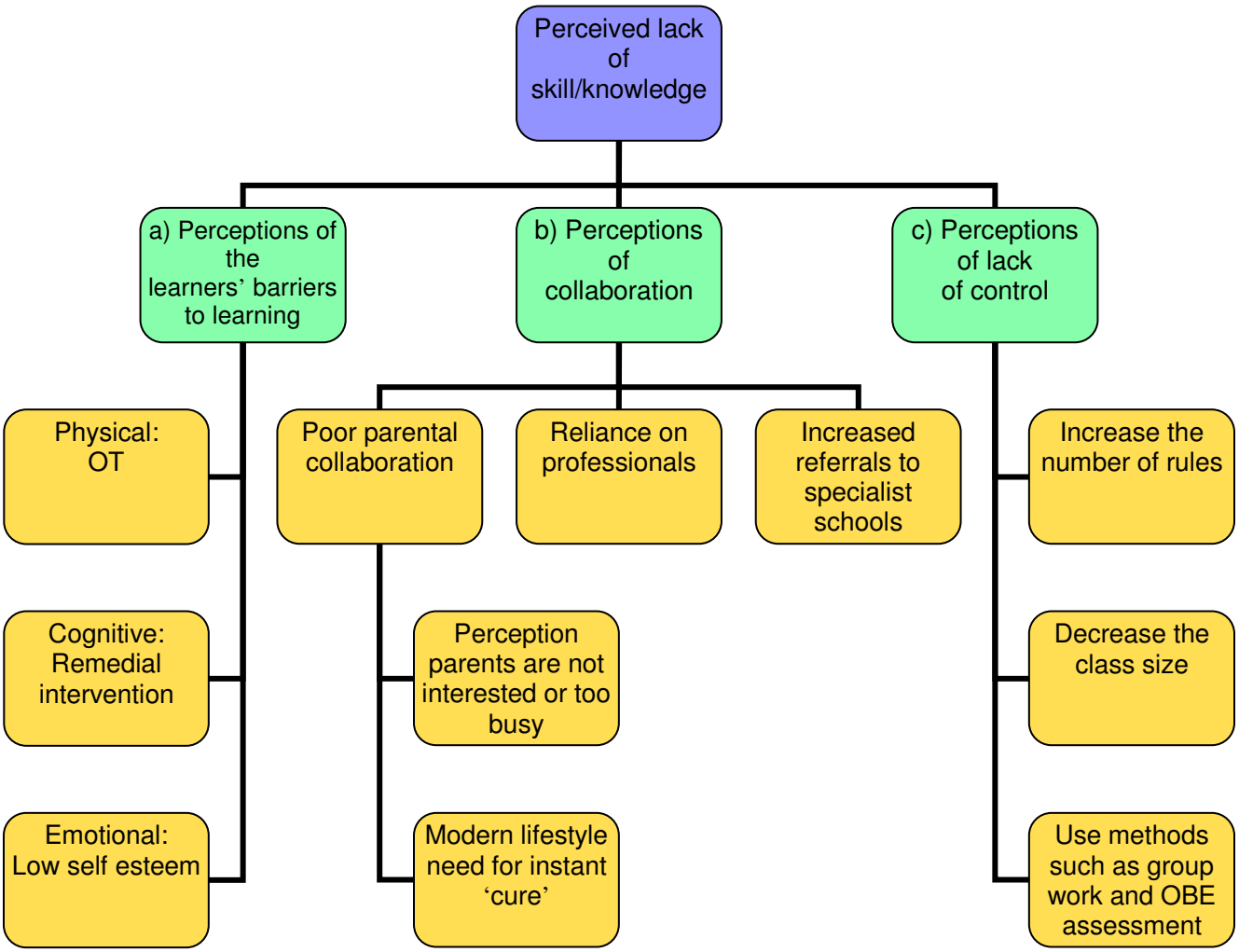
The educators' perceptions are influenced by their subjective experiences and do not always reflect reality (Hook et al., 2002). Figure 6 above shows that in section a) the educators will feel inadequately prepared to cope with the challenges of inclusion if they are anxious about the barriers to learning the learners' experience. According to Romi and Leyser (2006) educators are more willing to accept learners with mild barriers to learning. Physical barriers to learning and cognitive barriers to learning are more accepted by educators than emotional barriers to learning (Romi & Leyser, 2006 and Koutrouba et al., 2006).

