

https://dspace.org/

The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners in a mainstream high school after attending a remedial primary school

Combrink, Amanda

2015-08-17
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18238

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

THE EXPERIENCE OF GRADE 8 AND 9 LEARNERS IN A MAINSTREAM HIGH SCHOOL AFTER ATTENDING A REMEDIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

by

AMANDA COMBRINK

695855

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

(INCLUSIVE EDUCATION)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

SUPERVISOR: DOCTOR E. WALTON

FEBRUARY 2014

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It has been submitted exclusively to the University of Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Inclusive Education). It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

_____

Amanda Combrink

_____ day of _____ 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people and express my sincere gratitude for their contribution to this study:

To the Lord, I am so thankful for the opportunity to go on this journey. Thank you for giving me the strength and being next to me every step of the way.

Doctor Elizabeth Walton, my research supervisor, for your encouragement, insightful support and guidance in completing this study. I am very thankful that you took this journey with me.

My fiancé, Riaan, for your constant love and encouragement. The way you continually motivated me to stay strong and work hard has been a key motivator in this study, and for that I am very grateful. You mean the world to me.

My family, Mamma, Pappa, Willem, Boet, Tania, Donne, Zoey, Monique. Thank you for always pushing me to do my best and assuring me that I can do this. I am very blessed to have you as my family.

All my friends of which there are too many to mention. I am thankful for your support, patience and loving encouragement. You are all very special to me.

The learners who participated in my study. You were all wonderful and without you, this study would not have been possible.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

ABSTRACT

Historically in South Africa, learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and who experienced a barrier to learning were either sent to a special school or did not attend school at all. The move towards an inclusive education society changed this; all learners are now allowed to be educated in a single mainstream education system. It is important to discover what issues learners with SEN experience in mainstream schools in order for educators to determine how to improve the system. Research has shown the importance of listening to the voices of learners who are marginalised in school in order to do so. This study explores the experiences of learners who have moved from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school by giving them the opportunity to let their voices be heard. A literature review done on inclusion and voices revealed that there is a lack of information regarding how these learners experience school. Data gathered from individual interviews, journals and message-in-a-bottle questions revealed that learners find the transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school very difficult. The fact that they had attended a remedial school brought with it certain labels and levels of marginalisation. Such learners have to work very hard to overcome a number of challenges in high school.

KEY TERMS

Inclusion | Inclusive Education | Remedial school
Mainstream School | Barriers to learning | Marginalisation
White Paper Six

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the problem 1
1.2 Problem statement 2
1.3 Purpose statement and objectives of the study 2
1.4 Research question 3
1.5 Clarification of terminology used 3
1.5.1 Inclusion 3
1.5.2 Listening to voice 4
1.5.3 Remedial school 4
1.5.4 Mainstream school 4
1.5.5 Barriers to learning and Special Educational Needs 4
1.6 Research method 5
1.7 Chapter division 5
1.8 Conclusion 6

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction 7
2.2 Inclusive Education 7
2.2.1 Defining inclusive education 9
2.2.2 International perspectives on inclusive education 10
2.2.3 South African perspectives on inclusive education 11
2.2.4 Barriers to learning and Special Educational Needs 12
2.2.5 From medical model of disability to social model of disability 14
2.3 Policy documents 15
2.3.1 Salamanca Statement and other international policies 15
2.3.2 White Paper Six 16

2.4 Marginalisation 17
2.4.1 Definition 17
2.4.2 Different views of marginalisation 18

2.5 The value of listening to learners in research 19
2.5.1 History of listening to voices 19
2.5.2 Defining listening to voices in research 19
2.5.3 Why teachers and researchers should listen 20

2.6 The value of exploring the experience of learners 20
2.6.1 Why different experiences should be explored 20
2.6.2 How exploring experiences could assist in this study 22

2.7 Moving from remedial to mainstream 23
2.7.1 Mainstream schooling in South Africa 23
2.7.2 Remedial schooling in South Africa 25
2.7.3 The transition 26

2.8 Conclusion 27

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction 28
3.1.1 Research objectives 28

3.2 Research design 28
3.2.1 Phenomenography 29
3.2.2 Researcher role 30
3.2.3 Participant selection and social context 31
3.2.3.1 Limitations to participant selection 31

3.3 Data collection 31
3.3.1 Sampling 32
3.3.2 Semi-structured individual interview 32
3.3.2.1 The interview process 32
3.3.2.2 Advantages of using the interview as a research tool 33

3.3.2.3 Disadvantages/problems of the interview 33
3.3.2.4 Types of question 34
3.3.3 Journal entries 34
3.3.3.1 Advantages of using journal entries 34
3.3.3.2 Disadvantages of using journal entries 35
3.3.4 Using message in a bottle as a technique to gather data 35
3.3.4.1 Advantages of using message in a bottle 35

3.4 Data analysis 35

3.5 Ethical procedures 37

3.6 Credibility and trustworthiness 39

3.7 Conclusion 39

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction 40

4.2 Discussion 42
4.2.1 The academic side of school 42
4.2.1.1 Teacher influence on how learners feel about subjects and school 42
4.2.1.2 Adapting to high school academic demands 45
4.2.1.3 Academic work then and now 46
4.2.1.4 Academic inclusion and exclusion 47
4.2.2 Transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school 49
4.2.2.1 Expectation and reality 49
4.2.2.2 Challenges that participants face 50
4.2.3 Socialisation 51
4.2.3.1 Negative aspects of social life 51
4.2.3.2 Marginalisation and exclusion 53
4.2.3.3 Positive aspects of social life 54
4.2.4 Learners reflection upon their experience in a mainstream 55

high school and moving from remedial to mainstream
4.2.4.1 Perception of self 55
4.2.4.2 Participants' perceptions of what remedial, mainstream and exclusion mean 57
4.2.4.3 Positive and negative aspects of remedial education 58
4.2.4.4 What learners wished teachers knew 59
4.3 Conclusion 59

Chapter 5: Summary and conclusions

5.1 Introduction 61
5.2 Main points from literature review 61
5.2.1 Inclusive education 61
5.2.2 Barriers to learning 62
5.2.3 The value of listening to learners in research 62
5.2.4 The value of exploring the experience of learners 62
5.2.5 Moving from remedial schools to mainstream schools 62
5.3 Answers to research questions 63
5.3.1 How are grade 8 and 9 learners who had attended a remedial primary school experiencing a mainstream high school? 63
5.3.1.1 How do the learners perceive their transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school? 63
5.3.1.2 What do learners express as possible experiences of marginalisation and exclusion and what challenges do they face? 64
5.3.1.3 What do the learners report about the ways in which they are included socially and academically? 65
5.4 Limitations of the study 65
5.4.1 Limitations in the design of the study 65
5.4.1.1 Sample size, schools and location 65
5.4.2 Limitations in the execution of the study 65

5.4.2.1 Journal entries as data collection instrument 66
5.4.2.2 Obtaining participant and parental consent 66
5.4.2.3 Independent schools 66
5.5 Recommendations for further study 67
5.5.1 Qualitative research 67
5.5.2 Quantitative research 67
5.6 Conclusion 68

Reference List

Appendices

A. Ethics clearance
B. Information sheet: Learners – Interviews, Journals and Message in a bottle
C. Information sheet: Parents – Interviews, Journals and Message in a bottle
D. Consent form: Parents – Interviews
E. Permission from the learners – Interviews
F. Consent from Parents Audiotaping
G. Consent form Learners audiotaping
H. Permission from the learners – Journal
I. Consent form Parents – Journal
J. Permission from the learners – Message in a bottle
K. Consent form: Parents – Message in a bottle
L. Letter to the principal
M. Letter to the school governing body
N. Interview question schedule
O. Message in a bottle question

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this study:

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
DoE	Department of Education
GITL	Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIAS	National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
Unesco	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

> "*We are learners whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account"* (A World Fit for Us, Learners's Forum Message, 8 May 2002)

These powerful words, quoted by Messiou (2006:305), create the starting point of this research project. They raise the question of why the world has waited so long to start listening to learners and what they have to say. The concept of inclusive education has in recent years received increasing attention; many schools and academic institutions are striving towards achieving inclusion. But before we can say that we are inclusive, we need to listen to the learners. If we do, we are empowering them as well as ourselves with the knowledge of how to improve their experiences in education (Messiou, 2006).

Throughout the history of research investigations, learners with special needs have been the object of many educational, psychological, social and behavioural studies. Many of these studies have made a valuable contribution to the field of inclusive education. Much of this research was done, however, on or about learners rather than with learners. But in recent years, studies have shifted focus onto the concept of 'voice research'. In this perspective, research is done with learners in order to gain an understanding of their experiences, the ways in which they perceive things and what is significant to them (Dold & Chapman, 2011; Harwood, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Lundy, 2007; Messiou, 2006). It has become important to listen to learners and it is therefore also evident that using 'voices' in research is increasingly applicable in educational research.

However, according to Messiou (2008), there are not many studies in the field of inclusive education that focus on the voices of learners. There is much that we need to find out that could improve not only the way we teach but also the entire educational experience of any learner who might at some stage experience marginalisation. Rose and Shevlin (2004:155) emphasise the need for this exploration of learners's experiences when they state that "voices of young people from marginalised groups within society have tended to be ignored and patronised in the educational decision making processes".

Educators and researchers could allow for even more space to listen to learners who are in any way marginalised. Valuable information is being lost as result of their voices being ignored. Messiou (2006:314) urges us to view the voices of learners as the "challenging starting point for the creation of more inclusive practices within schools".

1.2 Problem statement

Many learners who have attended a small and intensive remedial primary school move up to a bigger mainstream high school, where classes are not as small and the learner does not receive the same amount of individual attention. Although a lot of research has been done on inclusion, we do not know enough about how these learners who are now being included experience a mainstream high school.

This study was conducted within the broader context of inclusive education, where learners who experience some learning difficulties nevertheless attend mainstream high schools. Research participants were learners in Johannesburg who had attended a remedial primary school and were now attending a bigger mainstream high school. If researchers and educators do not listen to the previously unheard voices of the learners who move from remedial to mainstream schools, these learners run the risk of being excluded and marginalised.

1.3 Purpose statement and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore and determine how grade 8 and 9 learners who had attended a remedial primary school are experiencing a mainstream high school. The focus is on how they experience academic and social aspects, inclusion and exclusion, and it aims to determine what their time at school feels like. It also attempts to understand what challenges the learners face. We need to give a platform to the voices of these learners to understand their experiences in order to improve the way in which they are included on all levels – academic, social and extramural. In order to answer the overall question, the study has set the following objectives:

- To determine what high school is like for this specific group of learners
- To explore the various experiences that they have and challenges that they face

- To find out whether they experience exclusion, marginalisation or inclusion

1.4 Research question

The central research question in this study is:

How are grade 8 and 9 learners who had attended a remedial primary school experiencing a mainstream high school?

In order to further explore the main research question, the following guiding questions framed the research:

- How do the learners perceive their transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school?
- What do the learners express about possible experiences or perceptions of marginalisation and exclusion, and what challenges do they face?
- What do the learners report about the ways that in which they are included socially and academically?

1.5 Clarification of terminology used

The following are brief explanations and definitions of terminology and words that are used throughout the study in order to make explicit what they mean and to avoid any misconceptions that might occur.

1.5.1 Inclusion

Inclusion and Inclusive Education acknowledge the diverse needs of learners in school, and respond to these needs (Naicker, 2012). These needs not only include academic aspects or disabilities, but address any factor that has an influence on learning, such as poverty or language barriers. Responding to these needs means that educational and other needs are accommodated and included into a single educational system (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2012). Inclusive education welcomes all learners to be educated in the same classroom.

1.5.2 Listening to voice

Educators and researchers have a lot to gain by listening to what learners have to say (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005; Harwood, 2010; Messiou, 2008; Rose & Shevlin, 2004.) This is done through allowing learners the opportunity to express themselves and discuss situations or feelings that they were never given a chance to talk about. Lewis and Porter (2004) stress that it is vitally important for educators and researchers to acknowledge the fact that every student with a learning disability has the right, along with all the peers in their class, to have a 'voice'. It is then also the educator's duty to elicit different views from these 'voices'.

1.5.3 Remedial school

A remedial school is a particular type of special school where learners with learning difficulties receive individualised attention, and where teachers work at filling academic gaps and assist learners to master critical skills such as reading, writing, learning and mathematical skills (Donald et al., 2012). One aim of remedial education is to provide intensive learning support and to increase the possibility for learners to be placed back into a mainstream school (Williams & Eloff, 2007). In South Africa, remedial schools are mostly independent schools, but may be government schools. Independent schools function independently from the Department of Education.

1.5.4 Mainstream school

In South Africa a mainstream school is any school that is not a special school. Although historically mainstream schools did not cater for the needs of learners with learning barriers, inclusion has now welcomed the possibility of this.

1.5.5 Barriers to learning and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A learning barrier is anything that possibly interferes with learning and teaching (DoE, 2002). Intrinsic barriers arise from within the learner, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or cerebral palsy. Extrinsic barriers relate to social and economic factors in a learner's life, such as poverty leading to hunger and inability to concentrate, and also educational barriers such as poor resources and difficulty in understanding the language of learning and teaching. Simply put, a

barrier to learning is any factor that hinders the ability of a learner to learn (Donald et al., 2012). The learner therefore has an obstacle that he or she needs to overcome in order for successful learning to take place. This barrier that the learner faces results in the learner having a Special Educational Need (SEN). SEN is a contested term and will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.4. These two concepts are interrelated and are often used together. It is also important to note that there is also controversy surrounding the use of the terms learning difficulty, learning barrier and learning disability and they are often used in the same context or confused with each other.

1.6 Research method

This is a qualitative phenomenographic study; it focused on the experiences of a specific group – the individuals were heard but the group was presented. This meant that the study explored the experiences of the group as a whole, instead of the experience of the individual participants who were interviewed, as this is what a phenomenographic study focuses on. Data was obtained through conducting two individual interviews with each participant. Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling, as they had to have attended a remedial primary school and be currently in a mainstream high school. Interview questions were focused on the various experiences that they had at school, in order to assist in achieving the aims of the study and ultimately answering the research question on their experiences in a mainstream high school.

1.7 Chapter division

This first chapter explained what the problem was and briefly mentioned how it would be addressed. The research question that was formulated was stated and the researcher discussed the purpose and aim of the study. The terminology that used throughout the study was discussed to assist the reader in understanding.

Chapter 2 is a literature review that reports on literature that was found in order to discuss the various relevant concepts of this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the research design and explains the methodology of the study as well as the data collection methods that were used.

Chapter 4 explains the research findings and results of the data obtained.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by reflecting on the main results that were found and also makes recommendations for further study and points out the limitations of this study.

1.8 Conclusion

Learners who are marginalised in mainstream schools, including those who might experience behavioural challenges, emotional problems or social difficulties, are in particular need of being listened to, and yet these voices get lost and often remain unheard, not only in research, but also in education (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012). It is the desire of this project to give a voice to a particular group of learners who were recently included in the mainstream system and to explore what they have to say. The following chapter considers the various contributions that have been made in the field of inclusive education with regard to barriers to learning, policy documents and listening to voices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Research has proved that we can learn a great deal when we allow learners in school to be heard; therefore teachers and researchers need to listen to them and allow them to give voice to their opinions (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). These voices in turn provide challenging opportunities for educators to refocus the way in which we include learners in our classrooms. Messiou strengthens this argument by urging that "voices should be seen as the essential element within the process of developing inclusive practices" (2008:35). Researchers, educators and society in general often find it easier not to hear the voices of learners who experience some sort of barrier or difficulty because, as Corbet (in Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012) argues, the social status of these learners is not considered important and their communication is seen as unconventional. Even so, these learners have the right to be heard. In this sense it is the responsibility of educators to listen to the learners. Inclusion should create pathways in schools where various barriers are reduced or eliminated for learners who are excluded or at risk of being marginalised. Listening to marginalised learners will allow us to explore various ways in which exclusion and marginalisation take place.

2.2 Inclusive education

Education is a vitally important part of a learner's life. People have an inherent need to learn. However, all people are unique and do not learn in the same way (Grosser & De Waal, 2006). Teachers soon realise that the ability of all learners in the class differs and that learners do not all have the same learning needs. South Africa is a diverse country where the learners come from diverse backgrounds, and it is thus evident that an average classroom in South Africa would consist of a variety of learners with a diverse range of abilities (Chikovore, Makusha, Muzvidziwa & Richter, 2012). The need for a system that allows for the equal education of all these learners is essential, and the need for such a system has led to the development of inclusion.

If learners who experience some sort of barrier in education, whether it is a mild impairment or a severe disability, do not receive specialised intervention, they might feel discouraged from trying to succeed, or they might get lost in the background of the classroom. Learners with a disability are already at a greater risk of never attending school or dropping out earlier than non-disabled learners (Unesco, 2010), and this should be a worrying fact for all involved in education. Pather (2011) and Walton (2011) are also concerned by the fact that not all learners with disabilities in South Africa are accounted for in special schools, implying that they either attend mainstream schools or no school at all.

The term *inclusive education* is often ideological, and frequently it is used either vaguely or ambiguously. This deeply troubles Slee (2011), who describes how many schools are calling themselves inclusive because they have a specific place on the premises where all the 'different' learners are placed, thereby ostensibly including them into mainstream. This is profoundly problematic, as inclusion goes far beyond simply grouping learners with 'differences' together.

