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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SUPPORT OFFERED BY THE INSTITUTION LEVEL SUPPORT TEAM TO THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN A SINGLE SCHOOL IN JOHANNESBURG

By

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Inclusive Education

Collaboration

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District Based Support Team

Diversity

Barriers to Learning, Development and Participation

Learners with Special Educational Needs

DEDICATION

This mini dissertation is dedicated to the little jewels of my life

Tiara - Engels & Ed - Fidel.

You will one day understand why I left you behind.

My parents,

David and Esther Tebid

For taking care of them, while I studied abroad.

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- All the others whose names could not be mentioned, I say thank you.

DECLARATION

I, Celyne Ambeck Tebid declare that the information found in this research report is my own unaided work that has not been submitted before for any other course or degree.

Name: ……

Date: ……..

Signature: ……..

Acronyms

DBST: District Based Support Team

D o E: Department of Education

EFA: Education for All

ESS: Education Support Services

EWP6: Education White Paper 6

ILST: Institution Level Support Team

LSEN: Learners with Special Educational Needs

NCS: National Curriculum Statement.

OBE: Out Come Based Education

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.

ABSTRACT

Some of the major difficulties encountered in embracing an inclusive education system are, lack of commitment, lack of resources as well as a poor understanding of how to support successful inclusion. The Education White Paper 6 (here after referred to as EWP6) states that, all children can learn, should be supported to learn and assured of equal and equitable education. The implementation of inclusion has been initiated by the EWP 6 (Department of Education, 2001) and is still in the process of developing the necessary education support services. At the school level, an institution level support team (ILST) should serve as a means of supporting learners experiencing learning difficulties. This study examined the perceptions of foundation phase teachers regarding the support they are getting from the ILST as well as finding out whether collaboration between the above mentioned bodies can help in addressing the issue of learner diversity in an inclusive classroom. The investigation was conducted at a school in the Northern suburb of Johannesburg. The foundation phase teachers and some members of the ILST were purposively included as participants. A case study design was chosen since this would allow for in-depth examination of the perceptions of foundation phase teachers regarding the support they are getting from their (ILST). The data collection process included questionnaires, oral follow up interviews, document analysis and observation. The data collected from the above sources has been analyzed according to themes and subthemes that emerged. The findings of the study show that, there is little or no collaboration between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST. It was also evident that the foundation phase teachers collaborate immensely amongst themselves in sharing ideas on how to support learners in their classrooms. Lastly, it was apparent that the support given to the foundation phase teachers was done solely by the learning support educator and not as a team with the other members of the ILST. The ILST on their part did not take time to actually define their roles in terms of how they would be functioning in rendering support to the foundation phase teachers. Based on the findings in this study, recommendations are made as to how to effectively support teachers as well as improve collaboration among all stake holders involved in inclusive practices.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The South African education system is under a process of change and in all of these processes are policies designed to make education more inclusive and accessible, redressing past imbalances and injustices. The principle for universal education have been adopted from the Education For All (EFA) (1990) and the World Conference on Special Needs Education(1994).The EWP6, is the policy document on special needs education legislated to carter for the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning (DoE, 2001). This document makes recommendations that impact on the educational practices and support to schools. The main principle is that all learners irrespective of differences in language, culture, ethnicity, economic status and gender can be educated with their peers in a regular classroom and in their neighborhood schools.

The foundation phase is regarded as the critical stage for promoting interest in education, developing positive attitudes towards school and positive self concept. If a child fails at this stage, he or she will be adversely affected and may even drop out of the schooling system before ever having the opportunity to explore his or her potentials (Joshua, 1995:10). The foundation phase is also a delicate stage where teachers should be informed of a range of barriers to learning and development such as the difficulties and challenges learners experience so as to be in a position to address them and ensure that effective learning takes place (Joshua, 1995:12). With the implementation of inclusive education, foundation phase teachers are therefore confronted with a new way of thinking about the learning and teaching process and this also requires a change of attitude from a formerly negative one perhaps based on fear and lack of awareness about the particular needs of the learners.