In section b) of Figure 6, educators who have little support from peers and parents will not perceive that they are competent to cope with managing their inclusive class (Zaretsky, 2005).

In section c) of Figure 6 the educators that have received adequate training, but did not experience it to be meaningful, will feel inadequately trained and share the perceptions of educators who in reality haven't been trained. They will not feel they have adequate control over their classes and their coping strategies will be ineffective (Forlin et al, 1997).

Figure 7 presents a more detailed overview of the themes identified in Figure 6.

Figure 7: Relationship of identified themes



5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Main theme: Educators' perception of training and knowledge

Figure 7 shows how the subthemes relate to the overall theme identified in the data. This was educators' perceptions that they did not have enough knowledge or skills to cope with LBTL.

Educators who do not perceive that they can manage diverse classrooms will perceive that they do not have control and adjust their teaching methods to increase their sense of control. These adjustments may not always be in alignment with the adaptations necessary for successful inclusion (Zaretsky, 2005).

It is very interesting to note that the educators with a greater sense of efficacy were less likely to refer students with cognitive and emotional barriers to learning to special education (Soodak et al., 1998 in Koutrouba et al., 2006). The educators in this study perceive a lack of knowledge which influences their self-confidence. Their perceived low self-efficacy has lead to a reliance of professionals and referral to special education.

The educators consistently perceived a lack of competency in dealing with the various difficulties of the learners in their classrooms, which led to the development in the educators of a negative attitude towards the learners. Figure 7 shows that this overwhelming perception can lead to the non-inclusion of learners in the mainstream class and their referral to specialists.

According to Naicker in Engelbrecht (2003), disability in the medical discourse is not viewed as a social construct. It is seen as something inherent to the particular learner, that is, a naturally occurring characteristic of the learner, such as blindness or a learning disorder like dyslexia, that makes him/her unsuitable for mainstream education. In the ecosystemic framework, the impairment, such as blindness, is seen as a physical characteristic occurring at the individual level of analysis, but a blind person is disabled only if the environment is in some way not meeting that person's need. For example, a

physically impaired learner is disabled only if there are no ramps at the school for his/her wheelchair. In this paradigm, disability is a social construct (Kruger et al., 2002).

> *Participant D: "I would be only too happy to have children that had learning disabilities because of hearing or whatever, but I don't feel that I am capable of teaching that. I am not trained to do it."*

It seems that if educators perceive themselves as unable to cope with a learner, they develop a negative attitude towards the learner. According to Cook (2001), there is no empirical evidence that the negative attitude of an educator towards inclusive education affects the educator-learner relationship; rather, there is evidence that this relationship is affected when the educator has a negative attitude towards the individual learner. This means that the educator develops a negative attitude towards the individual and remains positive about including other learners except that individual.

Educator attitudes of rejection are associated with learners with mild or hidden disabilities. The educators in the study reported that if they had to exclude learners from their classrooms, they would remove only 16% of learners with diagnosed barriers to learning as compared to the 48% of learners they would remove who had mild or hidden barriers to learning. This is because the educators felt more confident about coping with treatable difficulties that they knew about.

> *Participant C: "I think that I am very happy to cope with anything that I can cope with."*

The educators might not consciously reject a learner, but their perceptions of their abilities could well result in a school policy of referring learners to remedial schools, which they believe are better equipped and have more competent staff. Cook, Cameron and Tankersley (2007) found that educators generally rated themselves as more

concerned about, indifferent to and likely to reject learners with disabilities compared to those without disabilities.

> *Participant A: "If the recommendation is that the child would be better in a remedial school that is what we are going to opt for them to do."*

In the past, it was believed that educators received sufficient training at college to equip them for their whole careers. Today, educators need to participate in ongoing training to improve their skills and meet the challenges facing them as education changes (Morant, 1981, in Le Roux et al., 2005).