When society refers to schools as being either 'regular' or 'special' it suggests that not all learners are 'regular' (Slee, 2011). These words have an enormous impact on learners, as they are now being grouped into one of two categories. Society has become so accustomed to the language of different disorders and disabilities that it forms part of everyday life. A learner is no longer just a learner, but he might be an 'autistic' learner, or a 'hyper' learner or any other label be attached to him. As a result, Slee (2011:61) explains that such learners are being "detached from their humanity". It happens so naturally that teachers and peers do not always even stop to think about the meaning of the words and terms they use, and in doing so they are practising exclusion. Disability is often conceptualised here as an irregularity or aberration, and this creates false perceptions of difference (Stadler, 2006). It might be perceived either as tragic, evoking pity, or it might be seen as heroic (Mc Dougall, 2006). These perceptions are discriminatory in their own right: the problem is that the label separates the learner from the rest. Learners should be seen as unique individuals who each differ from one another, with different capabilities.

2.2.1 Defining inclusive education

Inclusion is a controversial concept; at the same time it is multidimensional and complex (Swart & Pettipher, 2013). The starting point of inclusion is the realisation that every learner has the right to be educated within a mainstream system (Sapon-Shevin, 2007). This view allows for the opportunity of each learner to be equally educated in the general educational setting, irrespective of his or her ability, socio-economic circumstances, disability, learning barrier, race or any other difference. This inclusionary vision is welcoming and accepting towards all learners (Bradley, 1995). It is a concept that celebrates diversity and embraces difference. Inclusive education also emphasises that learners who do experience difficulties, whether physical or intellectual, moderate or severe, should be allowed to be included in a mainstream schooling system, and provision should be made for these learners with regard to their education (Messiou, 2006; Mitchell, De Lange & Thuy, 2008; Norwich & Kelly, 2004; Pather, 2011). Walton (2013) describes a classroom as inclusive when a diverse array of learners who differ in their learning needs and abilities can be found being taught together in the same class. If teachers need to adapt their lessons or modify the way they teach, as well as providing extra and extensive support in order to accommodate these learners with various needs in their classrooms, then that is what inclusive education expects of them, as each learner is entitled to be a full member of the class (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2013). Inclusion can be implemented in any teacher's class if the teacher applies differentiation, so that every learner has a chance to learn and participate at a level suitable for each (Walton, 2013).

Taking all of this into consideration, and if the definition of inclusive education as outlined by White Paper Six (DoE 2001) is summarised, it is clear that the focus is on acknowledging, respecting and supporting all learners in the educational environment, equally valuing their different learning needs. Inclusion is not merely placing learners in the classroom. Dixon (2005) makes a clear distinction between inclusion and integration, pointing out that a learner who is integrated merely shares a physical space with the others in the classroom, whereas a learner who is included would feel a sense of belonging within the classroom setting and among peers. Inclusion is also about adapting the learning environment and empowering

individuals to get maximum participation and to include all learners in the learning process.

Naicker (2012) lists some characteristics of an inclusive classroom, adapted from Giangreco (1997), and states that an inclusive class is one where all learners feel welcome; where the number of disabled and non-disabled learners is proportional to the local population; where learners with varying abilities can share educational experiences with peers while pursuing learning outcomes that are individually appropriate; and where these educational experiences are designed to enhance the outcomes and educational experiences of each individual.

Even though many educators and researchers support inclusion, there are some who criticise it. Wedell (2008) makes the argument that inclusion has gone too far, saying that there are too many learners with SEN in a mainstream school who are nevertheless feeling excluded. It can be argued that the learners themselves feel different, or are aware of the fact that their learning barrier might separate them from the other learners in the class who do not experience such a barrier. Teachers also often feel overwhelmed by the diversity of learners and this creates a stressful challenge for teachers who are often insufficiently trained (Bradley, 1995). This in itself acts as a stumbling block towards achieving inclusion, as the attitude of the teacher is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of inclusive systems.

2.2.2 International perspectives on inclusive education

Inclusive education is an international issue (Nel et al., 2013). Across the world, classrooms experience a certain amount of diversity. The call for an inclusive system where all learners could be educated is therefore shared among countries around the world.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) has played a big role in the international promotion of inclusion and the vision of inclusive education around the world (Nel et al., 2013). Along with the vision of education as a right for all learners, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education was adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994. This document is in line with what Unesco strives for and states that every learner has the right to be educated (Walton, 2006). The visions of Unesco and the

Salamanca Statement are discussed in more detail in the section on policy documents in this chapter, in section 2.3. These international documents paved the way for inclusion in South Africa as well.

2.2.3 South African perspectives on inclusive education

Democracy in South Africa brought some welcome changes in our educational system, and the post-apartheid government made it a priority to reform the education system (Abrie, 2010). Naicker (2006) stresses how important it was to create all South African policies from within an essential human rights perspective. Inclusive education was a result of this endeavour to create an equal society. South Africa has come a long way in the transformation from an apartheid regime towards becoming a socially equal and just nation, free of discrimination, and is still developing (Abrie, 2010; Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009). Our educational settings are very diverse, even apart from the question of abled and disabled learners. Learners come from a wide variety of cultures, races, backgrounds, religions, social settings and environments (Chikovore et al., 2012). Our educational system has, to a large extent, to be differentiated to cater for all of its learners' diversity and various learning needs (Grosser & De Waal, 2006). That is also one of the reasons why we should strive to move towards an inclusive direction, to include everybody into the educational system, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

In the current democratic South Africa, the education system has seen many changes in order to attempt to eliminate discrimination and to work towards inclusion (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009). There are many policies that have been revised (Weber, 2011); the curriculum has been restructured a number of times (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013; Walton, 2012) and many teachers have been trained through workshops, courses and university degrees to work within an inclusive framework (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). Inclusive education is hailed as the way to go towards creating a schooling environment that is equal and free of discrimination, and as the *Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning* (DBE, 2012:8) state, "the right of every learner to access quality education is enshrined in South Africa's constitution". In South Africa there are many public, rural and independent schools which successfully implement inclusive education and which are functioning well while ensuring that

every learner is given an equal education (Gous, Eloff & Moen, 2013; Walton, 2006; 2010).

Because South Africa is still a developing nation, it still has a long way to go in the route to inclusion, as it does not yet have all the resources that are needed in order to successfully meet all its needs (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009). But, as mentioned above, there are many positive success stories. However, one factor that needs to be explored is whether learners with Special Educational Needs who attend mainstream schools are genuinely included and successfully supported in terms of their individual needs. It is also important to determine whether these learners are included on all levels in schooling, not only academically, but also socially. The following section deals with the various barriers that these learners experience and the special educational needs that they might have.

2.2.4 Barriers to learning and Special Educational Needs

There is some controversy surrounding the use of the different terms regarding Special Educational Needs. The terms learning difficulty; learning barrier and learning disability are often used interchangeably and many times confused with each other. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002), a learning disability has bases that are physically identifiable and include sensory disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments, neurological disabilities such as Cerebral Palsy and Epilepsy and also physical disabilities such as those that affect mobility. A learning difficulty, however, is not as easily recognizable and unlike a learning disability it does not necessarily have a basis that is physically identifiable (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). These could include emotional difficulties like problems related to personal relations and feelings that affect behaviour and also difficulty with communication where a learner might find it difficult to express him or herself or find it difficult to understand language. A learning difficulty can be specific such as a difficulty with learning to read or a difficulty with numbers. It is also important to note that a learning difficulty might be interpreted differently in different social situations. Finally, a learning barrier, according to Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2002), is any internal factor such as poverty or HIV/AIDS or external factor such as learning difficulties or disabilities which causes a barrier that influences or prevents a learner's learning.

The road to successful inclusion is filled with various challenges, some intrinsic and others extrinsic. It is important to note that the learning needs of a learner do not only relate to physical disabilities such as blindness or deafness, or learning impairments like dyslexia or ADHD, but also to any barrier that interferes with learning (DoE, 2001). When addressing the needs of a learner, the focus is not placed on what is wrong with him or her; rather, the emphasis is placed on the barriers that the learner is experiencing and consequently addressing those (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 2012). A teacher who can determine and understand the level that the learner has reached, as well as his or her learning preferences, can address these needs effectively, adapt wherever necessary to comply with the needs of the individual, and ultimately increase the learning potential for every learner (Tomlinson, 2005).

The term Special Educational Needs (SEN) emerged from the Warnock Report – *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Learners and Young People* (Warnock, 1978). This report made clear how important it is to make special provision for learners with SEN in the mainstream education system. A learner who needs additional support or has special educational needs will not be able to benefit from education at school without receiving this additional support (Rae & McKenzie, 2010). Furthermore, a learner who finds learning significantly more difficult than peers of the same age, or has a disability that prevents him or her from using certain educational facilities, is considered to have special educational needs (Lupton, Thrupp & Brown, 2010).

Extrinsic/external barriers are factors that are external to the learners but still influence their lives and learning. Examples include poverty; unemployment of parents; HIV/AIDS; illiterate parents; abuse of substances; gang involvement of community; language barriers and teachers that do not have sufficient training (Donald et al., 2012; Nel et al., 2013). The curriculum, assessment, the classroom and policies are also factors that could act as barriers. Intrinsic/internal barriers are inherent to the learner and include learning difficulties, physical impairments and disabilities (Donald et al., 2012; Nel et al., 2013). Both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers are those that prevent the learners from learning as best they could. While this is happening, these learners also run the risk of being marginalised in some way.

Some learners around the world do not complete high school as a result of some sort of learning barrier. These learning barriers could be internal or external and can range to anything from poor socio-economic conditions to disabilities. This could have a negative impact on their lives. Pijl, Frostad and Mjaavatn (2013) are concerned that students with learning difficulties or who experience exclusion in schools might run an even greater risk of dropping out of school, and mention that these learners are generally overlooked in such research. Other researchers concur, stating that schoollearners with SEN are less likely to finish high school (Cobb, Sample, Alwell & Johns, 2006; Wagner & Davis, 2006). Contributing factors could be exclusion by peers and failure to succeed academically because of a barrier.

Through education, learners are prepared to become economically independent, becoming socially mobile and increasing their employability when they are adults (Camilleri-Cassar, 2013). Controversially, though, many learners have not experienced school as leading to success and increasing the quality of life. Debates in education suggest that the school system often entrenches subtle barriers that cause exclusion and marginalisation (Camilleri-Cassar, 2013).

2.2.5 From medical model of disability to social model of disability

Inclusion calls for a paradigm shift from the medical model of disability to the social model. Historically, learners with disabilities were seen as ‘unnatural’ and were not desirable members of society (Shah, 2007). They were therefore recipients of medical intervention and they were separated from mainstream society. In the medical model, learners are labelled according to their disability and the disability is seen as the problem (Uys, 2005). This model was used previously in education to categorise learners with learning barriers according to the medical problem. Here, the learner was assessed on his or her own without taking any other factors into account. This viewpoint started the move towards what was called ‘special education’ because of the specialised environment that learners were placed in (Nel et al., 2013). These authors add that this was seen as a discriminatory practice that resulted in labelling and stigmatisation.

Inclusive education became the new focus and therefore the medical model was no longer appropriate. A shift needed to be made away from seeing learners in terms of their barriers or disabilities, towards a social and more inclusive model (Nel et al.,

2013). *The Fundamental principles of disability,* published by UPIAS in the mid-1970s (Oliver, 2013), argued that people's impairments did not disable them; it was rather the societal barriers that caused the impairment. It was from this publication that the idea of a social model of disability stemmed (Oliver, 2013). As the social perspective emerged, the disadvantages that learners with disabilities encountered were increasingly seen as a result of failure by social structures to include them, rather than a result of the impairment that they had (Shah, 2007). The social model acknowledges that an individual experiences a barrier, but holds that this disability does not prevent the individual from participating in education and social activities. The social model views exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination as barriers. Critics of the social model have argued, however, that this model only partially explains what happens to disabled people, and that it is a limited view of disability (Oliver, 2013).

2.3 Policy documents

2.3.1 Salamanca Statement and other international policies

According to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001), the framework of the policy documents in South Africa has been developed following international guidelines such as the *United Nations Convention on the rights of the Learner* (United Nations, 1989), *the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled Persons (*United Nations, 1993) and *the World Conference on Education for All by the Year 2000* (Education for All, 2000).

The Salamanca Statement was adopted by the World Conference on Special Education in Spain in 1994, and this paved the way for more inclusive educational practices around the world and also in South Africa (Unesco, 1994). The Salamanca statement was developed to advocate inclusion, and one of the essential claims it made was that learners with SEN should be included in mainstream education. The results of this would be that discriminatory attitudes should change and ultimately be eliminated. Essentially, education should be welcoming to and accepting of all learners in order to create a society that was truly inclusive and where all learners could receive the equal education they all deserved (Gyimah, Sugden & Pearson, 2009).

Internationally, inclusive education is based on the principle that education forms part of the basic human rights that each learner is entitled to and, as Ainscow and Kaplan (2005) rightly argue, this lays an important foundation for the creation of a society that is just and fair.

2.3.2 White Paper Six

White Paper Six (DoE, 2001) was developed to attempt to address barriers found within education and to transform the pre-94 education system, which was exclusionary and filled with injustices (Pather, 2011). This policy was put into place to ensure that attempts would be made to grant access to education for all learners, whether they had disabilities or special educational needs or not.

The Department of Education of South Africa has adopted inclusive education and has set in place policies such as the White Paper Six, which sets the tone on how inclusion should be implemented in schools. Gous et al. (2013) argue, however, that there is inconsistency between policy and practice. The policies that educators are given as guidelines are not always practically possible to implement in classrooms.

The South African Department of Education developed the White Paper Six on Special Needs Education in 2001 in an attempt to alleviate the segregation that was caused as a result of apartheid (DoE, 2001). During this time, learners with disabilities and SEN were often completely excluded from education, and for this reason the negative impact of apartheid is often still seen in the field of special education. The White Paper Six guides educators on some of the principles of inclusion and gives information on identification and assessment of learners, as well as guidelines on special and full-service and ordinary schools (DoE, 2001). According to Gous et al. (2013), there were approximately 260 000–280 000 disabled learners in 2001 who were not included in the education system of South Africa. As the Education White Paper Six was published in 2001, this is a very large number of learners to be excluded 12 years after the implementation of the policy. This number has significantly increased and in 2012 the Sowetan reported that it has risen to 400 000 disabled learners (Monama, 2012). Gous et al. (2013) raise the fact that in the 12 years since 2001 we have been provided with numerous documents from the Department of Education that provide frameworks for the implementation of inclusive education. These documents include *Conceptual and operational*

guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education (DoE, 2005); Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: District Based Support Teams (June 2005); Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: Full Service Schools (June 2005); Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: Special schools as resource centres (June 2005); Curriculum adaptation guidelines of the revised national curriculum statement (2010); Draft conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education. Second draft (October 2002); Draft National Strategy on screening, identification, assessment and support (DBE, 2008); and *Summary outline of the draft national strategy for screening, identification, assessment and support (2008).* In the next section, marginalisation is discussed in terms of inclusive education and how marginalisation can cause exclusion.

2.4 Marginalisation

2.4.1 Definition

Messiou (2012) states that there have been limited attempts to define marginalisation, and even in recent literature this has not been clearly addressed. This is problematic because there are so many learners who are marginalised in schools and in many situations teachers and even the learners themselves are not aware of this marginalisation. In recent years, marginalisation has often been discussed in the context of inclusive education, and is a contested issue (Messiou, 2012; 2013; Petrou, Angelides & Leigh, 2009; Rose & Shevlin, 2004). There are debates surrounding when a learner is actually marginalised and how educators should handle this. There is also very little information and theories about why learners are marginalised. Still, marginalisation is a concept that lacks appropriate definition. What is certain is that within all educational systems, marginalisation will be present (Rix, Sheehy, Fletcher-Campbell, Crisp & Harper, 2013). In South Africa, learners with learning difficulties have an opportunity to attend Remedial schools if there are such schools in their area and if their parents can afford it. The dilemma that arises however is that even though these learners are included into the schooling system, they are still not included into mainstream education and it could

therefore be debated that they are still marginalised and excluded. The reasons for this marginalisation vary between the educational systems.

All learners want to be accepted and included, and they need to feel supported by peers and family. Being marginalised brings about negative feelings, and learners could feel a variety of negative emotions. This could have a negative impact on their educational experience as a whole and also their futures, because if this marginalisation makes their educational experience a negative one, it could influence how hard they work at planning their adult lives after school. Pijl et al. found that lack of support from parents, peers and teachers, as well as loneliness, are predictors for early drop-outs (2013). Their findings indicated that peer support is a very important motivator for students with special needs.

2.4.2 Different views of marginalisation

Messiou (2006) conducted a study to determine how learners view marginalisation and what their views are regarding other learners in the school. She found that learners do indeed understand various forms of marginalisation, and the ones who are being marginalised are aware of the fact that they are indeed being marginalised. Messiou (2012) identified four kinds of marginalisation. The first kind is when a learner experiences a form of marginalisation that he or she is aware of, as well as others. The second kind is when a learner experiences feelings of marginalisation, but peers and other people are not aware of this. The third kind is when a learner is marginalised but he or she is not aware of this. The last kind is when a learner is marginalised but does not acknowledge it. Messiou writes that these categories of marginalisation are merely suggestions when thinking about the learner being marginalised. There are many labels in society, and being labelled and marginalised creates feelings of rejection and exclusion within the learner. Rose and Shevlin (2004) state that negative labels can lead to exclusion, not only socially, but also academically.