In the past, teachers were trained to manage a largely content- based education system, but they now have to change their way of thinking as well as their instruction

methods to suit the new system of outcomes based education (OBE) which is learner centered and accommodative of different learning styles. A good teacher is now expected to adjust his or her method of instruction now commonly referred to as facilitation of knowledge acquisition and to understand the diversities of needs of learners (Camper, 1997:23). Change from content based approach to an outcomes based approach requires teachers to work collaboratively as a team, but such thinking is new to many teachers particularly foundation phase teachers, and therefore they need support systems to help them cope with inclusive education approach (Calitz, 2000:2).

In South Africa, support is needed to help teachers as well as learners who experience barriers to learning and development. According to (EWP6, 2001), enabling mechanisms need to be develop to ensure that the education system including the curriculum is continuously addressing the needs of all learners. This requires the provision of additional support to learner and system where appropriate. Supports include all human and material resources that provide support to individual learners and to all aspects of the system. This is seen as the key to reducing barriers to learning throughout the educational system and is also an essential characteristic of inclusive education. In an integrated system, a range of services that work together to meet the needs of all learners and other aspects of the education system as a whole is necessary. As recommended by the (EWP6), three levels of support services are envisaged that will collaboratively reduce barriers to learning. These include:
The Provincial and National Departments- that should develop competencies to understand and act upon the challenges of addressing the barriers to learning and participation for the purpose of promoting effective teaching and learning; the District Support team- that incorporate all relevant support providers to the Institution level Support Team and also assess and facilitate the utilization of community resources in addressing local needs; the Institution level Support Team – this consist of staff members who will identify and address barriers to learning through collaborative problem solving. All the teams work hand in hand to reduce barriers to learning and development (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). For the purpose of this study the ILST will be our focus and the detail will be discussed in the literature review.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research by Creese, Norwich & Daniels, (1997:7) pointed out that, the past ten years has seen major changes in the organization of schooling: Whatever the source of these changes, their implementation has fallen to a greater extent on the teachers themselves. This has often meant that teachers are dealing with higher levels of dilemma and tension both in and out of the classroom, as they endeavor to deliver the curriculum in ways which are relevant and meaningful to the diverse needs of their learners. In line with the above, practicalities of adapting classrooms to meet the diverse needs of learners have turn out to be the sole responsibility of foundation phase teachers who do not possess the specialized knowledge and skills. This means that, teachers need strong and collaborative support structures such as the institution level support teams to provide collaborative assistance by sharing expertise and work on problem solving issues relating to teacher's work in classroom. Given this background, the problems to be investigated in this study include:

- What are the perceptions of foundation phase teachers with regard to the support offered by the institution level support team in their school?

- Can collaboration between the institution level support team and the foundation phase teachers help in addressing learner diversity in an inclusive classroom?

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The research study aims to investigate and describe the foundation phase teacher's perceptions of the support offered by the institution level support team in a single public school in the Johannesburg North District. The focus is on how working collaboratively to support and assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and development may facilitate in addressing learner diversity in the inclusive classroom.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In South Africa, the lack of provision of Educational Support Services (ESS) is addressed in the new legislation, EWP6 on Special Needs Education; Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, Department of Education (DoE, 2001). As mentioned earlier, this document makes many curriculum changes that impact on educational practices and support to schools. According to Eleweke and Rodda (2002), recent research indicates that in the developing countries of Africa, the implementation of inclusion has not received strong support from most of the government departments in terms of proper planning and resource provision. Consequently, the needed support and resources for meaningful inclusion is scarce. The lack of support services, relevant materials and support personnel is a major problem which hinders effective implementation in South Africa.

The challenges regarding curriculum changes that the foundation phase teachers have experienced alongside with the accommodation of diverse needs of learners mean that teachers are supposed to adapt in many different ways. The practicalities of accommodating learners experiencing barriers to learning and development in the ordinary classrooms are mostly the responsibilities of the teachers (Sethosa, 2001). This means that it has become the responsibility of educators especially foundation phase teachers to adopt classrooms in order to meet these diverse needs.