> *Participant H: "There are a lot of things that I don't know how to deal with, you don't learn everything when you are a teacher."*

Hay and Winn (2005) state that as the number of special needs learners in mainstream schools in Australia increases, more questions are raised about whether the educators have the requisite knowledge and skills to cope. The educators in the present study apparently had similar feelings. Murphy (2006) maintains that many educators and policy makers are not sufficiently informed about the theory and practical aspects of inclusive education.

> *Participant A: "Teacher training is a major concern, we need to train our teachers. Not only in remedial but to train in special needs, any special needs."*

> *Participant B: "I don't know, previously I have had children in my class like a blind child, not here, at another school I was at. I have also had a little brain damaged girl, and I loved them both, but it was hard to include them."*

According to Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000), educators who receive thorough training feel competent and consequently find the concept of inclusion easier to understand. Voltz (2001) argues that preparing educators for inclusion calls for the use of specialised educators in professional development teams. This argument ties in with

the ecosystemic approach of not simply referring learners to specialists but integrating the systems so that they are interdependent.

5.2.2 Subtheme a) educators' perceptions of learners' physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to learning

> *Participant D: "At the moment he is attending remedial therapy and with some OT he has made lots of progress."*

> *Participant F: "I have a couple of children that go to OT and a couple of children who go to remedial."*

The participants generally believed that the learners had difficulties or problems requiring intervention from occupational and remedial therapists. These difficulties were thought to be the result of cognitive or physical impairment and to be intrinsic to the learners (Engelbrecht, 2003).

According to Nickerson & Brosof (2003), learners with emotional/behavioural difficulties are the least likely to be included. The participants said that learners with emotional problems were difficult to include because their attitude became negative, and they developed avoidant and/or disruptive behaviour. Cook (2001) reports that the educators in his study had negative attitudes towards learners who demonstrated challenging behaviour.

> *Participant A: "On an emotional and sub-cognitive level he was taking a big knock, so he moved to X."*

The participants also said that the LBTL developed low self-esteem because they knew that they could not keep up with their peers. Some of the participants argued that inclusion was therefore doing more harm than good to these learners. Lavoie (in Mulholland, 2008) confirms that special needs children are at risk of developing low self-esteem when they compare themselves with their more capable peers. According to

Cartledge & Johnson (1996), the benefits of the mainstream environment for learners with difficulties have not been proven, and these learners tend to be rejected.

> *Participant B: "He sees his peers are managing and he realises that he is not managing and he's not happy."*

> *Participant A: "I think it causes a negative impact on their self-confidence because they are competing against peers that are just so much more capable than what they are."*

Overall, the educators thought that the LBTL in their classes experienced difficulties that impacted on their ability to keep up with their peers. They thought that the environment was wrong for such learners and that the learners needed to change and not the environment, because these learners were in the minority. Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht (in Engelbrecht et al., 2003) state that a major challenge facing the adaptation of the school environment is the development of a democratic style of leadership and management.

> *Participant A: "So that is my concern. I don't think schools can cater for their needs. I think that there are huge expenses that go hand in hand the reaching of those needs, and I know private schools are supposed to resourceful but the money can only go so far."*

5.2.3 Subtheme b) educators' perceptions of collaboration and support

Engelbrecht et al. (2003) believe that the school support team should be used to facilitate organisational change towards inclusion. The team is responsible for providing educator and parental support as well as psychosocial, paramedical and medical support for the learners. The present study shows that the educators had come to rely on the services of occupational and remedial therapists in particular. This reliance was due to their underlying perception that they had not been trained to cope with the demands of the LBTL who were included in their classes. Cross et al. (2004) found a pressing need for collaboration with a multidisciplinary team among practitioners of inclusive education.

> *Participant A: "We have quite a comprehensive support team, three remedial therapists on the property and we are developing our facilities so we will have an occupational therapist with sensory integration on the property."*

The participants reported that they relied on the interventions and support of the on-site therapy team.