Previous studies have shown that students who are marginalised, regardless of the reason, have negative experiences of peer attitudes towards them (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). These attitudes hinder the process of inclusion. Peer attitudes can have a tremendous impact on the overall schooling experience of the learner. It could be argued that learners who are included in class and by teachers, might experience

less marginalisation. The next section of the literature review explores the value of listening to learners and how this could assist teachers in improving the schooling experience of learners.

2.5 The value of listening to learners in research

This study focused on the experience of a certain group of learners – who attended a remedial primary school and now attend a mainstream high school - and they were provided with an opportunity to discuss certain aspects of school and given a chance for their voices to be heard. The following section will briefly explore the history of using voices in research, attempt to define 'listening to voices' and discuss why teachers should allow learners to be heard.

2.5.1 History of listening to voices

The promotion of listening to learners's voices in education is a growing phenomenon worldwide and it is being recognised in domestic legislation and policies (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). However, even though researchers are starting to realise the value of learners's voices, there are still specific groups that are not listened to enough. According to Tangen (2009), learners with disabilities form part of this group.

2.5.2 Defining listening to voices in research

Listening to what learners have to say is a valuable way of gathering information, and its importance in creating an inclusive schooling society should not be underestimated. Ainscow and Kaplan (2005) state that these views and opinions of learners should be the motivation for change in education.

Teachers hear learners each day, but it is not known whether they always really listen. According to Clark (2005), 'listening' suggests that a person is heard and that what is said is interpreted and taken into account; he emphasises that it is not simply restricted to listening to words, suggesting that 'listening' can also take the form of observing such things as body language and facial expressions. Listening should be an active process, and the listener should interpret what is said and construct meaning from what was heard (Tangen, 2009). Through listening to learners, inclusion in education can be improved and promoted.

2.5.3 Why teachers and researchers should listen

The research participant, and in this case the learner, is an expert in his or her own life. It is therefore valuable and beneficial to the researcher if he or she is made part of research. However, as Harwood (2010) implies, learners are not often offered this opportunity; Christensen and Prout (in Harwood, 2010:6) concur by stating that "the exclusion of the learner's voice within educational research is still pervasive". The researcher can come to know certain things about the learner participant, and the more the researcher engages with the learner, the more valuable the knowledge that is gained. Voice research allows us to gain insight into the daily experiences and emotions that the learner has. This knowledge could contribute in many areas. It could enable us to explore positive and negative aspects that learners experience in school and it opens new possibilities for improving the general schooling experience. Because the opinions of learners are often overlooked, opportunities to improve inclusion and education are lost. These opinions are valuable and are worth exploring, as the next section discusses.

2.6 The value of exploring the experience of learners

Educators and researchers should not overlook the importance of exploring the experience of learners with learning difficulties in particular, and this section addresses the reasons for this exploration and how it assisted in this specific study.

2.6.1 Why different experiences should be explored

Traditionally, research objectified the different experiences that learners had; in this process, the view of the learner was not taken into account and valuable information was lost (Harwood, 2010). The literature suggests that many learners state that they do not feel as if they were being heard in classrooms (Reay, 2006). Learners experience a variety of emotions and situations each day and, as Harwood acknowledges, there is not enough focus in research about the experiences of the learners in the varied daily situations in which they find themselves. If researchers were to allow learners to reflect on and voice their opinions and experiences, it would create an opportunity to explore the vast intricacies of these experiences and determine how these varied experiences could improve or limit learning (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). The knowledge that we gain through listening to learners about their

daily activities and social interactions, as well as their opinions about different issues, could help in the journey towards achieving inclusion in education (Messiou, 2008).

Learners can assist researchers and educators by identifying various factors that could either create and improve inclusion in schools or hinder it (Messiou, 2012). By exploring hidden voices, schools, schooling and the educational experience of learners could be improved. Learners in high school are capable of thinking about their future and how education can influence this (Tangen, 2009). They should be aware of the fact that their education can have a positive impact on their adult working lives. If their educational experience however is a negative one, it can also have undesirable outcomes later in life. Listening to learners and determining what their attitude is about school and their education is therefore important and can contribute to their futures. Determining whether learners experience school life as meaningful and a positive contributor to their future is an important aspect to consider when exploring their experiences at school.

Tangen (2009) discusses how learners described the important role that teachers played in their lives in school and education. It was found that teachers who made an effort to listen to the views of learners were also sensitive to the individual experiences of learners and the varied ways in which they expressed themselves. When teachers show such interest in the lives of the learners it makes them feel that their opinions count and that someone takes the time to care about what they have to say. In this way, according to Tangen (2009), teachers are able to use the information they have gained from learners regarding their education and adapt their teaching in accordance with the needs expressed. In situations where learners described teachers who did not care how they felt, the general finding was that learners had negative relationships with these teachers.

A number of successful studies have been done where the aim was to explore how learners experience school, and where the learner was involved as participant in the research in order to fulfil this purpose (Ainscow & Kaplan, 2005; Messiou, 2013; Tangen, 2009; Thompson & Gunter, 2006). One such study was conducted by Thompson and Gunter (2006) at a school in Northern England to explore aspects of schooling; learners were used as researchers to gain insight into various experiences. Researchers gained valuable insights and could use the information

that was obtained in the study to work alongside educators to address a number of the issues that were raised. They referred to the views of the learners as a ‘student’s eye’ and this helped them in creating categories to evaluate.

2.6.2 How exploring experiences could assist in this study

In a study done by Norwich and Kelly (2004), the aim was to determine how pupils with mild learning difficulties in both special and mainstream schools viewed inclusion. A mild learning difficulty could be corrected or contained if in the right supportive learning environment (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). The feelings that the boys in a mainstream school expressed were mainly positive, while the girls in a mainstream school experienced mainly mixed feelings. They had both positive and negative feelings regarding their experiences. By exploring the experiences of learners, teachers and researchers could try to understand why boys and girls have different views on inclusion.

Tangen (2009) makes us aware of the fact that there is a lack of literature that focuses on the quality of life that learners experience in education, and specifically in special education. Tangen adds that many specialists in education, as well as many researchers, do not view aspects of school life and the experiences that learners have here as important, because they focus primarily on preparing learners for life as adults. This is problematic, as understanding how learners experience the various aspects of school is essential to creating a truly inclusive environment. As listening to learners becomes an increasing part of research, these school experiences should be seen as an important aspect of the research.

It is not known whether the experiences of learners moving from a remedial school to a mainstream school are positive or negative. It would be easy to assume that their school experience would be negative, because of possible marginalisation and exclusion, but if we do not allow an opportunity for them to voice these experiences, our assumptions might stay undetermined. When teachers take the time to understand the experiences of learners, it can improve the educational experience of the learner and it creates an opportunity for the teacher to gain greater understanding of how and why learners do certain things.

Some learners with SEN might not be very confident in a new school when having to form social relationships with their peers. According to Thompson, Whitney and Smith (1994), if these learners lack social ability, trying to form such social relationships is likely to create anxious situations and many would end up avoiding any social situation at school. This could create further feelings of exclusion. A concern as a result of this would be that the learner could be at risk of being bullied. The lives of learners at school need to be explored to determine, among other things, whether they are being bullied and or excluded.

Messiou (2012) challenges teachers and researchers to question themselves in terms of what they do and how they do it and also about what they believe to be correct. In the same regard we need to trust what the learners are telling us. Learners deserve to have their perspectives considered. Taking into account and exploring these perspectives might give insight into how learners perceive things such as marginalisation. The next section explores mainstream and remedial schooling, and the transition from the one to the other.

2.7 Moving from remedial school to mainstream

The group of learners that were chosen for this study attended a remedial primary school and then went to a mainstream high school. This section explores what literature exists and what it has to say about mainstream and remedial schools in South Africa, as well as the transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school. .

2.7.1 Mainstream schooling in SA

Most of the primary and high schools in South Africa are mainstream schools. Historically, these schools were not opened to accommodate learners with special educational needs. Learners with special needs used to go to a special school, while learners without special needs went to a mainstream school. The move towards inclusive education paves the way for equal access for all learners to any classroom.

When learners with special educational needs are integrated into a mainstream school, all staff members involved with this learner should work collaboratively to adapt the curriculum to accommodate the academic needs of the learner (Cambra & Silvestre, 2003). They need to look at various aspects such as class structure – i.e.

grouping of learners, length of lessons, types of assessment used and varied teaching methods in order to include the learner in the best possible way in all aspects of his or her schooling experience. When learners with SEN are included in mainstream schools, they have a better sense of integration (Shah, 2007). This inclusion provides learners with the opportunity to receive the same and equal training and high school qualification as other learners; it will allow them to be integrated as part of the mainstream economic society.

Research has shown that many learners who experience a learning barrier or difficulty will spend most of their schooling years in a regular class in a mainstream school (Tomlinson, Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Moon, Brimijoin, Conover & Reynolds, 2003). The research does not state whether this is the case for South African learners. There is a call for differentiated teaching because of the vast diversity in classrooms with regard to academic capability and performance. Research has shown the importance of adjusting the curriculum and also adapting ways of instruction in order to fit in with the individualised needs of the learner (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Differentiation requires that a teacher should individually assess and determine the learning needs of each individual learner. The teacher then works at adapting ways in which to teach the different learners in class. This will mean that the learning activities that learners complete will not be the same; the teacher will not use the same teaching resources for each learner; and assessment will vary according to the individual needs of each learner (Raveaud, 2005).

Research suggests, however, that some teachers who teach in mainstream schools feel inadequately trained in such inclusion methods and therefore feel that they cannot meet the varied needs of the pupils in their classes (Avrimidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003; Rae & McKenzie, 2010).

Voltz, Brazil and Ford (2001) suggest that teachers should feel comfortable using a variety of different methods and strategies of instruction. A single approach to teaching would never suffice in a diverse classroom filled with different needs. Good teaching would make room for all sorts of learners, and therefore the teacher should not have to do much extra planning to accommodate everyone. Using a variety of teaching methods and materials would cater for the many different learning styles of the learners in the class (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009; Roy, Guay & Valois, 2012). As we

learn, we accumulate and acquire knowledge. The teacher plays a role here as it is his or her responsibility to assist the learner in the attainment of the educational goal. When a teacher supports learners when it is necessary and where it is possible, the learners are presented with the possibility of learning and also reaching their full potential (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009).

According to Westwood (2001), teachers should serve as a resource in assisting learners to achieve more than they would have if they were unassisted. A teacher should differentiate teaching and assessment in class to include all the diverse learners who learn differently. In teaching and education, there are many goals that the learners need to obtain and achieve. Some of these goals they might be able to reach on their own and independently. But many of those goals are ones that they would only reach if they were assisted by a knowledgeable and competent teacher. The teacher should therefore strive to assist each learner in the attainment of these goals. This could be done in any number of ways, including delivering content knowledge, conveying different messages, facilitating exercises and examples, mediating information or even prompting questions that will lead the learner to the answer. The possibilities are many.

2.7.2 Remedial schooling in SA

Learners who attend a remedial school have a learning barrier of some sort. This might range from barriers such as autism and Tourette's Syndrome to barriers such as dyslexia or struggling with mathematics. When these learners go to mainstream high schools, some might experience successful inclusion, whereas others might not. When learners with SEN are included into a mainstream setting, a particular concern is that they will probably have difficulty in fully participating in regular education (Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl & Petry, 2013). The learners who have attended a remedial school do experience a certain number of learning barriers and challenges when attending a mainstream school. These could range to anything from difficulties in adapting to the pace at which they work and the amount of work that needs to be done to fitting in socially and making friends.

If learners apply for acceptance into a remedial school, they may be expected to complete a range of comprehensive assessments (Williams & Eloff, 2007). These could include assessments done by occupational and speech therapists and

psychologists: they will also be assessed on their educational ability and scholastic performances. All of these results will assist teachers and therapists at the school to determine the type and level or intensity of support that the learner will require.

2.7.3 The transition

Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua and Fredrickson (2007), in their paper on learners who move from special schools to mainstream schools, argue that learners with special educational needs can often successfully function within a mainstream school, and research has shown that through differentiated teaching and learning and a differentiated curriculum these learners can show appropriate progress. Nevertheless, there is research evidence to show that although learners with special needs might experience academic success in a mainstream school, they are still at risk of being bullied, excluded, rejected by peers and socially marginalised (Gibb et al., 2007; Thompson et al., 1994). Inclusion is not something that should apply to only one aspect of schooling. If a learner is included academically but excluded socially, this can have a significant negative impact on the entire schooling experience.

In the study done by Gibb et al. (2007) on the move from special to mainstream schools, teachers placed emphasis on the ability of the learner to successfully adapt to the curriculum of the mainstream school in order for inclusion to be successful. However, inclusion includes having to adapt the curriculum in order to suit the needs of individual learners, to allow them to achieve success at their own level. This study showed that there was a significant difference in how special schools and mainstream schools viewed inclusion.

According to the special schools, successful inclusion took place when the teacher planned specifically for the learner as part of the work that the class did and when this led to individual progress according to the academic needs of the learner and the specific goals that were set for that learner. This is in line with what is seen as inclusion in South Africa and also according to our policy documents. However, in the mainstream school, inclusion was seen as successful when the learner was proceeding to narrow the academic gap that existed between the individual and the rest of the class.

2.8 Conclusion

Allowing learners in the education system who might experience some form of marginalisation or exclusion the opportunity to express themselves would “enable us to reflect upon how future developments may afford greater opportunities to those who have been previously denied” (Rose & Shevlin, 2004:160). The challenge is that, once we have listened to what learners have to say and we understand the ways in which they view inclusion and marginalisation, and the ways in which they experience school, we do not stop just because now we have heard them. Messiou (2006) urges us to actively do something about the issues regarding inclusion and marginalisation and that we go beyond just listening and start dealing with the issues.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methods that were followed in order to complete this study. The research paradigm is a qualitative study using phenomenography and this chapter discusses it in more detail. This chapter will discuss the objectives of the research and explain the research design that was used. Furthermore, the data-collection methods that were used, including the semi-structured individual interviews and the journal entries, will be described; it will also be explained how 'message in a bottle' was used to add to the data that was obtained. The chapter will then address the data analysis procedure, and finally the ethical considerations of this study.

3.1.1 Research objectives

Chapter 2 provided literature on topics such as inclusive education, policy documents, marginalisation, listening to learners and exploring their experiences as well as the transition from remedial primary schools to mainstream high schools. The literature was critically reviewed and it clearly indicated the need for educators and researchers to give learners an opportunity to be heard and to discuss the various experiences that they have in school. It also indicated the specific need of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to be listened to. This research project aimed to explore the experience of learners who were now in mainstream high schools after attending remedial primary schools. It aimed to determine what their academic experience was and how they experienced the social aspects. It also attempted to understand the challenges that these learners faced and find out how they were included or excluded.

3.2 Research design

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2008) state that a problem statement emerges from the research. When a researcher addresses this problem statement, the research design should act as a guideline in this process. The research design also provides information on whether participants will participate individually or in groups,

and will also include information on the different variables that will be included (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006).

This specific study is qualitative in nature. The research design aimed to gather insight and understanding pertaining to the experience of learners in a mainstream high school. The qualitative research design that was selected for this study was chosen because it was best suited to answering the planned research question. This allowed the researcher to explore the experiences of grade 8 and 9 learners in a mainstream high school after attending a remedial primary school. The aim of the study was not to determine how many learners who attended a remedial primary school later attend a mainstream high school, so therefore it was not necessary to do a quantitative study. This study was interested in how learners experience school, and a qualitative approach was therefore best suited to it.

The purpose of a qualitative study is not only to understand, but also use the data obtained and the literature sourced to explain the phenomenon under study and ultimately create meaning (Henning et al., 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In this research study, the phenomenon was experiences of the learners who move from a remedial school to a mainstream school. Qualitative researchers seek to find meaning from the data that has been gathered; as Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) state, the questions that will be asked in a qualitative research design will often start with “how, why or what”, as these will be able to generate rich responses, even more so when the questions asked are open-ended, as was the case in this study. Furthermore, “the strengths of qualitative studies should be demonstrated for research that is exploratory or descriptive and that stresses the importance of context, setting and participants’ frames of reference” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:92). This design was therefore well suited for this particular study, as the researcher planned to explore the experiences of the chosen participants from their frame of reference and to listen to their point of view.

3.2.1 Phenomenography

For the purposes of this research project, a phenomenographic study was conducted. Marton (in Bowden, 2000:2) explains that people experience various phenomena in their lives differently and also have different perspectives on and understanding of the world they live in, and that these phenomena can be explored

in a qualitative manner in a phenomenographic study. The learners who participated in this study all had in common the fact that they were attending a mainstream high school after having been to a remedial primary school. They were therefore a specific group that I chose to study. According to Prosser (2000), one of the aims of a phenomenographic study is in line with part of this research: to understand the relationships of the experiences that learners and teachers have, related to aspects of teaching and learning.

In phenomenography, the collective experience is recorded, not the individual. Ultimately, such a study should seek to improve the quality of the learning that takes place. When exploring the experiences of the chosen participants in their schools, and through listening to what they have to say, teachers should be able to understand more about how the learners perceive school and learning, and this should ultimately be the starting point towards improving their educational experience.

Bowden (2000) further acknowledges that, as in other research projects, researchers doing a phenomenographic study should be very clear about the purpose of their study, and they need to carefully decide what strategies they will implement in order to get these results. The researcher should not deviate from the purpose of the study. The purpose of this specific study was discussed in section 1.3 under the heading: “Purpose statement and objectives of the study”.