For these reasons, the research was conducted to find out if foundation phase teachers are getting practical suggestions on handling the difficult situations they are faced with on daily basis through the ILST. If intervention and support is not made available the teachers are left with no choice but to resort to trial and error methods and strategies which in turn lead to frustration on the part of the teachers (Sethosa, 2001). Many classroom teachers feel they do not have sufficient training and support to meet any challenges presented by learner experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms (Sethosa, 2001), and they tend to lack confidence in their ability to provide programs of study which are appropriate. Thus if foundation phase teachers can work as a team in these circumstances, they are likely to realize that they are not alone and that others have similar difficulties. In this way support teams enable teachers to learn specific methods and have access to different teaching techniques.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE ORIGINS OF THE POLICY OF INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The education system in South Africa is undergoing a lot of changes in recent years and the policy around inclusive education is another piece of the puzzle to ensure the democratization of education in South Africa (Potterton; Utley & Potterton, 2004). Amongst the influential documents which precipitated the South African policy on inclusion are: The document on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) makes provision for education as a basic right for all persons. Article 2 especially outlines the rights of all children who should not be discriminated against and it states that members of the state should ensure and respect the rights of each child within their jurisdiction and without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex language, disability birth or other statues. It ensures that the child is protected against any form of discrimination or punishment on the basis of status, activities expressed opinion and belief (UN, Convention on the rights of the child, 1989). Article 9 further outlines the rights of the child to live within his or her family and the rights of a disabled child to have special care.

Furthermore, Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (1990) stresses the inherent rights of a child to a complete cycle of primary education and a commitment to a child- centered teaching and learning where individual differences are accepted as a challenge and not as a problem. It advocates for recognition of a wide range of differences and needs and patterns of development amongst primary school children's individual needs and commitment to an integrated and holistic approach to teaching.

The UNESCO Salamanca statement (1994) re- enforced the principles outlined in the Jomtien Declaration. It was the forerunner to the inclusive movement. The documents utilized at the conference were informed by reportedly recognizing the need to work towards "school for all" and to have institutions that include everybody that celebrates differences, provide supportive learning and responds to individual needs. The guiding principles for this frame work is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, socio emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should therefore include learners experiencing disability and gifted children; street and working children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (UNESCO Salamanca statement, 1999:4).

With the Salamanca statement (1994) underpinning the implementation of inclusion in South Africa, local government policy has based their definitions and possible implementation plans on this document. Inclusive education policy in South Africa has not been promoted as simply one more option for education but as an educational strategy that can contribute to a democratic society (Engelbrecht, 2004). South African inclusion attempts to carter for all learners in the country, not only those who may be physically, cognitively or emotionally disabled.

In 1994, the first democratic election was held in South Africa and with this a new government was elected into power. The recent political changes in South Africa resulted in a new Constitution (RSA, 1996: a) being implemented. It is grounded on principles of democracy, equality, non discrimination and respect for the rights and dignity of all. In fact the new democratic South Africa is in a process of social, political, economic and educational transformation, which aimed at developing an egalitarian society (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:304).

Therefore with the change in education structures, came the investigation by the South African Education department into various new systems or structures that would promote equal education opportunities and promote educational practices that were grounded in the principle of human rights. The government published documentations relating to the philosophy and policies of the new education system. These became known as the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) published in 2001.

From this, the practical implementation of this policy was proposed and the Department of Education published the Draft Guide Lines for the implementation of Inclusive Education in October 2002.

The EWP6 (DoE, 2001) is a policy document with recommendations about the educational practices that will determine the future of the education of learners experiencing learning barriers and special educational needs, including those who have been marginalized or excluded from the education system. The ultimate aim is to transform the whole education system to accommodate the full range of learning needs. The legal frame work is outlined in terms of basic human rights for including a learner in a regular school of his choice. The overall long term goals are the development of an Inclusive Education and Training systems that will uncover and address barriers to learning, recognize and accommodate the full range of learning needs (Lomofsky, 2002:45). In the same way that the country has been through a major reform, it was necessary for education and educational practices to also undergo change. Generally, the main reasons for change are that the global society is increasingly complex, requiring educated citizens who can learn continuously and who can work with diversity both locally and internationally (Fullan, 1995).