> *Participant G: "What I find very nice here compared to the government school is that the therapists are at the school so we can chat to them and tell them we are having difficulty with this, can you help me with this and then go back and say I find this, did you find that?"*

However, the educators were not in favour of integrating the therapists into the classroom possibly because they thought that the therapists were specialists and might criticise them. This again stems from the educators' perception that they were not skilled enough to handle LBTL. Hay et al. (2005) confirm in their study that the support of specialists was valued by mainstream educators, but there was debate on how to best utilise the support.

> *Participant F: "I think I would prefer them to go out and if it's not possible then you can come in and do it, but to go out is possibly better."*

> *Participant A: "We don't have a problem, but often the therapist does. They find the child is often distracted and is not getting the input that they get with one on one."*

Cross et al. (2004) found that the successful inclusion of learners with disabilities depended largely on good parent-educator relationships as the educators relied on the

parents to provide information regarding the needs of their children. The participants in the present study reported a lack of parental support, which might also have contributed

to their perceptions that they were not sufficiently equipped to cope with difficult learners.

> *Participant C: "They expect everything to be done for them and there is an au pair that fetches the child, so that is tricky."*
>
> *Participant G: "The parents don't want to send him to OT."*
>
> *Participant H: "No matter how much advice we have given them, they still won't put the child on medication."*

Voltz (2001) believes that mainstream educators should be competent in collaboration and team teaching for successful inclusion. They should have a good understanding with the parents and collaborate with them and other interested persons – something not yet achieved by the participants in the present study.

5.2.4 Subtheme c) educators' perceptions of current coping strategies

The educators in the sample school relied on assessment by and referral to remedial or special schools due their perception that they could not cope with learners who required more interventions, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and play therapy than the average learner in the school. According to Avramidis et al. (2000), educators are prepared to include only learners who do not require any additional instructional and or management skills from them.

> *Participant C: "We don't have one teacher for 7 children. You don't have time when you've got 22 or 23 in a class, to cope with anybody who is too different from the others."*

> *Participant C: "I think with any child's problem you try and meet that challenge. It's only if it is either more than the time allows or your knowledge allows that you have to pass on the problem to somebody else."*

The participants felt they lacked control as they believed they were not able to cope with the extra demands of difficult learners. They said that class size was a major factor in determining whether inclusion would be successful or not. Smith et al. (2000) also found that class load was an important consideration for educators in inclusive classrooms. They found, too, that if the educators thought there were too many children in a class, or the ratio of LBTL to learners without barriers to learning too high, they were not in favour of including learners with difficulties. Despite the difference in class size between government and private schools, educators in the latter schools also said the load was too great. McCann (2008) found that smaller class size was one of the issues mentioned by educators when discussing inclusive education.

> *Participant B: "It does put a much heavier load on the teacher, which in a class of 22 is no problem, but in a class of 42 in the state school is a different story as that one child would demand so much of the teachers attention, what about the other 41 children? Even now with the 22 children I think that I have not put into the other 21 children what I have put into this one child and he is still not managing."*

> *Participant H: "When the teacher has 22 other children to attend to the demands are great and she can't spend too much time on one child."*

According to Hawkins (2009), educators who are not confident about their own ability are generally also not effective in their methods of classroom management and instructional differentiation. Ashton (1984, in Hawkins, 2009) identifies sense of control as crucial in teacher efficacy. He argues that one-size-fits-all approaches will not lead to achievement for the learners or the educator. The participants in the present study said that applying classroom rules was the most effective way to manage the learners.

Participant D: "You have four or five rules that you truly believe in."

Participant C: "They know within a day or two what the boundaries are."

Broderick et al. (2005) believe that educators should be responsive to learner needs and should prepare for a wide variety of needs and interests. According to Engelbrecht (2003), OBE allows for the development of outcomes in accordance with learner needs, and therefore learners of diverse abilities can be included in the same class. The participants generally had had little training in OBE and felt that good educators have been teaching OBE informally for many years. The participants perceived that formal OBE would not necessarily work.

Participant D: "It didn't work for me … we don't use it here".