3.2.2 Researcher role

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stress the fact that a qualitative researcher should be well prepared, and this was important in this research study because interviews were conducted. If I had not been well prepared for an interview, the participant might have lost interest and the data that was obtained might have been limited, as a result of questions not being well thought through before the interview. It is preferable for the researcher to be unknown to the participant, but when he or she is in fact known, this could lead to natural participation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this instance, as I was known to some of the participants, it was important to set aside any familiarity with the participants and to treat all participants in the same professional manner and fulfil my role as investigator in the study.

3.2.3 Participant selection and social context

To ensure that this study was truly sound, I had to make well thought-through decisions regarding sampling, as Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest. As this research project required that I gather data from a specific group of participants, purposeful sampling was chosen to find the participants. Participants needed to be specifically selected to fulfil the purpose of the research (Bowden & Walsh, 2000).

The specific research question of a study determines what sort of purposive sampling is required (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In order to answer the research question of this study, participants had to have attended a remedial primary school and they had to be in grade 8 or 9 in a mainstream high school in 2013. It was decided that learners had to be in these two grades because their primary school would be still fresh in their minds, and it is in these first two years of high school that learners adapt to the change and transition from primary to high school. Furthermore, they had to be between the ages of 12 and 16 years, as these are the common ages for grades 8 and 9. Three of the participants had attended the remedial primary school where I currently teach, and the rest had attended other remedial primary schools in Johannesburg. To find learners who matched the criteria, I contacted a large number of remedial primary schools in the Johannesburg area and asked whether they had learners who had attended grade 7 in their school and then went into a mainstream high school. I received contact details for parents of possible participants and thereafter contacted the parents to obtain permission.

3.2.3.1 Limitations to participant selection

Ethically, finding suitable participants was a big limitation of this study. The remedial primary schools were very reluctant to give out contact details for parents of possible research participants. The participants that eventually formed part of the research were not spread over a large number of primary schools. Furthermore, only a few parents agreed to allow their learners to form part of the research, and as a result the sample was not very large.

3.3 Data collection

During the course of the research, I collected and stored certain information in the form of texts of transcriptions and journal entries, as well as oral information from

interviews. This is referred to as ‘data’ (Wood, 2005). Data was obtained by using two different data-collection instruments, semi-structured interviews and journal entries. In addition, participants completed a message-in-a-bottle activity, the data from which were added to the analysis. When a researcher uses a variety of methods to collect data, it increases the validity and this is even more important in cases where learners are the research participants (Harwood, 2010).

3.3.1 Sampling

Participants were chosen by using purposeful sampling. I decided on particular characteristics that participants needed to have and then chose participants who had these characteristics and who would provide the best information to assist me in addressing the research question (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). The strengths of this type of sampling are that it makes administration easier and it is possible to generalise to similar cases. It also ensures that the researcher gets the information that is needed. A weakness, however, is that the results that are obtained will strongly depend on the characteristics of each individual (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). There is also the danger of subject bias.

3.3.2 Semi-structured individual interview

Semi-structured individual interviews were chosen to collect the majority of the data that was needed in order to address the research questions.

3.3.2.1 The interview process

Each interview began with a detailed explanation of the research as well as the type of question that would be asked. It was explained to each participant that the interview would be audio-recorded and why this needed to be done. I conducted two individual semi-structured interviews with each participant. The main purpose of the data being received from an interview was to determine what the participant’s thoughts were about the topic (Henning et al., 2008).

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions. Interviews that use open-ended questions allow us to receive information regarding the views and experiences of the participants and give us insight into their perceptions of the world and their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This ensured that participants were able to discuss

topics and elaborate on their answers through probing by the interviewer. All the questions were uniquely developed and were used specifically in this study to answer the proposed research question. Open-ended questions are important in a qualitative study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that if the interviewer asks specific questions, it generates the responses that have to do with the research topic and this will ultimately assist in answering the research question.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 70 minutes; the length of the interview depended on the responses that each participant gave. Each interview was audio recorded as this increased the reliability of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, Niewenhuis, 2007c). In addition, I took notes during the interviews to assist the analysis of the data. I decided that I would like to have two interviews with each participant, one at the beginning of the year and one during the end of term two. This was done to explore how their feelings towards the school had changed or remained the same after two terms in the high school.

The semi-structured individual interviews with the participants were designed to obtain information from them regarding their experiences at the mainstream high school, as well as their feelings regarding their remedial primary school. The interviews were undertaken after school hours.

3.3.2.2 Advantages of using the interview as a research tool

The researcher decides what questions need to be asked in order to answer the research questions. Because the researcher is present in the interview, she can decide to change or adapt the questions whenever it is necessary, and could also add questions that are generated from the responses of the participant, or omit questions that she feels are no longer relevant or necessary.

3.3.2.3 Disadvantages/problems of the interview

During an interview, participants can often find their own space and even though this could be a positive thing in many instances, it could also be a disadvantage because participants could resist the questions that the researcher asks them and they could also attempt to manipulate some of the questions in order to answer a question that they would rather answer. Another disadvantage is that there is the possible danger of the researcher's being biased and the interview subjective (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2005). Furthermore, participants might be uncomfortable and this would have an effect on their responses.

3.3.2.4 Types of question

When interviewing learners with Special Education Needs (SEN), general open-ended questions generate the best responses (Lewis, 2005).I used an interview schedule (see Appendix O) during the interviews. This consisted of a list of open-ended questions that could elicit rich responses from participants. Questions were based in part on the literature and also on what information was needed in order to answer the main research question and also the subsequent sub-questions. The questions served as a guide to the structure of the interview, and more questions emerged as the result of a participant's answer. I therefore probed the participants for more answers where I felt it was needed.

3.3.3 Journal entries

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a journal is a type of personal document written in a narrative form that allows the researcher insight into the personal thoughts and experiences of the participant. Interviews can be supplemented by other documents, such as a journal in the case of this study, that contain information regarding events that occur and any other information that is relevant to the specific research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This will help to generate rich data.

During the first meeting at the beginning of 2013, each participant received a journal. They were asked to write about their experiences at school once every one or two weeks. I explained to them that they could choose to write more or less frequently. This added to the data that was analysed in order to understand what experiences the participants had during their daily lives at school.

3.3.3.1 Advantages of using journal entries

Marshall and Rossman (2011) further state that an advantage of using documents like the journal is that they do not disrupt and disturb the setting. The learner is given the opportunity to write in the journal without someone's commenting on it or judging

him or her. It is also a method of obtaining data from a participant who might be too shy or uncomfortable to be honest in an interview.

3.3.3.2 Disadvantages of using journal entries

Not all learners enjoy writing. A researcher therefore runs the risk that all participants might not write in their journal about their experiences. Journal entries are made in the participant's own time and this might be time consuming.

3.3.4 Using message in a bottle as a technique to gather data

In a study done by Messiou, she used a technique called 'Message in a bottle' (2006). With this method, a question that requires a reflective answer is asked of the participant, and the participant answers the question on a piece of paper as if placing the message in a bottle so that a person far away can find and read it. During the second interview, the learners were asked to write a message regarding this question in a bottle to a faraway planet. This allowed them the opportunity to write completely honestly about their feelings regarding the question.

3.3.4.1 Advantages of message in a bottle

Messiou (2006) explains that using this method to collect data from learners reduces the disparity in power that often exists between the adult doing the research and the learner participating in the research. She further explains that the message-in-a-bottle activity can be used when sensitive issues are being addressed, as the participant then does not have to talk to the researcher directly about it. In this study, learners were asked what they wished their teachers knew about learners who came from a remedial school.

3.4 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis aims to develop an understanding of the participant's perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, feelings and experiences (Niewenhuisen, 2007a). This confirms the fact that choosing a qualitative study would assist in the answering of this research question. Niewenhuisen (2007a) further explains that the participant's world view adds to the construction of the research question. As data collection commenced, I was continuously involved in organising and categorising the data into different types (Creswell, 2003). I set out to analyse and understand the

participants' perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, feelings and experiences, which added to the construction of the research question. Wolcott (1995) explains that the success of qualitative data does not lie in the accumulation of information or data, but rather in how the data has captured the experiences of the participants and the researcher, then presenting it to others.

Throughout this process I was guided by the reminder of Wimmer and Dominick (2000) of the importance of the role of the researcher in a study. The boundaries of this important role should not be overstepped, however, and Cresswell (2003) highlights the importance of recognising researcher biases, personal interests and values with regard to the research question, as well as the research process. Through keeping a reflective journal myself, possible biases could be identified and addressed accordingly. The reflective journal served as a space where I could write about personal opinions regarding the interviews, and certain aspects of the research journey. If any biases arose, I could pick them up through reading through the journal, and then attempt to put the bias aside.

With this in mind, my role as a researcher was to observe and listen carefully so as to avoid confusion between my own world view and the understanding of the participant's world view. Throughout this research process I also had to be aware of the roles that I fulfilled as a participant researcher and a teacher. It was necessary to distinguish between the different aspects of the roles and the possible influences these roles might have had on the research process, being wary of power relations and avoiding them.

Creswell (2003) explains that the process of meaning-making is a continuous one, going backwards and forwards, constantly evaluating and assessing collected data, ensuring richness of the data. I was engaged with the collected data, from which a process of meaning making unfolded as the data was understood within the given context.

All interviews were transcribed, and as McMillan and Schumacher advise, the notes and audio transcripts were converted into a "format that will facilitate analysis" (2010:370). Once the data had been gathered, an exploratory phase was entered where all the data was read through carefully and thought through (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011); this engagement with the data allowed me to become familiar with the

information. This included data from the semi-structured individual interviews, the participants' journal entries and the information obtained from the message-in-a-bottle question.

In all the data that was gathered, there were certain responses that stood out as separate ideas with regard to the topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). These individual ideas were then used to create codes. These codes in turn gave meaning to each piece of information. Henning et al. (2008) suggest that codes are created as the researcher goes through all the data that has been collected. The codes could come from a variety of sources, including ideas generated from the literature review, the responses generated from the data obtained from participants and also the creative insight of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). When the coding process was finished, these codes were placed into categories. These categories in turn showed the themes that formed the structure of the data analysis (Henning et al., 2008).

3.5 Ethical procedures

The consideration of ethics needs to play a vital role in the research structure. Research was conducted in accordance with ethical methods and guidelines, as stipulated by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand (See Appendix A). The advice of Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) acted as a reminder that ethical rules and regulations needed to be adhered to from the onset of the research process until publication of findings. The latter provided a platform for ethical legislation to be woven into the research process, allowing for the research to be informed by ethical codes of conduct. Ethical procedures were especially applicable in this case, owing to the young and vulnerable age of the participants.

Before the research could begin, confidentiality needed to be explained and discussed with the participant, and even before the interview was scheduled informed consent needed to be obtained (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). It was particularly important to ensure confidentiality in this study, as learners who experience learning difficulties might be prone to thinking that other people would not respect their views Lewis (2005). Participants needed to be informed regarding what the research was about as well as what was expected of them. Only then could consent from learners be given. A comprehensive information sheet for both the

parent and the learner (See Appendices B and C) was set up, and separate consent forms for each of the data-collection methods as well as the audiotaping of the interviews were made for both parents and learners (See Appendices D–K).

Henning et al. (2004) state that a researcher has to obtain consent from the parent or guardian of a learner who is under the age of 18 before the research can be conducted. One of the main ethical considerations when working with learners and young people is to protect them in terms of harm: their identity as well as their privacy. This was done in this research by using pseudonyms that the participants chose for themselves and assuring them that everything was handled confidentially. It was also essential to ensure that they were fully aware of and understood that they could withdraw from participation without any negative consequences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The fact that they could withdraw their participation was stated in the information sheets as well as on every consent form. It was explained to them during each session as well. The research was explained to participants and I made it clear whether there were any risks involved (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The research was explained briefly in the information sheets (Appendices B–C) and was discussed in more detail during the first meeting. The specific research was explained in the information letter and our first meeting and I answered any questions that they had. In the letter participants were again invited to be part of the research. I obtained the consent forms personally from the parents involved. In the letters it was explained that participating in this research project meant that I would meet with them twice in 2013. It was anticipated that the participants that were chosen would be representative, as well as providing information regarding the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Participation needed to be entirely voluntary and this was stated in the information letter (Appendix B) that participants received. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) point out that with voluntary participation, the participant cannot be forced in any way to take part in the study. All private and personal information regarding the participant needs to be protected through ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and all data must be kept in a locked room.

3.6 Credibility and trustworthiness

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) state that trustworthiness implies that what you report is true, and Lincoln and Guba (2003) refer to the term *trustworthy* as the way in which the inquirer is able to persuade the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality.

One way to ensure credibility and trustworthiness is through data triangulation, using various sources of data collection. This allows a researcher the opportunity to increase and improve the credibility of the study that the researcher is doing (Newton Suter, 2006). The aim in this study was to establish trustworthiness by using semi-structured interviews, journals and message in a bottle. Data triangulation implies that the validity of the research will be enhanced if the methods used to collect data generate the same findings. I also worked with my supervisor and kept an accurate record of all data that were collected. The data could therefore be audited.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of the qualitative research design that the study followed, and the methodology that was used, including the collection of data, the sampling of the subjects and the analysis of the data. It also discussed and addressed ethical considerations. The research was designed with the main question in mind and the design and methodology was chosen to best assist in answering the question.

The following chapter will present and discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In order to determine how learners who had attended remedial primary schools experienced mainstream high schools, a group of learners were identified and interviewed. The following chapter introduces the participants that were involved in this study and describes the common themes that were found as result of interviews held with participants.

Table 1: Biographical information of participants

Participant	**Gender**	**Grade in 2013**	**Number of years participant had attended remedial primary school**
Participant A	Female	8	1
Participant B	Male	8	3
Participant C	Female	8	4
Participant D	Male	8	4
Participant E	Male	9	3
Participant F	Female	9	3
Participant G	Male	9	2

Table 1 gives the biographical information of the seven participants who were interviewed for this study. This is for information only, because in a phenomenographic study the group experience is presented, not the experience of the individual. There were three females and four males. All participants were between the ages of 13 and 15 years. Four of the participants were in Grade 8 in 2013, and the other three were in Grade 9. Participants were therefore in their first or second year of attending a mainstream high school. The number of years that participants had spent in remedial primary schools varied, with the lowest being one year and the most being four years. The average number of years that the learners

had attended a remedial primary school was three years. All participants except one spoke English as their first language. The other participant spoke Zulu as a first language and English as a second language. The language of learning and teaching for all participants, however, was English. All learners had attended independent remedial primary schools and were now in independent mainstream high schools. Participants came from four different primary schools and now attend six different high schools. Only two participants currently attend the same high school.

Table 2 presents the main themes that were identified through interviews with participants, and it also lists the subsequent subthemes.

Table 2: Main themes and subthemes

Main themes	**Sub themes**
1. The academic side of school	1.1 Teacher influence
	1.2 Academic adaptation
	1.3 Then and now
	1.4 Inclusion and exclusion
2. Transition from remedial primary school to mainstream high school	2.1 Expectation and reality
	2.2 Challenges of high school
3. Socialisation	3.1 Negative aspects of social life
	3.2 Marginalisation and exclusion
	3.3 Positive aspects of social life
4. Learners' reflection upon their experience in a mainstream high school and moving from remedial to mainstream	4.1 Perception of self
	4.2 Perception of what exclusion, remedial and mainstream mean
	4.3 Positive and negative aspects of remedial education
	4.4 What learners wished teachers knew

4.2 Discussion

The data that was obtained through the interviews, journal entries and message-in-a-bottle question was analysed and four main themes were identified. The findings will now be discussed under each main theme as well as the identified subthemes.

4.2.1 The academic side of school

The main purpose of this study was to determine the experiences of learners in a mainstream high school after having had a remedial primary education. As the largest part of the schooling experience consists of academic aspects, such as learning, the amount of work, the difficulty of work and teachers, and the like, it was necessary to explore the academic side of school in great detail. As the subthemes indicate, there are various recurring aspects that need to be addressed. Findings relating to the first main theme will now be discussed within each subtheme.

4.2.1.1 Subtheme: Teacher influence on how learners feel about subjects and school

Teachers spend a large amount of time with learners each day. As with many other factors at school, such as friends and activities, teachers can have a certain effect on the mood of a learner, and they also have the ability to either positively or negatively influence learners (Akande, 1999). If a learner does not get along with a teacher, there is the possibility that the learner will also not enjoy the subject that that teacher teaches; as one participant says: "*I hate Maths because I hate the teacher,"* and even *"do bad in that subject because I don't get along with the teacher"*. The same might also be true for the opposite, when the learner likes a teacher and gets along with him or her. Research has shown that students are concerned with whether or not their teacher likes them, and whether they like or do not like the teacher also matters to them (Noddings, 2003). Teachers and their teaching also have an important effect on the self-concept of the learner because, as Cambra and Silvestre explain, the attitude that the teacher displays towards learners with special educational needs may be reflected in the attitude of other pupils (2003). This subtheme explores how participants experienced the influence that teachers had on how much or little they liked a subject and whether it played a role in how they performed.