However, it is worth mentioning that though the pressures for change have increased, real change or reality has not occurred. According to Fullan (1995), the force behind the failures to achieve good results to change are mostly systemic. The education system is still very isolationists and this needs to be combated though it has proven to be a difficult task. Furthermore, policy bureaucrats have not trained teachers but rather oriented them to inclusive education policy goals and aims. Issues relating to knowledge, which provide the conceptual tools to guide teachers to navigate the new educational pedagogy, have been absent. This has hindered the growth of knowledge about knowledge and conceptual developments, innovation, creative thinking and imagination (Naicker, 2006). As Fullan (1995) argues that, reform is not just putting into place the latest policy, it means changing the cultures of classrooms, the schools, districts, and every stake holder involved in the learning process.

2.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND WHY TEACHERS NEED SUPPORT.

Inclusive education is about acknowledging that all children can learn, need support and about changing attitudes, curricula, and environment to meet their needs. It is an increasingly important part of most government's agenda and it is committed to ensuring that all pupils are integrated as far as possible into the daily life of schools and the local community (Hayward, 2006). In an inclusive education system, diversity is valued, respected and encouraged in the classrooms. Instructional practices based on strategies which are effective for learners: cooperative learning structures, active and experienced instructions, an integrated language and arts curriculum and a performance based portfolio assessment. These are regarded as innovative and interactive formats (Fisher et al, 1996). The creation of a performance based assessment is recommended and is used to understand and allow for individual measurement of development of each learner's personal performance and progress. According to Stainback and Stainback (1990), inclusive schools do not just focus on assisting any particular category of learners; for example how a child with a physical disability fits into the mainstream, but focus on how to operate supportive classrooms and schools that include and meet the needs of everyone.

Engelbrecht and Green (pp. 121) argues that, inclusion means different things to different people in different contexts, however, there are some commonalities which include, a commitment to building a more just society and more equitable education system and a conviction that, extending the responsiveness of mainstream schools to learner diversity offers a means of turning these commitments into reality. These definitions also incorporate the positive philosophy (values\beliefs), which is said to be the foundations on which inclusive education is built. Inclusive education relates to policies governing educational practices. It is "the full time placement of children with mild, moderate or severe disabilities in regular classrooms" (Staub & Peck, 1994:36). The success of an inclusive system is considered when all learners are provided with appropriate educational opportunities and support and also when structures, systems and overall beliefs are changed.

In the EWP6, the ministry emphasized that the 'key to reducing barriers to learning within the education and training lies in a strengthened education support service' (Department of Education, 2002). An over emphasis on the notion of 'Special needs' discouraged ordinary schools from organizing support in such a way that it was not responsive to the needs of all learners from various cultural, socio economic and language backgrounds. Ordinary class teachers in particular foundation phase teachers did not see it as part of their everyday classroom activity to develop an understanding of the diverse ways in which learners can learn and need to be supported.

For the inclusive approach to be effective, teachers and learners will need specialists support since the whole school culture has to be changed to make it responsive to the needs of the learners. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) have flexible features that can affect the ways at which schools deal with diverse needs. This means that schools should develop strategies to create a positive learning environment that supports the diverse needs of learners within a regular classroom and provide them with opportunities to succeed. In view of this diversity, activities can be flexible, context can be made relevant to the learners needs and learning outcomes do not prescribe content or methods, therefore content and teaching methods could be customized for learners needs (Department of Education, 2002:25).

Mackenzie (2003) suggests that schools should provide opportunities for learning support teachers to develop the needed skills of collaboration and understanding to enable them to provide effective support to learners. Special educators are needed in full inclusion in order to work with regular educators in teaching and facilitating challenging, supportive and appropriate educational programs. The general and special educators and resources should come together in unified and consistent efforts to ensure access to the curriculum (Karagiannis; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). These authors suggest three interdependent practical components in an inclusive education school system. They are:

- Net working
- The organizational component, which involves the coordination of different teams and individual and
- Formal and informal connections that support each other.