Participant C: "We have actually elected not to do the whole OBE thing because it's very much a part of what we do, our children are learning through doing. But I can see huge problems with the way it is being implemented in that the teachers don't actually know what it is all about and also don't have the facilities."

Participant B: "Then it changed and since then we have not had any training. Again I think that we were doing a type of OBE all along, we just called it something else."

5.3 Conclusion

The participants believed that the barriers to learning experienced by the learners required intervention from other members of the multidisciplinary team. They did not perceive that they had adequate knowledge or skill to manage the barriers to learning.

The educators conceptualised the barriers to learning to be inherent to the learners and not arising as a problem in the environment – they expected the learners to change and did not consider adaptations to the environment. This medical model conceptualization

results in a reliance on remediation and if it could not be achieved at the school, referral to a specialist school was necessary.

The educators did not, in general perceive the parents as contributing members of the support team and while they valued the input of specialists, true collaboration was not consistent among the staff.

Educators categorized learners who could not conform to class rules as problem learners and relied on classification to determine school placement. The participants considered it difficult to include learners who could not meet the academic standards at the school.

According to Hawkins (2009), educators who feel trained and supported are more willing to engage in experimentation with new strategies and differentiated instruction. The more positive experiences educators have, the greater their feelings of self-efficacy. If the participants perceived themselves as more knowledgeable in the areas of learner difficulties, OBE and intervention techniques, they would probably be more positive about inclusion.

The participants in this study clustered within quadrant four of Figure 8 below. They had received OBE training and attended courses on inclusive education yet they do not perceive the inclusion of LBTL in their classrooms positively.

Figure 8: Clustering of participants in the matrix of success factors for inclusive education