Participants felt that it was important for teachers to put effort into the planning and execution of lessons in high school to make it interesting: *"My Maths teacher doesn't plan"; "I like it when the lessons are interesting."* This also means that teachers should use a variety of teaching methods, because if a teacher teaches all learners in the same way, some learners will achieve success while others will not (Grosser & De Waal, 2006). One participant described how in doing so, the teacher is able to lift the marks of the learners in class. *"I just feel that those teachers who do a bit more effort in making their lessons interesting can get everyone to that extra 10%, you know?"* Many of the participants highlighted the fact that lessons need a 'fun' factor and should not be boring. Some participants mentioned that in high school the teacher is part of the reason why their favourite subject is their favourite. *"I love NS, the teacher is so much fun." "English and LO are my favourite subjects because the teacher jokes with us."* Participants therefore enjoy classes in high school where teachers are fun and friendly.

In the same way, participants also mentioned that teachers sometimes had a negative influence on their subjects. Participants did not like being bored in class and, as one participant put it: *"We have some mediocre teachers who normally just sit at their desks, their lessons are boring."* When learners do not like the teacher, they also do not like the subject, and state that the subjects they like least are the subjects where they do not like or get along with the teacher. In this study, the Mathematics teacher and subject turned out to be the least favourite out of the group of participants and the following quotes express their dislike:

> ***"****I hate Maths."*
>
> *"Maths is my least favourite."*
>
> *"When we go up to the Maths teacher to ask a question, she always says that we need to go ask a peer."*
>
> *"I don't like the Maths teacher because if you ask him a question, he gets angry and shouts at you. Uhm, if you ask him the same question because you don't understand, he gets irritated with everyone and starts yelling at us."*
>
> *"I don't like Maths because our Maths teacher just sends you for extra lessons, he doesn't do extra work in class."*

When looking at the reason for the dislike of the Mathematics teachers, it seems that learners expect their teachers to help them when they struggle and to answer questions when they do not understand, and these Maths teachers are not doing that but rather send learners elsewhere to find answers or "yell" at them. Research has shown that many teachers have a negative attitude towards inclusion (Nel, Muller, Hugo, Helldin, Backmann, Dwyer & Skatlind, 2011) and they feel that they are inadequately prepared to deal with the diversity of learning needs (Hay, Smit & Paulsen, 2001) and do not have enough training to support learners with SEN (Bornman & Donohue, 2013).

There was a clear distinction between the way in which many participants described their teachers in primary school, and the way in which they described their high school teachers. *"Teachers at my primary school were just... kinder."* "*If you had a problem in primary school, the teachers would be there by your side to help you through it. If you didn't understand your work they would be there to explain it, no matter how many times you struggle to understand it."* For most, their primary school teachers had been very caring and understanding and went out of their way to make sure that learners understood the work. More than one participant explained that primary school teachers' "*spoonfed"* the learners. High school teachers were described as more authoritative and encouraged learners to be independent. One participant explained that teachers in primary school always made time to listen to them and now in high school it no longer worked that way. *"...if you have a problem they tell you that you can't always go to them for advice and stuff because it's now high school and you have to learn to deal with peer pressure, your own difficulties and sort it out."* Participants explained that they needed to deal with more things on their own and that that was difficult.

On top of academic and social pressures, learners also had to deal with teachers' perceptions of them. Many learners commented that it was hard to adapt to the way in which teachers in high school treated them, and explained that primary school teachers had a closer relationship with learners. Most learners stated that the grade 8 learners were not very popular with teachers. This was applicable to the grade 8s in general and not specific to the fact that they came from a remedial school. The following quotes explain how learners perceived teachers to feel about them.

“Most teachers complain about us grade eights because we are new and everything about us is wrong.”

“They complain that we don’t participate in sports as well as the other things...”

“The grade eights are always in trouble... I don’t think they like us very much...”

Teachers play an important role in the schooling experience of all learners. The transition from a primary school to a high school might present a number of challenges. If one adds to this the fact that the learner moves from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school, the challenges that they face might be even greater. The following subtheme explores how learners experienced adapting to the academic aspect of high school.

4.2.1.2 Subtheme: Adapting to high school academic demands

For many learners the transition from primary school to high school is a difficult and challenging one. For learners moving from remedial primary schools to mainstream high schools, this transition might present them with even more challenges. This subtheme explores how learners adapted to the academic work pace and intensity of high school.

All the participants in the study were introduced to new subjects in high school. Lessons were longer and the work done in each lesson more demanding and harder. The average school day of each learner increased by at least an hour, and one of the biggest aspects learners had to get used to was the fact that they had been able to go home after school in primary school, whereas in high school their day was longer as a result of extramural activities. Academic performance is often highlighted in a mainstream school, and the learner’s individual needs are not always given high priority (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009). Participants explained that teachers had *“focused more on the individuals”* in their remedial primary school and that there were many differences regarding academic work in primary school and academic work in high school. These differences will be discussed in the next section.

4.2.1.3 Subtheme: Academic work then and now

There are many academic differences between primary school and high school. There are new subjects, learners have more subjects, there are more teachers, work and homework increases and the difficulty of work intensifies. The fact that everything about the participants' academic experience at school changed substantially when they went to high school was made very clear. When asked what, if anything, was the same about their primary school and their high school, not one participant gave even just one similarity.

Learners had to take on a completely new work ethic. Not only did the amount of class work increase, but homework increased significantly and *"every day is like school, school, school, school, homework, homework, project, study, study, study, study."* In high school learners were faced with academically demanding weeks that required them to study for at least two or more tests; they had to complete assignments and projects and they had hefty amounts of homework daily. Participants now had to learn how to manage their time, as they often had to *"sit until eleven o'clock at night"* and they had to create schedules to fit in tests, projects and activities such as speeches and other oral tasks. Balancing all of this was important as their afternoons did not only consist of a single academic activity but they had to "*get all my work done and then I have to study or work on a project."* Most learners had written tests in their primary schools, but they wrote one test per week and did not receive much homework and hardly ever received a project. This made them *"miss primary school",* as they felt that whereas now they had to rush to try to get everything done in the afternoons, in primary school they could at least *"relax in the afternoons!"* This all proved to be difficult and exhausting for learners and they were demotivated by the fact that they "*can't even relax in the holidayz because we have too many projects..."*

Learners also faced a sudden increase in the number of learners that were in each class. All the participants came from grade 7 classes that had had approximately 12 learners in each class. In their high schools they were faced with classes that held between 30 and 45 learners in each class. This was intimidating for quite a few of them, as they explained that they were used to a small number of learners. A study done by Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009) revealed that learners may experience

independence and a sense of academic success when they are educated in smaller classrooms where they receive individual attention. Many of them mentioned how *"in primary school teachers could make sure everyone understands"* and that made learning easier for them. In high school, however, learners felt that this was no longer possible as "*now there are too many kids in class..."* Participants thought that the size of the class mattered, and one participant mentioned that teachers cannot give each learner lots of attention. *"... if one kid like really struggles, the teacher can't basically get to him 'cos there are so many other."* There were therefore numerous changes that participants needed to get used to. The next section explores how learners perceived themselves to be academically included and excluded.

4.2.1.4 Subtheme: Academic inclusion and exclusion

The role that the teacher plays with every individual is very important. The role of a supportive teacher should not be underestimated, as this could have an influence on the success that a learner experiences in class (Te Riele, 2006). Because learners go to a remedial school as result of some sort of learning barrier, these learners probably have specific academic needs that need to be met in high school. Learners with SEN have a greatly increased risk of achieving poor academic results (Humphrey, Wigelsworth, Barlow & Squires, 2013; Ruijs, Peetsma & Van der Veen, 2010). Now in a mainstream high school, for learners to be successfully included the teacher needs to adapt the curriculum to meet the specific needs of the individual and also use various additional materials to further add to the learning (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009). It was necessary to explore whether learners felt that they were being included or excluded academically.

A trend was that learners felt they were misunderstood and blamed for not listening when in fact they did not understand the work. The following extracts from the interviews support the fact that learners felt this way.

> *"My teachers don't help me, certain teachers will say that I need to ask my friends when I don't understand, and others just say 'You weren't listening when I explained, so it's your problem.'"*

> *"Teachers always say that I didn't listen when I say to them I don't understand."*

"Most of the times I don't understand the work, but I don't want to say so because teachers will think I'm stupid or I don't listen."

Participants did not discuss how they were being included or excluded academically in great detail, but a few participants gave examples of how they felt they were or were not being included. One participant has a hearing disability and explained that it took teachers a long time before they attended to his specific needs. *"I am deaf, and finally after a year teachers have moved me to the front so that I can hear what they are saying."* Another learner discussed the fact that teachers were not as strict with him as regards deadlines of projects and assignments. *"I'm remedial, right, so they don't give me strict deadlines."* The following participant explained how he was included after struggling with Afrikaans. *"I got an exemption for Afrikaans because I kept on failing and they said I can't keep on failing Afrikaans, so they finally sent in my exemption and now it's like a free lesson for me."* They explained that inclusion and exclusion were different for each subject. All participants found that there were some teachers who did not make any attempt to include them in class at all. (Many teachers in South Africa battle to meet the different educational needs of the learners in their classes (Chikovore et al., 2012; Grosser & De Waal, 2006). Then there were other teachers who seemed to make an effort to include them in the classroom by giving them more time to finish activities, explaining assessments in more detail to them and to make time after school to work on things learners did not understand during the lesson.

All the learners, apart from two, explained that teachers were not really aware of learners having different academic requirements and so they did not differentiate in their teaching. They therefore felt that they were not always academically included, because teachers focused on the class as a whole and not a group of individuals with specific individual learning needs. It was interesting to note that five of the participants mentioned that teachers like the *"smart learners"* in the class, and that they expect everyone to understand the work just as well as those 'smart' ones do. The following quotes explain how learners felt that teachers only taught for a specific group of learners in the class.

"Teachers like it when the kids get the answers right, so they keep working with those kids and forget about us."

"We can't all be so clever, but teacher expect us to just be like that."

"Lots of teachers think that we must all just understand because the smart ones understand, but I say to my friends, 'Coach doesn't think every boy can play soccer, so how can the Ma'am's think we can all do the work?'"

It was evident through the interviews with learners that the academic side of life in high school is not easy for them and presents them with many challenges. This leads onto the next theme that needs to be explored: just how learners perceived their transition from remedial primary to mainstream high school.

4.2.2 Transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school

As mentioned before, the transition from any primary school to any high school is often hard and challenging. Not one participant said that it had been an easy journey so far. This theme will explore what their expectations were and whether the reality was any different, it will determine what challenges they face in high school and it will look at what has changed each time they approach a new phase of schooling.

4.2.2.1 Subtheme: Expectation and reality

Before entering high school, most participants were nervous and expected that they would either struggle academically or battle to make friends. *"I was very nervous..." "I didn't know how I was going to do." "I was worried most about making friends." "I don't fit in easily..."* Some participants explained that their parents were worried because they did not think that they would adapt to the academic work. *"I mean, like, even my parents, they don't think I'm academically smart, so, and they were worried that I might not do so well in the first year or something..."* "*Everyone made it out that I was gonna struggle."* Most of them anticipated that they would not like high school.

When participants discussed their feelings leading up to their first days in high school, they all created a clear picture of uncertainty and considerable nervousness. All participants were scared and did not know what to expect. One participant explained that everyone in grade 7 felt on top of the world, but the moment the first week of high school came, there was no more confidence anywhere to be seen. Even though participants were scared and unsure, most of them explained that they were still excited at the same time. These quotes express their fear and excitement.

"I was scared 'cos it's a change from primary school. And I was excited..."

"I felt very scared 'cos I wouldn't know anybody there, so this new school with more kids and I wouldn't know where to go..."

"I was really scared and anxious but I was also really excited for a new experience..."

"I was nervous about being liked..."

Almost all the participants admitted that many of their fears were quickly eliminated when they realised that high school was not such a bad place. A few participants commented on how impressed they were with themselves for 'coping' because they did not think that they would. *"I was very happy when I saw the shock on my parents' faces when I actually did well. I could see they were surprised when I did well."*

Some did say, however, that they were right about being nervous, as high school is no "*ball game"* and that even though they liked it, they were still "*blown away"* by just how much it differed from their primary schools. Although most participants seemed to be enjoying high school in general, most admitted that it brought along a whole new range of challenges.

4.2.2.2 Subtheme: Challenges that participants face

"High school is exhausting; there is so much to do!"

"It's hard trying to fit in..."

"I struggle with the work ethic. The work is so much more and everything is harder."

These three quotes sum up the three biggest challenges that participants are faced with daily, coping with an increasingly busy and demanding school life, gaining social acceptance, and adapting to the change of academic work structure.

Participants discussed their daily lives. None of the primary schools they had attended offered any extramurals such as sport. Participants enjoyed the fact that they were now given the opportunity to participate in sports and other activities. The challenge for most participants, however, was that they were used to having relaxed

afternoons with nothing much to do and little stress regarding homework and studying. Now, being given the chance to do a variety of activities, participants suddenly had to balance busy schedules and *"set time out"* to fit in both extramurals and academic work. If they do not plan, they *"won't get around to do your homework and study"* and this will add to the pressures they already face. This seemed to have a very tiring effect on all participants and many *"sit around doing homework and making posters 'till like twelve o' clock at night".*

Another challenge that learners faced was the fact that they all wanted to fit in. It was also an aspect that was mentioned by many participants when asked how they felt about coming to high school. For many participants, social acceptance is very important and they *"just want everyone to like me and I wanted to get along with people..."* They do not enjoy it when they feel left out or alone, and one participant said that *"there are some days where it felt like nobody wants to talk to me."* And this leads to feelings of exclusion. Another participant expressed his worry because he was a *"very shy guy at the start"* but then after getting used to the school and the people he *"sort of broken out of my shell".* For him and others who experienced similar feelings it was "*stressful".* The social aspect of high school is quite important to the participants and will be discussed in more detail in the next main theme presentation.

4.2.3 Socialisation

As discussed previously, learners long to be accepted and to be able to have friends with whom they can share their high school experience. Most of the participants that were interviewed seemed to have some meaningful and positive relationships with friends. There were two participants who battled to fit in socially and this made high school life very hard for them. All participants discussed situations where they were excluded in some way.

4.2.3.1 Subtheme: Negative aspects of social life

In most school environments there are learners who will have negative experiences. Studies have shown that the social status of learners with SEN is often lower than that of their peers who do not have special needs (Cambra & Silvestre, 2003). These experiences could range from being socially excluded to being bullied, and might

include things such as peer pressure and rejection by learners of the opposite gender. All of these factors could have a negative impact on the overall high school experience of learners.

The group of learners that were identified for this study were learners who ran the possible risk of being marginalised as a result of the type of primary school that they attended. In a study done by Walton (2012), it was found that learners did not want learners with disabilities to be included in their school because those learners would be excluded and labelled. Most high school learners might have to face some negative experiences during their time in high school, but because the focus of this study was on learners who had attended a remedial primary school, the negative experiences that they had will be the focus here.

It was important to explore how friends of the participants reacted when they found out from which primary school the participant had come. For some friends it "*did not matter"* and participants explained that their friends *"didn't really care about that".* An interesting opinion from a participant as to why it did not matter to his friends was that perhaps "*they don't understand what remedial means."*

For other participants, however, it was a different matter altogether. Many felt that they were being "judged" and classified because they came from a remedial school and these statements by the learners confirm this. There is always the risk that peers will exclude and marginalise some learners (Walton, 2012).

> "*I didn't like it when kids judged me because I'm remedial, 'cos like, it doesn't mean that you're stupid because you're remedial, it just means that you take longer to catch on..."*
>
> *"People judge you on your brains and how much you can do and they say I'm stupid, but I'm not."*
>
> *"There is a lot of judging going around. I don't judge people from what they are and what they do, but people judge you from like the way you dress, the way you comb your hair and the way that they walk and wear their pants. And they judge you from which school you come from."*

Most learners explained that it was very hard for them to fit in because of the way people judged them about having a remedial background. One participant commented that perhaps learners did not understand what remedial was all about. Another participant refused to tell anyone that he had attended a remedial primary school. He lied and told friends that he came from a different school in another town. When asked why he chose to do this, it seemed that he was very uncomfortable about having gone to a remedial school.

> "*Look, I mean most kids from my primary school aren't the smartest on the block, and that gives people the perception that kids from my school are dumb."*

Learners furthermore spoke about their encounters with peer pressure. As the learners were in grade 8 and 9, not many had had personal encounters with pressures such as smoking and drinking or doing something that they did not want to, but they were all aware that this happened to learners in school and commented that they knew some learners were pressurised into smoking and drinking. Many admitted to finding peer pressure hard to deal with and one in particular said that he was *"very bad with peer pressure."* He further explained this by saying that "*if two people agree with each other and I actually don't I'm going to be full frontal and do what they say, even if it's wrong...",* confirming the reality of learners giving in to peer pressure.

4.2.3.2 Subtheme: Marginalisation and exclusion

> *"If they really knew which school I came from, they would think I'm stupid...."*

This statement set the tone for the marginalisation that the participants faced, and it acts as an example of some of the labelling that the learners experienced. The participants who told people which primary school they attended said that they felt that they were placed into a category and excluded because of it. The word that participants associated most with remedial was 'stupid'.

Participants also spoke of how they were aware of other learners being excluded, labelled and bullied. This confirmed that they understood these concepts and they empathised with these learners. Learners knew that exclusion, labelling and bullying were wrong, and because they had experienced some form of this themselves they

might feel bad for the learner: as one said, *"it breaks my heart if I see someone being teased."* However, they did not always do something about it because they were scared that it would exclude themselves further; one participant even had the realisation that "*I know if I defend them I'm gonna be judged and classified with them..."*

An interesting observation was that most learners discussed the fact that they noticed that disabled learners were abused and excluded more than other learners. One participant was deaf, and he commented that he was being constantly bullied and excluded as result of his hearing barrier.

> *"I sort of hate to say this but it's the kids who have disabilities who are excluded."*
>
> *"I think people see a weakness and then they take it to a next level."*
>
> *"People always exclude me because I'm deaf."*

Some participants said that their exclusion led to their being bullied and they noted that this made them feel even more excluded. As one participant mentioned, "*It's a vicious cycle..."* They spoke about their own encounters with bullying and some also mentioned how they had seen others being bullied. In the message-in-a-bottle activity where learners had to write about what they wished their teachers knew about learners who came from a remedial school, a few learners wrote that they wished teachers were aware of the bullying that went on and that they would do something about it.

4.2.3.3 Subtheme: Positive aspects of social life

Even though the experiences at school that learners chose to speak about were predominantly negative, there were some positive experiences that learners discussed. One of the positive things that they discussed was the friends that they made, as they described their friends as *"nice"* and "*helpful".* The participants liked their friends because their friends were *"patient"* and if they didn't "*understand they will try and explain to you."* Another factor that made participants enjoy the company of their friends was that they *"share the same interests"* and they therefore "*have lots to chat about."*

Even though it took participants a while to find a friendship group to belong to, most eventually did and spoke fondly about them. It was evident through the discussions with participants that they mostly found their group of friends through similar interests. These included rugby, reading in the library, soccer and even playing games. Some participants spoke about few friends and others claimed that they had *"lots of friends".* Even though their friends had similar interests, it seemed as if their personalities and cultures were "*very diverse".* For one learner it was particularly important to mention that he had "*an Asian friend, and an Italian friend",* as he wanted to make it clear that "*there was no sort of racial thing"* at his school.

Socialisation with friends occurred during break times at school and participants said that they mostly hung around with their friends and chatted. Participants were asked if they saw their friends during weekends and holidays, but nobody said that they did. Socialising was therefore restricted to school and not part of their personal lives out of school times. Even though many of the participants had experienced a great deal of rejection and exclusion, their friends made them feel that they at least belonged somewhere.

4.2.4 Learners reflection upon their experience in a mainstream high school and moving from remedial to mainstream

Learners were invited to do self-reflection through writing in their personal journal as well as through the message-in-a-bottle question. Even though there was not much data gathered from the journals, the message-in-a-bottle activity generated some insightful responses. Many of the open-ended questions that were asked in the interviews also allowed ample opportunity for self-reflection. This theme will discuss what learners perceptions are of themselves, what they perceive remedial, mainstream and exclusion to be, whether they feel their remedial primary education influenced them in a positive or negative way and also what they wished their teachers knew about learners who come from a remedial primary school.

4.2.4.1 Subtheme: Perception of self

Results of a study by Cambra and Silvestre showed that the self-concept of learners with SEN in an integrated classroom is lower than that of their peers who do not have special needs (2003). Participants in my study noted that they knew they were

called things like *"retard"* and *"the remedial one*", but they often felt helpless about the situation. They said that even though they knew this was happening, *"What can I do about it?"* Some participants developed their own coping mechanisms to deal with this labelling they experienced; one learner said that *"this one kid that does it, he is fat, right, so I always say to him, 'can I call you the fat one?' and then he stops for a while."* None of them liked being called names and they said it was *"unfair",* because *"I don't call people names".* One girl just wanted to enjoy school and not worry about being called names, saying that *"I'm just like any other teenage girl",* and explaining that she *"just take(s) longer to learn."*

Participants were very open and honest about their opinions of themselves and also the way that they perceived themselves academically and socially. Academic competence and social acceptance have a big influence on the overall self-concept of a learner (Akande, 1999). Participants spoke with fondness of their grade 7 years and enjoyed telling me how they were "*on top of the world"; "the main guys in school"; "our teachers made us feel like we are the most special grade".* When asked how they then experienced the first few months of high school, their responses were slightly less positive and the tone was more serious. Many said that it was more difficult to be themselves in high school because of judgemental learners and because there were no longer only a few learners in a grade. It was harder to just *"fall into the shadows of all the kids".*

All participants discussed their learning needs and accepted that they had different academic capabilities and needs from other learners. Most participants saw themselves as "*different*" and many called themselves *"remedial".* For some, as these extracts from the interviews show, the perception that they had of themselves had been distorted into something negative.

> *"I used to be very embarrassed when the teacher who took me for remedial was, like, It's time for remedial!' so they made it obvious and I didn't like that at all."*
>
> *"So, like, I'm remedial, right, and my needs are different... but people take it as being stupid..."*

"Most of my friends didn't do any extra remedial stuff, I didn't feel too smart about it, it made me feel that I wasn't smart enough like everyone else..."

"It's different 'cause you know I'm remedial... and you know... but like if I was normal then I would have been as normal as other people..."

Participants were not very confident when discussing themselves and preferred to chat about negative aspects and things they struggled with than about things they were good at. The only two participants who were confident were the ones who played rugby and soccer, and one of them said that *"it's not the way you look, it's not the way you run, it's not the way you play football, it's the way you are inside, and I think people don't get that."*

4.2.4.2 Subtheme: Participants' perceptions of what remedial, mainstream and exclusion mean

Learners were asked what they thought each of these terms meant. It was an important question, as it was significant to explore what their feelings were regarding their primary remedial education, their mainstream high school education and their experiences with exclusion.

When asked what they thought mainstream meant, some participants thought that *"it means bigger"* or *"more learners".* Some explained that it meant the *"needs of pupils who don't have special needs are met,*" and even said that *"it is where you go if you don't have learning problems".*

The opposite was also true when learners spoke about what remedial meant, and many thought it meant the school was *"smaller"* and where there were *"not as many kids in a class",* whereas others identified it as a place where you could get *"help for students who are experiencing learning difficulties"* and where you went to be helped if *"you struggle to learn*".

Two participants did not know what exclusion meant, but the rest gave a short definition, such as that *"you get excluded from a group for some reason"* and you are *"left out on purpose".* Some could also discuss examples of exclusion like *"when you get left out and people don't involve you"*. Some examples were about their own experiences of exclusion, like being left out of "*groups of friends at school"* or "*people*

quickly walking away when I want to go stand with them" A study done by Walton (2012) about inclusion in a South African high school found similar results of being left out. Other statements about exclusion were that *"being excluded makes learners feel bad"* and that they *"hate it"* because *"it sucks to be left out"*.

4.2.4.3 Subtheme: Positive and negative aspects of remedial education

Part of understanding the participants' experience at school was trying to determine how learners perceived their remedial education to have positively or negatively influenced them and the way they experienced school. All participants said that if they could choose again, they would choose again to go to a remedial primary school, because "*they understood my needs better than in a mainstream school"* and *"I got along with my teachers".* They felt that their remedial primary schools contributed to giving them a positive school experience because there they "*felt confident to asked questions"* and "*teachers always helped without making you feel dumb".* The smaller and more intense learning environment made it "*easier to concentrate"* and made it possible for the learners to get the *"attention that I needed".* Socially it was also easier for participants to fit and *"it was easier to be friends with everyone"* because the school was smaller and learners were more tolerant towards difference.

Participants felt that there were many advantages to a remedial school. The teachers played a big role in all participants' primary school experience. All participants felt that teachers were more caring and that it was easier to have a good relationship with teachers. It was also evident that most teachers were patient and would explain work as often as participants liked. Another factor was that some participants felt that their academic needs were met in the sense that teachers understood their specific needs and work was suited to them. These next statements from some of the participants show what feelings they expressed about remedial primary schools and the way these schools left positive thoughts in their minds.

> *"I think remedial is the way to go, as teachers pay a lot of attention to how your work progress is going, and where you struggle, they also get to know you personally and you feel more closer to them because you are comfortable there."*

"They understand your needs there, they help you get better at working life if you're a dyslexic person."

"Teachers were so much nicer, I wish I could go back."

Even though learners spoke highly of the positive effects that remedial education had on them, they could also identify some negative effects of having gone to a remedial primary school. Most participants found it very hard adapting to mainstream high school and this was the biggest disadvantage that they felt they had. They seemed to think that learners who had attended mainstream primary schools adapted better and faster than they did, and said that if they *"went to a mainstream primary school"* they *"might have been used to the work flow by now"*. They also felt that many teachers in primary school "*spoonfed"* them and they were "*too dependent on teachers"* and they therefore struggled with the workload and difficulty of high school and battled with the sudden independence. Participants were also aware of the 'label' that they now had and that that resulted in marginalisation, exclusion and teasing and saying that *"you may get teased by kids who are not in a remedial school"*. One participant said that she *"hates"* that people to call her *"stupid because of it".* Some learners said that they sometimes felt "*lonely"* and didn't *"have as many friends because the school is so small*[big]*".*

4.2.4.4 Subtheme: What learners wished teachers knew

Participants were asked to complete a message in a bottle, as discussed in section 3.3.4. In this activity they were asked to openly and honestly answer a question by writing it on a piece of paper. The question asked what they wished their teachers knew about learners who came from a remedial school. It was evident from the answers that participants wished that teachers could realise that they have *"different needs from my friends"* and that they *"sometimes struggle to learn in the same way as other learners".* Learners further expressed their desire for teachers to be *"patient"* and *"helpful"* when they *"struggle with the work"* in class.

4.3 Conclusion

This researcher was interested in the experience that learners have in a mainstream high school after having attended a remedial primary school. The findings discussed in this chapter clearly indicated that the transition between the two schools is a

difficult one for participants and presents a number of challenges. The themes that were identified showed that their experiences in high school are mainly centred firstly around academic aspects such as the increased workload and busy schedule, the intensity of the work and their relationship with their teachers, and secondly around social aspects such as fitting in and dealing with marginalisation. Overall, participants chose to mainly speak about negative experiences such as the challenges that they faced with regard to academic demands and social acceptance. However, their experiences were not only negative, and they enjoyed discussing friends and the positive social experiences that they did have. The next chapter will sum up and conclude this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to reflect on the entire research process and to briefly discuss the results of the data that was analysed. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to make some recommendations as to future research as well as discuss the limitations of this project. The main points that were found from the literature review will be briefly discussed, while integrating the data and findings with the literature. This is done to determine whether the findings agree or disagree with the literature.

This qualitative, phenomenographic study was initiated in response to the main research question regarding how seven grade 8 and 9 learners from Johannesburg who had attended a remedial primary school now experienced a mainstream high school. This was done using semi-structured individual interviews, journal entries and the responses participants gave to a message-in-a-bottle question.

5.2 Main points from literature review

5.2.1 Inclusive Education

Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN), or those who face any barrier need to be included by receiving specialised intervention in order to feel encouraged to succeed and to be motivated to learn (see section 2.2). Because these learners are at a greater risk of failing in the educational system, including them is of vital importance. In South Africa, a lot has been done to attempt the implementation of inclusion in schools; however, there is still a long road to go towards the inclusion of all learners and also ensuring that those who are physically included do not feel excluded and marginalised as a result of it (see section 2.2.3). The data in this study has shown that some learners, even though they are included in the mainstream education system, experience exclusion in their schools in both academic and social spheres.

5.2.2 Barriers to learning

A barrier to learning is not only a physical disability or problem that a learner is facing in education. It is defined as anything that limits learning or prevents it from taking place. Learners who experience barriers and/or who have SEN run the risk of struggling with or even failing at education. The results of this study have shown that there are many difficulties and challenges that these learners face as a result of these barriers.

5.2.3 The value of listening to learners in research

The voices of learners are increasingly used in educational research (see section 2.5.1) but it was found that specific groups of learners, such as the group of participants selected for this study, have not been listened to enough. Listening to voices is described as a valuable technique when attempting to understand the experiences of learners (see section 2.5.3). Educators and researchers have much to gain by considering and taking into account the opinions of learners. It was necessary to give the specific group of this study a voice in order to learn more about the different experiences that they have.

5.2.4 The value of exploring the experiences of learners

Research has shown that there is a need to explore the experience of various groups of learners in education (see section 2.6.1). Understanding these experiences could assist researchers and educators in improving inclusion and also determining how they could improve learning. It could also point out how inclusion is being hindered. Because the researcher found that it was not known how learners experienced a mainstream high school after they had attended a remedial primary school, this study chose to focus on the experiences of this specific group.

5.2.5 Moving from remedial schools to mainstream schools

A limited amount of research has been done on remedial and mainstream schooling in South Africa. There have been even fewer attempts to explore the transition from a remedial school to a mainstream school. It was found that learners with SEN who attend mainstream schools need to have their needs individually addressed for successful inclusion to occur. Even though the challenges that learners with SEN

face are often many, it is indeed possible for them to achieve success in a mainstream school. This happens when educators considers their individual needs and make provision for them. In this study it was noted that participants felt that they would like teachers to understand their specific needs so that the teachers could help them learn.

5.3 Answers to research questions

5.3 1 How are grade 8 and 9 learners who had attended a remedial primary school experiencing a mainstream high school?

The data that was obtained through the individual interviews and the participants' journal entries pointed out certain main themes that formed the basis of the data analysis. These main themes related back to the varied experiences that learners have in their high schools, therefore addressing the main research question for this study. The main themes concerned the academic side of school; the actual transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school; socialisation; and the learners' reflections upon their experience in a mainstream high school and moving from remedial to mainstream. In order to explore more closely how learners were experiencing a mainstream high school and to assist in answering the main research question, a few sub-questions were asked and these will now be addressed individually.

5.3.1.1How do the learners perceive their transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school?

The research clearly revealed that the transition from a remedial primary school to a mainstream high school is not an easy one for learners. Participants discussed in subtheme 4.2.2.1 that they had expected that the transition would present a number of challenges and were all very uncertain about how they would experience high school. During the first meeting with participants in the first term of their grade 8 year, it was evident that they were still battling to find their feet. Grade 9 learners who were interviewed during the first term were better adapted, and all admitted that their grade 8 year had been hard because they were not used to the fast-paced demands of a mainstream school. When grade 8 learners were interviewed again

later in the year, they still talked about the transition being a difficult one, but they had started to relax more and had found their feet in their various groups of friends.

All learners commented that the work in their remedial primary school had been a lot easier and far less in amount than in their mainstream high schools. In subtheme 4.2.1.1 it emerged that participants felt that teachers in their primary schools were more helpful and more focused on the needs of the individuals. Because participants felt that teachers in their high schools were more authoritative and wanted them to be more independent, this made the transition between the two schools difficult. The sudden change in the way learners experienced teachers, their attitudes and the way they taught, added to the challenge of the transition. Participants expressed in subthemes 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.1.3 their feeling that there was a big difference between the work done in a remedial primary school and that in a mainstream high school. All of them struggled to adapt to the academic expectations and demands of high school.

5.3.1.2 What do the learners express about possible experiences or perceptions of marginalisation and exclusion, and what challenges do they face?

Most learners had a good concept of exclusion and they discussed situations where they had seen other pupils being excluded. There were a few participants who described their own experiences of exclusion. This exclusion that they discussed related back to the fact that they had attended a remedial primary school, and they seemed to be aware of the fact that they were being marginalised. Many of them had been labelled and called names as result of their primary school. A name that cropped up often was ‘stupid’, and some were also called ‘the remedial ones’. This formed part of one of the big challenges that they faced, which was the importance they placed on fitting in. All the participants had a desire to fit in socially, and in some instances the ‘label’ that they had hindered this.

The academic side of school was a big challenge for almost all the participants. Participants mentioned that not all teachers realised that they were struggling, and they even said that the teachers enjoyed teaching the ‘smart ones’ in class and the rest just had to keep up. They struggled with the amount of work, the intensity and difficulty of it and the pace at which they had to work. They also found their new

schedules challenging, as their afternoons now consisted of lots of homework, studying and projects.

5.3.1.3 What do the learners report about the ways in which they are included socially and academically?

All learners except for one expressed the feeling that their close friends had no problem with the fact that they came from a remedial school. Their groups of friends included them in activities inside and outside of the classroom. Some discussed how their friends even helped them with their work. Some teachers in the schools that the participants attended were aware of their difficulties and helped them accordingly.

5.4 Limitations of study

This section addresses the limitations that were encountered during the course of the design and execution of the study. The limitations that were identified in turn created the possibility for further research.

5.4.1 Limitations in the design of the study

During the design of this research study, limitations concerning the sample size, the number of schools included and the location of the study were encountered. These are discussed first.

5.4.1.1 Sample size, schools and location

As mentioned in section 3.2.3.1, this study had a very small sample size; there were only seven participants. This resulted in a limitation of the study. All seven participants attended schools in the western and northern suburbs of Johannesburg. This adds to the limitations as it was a very small area of South Africa that was covered in this study. Furthermore, there were very few remedial primary schools (four) and mainstream high schools (six) in this study.

5.4.2 Limitations in the execution of the study

While the actual study was being conducted, some limitations were also encountered. These related to the journal entries that participants had to complete, the parental consent that it was necessary to obtain and the fact that the study only used independent schools. These limitations will now be discussed.

5.4.2.1 Journal entries as data collection instrument

Participants received journals during the first meeting with the researcher. They were asked to write about their experiences in school throughout the first two terms of 2013. Participants could decide how often they wanted to write in the journal. However, only a few participants actually wrote in their journals. It was noted that it was the three girls who made journal entries, whereas the four boys did not. Even though all participants did not write in their journals, it was decided to use the entries that were made, as the data generated from them was rich and made a valuable contribution to the findings.