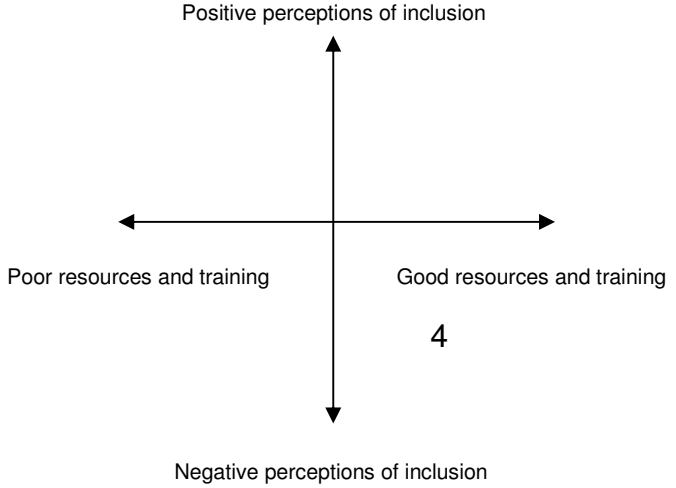


Figure 9: Perceptions that lead to the failure of inclusive practices

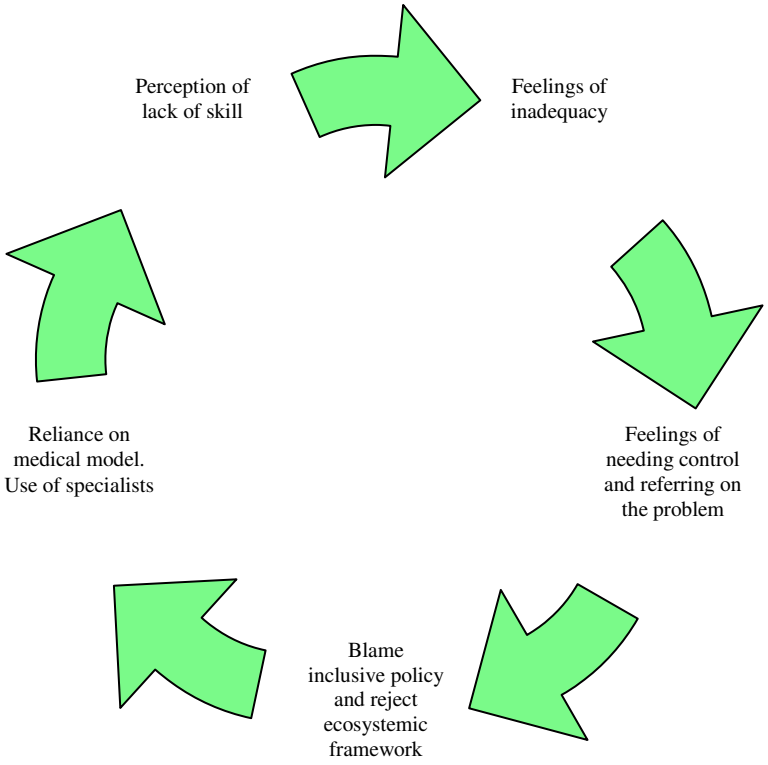


Figure 9 above shows the cycle of how perceptions and bias result in the educators becoming 'stuck' in the medical model approach to inclusive education. The educators are unable to make the paradigm shift as they continue to conceptualise the barriers to learning according to the medical model. In order to make the shift, educators need to understand the theoretical underpinnings of inclusive education practice, but more than that, the educators will have to experience successful inclusion in conjunction with increase training for their perceptions to change (Zaretsky, 2005, Romi et al, 2006, and Engelbregcht et al., 2003).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter summarises the findings of the research and integrates them with the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 1 and 2.

This study revealed that the educators felt that they could not cope with LBTL, specifically learners with physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to learning and relied on referrals to specialists and specialist schools. According to Maniadaki, Sonuga-Barke and Kakouros (2007) when educators and parents felt they are not able to cope with the learner's barriers to learning, they referred to specialists for their help and advice. Such an attitude leads to a school policy of referring the learners to specialist institutions and 'passing on the problem'.

According to Kerr (1985, p. 421), "The medical model of specialization seems inappropriate for the education profession." According to Engelbrecht (2003), in the medical model discourse, impairment is linked to disability. The participants in the present study believed that the learners were in need of remediation and that, once they had received it, they could return to mainstream education. Such an approach would, however, not provide a structure for inclusion within the school context or within the broader social context. The participants said that those learners who could not be remediated would not cope in comparison with their peers and would not be accepted at the school.

The medical model approach of the participants suggests they believe that inclusion cannot be successfully implemented. A shift is needed in the educators' paradigms from the medical model to an ecological approach in terms of which learning needs occur because of intrinsic and environmental factors (White Paper Six, 2001). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework, the shift should take place at the microsystems level where the educators' perceptions and classroom factors are taken into account.

Mock et al. (2002) report that full inclusion is based on the premise that learners are more alike than different and that all learners will benefit from the same educational settings. This premise negates all the input received from specialised education and dangerously assumes that all educators are prepared to teach a diverse class of learners.

It would be logical to conclude that if the participants received adequate training, their perceptions of their inadequacy to handle difficult learners would change. It is mentioned by various authors that increased knowledge and experience led to positive attitudes towards inclusion (Hawkins 2009, McCann, 2008 & Avramidis et al., 2000). According to Dantas (2007), educators need training and professional development in inclusive education to appreciate and understand that all learners can learn successfully in diverse classrooms. However, the educator development programmes have to date not led to positive educator attitudes towards inclusive education probably because the programmes do not focus on the practical use of the information provided.

The participants reported that their multidisciplinary team was comprehensive and that they were able to work well with them. However, the relationship between the role players was not based on collaboration but on referrals and the handing over of the difficulties. Educators and specialists need to share knowledge and experience in order to achieve systemic change (Hawkins, 2009).

According to Walton (2006), high fee-paying private schools tend to be more inclusive because of the high cost of inclusiveness. However, this finding was not replicated in the high fee-paying private school in the study. The school reported that it was unable to afford the structural changes needed to change the environment for a minority of the learners.

6.1 Limitations

A primary limitation of the study was that the data were collected from only one private school – the perceptions of educators in other private education institutions might well be different. As mentioned in the section above, some high fee-paying independent schools are considered to be inclusive (Walton, 2006), and it would be interesting to compare the educators' perceptions at these schools. However, the data was never intended to be generalised. An understanding of the participants' perceptions was the primary aim, not generalisability of the data.