5.4.2.2 Obtaining participants and parental consent

If a researcher chooses to work with a group of participants that are particularly vulnerable, accessing these participants and gaining consent from them and their parents can be complex and difficult (Valentine, Butler & Skelton, 2005). The researcher approached a variety of remedial primary schools in Johannesburg and asked to receive contact details of parents whose learners had attended their remedial primary school and then went to a mainstream high school. This in itself was problematic, as most primary schools did not want to give out these contact details.

This eliminated a large number of primary schools where participants could possibly have been found. In addition, many of the parents for whom the researcher did actually get contact details did not want their learners to be part of the study. Many parents felt that it would take time away from either academic demands or extramural activities. There were also a number of parents who did not want to subject their learners to the research questions, as many felt that their learner was already battling with the fact that he or she had gone to a remedial primary school and did not want to be reminded of that. Lewis (2005) found that when interviewing learners about inclusion, there is a good chance that the sample will be limited because of difficulty in obtaining parental consent.

5.4.2.3 Independent schools

The researcher did not intend to only use learners who were in independent high schools. However, because it was so difficult to find suitable participants, the

researcher had to use all the available participants. All of these participants that were found and consented to be in the study were currently in independent high schools. The study is therefore not representative of government high schools.

5.5 Recommendations for further study

5.5.1 Qualitative research

The results of this study could be used to generate a new study to determine what remedial primary schools could do to better prepare grade 7 learners for the transition into a mainstream high school. It could explore what teachers could do in the classrooms of remedial schools to assist learners with the transition. Another study could then also be done to determine what mainstream high school teachers could do to make the transition easier for the learners.

This study could also be replicated using government high schools. The research could therefore be focused on the experience of learners who had attended a remedial primary school when entering a government mainstream high school. A comparative study could also be done to see if there were differences or similarities between the experiences of learners in government and independent mainstream schools.

A qualitative study could be done in which learners from across South Africa are represented and their experiences are explored. In this study I have listened only to this specific group of learners, and do not know the extent to which all learners may experience the same when coming to high school, so some comparative work could be done to see how similar/dissimilar their experiences are to the rest of grade 8 and 9 learners.

5.5.2 Quantitative research

When the researcher contacted remedial primary schools, many of the schools replied that most of their learners go to small independent high schools or they are home schooled. A quantitative study could be done to determine how many learners who have attended a remedial primary school actually go to a big mainstream high school.

5.6 Conclusion

Every learner throughout the world and South Africa is equal and should be seen as such in a classroom. This study wanted to give a voice to the previously unheard learners who face the difficult transition from a remedial school to a mainstream high school. This study has shown that there definitely is a lot to gain through listening to this group of learners, and that the possibility of improving their educational experience does indeed exist by allowing them the opportunity to express themselves. It is the responsibility of researchers and educators to do all we can to give each and every learner the best possible learning opportunity, without their feeling excluded and left out. As one participant stated:

"Even though I am different, I am still just the same as everyone else".

Reference List

Abrie, A.L 2010). Student teachers' attitudes towards and willingness to teach evolution in a changing South African environment. *Journal of Biological Education,* 44(3), 102–107.

Akande, A. 1999). South African learners's conception of self. *Early Learner Development and Care,* 152(1), 55–76.

Ainscow, M. & Kaplan, I. 2005). Using evidence to encourage inclusive school development: Possibilities and challenges. *Australasian Journal of Special Education,* 29(2), 106–116.

Avramidis, E., Bayliss, B. & Burden, R. 2000. Student teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the ordinary school. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 16(3), 277–293.

Bornman, J. & Donohue, D.K. 2013. South African teachers' attitudes toward learners with barriers to learning: Attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder and little or no functional speech. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education,* 60(2), 85–104.

Bossaert, G., Colpin, H., Pijl, S. J. & Petry, K. 2013. Truly included? A literature study for focusing on the social dimension of inclusion in education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 17(1), 60–79.

Bowden, J. A. 2000. The nature of phenomenographic research. In J.A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds). *Phenomenography: qualitative research methods.* Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Bowden, J. A. & Walsh, E. (Eds). *Phenomenography: qualitative research methods.* Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Bradley, D.F. 1995. Moving into the mainstream. *Educational Forum,* 59(1), 81–91.

Camilleri-Cassar, F. 2013. Education strategies for social inclusion or marginalising the marginalised? *Journal of Youth Studies,* 17(2), 252–268.

Cambra, C. & Silvestre, N. 2003. Students with special educational needs in the inclusive classroom: Social integration and self-concept. *European Journal of Special Needs Education,* 18(2), 197–208.

Campbell, J., Gilmore, L. & Cuskelly, M. 2003. Changing student teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability,* 28(4), 369–379.

Chikovore, J., Makusha, T., Muzvidziwa, I. & Richter, L. 2012. Learners's learning in the diverse sociocultural context of South Africa. *Learnerhood Education,* 885), 304–308.

Clark, A. 2005. Listening to and involving young learners: A review of research and practice. *Early Learner Development and Care,* 175(6), 489–505.

Cobb, B., Sample, P.L., Alwell, M. & Johns, N.R. 2006. Cognitive-behavioural interventions, dropout, and youth with disabilities: a systematic review. *Remedial and Special Education,* 27(5), 259–275.

Cresswell, J.W. 2003. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

DBE (Department of Basic Education). 2008. *National strategy on screening, identification, assessment and support.* Pretoria: Department of Education.

DBE (Department of Basic Education) 2010. *Guidelines for inclusive teaching and learning.* Pretoria: Department of Education.

Dixon, S. 2005. Inclusion – Not Segregation or Integration – Is where a Student with Special Needs Belongs. *Journal of Educational Thought.* 39(1)

DoE (Department of Education). 2005. *Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education.* Pretoria: Department of Education.

DoE (Department of Education). 2001. *Education White Paper Six: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system.* Pretoria: Department of Education.

DoE (Department of Education). 2009. *Guidelines for full-service/inclusive schools*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

DoE (Department of Education). 2002. *Implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa: True stories we can learn from.* Pretoria: Department of Education

Dold, C.J. & Chapman, R.A. 2011. Hearing a voice: Results of a participatory action research study. *Learner Family Study,* 21, 512–519.

Donald, D., Lazarus, S. & Lolwana, P. 2012. *Educational Psychology in social context: Ecosystemic applications in Southern Africa. 4th ed.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Gibb, K., Tunbridge, D., Chua, A. & Frederickson, N. 2007 Pathways to inclusion: Moving from special school to mainstream. *Educational Psychology in Practice,* 23(2), 109–129.

Gous, J.G., Eloff, I. & Moen, M.C. 2013. How inclusive education is understood by principals of independent schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 1–18.

Gravetter, F.J., & Forzano, L.B. 2003. *Research methods for the behavioural sciences*. Thomas Wadsworth.

Grosser, M. & De Waal, E. 2006. Enhancing pedagogical needs and fundamental rights at school by accommodating diverse learning styles. *Education as Change,* 10(2), 17-32.

Gyimah, E.K., Sugden, D. & Pearson, S. 2009. Inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream schools in Ghana: Influence of teachers' and learners's characteristics. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 13(8), 787–804.

Harwood, D. 2010. Finding a voice for learner participants within doctoral research: Experiences from the field. *Australasian Journal of Early Learnerhood,* 35(4), 4–13.

Hay, J.F., Smit, J. & Paulsen, M. 2001. Teacher preparedness for inclusive education. *South African Journal of Education,* 21(4), 213–218.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W. & Smit, B. 2008. *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leavy, P. 2006. *The practice of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leavy, P. 2011. *The practice of qualitative research.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Humphrey, N., Wigelsworth, M., Barlow, A. & Squires, G. 2013. The role of school and individual differences in the academic attainment of learners with special educational needs and disabilities: A multi-level analysis. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 17(9), 909–931.

Lazarus, S., Daniels, B. & Engelbrecht, L. 2012. The inclusive school. In P. Engelbrecht, L. Green, S. Naicker & L. Engelbrecht (Eds). *Inclusive education in action in South Africa.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Lewis, A. 2005. Reflections on interviewing learners and young people as a method of inquiry in exploring their perspectives on integration/inclusion. In Sheehy, K., Nind, M., Rix, J. & Simmons, K. (Eds). *Ethics And Research in Inclusive Education – Values into Practice.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Lewis, A. 2010. Silence in the context of 'learner voice'. *Learners & Society,* 24, 14–23.

Lewis, A. & Porter, J. 2004. Interviewing learners and young people with learning disabilities: Guidelines for researchers and multi-professional practice. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 32, 191–197.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, G. 2003. Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 253–276.

Lomofsky, L. & Lazarus, S. 2001. South Africa: First steps in the development of an inclusive education system. *Cambridge Journal of Education,* 31(3), 303–317.

Lundy, L. 2007. 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Learner. *British Educational Research Journal,* 33(6), 927–942.

Lupton, R., Thrupp, M. & Brown, C. 2010. Special Educational Needs: A contextualised perspective. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 58(3), 267–284.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 2011. *Designing qualitative research.* 5th ed.. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McDougall, K. 2006. Ag shame and superheroes: Stereotypes and the signification of disability. In B. Watermeyer, L. Swartz, T. Lorenzo, M. Schneider & M. Priestley (Eds), *Disability and Society.* Pretoria: HSRC Press, pp. 387–400.

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher. 2010. *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry.* 7th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Messiou, K. 2006. Understanding marginalisation in education: The voice of learners. *European Journal of Psychology of Education,* 21(3), 305–318.

Messiou, K. 2008. Understanding learners's constructions of meanings about other learners: Implications for inclusive education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs,* 8(1), 27–36.

Messiou, K. 2012. Collaborating with learners in exploring marginalisation: An approach to inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(12), 1311–1322.

Messiou, K. 2013. Working with students as co-researchers in schools: A matter of inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 1–13.

Mitchell, C., De Lange, N. & Thuy, N. 2008. "Let's not leave this problem": Exploring inclusive education in rural South Africa. *Prospects*, 38, 99–112.

Monama, T. 2012. Many disabled not in school. *The Sowetan.* Retrieved 2012/05/24/many-disabled-not-at-school

Msibi, T. & Mchunu, S. 2013. The knot of curricular and teacher professionalism in post-apartheid South Africa. *Education as Change,* 17(1), 19–35.

Naicker, S. 2006 From policy to practice: A South African perspective on implementing inclusive education policy. *International Journal of Whole Schooling,* 3(1), 1–6.

Naicker, S. 2012. Inclusive education in South Africa. In P. Engelbrecht, L. Green, S. Naicker. & L. Engelbrecht (Eds). *Inclusive education in action in South Africa.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp. 12–23.

Nel, N., Muller, H., Hugo, A., Helldin, R., Backmann, O., Dwyer, H. & Skarlind, A. 2011. A comparative perspective on teacher attitude-constructs that impact on inclusive education in South Africa and Sweden. *South African Journal of Education,* 31, 74–90.

Nel, N., Nel, M. & Hugo, A. 2013. Inclusive Education: the necessity of providing support to all learners. In Nel, N., Nel, M. & Hugo, A. (Eds) *Learner support in a diverse classroom: A guide for Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phase teachers of language and mathematics.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Newton Suter, W. 2006. *Introduction to educational research: A critical thinking approach.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Niewenhuis, J. 2007a. Analysis of qualitative data. In K. Maree (Ed.). *First steps in research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.99–117.

Niewenhuis, J. 2007b. Introducing qualitative research. In K. Maree (Ed.). *First steps in research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.47–66.

Niewenhuis, J. 2007c.Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.),.*First steps in research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.70–92.

Nind, M., Boorman, G. & Clarke, G. 2012. Creating spaces to belong: Listening to the voice of girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties through digital visual and narrative methods. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 16(7), 643–656.

Noddings, N, 2003. Is teaching a practice? *Journal of Philosophy of Education.* 37, 241–252.

Norwich, B. & Kelly, N. 2004. Pupils' views on inclusion: Moderate learning difficulties and bullying in mainstream and special schools. *British Educational Research Journal,* 30(1), 43–65.

Oliver, M. 2013. The social model of disability: Thirty years on. *Disability and Society,* 28(7), 1024–1026.

Pather, S. 2011: Evidence on inclusion and support for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools in South Africa: Off the policy radar? *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 15(10), 1103–1117.

Petrou, A., Angelides, P. & Leigh, J. 2009. Beyond the difference: from the margins to inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 13(5), 439–448.

Pijl, S.J., Frostad, P. & Mjaavatn, P.E. 2013. Students with special educational needs in secondary education: Are they intending to learn or leave? *European Journal of Special Needs Education,* 29(1) 1–13.

Pillay, J. & Di Terlizzi, M. 2009. A case study of a learner's transition from mainstream schooling to a school for learners with special educational needs (LSEN): Lessons for mainstream education. *South African Journal of Education,* 29, 491–509.

Prosser, M. 2000. Using phenomenographic research methodology in the context of research in teaching and learning. In J.A. Bowden & E. Walsh, *Phenomenography: Qualitative research methods.* Australia: RMIT.

Rae, H. & McKenzie, K. 2010. Teachers' attitudes to mainstream schooling. *Learning Disability Practice,* 13(10), 12–17.

Raveaud, M. 2005. Hares, tortoises and the social construction of the pupil: Differentiated learning in French and English primary schools. *British Educational Research Journal,* 31(4), 459–479.

Reay, D. 2006. The zombie stalking English schools: Social class and educational inequality. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 54(3), 288–307.

Rix, J., Sheehy, K., Fletcher-Campbell, F., Crisp, M. & Harper, A. 2013. Exploring provision for learners identified with special educational needs: An

international review of policy and practice. *European Journal of Special Needs Education,* 28(4), 375–391.

Rose, R. & Shevlin, M. 2004. Encouraging voices: Listening to young people who have been marginalised. *Support for Learning,* 19(4), 155–161.

Roy, A., Guay, F. & Valois, P. 2012. Teaching to address diverse learning needs: Development and validation of a Differentiated Instruction Scale. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 17(11), 1186–1204.

Ruijs, N., Peetsma, T. & Van Der Veen, I. 2010. The presence of several students with special educational needs in inclusive education and the functioning of students with special educational needs. *Educational Review,* 62(1), 1–37.

Sapon-Shevin, M. 2007. *Widening the circle.* Boston: Beacon Press

Shah, S. 2007. Special or mainstream? The views of disabled students. *Research Papers in Education,* 22(4), 425–442.

Slee, R. 2011. *The irregular school.* London, UK: Routledge.

Stadler, J. 2006. Media and disability. In B. Watermeyer, L. Swartz, T. Lorenzo, M. Schneider & M. Priestley (Eds). *Disability and society.* Pretoria: HSRC, pp. 387–400.

Swart, E. & Pettipher, R. 2013. A framework for understanding inclusion. In E. Landsberg, D. Kruger & E. Swart (Eds). *Addressing barriers to learning: A South African perspective.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Tangen, R. 2009. Conceptualising quality of school life from pupils' perspectives: A four dimensional model. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(8), 829–844.

Te Riele, K. 2006. Schooling practices for marginalized students: Practice with hope. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 10(1), 59–74.

Thompson, D., Whitney, I. & Smith, P.K. 1994. Bullying of learners with special needs in mainstream schools. *Support for Learning,* 9(4), 102–106.

Thompson, P. & Gunter, H. 2006. From 'consulting pupils' to 'pupils as researchers': A situated case narrative. *British Educational Research Journal,* 32(6), 839–856.

Tomlinson, C. 2005. Grading and differentiation: Paradox or good practice? *Theory into Practice,* 44(3), 262–269.

Tomlinson, C., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C., Moon, T., Brimijoin, K., Conover, L. & Reynolds, T. 2003. Differentiating instruction in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile in academically diverse classrooms: A review of literature. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted,* 27(2/3), 119–145.

Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) 1994. *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.* Paris: Unesco.

Unesco, 2010. *Reaching the marginalised*: *EFA Global Monitoring Report.* Paris/Oxford: Unesco/Oxford University Press.

Uys, K. 2005. Severe and multiple disabilities. In E. Lansberg, D. Kruger & N. Nel (Eds). *Addressing barriers to learning: A South African perspective.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Valentine, G., Butler, R. & Skelton, T. 2005. The ethical and methodological complexities of doing research with 'vulnerable' young people. In Sheehy, K., Nind, M., Rix, J. & Simmons, K. (Eds). *Ethics And Research in Inclusive Education – Values into Practice.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Voltz, D.L., Brazil, N. & Ford, A. 2001. What matters most in inclusive education: A practical guide for moving forward. *Intervention in School and Clinic,* 37(1), 23–30.

Wagner, M. & Davis, M. 2006. How are we preparing students with emotional disturbances for the transition to young adulthood? *Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders,* 14(2), 86–98.

Walton, E. 2006. *The extent and practice of inclusion in independent schools (ISASA members) in Southern Africa.* D.Ed. Thesis: Unisa

Walton, E. 2011. Getting inclusion right in South Africa. *Intervention in School and Clinic,* 46(4), 240–245.

Walton, E. 2012. Inclusion in a South African high school? Reporting and reflecting on what learners say. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 17(7), 1171–1185.

Walton, E. 2013. Learner support through differentiated teaching and learning. In N. Nel, M. Nel & A. Hugo (Eds). *Learner support in a diverse classroom.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp. 117–140.

Warnock, M. 1978. *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Learners and Young People.* London: HMSO.

Weber, E. 2011. Policies shaping South African scholarship: Production and reproduction, or diversity in the pursuit of knowledge? *Oxford Review of Education,* 37(4), 525–542.

Wedell, K. 2008. Confusion about inclusion: Patching up or system change? *British Journal of Special Education,* 35(3), 127–135.

Westwood, P. 2001. 'Differentiation' as a strategy for inclusive classroom practice. *Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 6(1), 5–11.

Williams, C. & Eloff, I. 2007. Is there a bright side? The positive emotional responses of mothers of learners with learning difficulties. *Education as Change,* 11(1), 21–41.

Wimmer, R. & Dominick, J. 2000. *Mass media research: An introduction*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Wolcott, H.F. 1995. *The art of fieldwork.* California: Alta.

Wood.C. 2005. Data protection issues in educational research. In Sheehy, K., Nind, M., Rix, J. & Simmons, K. (Eds). *Ethics And Research in Inclusive Education – Values into Practice.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer, pp. 242 – 250.

APPENDIX A

Wits School of Education

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website: www.wits.ac.za

Student Number:
695855

Protocol Number:
2012ECE0179

Date: 19-Nov-2012

Dear Amanda Combrink

Application for Ethics Clearance: Master of Education by Coursework

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

The experience of grade 8 learners who have attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that clearance was granted. However, there were a few small issues which the committee would appreciate you attending too before embarking on your research.

The following comments were made:

* write the learner's information letters and consent forms in a child friendly way.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page. /td>

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely

M Mabeta

Matsie Mabeta
Wits School of Education

011 717 3416

Cc Supervisor: Dr. E Walton

APPENDIX B

Information sheet: Learners – Interviews, Journals and Message in a bottle.

1 October 2012

Dear Learner,

My name is Miss Amanda Combrink and I am a Master's Degree Student in the School of Education at the University of Witwatersrand. I am doing research on the experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who have attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

I would like to invite you to take part in 2 interviews with me where we will chat about your experiences in grade 8 and/or 9 in your new high school. Your participation is completely voluntary, this means that it is your choice to participate and you can also decide not to take part. There are no negative consequences if you decide that you do not want to do it.

If you decide to work with me, I will meet with you twice in 2013. The first meeting would be during the first term. During the first meeting, I will explain what the research is about, and we will have an individual interview. This means that it will only be me and you. I will then give you a journal. In this journal I would like you to write about your experiences in school once every one or two weeks. If exciting things happen, or you wish to write in the journal more often, you are welcome to do so. You can write about anything you want that has to do with your school experiences. If you feel that you want to write in the journal less often, you can. The interview will be about 30 - 60 minutes depending on your responses.

The second meeting will be during term 2. We will have another interview. This time we will chat about the things you wrote in the journal. We will also chat about how things have changed at school during the term. The interview will again be about 30 - 60 minutes. .

We will do a message in a bottle activity. In this activity I will ask you one question on a letter, and you write a message in a bottle to a person on another planet.

Both interviews will be done after school hours at a time and place that will suit us both. Your journal entries would be done in your own time when you feel you want to write in your journal.

I would also like your permission to audiotape and transcribe the discussions to help me make sure I know exactly what you said. Audiotaping means to record our chat with a tape recorder. Transcribing means that I will type out everything that we said. I would like to ask you if it is okay if I use the information that I get from your interview for my research project.

Remember, this is not a test and it is not for marks. You do not have to do the interview if you do not want to and you do not have to write in the journal if you do not want to because it is voluntary. Also, if we are busy with the study and you change your mind about participating and you don't want to do it anymore, you are allowed to do this. It will not affect you negatively in any way. You do not have to answer all the questions that I ask you. You do not have to write anything you do not want to.

I will not use your name anywhere in the interview or the journal. Instead I will make one up so that no one can identify you. All the information about you will be kept confidential (that is like secret) when I am writing about my study in academic reports, journals and books. All the information that I have collected will be stored safely in a locked office and I will destroy it within 3 – 5 years after I have completed my research.

I have given an information sheet to your parents telling them about the interviews and the journal and the message in a bottle and they have also received a consent form. It is your decision to join me in this study, and even if your parents give permission to do it and you do not want to, you have the right to withdraw.

I look forward to working with you!

You are welcome to contact me if you have any other questions.

Thank you

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen

acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX C

Information sheet: Parents – Interviews, Journal and Message in a bottle.

1 October 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Amanda Combrink and I am a Master's Degree student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my Degree I am expected to complete a mini research project. I am doing research on the experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Your learner is invited to participate in this specific study because he/she attended a remedial primary school and is now a grade 8 or 9 learner attending a main stream high school. Participation is entirely voluntary and there are no negative consequences for your learner should he/she choose not to participate. I would therefore like to request your permission for your learner to participate in this study and for me to use the information gathered from the interviews, journal entries and message in a bottle.

I am currently teaching at a small remedial school and it is my passion to work with learners and enable them to reach their full academic and social potential. Many of the learners, who attended a small remedial school, attend a bigger mainstream high school. We do not know enough about their individual experiences in these high schools.

As part of my research I wish to investigate these individual experiences of the learners and explore the ways they perceive their daily life in a mainstream high school. I would hereby like to invite your son/daughter to participate in my study. Participating in this research project would involve that I meet with your learner twice in 2013. The first meeting would be during first term. During the first meeting, I will explain what the research is about, and we will have an individual interview. I will then give your learner a journal and explain that I would like him/her to write about his/her experiences in school once every one or two weeks. If exciting or important things happen, they could write more often. The interview will last approximately 30 - 60 minutes. The second meeting will be during term 2. A second interview will take place where we will discuss the journal entries that the learner has made as well as how things have changed throughout the term. The interview will again be approximately 30 - 60 minutes. We will also do a message in a bottle activity where a question is asked on a letter, and your learner has to write an anonymous answer. During this last meeting I will thank your learner for his/her participation throughout the year and will debrief them and conclude our meetings together.

The above mentioned interviews, journal entries and message in a bottle will be anonymous and there will be no identifying information appearing on any of the documents. The name and identity of your learner will at all times be kept confidential and will also not appear on any of the academic writing about the study. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data

resulting from the study such as journal articles, books and conference presentations. The interviews will, with your permission, be audiotaped and transcribed to ensure accurate recording.

I will reassure your learner that he/she can withdraw his/her permission to participate at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and your learner will not be paid for this study. If you would like a copy of the questions I will be asking, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details given below.

All research data will be kept in a locked office and destroyed between 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you require any further information.
Please complete the attached consent form and return it to me via your learner's teacher.
Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Combrink

4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor:

Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX D

Consent Form: Parents – 2 Interviews

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow me to use the information gained from the 2 Interviews that your learner will participate in. You will be giving me permission to use this for my voluntary research project called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Permission for the use of 2 Interviews

I, _____ the parent of _____

(Please delete whichever not applicable)

Give /do not give my consent for my learner to take part in both interviews (one during term 1, the other during term 2) for approximately 30 - 60 minutes each time after school at a time convenient for the learner during terms 1 and 2 of 2013.

[ ] I know that participation is entirely voluntary and my learner may withdraw from the study at any time and there are no negative consequences for choosing not to participate.

[ ] I know that my learner will not be compelled to answer any questions that he or she does not want to answer.

[ ] I am aware that the researcher will keep all information confidential in all academic writing like books, conference presentations and journals through using pseudonyms.

[ ] I am aware that my learner's interviews will be kept securely in a locked office and destroyed between 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Person:

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

APPENDIX E

Permission from the learners – 2 Interviews

Please fill in the reply slip below and place it in the addressed unsealed envelope that I will provide to you if you agree to take part in 2 interviews about your experience in grade 8 and/or 9. I will provide a box for your teacher where you can place the envelope. These interviews are for the study called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Permission for participation in 2 interviews

My name is: _____

I would like to take part in both interviews (1 during term 1, the other during term 2)	YES/NO
I know that my participation is voluntary.	YES/NO
I know that there are no negative consequences if I choose not to participate.	YES/NO
I know that I can withdraw from the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences if I choose to do so.	YES/NO
I know that Miss Amanda Combrink will keep my information confidential in all academic writings like reports, books and journals, through using pseudonyms.	YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and I don't have to answer all the questions that I am asked.	YES/NO

Sign _____

Date _____

Contact Person:

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
072 390 1702
acmands@gmail.com

Supervisor:

Dr. Elizabeth Walton
(011) 717 3768
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX F

Consent form Parents Audiotaping

Please fill in and return the reply slip below to your learner's teacher and indicate your willingness to have your learner's participation in 2 interviews be audiotaped for my voluntary research project called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who have attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school. This will take place after school hours for about 30 - 60 minutes each time as explained in information letter at a time and place that is mutually convenient. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate recording.

Permission to have my learner's 2 interviews audiotaped

I, _____ the parent of _____

Give my consent to have both interviews recorded.

[ ] I know that participation in the interviews is voluntary and there are no negative consequences if my learner chooses not to participate.

[ ] I know that the recording of the interviews are voluntary and there are no negative consequences if my learner chooses to not have the interviews recorded.

[ ] I know that I may withdraw my learner from the study at any time and there are no negative consequences if I choose to do so.

[ ] I know that the tapes will be kept securely in a locked office and destroyed between 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

[ ] I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate recording.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Person: Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
072 390 1702
acmands@gmail.com

Supervisor:

Dr. Elizabeth Walton
(011) 717 3768
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX G

Consent Form Learners Audiotaping

Please fill in the reply slip and hand it in to your teacher if you agree to have the 2 interviews audiotaped. This means that I will record our conversation and write down what you have said. I will do this to make sure that I know exactly what you said and write an accurate report. I will use these audiotapes for my study called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school. These interviews will take place during the first and second terms of 2013 at a time and place that is convenient for both of us.

Permission to be audiotaped

My name is: _____

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary. YES/NO

I understand that there are no negative consequences if I choose not to participate. YES/NO

I understand that the process of audio-recording the interviews is voluntary and I can choose not to have the interviews audio-recorded without any negative consequences if I choose not to be recorded. YES/NO

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview YES/NO

I know that I can stop the audiotaping of the interview at any time YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes and transcriptions will be kept in a securely locked office and will be destroyed between 3 – 5 years after the completion of this study. YES/NO

I understand that our interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure that the researcher knows exactly what I have said in order to write an accurate report. YES/NO

Sign: _____

Date: _____

Contact Person:

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
072 390 1702
acmands@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX H

Permission from the learners – Journal

Please fill in the reply slip below and give it to your teacher if you agree to write in a journal about your experience in grade 8 and 9. This journal is for the study called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Permission for writing in a journal

My name is: _____

I would like to write in a journal about my experiences in school during the first 2 terms in 2013.	YES/NO
I know that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences if I choose not to participate.	YES/NO
I know that writing in the journal is voluntary and I can choose not to write in the journal and there will be no negative consequences if I choose not to write in the journal.	YES/NO
I know that I can withdraw my journal from the study and there will be no negative consequences if I choose to withdraw my journal.	YES/NO
I know that Miss Amanda Combrink will keep my information confidential in all academic writings like reports, books and journals, through using pseudonyms.	YES/NO
I know that I can write as many or as few times as I want and that I do not have to write anything that I do not want to.	YES/NO

Sign _____

Date _____

Contact Person:

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX I

Consent Form: Parents – Journal

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow me to use the information gained from the Journal that your learner will be writing in regarding their experiences at school. You will be giving me permission to use this for my voluntary research project called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Permission for the use of Journal entries

I, _____ the parent of _____

(Please delete whichever not applicable)

Give /do not give my consent for my learner to write about his/her experiences at school in a journal.

[ ] I know that participation in writing in this journal is entirely voluntary and my learner may withdraw their journal at any time and there are no negative consequences if my learner decides to withdraw his/her journal.

[ ] I know that my learner will not be compelled to write anything he/she does not want to.

[ ] I am aware that the researcher will keep all information confidential in all academic writing like books and journals through using pseudonyms.

[ ] I am aware that my learner's journal will be kept securely in a locked office and destroyed between 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Person:

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

APPENDIX J

Permission from the learners – Message in a bottle

Please fill in the reply slip below and give it to your teacher if you agree to write a message in a bottle about your experience in grade 8 and/or 9. This journal is for the study called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Permission for writing a message in a bottle

My name is: _____

I would like to write a message in a bottle about my experiences in school.	YES/NO
I know that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences if I choose not to participate.	YES/NO
I know that writing the message in a bottle is voluntary and I can choose not to write the message and there will be no negative consequences if I choose not to write it.	YES/NO
I know that I can withdraw my message in a bottle from the study and there will be no negative consequences if I choose to withdraw my message in a bottle.	YES/NO
I know that Miss Amanda Combrink will keep my information confidential in all academic writings like reports, books and journals, through using pseudonyms.	YES/NO

Sign _____

Date _____

Contact Person:

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor:

Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX K

Consent Form: Parents – Message in a bottle

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow me to use the information gained from the message in a bottle that your learner will be writing regarding their experiences at school. You will be giving me permission to use this for my voluntary research project called: The experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

Permission for the use of Message in a bottle document

I, _____ the parent of _____

(Please delete whichever not applicable) Give /do not give my consent for my learner to write a message in a bottle regarding his/her experiences at school.

[ ] I know that participation in the message in a bottle activity is entirely voluntary and that there are no negative consequences if my learner decides not to participate.

[ ] I know that my learner may withdraw their message in a bottle at any time and there are no negative consequences if my learner decides to withdraw his/her message in a bottle.

[ ] I know that my learner will not be compelled to write anything he/she does not want to.

[ ] I am aware that the researcher will keep all information confidential in all academic writing like books and journals through using pseudonyms.

[ ] I am aware that my learner's message in a bottle document will be kept securely in a locked office and destroyed between 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Person: Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX L

Letter to the Principal

The Principal

Dear _____

My name is Amanda Combrink. I am a Master's Degree student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who have attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

I have chosen this school as I am aware that you have learners that attended a remedial primary school and will be in grade 8 and 9 in your mainstream high school. I request to invite some of your learners to participate in my study. I will be conducting 2 individual interviews with each participant. I will give each learner a journal that they will write in about their experiences at school. I will also be conducting a message in a bottle activity where the learners answer one question anonymously in paragraph form. I intend to audiotape the interviews and each interview will take approximately 30 - 60 minutes, 1 during term 1, the other during term 2, at a time and place that is mutually convenient.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study, like academic articles, books and journals.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked office and destroyed within 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

Please inform me if you require any other information. I will provide a summary of the report should you wish to read it.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor:

Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX M

Letter to the School Governing Body

The Chairman

Dear _____

My name is Amanda Combrink. I am a Master's Degree student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the experience of grade 8 and 9 learners who have attended a remedial primary school in a mainstream high school.

I have chosen this school as I am aware that you have learners that attended a remedial primary school and will be in grade 8 and 9 in your mainstream high school. I request to invite some of your learners to participate in my study. I will be conducting 2 individual interviews with each participant. I will give each learner a journal that they will write in about their experiences at school. I will also be conducting a message in a bottle activity where the learners answer one question anonymously in paragraph form. I intend to audiotape the interviews and each interview will take approximately 30 - 60 minutes, 1 during term 1, the other during term 2, at a time and place that is mutually convenient.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should they choose not to participate. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study, like articles, journals and books.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked office and destroyed within 3 – 5 years after completion of the project.

Please inform me if you require any other information. I will provide a summary of the report should you wish to read it.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Combrink
4 Heidi Ave, Florida Glen
acmands@gmail.com
072 390 1702

Supervisor:

Dr. Elizabeth Walton
Elizabeth.walton@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 3768

APPENDIX N

Individual Interview process and Question schedule

Process for the individual interview

Learners will be told about interview protocols. They will again be made aware that they have the right not to answer any question which they do not want to and they can also withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative consequences or penalties. They will be reassured regarding anonymity and confidentiality, and they will be asked to select a name (pseudonym) which could be used instead. These questions will be used as a guideline and more questions could arise from the responses of the participants.

Question Schedule

Interview 1

Which High School are you attending?

Which Primary School did you attend?

Tell me about your experiences in this high school?

How did you feel about coming to this High School? Explain your answer.

What was your favourite thing about attending your Primary School?

Was there anything you did not like about attending your primary school?

What is different to this high school from your primary school?

What are the same in your primary and your high school?

What has been the most difficult thing about coming to this high school?

Could you explain what you think exclusion means?

Do you think there are learners in this school who are being excluded?

Do you think you are being excluded? If your answer is yes, from what are you being excluded?

Interview 2

Tell me about your experiences in this high school during this term?

Let us discuss your journal entries that you have made. Are there particular ones you want to discuss?

What has changed for you during this first term at your school?

How are you being included socially?

How are you being included academically?

What are the advantages or disadvantages of having been to a remedial primary school?

Would you have chosen to be in a mainstream primary school? Why/Why not?

What do you understand by the term remedial school?

What do you understand by the term mainstream school?

You have been in this high school for two terms now. Tell me about your experience?

Let us discuss your journal entries since the last time we met. Are there any specific entries you wish to discuss?

How have your feelings toward school changed during these two terms?

What experiences stood out for you during the first two terms? Let us discuss them.

What has been your favourite experience so far?

What has been your worst experience so far?

APPENDIX O

Message in a bottle question:

What do you wish your teachers knew about learners who come from a remedial school?