Due to the qualitative nature of the data, the researcher cannot generalise the findings to a broader context as qualitative data have low external validity (De Vos et al., 2005). The participants had time between being invited to participate in the study and being interviewed to discuss their opinions, and they might have reported similar perceptions as a result of group discussion despite the researcher assuring anonymity.

Another limitation of the study was the subjectivity of the researcher in collecting and interpreting the data (Terre Blanche et al., 1999). Murphy (2006) criticises investigations of this nature as they are undertaken by the researchers themselves and are therefore not objective. Many studies on inclusive education are conducted in this way, and Murphy argues that no valid conclusions about inclusive education can be drawn until more objective and rigorous studies are undertaken. In order to lower the subjectivity of the research, the researcher consulted a supervisor who was not familiar with the participants or the school.

According to Tobin (2004) to increase the credibility of qualitative research emerging criteria such as trustworthiness, goodness and authenticity are being used to counteract the rejection of qualitative data on the grounds that it is not robust. If this research were to be reworked, the researcher would use both qualitative and quantitative methodology and make use of triangulation to further ensure the objectivity of the analysis of the data collected. Triangulation has been shown to completeness and is used to ensure acceptability and authenticity of the data collected.

According to Greeff (in Engelbregcht et al., 2003), an assumption in the interviewing method is that everyone knows how to take part in an interview. The researcher and participants are both unavoidably involved in constructing a meaningful interview. To avoid this, the researcher relied on the semi-structured format of the interview schedule so that the discussions followed a similar format.

The interviews took place at the venue decided by the participants, which was noisy and affected the quality of the audio-recording. As a result, the transcripts were difficult to transcribe accurately – three of them were inaudible, and the researcher had to rely on handwritten notes.

The interviews were only 30 minutes in duration as the HOD had allocated the educators only one period for relief teaching so that they could participate. This was not enough time, and the end sections of the interviews were rushed with very little probing into the participants' responses.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

Further research is required to determine whether private school educators are less inclined than government school educators to change their paradigm from a medical model to an ecological model as it is not enforced by ISASA that the schools practice inclusion. The independent school learners also do not experience the same level of environmental challenges, such as deprivation and lack of resources, as the learners in government schools and this may also impact on the need to move to more inclusive education practices.

Overall, the participants gave meaningful insights into their experiences of inclusive education. However, more in-depth discussion is needed to determine the practical considerations for the participants to shift from a medical model paradigm to an ecological paradigm, for the successful inclusion of learners who experience barriers to

learning. As discussed earlier in this chapter it would be interesting to compare the educators' perceptions from other independent schools.

Beattie, Anderson and Antonak (1997) maintain that programmes for prospective educators should include positive experiences with learners with disabilities who have been successfully included in mainstream classes. The programmes should also include training in instructional techniques.

6.3 Conclusion

Educators' perceptions are formed as a result of previous experience and knowledge. (Brownlee et al., 2000). In this study educators' negatively perceive inclusive education as a system of education in their school. In order to change their perceptions the educator's will have to experience successful inclusion and receive further training at the same time in order to change their perceptions and shift their paradigms away from the medical model and towards inclusive education.

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APPENDIX A: School information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Robyn Hays and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Master degree in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is to explore educators' perceptions towards teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms. Teaching in the South African context presents many challenges to teachers and it is important to understand teachers' perceptions in order to address these challenges.

I would like to invite your school to participate in this study. Participation in this research will entail your foundation phase educators being individually interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for them, should they choose to participate in the study. Each interview will last approximately one hour. With the educator's permission, the interview will be audio-tape recorded in order to ensure accuracy. The educator may choose not to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable with. Participation is voluntary and all of their responses will be kept confidential. No information that could identify the school or staff would be included in the research report and I will use pseudo-names in the transcripts. The interview tapes will not be seen or heard by any person other than my supervisor and/or I and will only be processed by myself. The educators may choose to withdraw from the study at any point, without any negative consequences.

If your school chooses to participate in the study, please could you let me know in writing and email it to me at hopkins07@telkomsa.net. I am available to collect the letter and can be contacted telephonically at 078 638 4860 or (011) 705 2155.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. The final report will be available by request, I can be contacted by the following means should you wish to see it, 0117052155 or hopkins07@telkomsa.net.

Kind regards,
Robyn

011 705 2155
0786384860
hopkins07@telkomsa.net

Supervisor:
DR. D. Alexander
Lecturer \ Registered Psychologist
Course coordinator :M.Ed
University of the Witwatersrand
Discipline of Psychology
011 717 4526

APPENDIX B: Participant information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Robyn Hays and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Masters degree in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is to explore educators' perceptions towards teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in inclusive classrooms. Teaching in the South African context presents many challenges to teachers and it is important to understand their perceptions.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. With your permission, the interview will be audio-tape recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential. No information that could identify you would be included in the research report as I will use pseudo-names in the transcripts. The interview tapes will not be seen or heard by any person other than my supervisor and/or I and will only be processed by myself. The tapes will be kept by the researcher in a locked drawer. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to answer, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point, without penalty. There are no anticipated risks or benefits should you choose to participate in the study.

In the unlikely event of you feeling distressed by the interview, you may wish to receive counselling from the Family Life Centre. (011) 788 4784.

If you choose to participate in the study, could you please fill in your details on the form below and email your response to me at hopkins07@telkomsa.net or I can be contacted telephonically at 078 638 4860 or (011) 705 2155.
Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. The final report will be available from me at your request.

Kind regards,
Robyn

011 705 2155
0786384860
hopkins07@telkomsa.net

Supervisor:
DR. D. Alexander
Lecturer \ Registered Psychologist
Course coordinator: M.Ed
University of the Witwatersrand
Discipline of Psychology
011 717 4526

APPENDIX C: Consent form for interview

Date: _____

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Robyn Hays for her study on exploring educators' perceptions regarding teaching learners with barriers to learning. I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- I may refuse to answer any question I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.
- The interview tapes will be kept by the researcher in a locked drawer.

I do / do not consent to her using verbatim quotes from the interview.

I understand that the interview will last approximately forty-five minutes.

Signed: _____

APPENDIX D: Consent form for recording

I _____ consent to my interview by Robyn Hays being audio-taped for her study on exploring teachers' perceptions towards teaching learners who experience barriers to learning. I understand that:

- These audio-tapes will not be heard by any other person except Robyn and will only be processed by her.
- All tape-recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed:_____

APPENDIX E: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Educators

A. Introduction:

1. Could you please describe your school and the grade that you teach?

B. Questions regarding the learners:

1. Could you describe the learners in your class? Give details around what kinds of barriers to learning do they experience and what behaviours do they present with?

2. Could you describe your understanding of what barriers to learning are?

3. Are you aware of some of the factors that may be causing or contributing to these barriers to learning?

C. Perceptions regarding teaching learners with barriers to learning:

1. What are your thoughts about teaching learners with barriers to learning in inclusive classrooms?

2. What challenges do you face when teaching learners with barriers to learning within the same class as learners without barriers to learning?

3. Do you think educators need assistance to teach learners with barriers to learning? If so, what kind of assistance do they require?

D. Questions regarding current strategies used:

1. Could you give a detailed description of how you manage behaviour in the class? Do you consider these management strategies as being effective?
   Where do you think it is not effective and why?

2. Which behaviours do you find the most challenging to manage? Which behaviours are easy to cope with and why?

3. Do you use any particular methods or models of behaviour management in your class? If yes, which one(s) and where did you get trained? If no, are you aware of any models or specific behaviour interventions?

E. Questions regarding the relationship between the different levels of organisation:

1. How much training have you received in OBE and who provides you with training?

2. What are your perceptions of the curriculum and do you find it suitable for teaching inclusively?

3. How much contact do you or your school have with Gauteng Department of Education? How is contact made?

4. Do you and/or your school receive support from the Independent Board of Education? If no, would you like to receive support from them and what kind of support? If yes, what kind of support are you receiving and is it adequate?