The three systems of support and networking are seen to be successful because the Institution level support team and the foundation phase teachers are in partnership with the community agencies (Karagiannis et al, 1996). They function together to empower the staff and learners in a mutually supportive way.

Most classroom teachers feel they do not have sufficient training and support to meet any challenges presented by learner experiencing barrier to learning in their classrooms. They tend to lack confidence in their ability to provide programs of study which are appropriate. Research by Harcombe (2000) and others suggest that inclusion can only be achieved if the support services are transformed. According to (Creese, et al, 1997:6), the institution level support team has the capacity of maximizing the participation of all learners and improving the educational opportunities of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. This support team provides a facility for teachers to exchange ideas, air their feelings and work on problem solving issues relating to teachers' work in their classes.

Harcombe, (2000:14) summarized that teachers particularly need support because:

- When teachers rather than learners are given support, learners learn well.
- That when support team work in collaboration with the classroom teachers learners learn well
- That when teachers are helped with the planning of multi level teaching Learners learn well.
- That when support is given to teachers on different learning styles by team teaching, learners learn well.
- And that when support specialist gives direct support to a few learners in small groups settings in the regular classroom, learners will learn well.

The teacher support offered by the team, if properly organized, ensures that staff work from a position of knowledge and confidence and perhaps most importantly from a position of attitude. The above aspects are important for the success of inclusive education as it aims at identifying and minimizing barriers to learning and maximizing participation for all learners. The EWP6 (Department of Education, 2002:15) emphasizes that the key to reducing learning difficulties lies in a

“strengthened Support Services” and this is the reason why the Institution Level Support Team should be put in place to enforce this concept of efficient delivery by collaboratively working as a team with foundation phase teachers to develop intervention strategies for learners who need additional support in the classrooms (Campher, 1997:8).

Research by Muthukrina and Schoeman, (2000) stated that, the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) are bodies which were appointed by the Minister of Education to do a situation and needs analysis and to make recommendations on special needs and support services in South Africa so that the historically fragmented members of society and the issue of scarce special education and support could be addressed. These commissions indicate that enabling mechanisms needs to be developed to ensure that the system and other curriculum are continuously transformed to address the needs of all learners. It further requires the provision of additional support to learners and the system where needed. In this regard, Educational Support Services (ESS) includes all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and to all aspects of the system and are viewed as key to reducing barriers to learning and participation across the entire education system and are also the characteristics of inclusive education.

As mentioned by (Landsburg, Kruger & Nel, 2005), the institution level support team should be very visible and flexible in every school. The ILST should support teachers in every way including: in-service training of teachers in the identification, assessment and support of all learners including those who experience barriers to learning and participation; identification and discussion of learner development through organizing programs and new teaching strategies that the class teacher may try to support the learner; facilitating the sharing of human and material resources, teaching methods and teaching aids; placement of the learner in another school if needs arise; ensuring parental consultation and involvement; planning preventive strategies such as child abuse, drug abuse, malnutrition by drawing in resources needed from within and outside of the institution etc; encouraging teachers to share ideas; supporting teachers on site as well as monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an action reflection framework (Landsburg et al:67).

-

Furthermore, the context of change and inclusive education implies a redefinition of the roles of teachers. This means teachers are not only imparting knowledge to learners but may also serve as learning support teachers in order to accommodate the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. That is, all educators should develop strategies to help learners succeed and work together towards a common goal of improving outcomes for learners. The class teacher is then responsible for providing direct support. This support would be more effectively channeled when barriers to learning and development are understood and identified.

2.3 CONCEPTUALIZING AND COMPREHENDING BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The responsibilities of the education system to develop and sustain learning are based on the recognition that education is a fundamental right which extends equally to all learners. Thus if the system fails to meet the different needs of a wide range of learners, the learners would not be able to sustain an ideal process of learning. Those factors which prevent learners from accessing educational provision have been conceptualized as barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 2002:130). The department further acknowledges that learners with barriers to learning and development are learners who experience learning difficulties which make it impossible for them to learn effectively and that such differences arise from a range of factors including physical, psycho social disturbances, cognitive differences, particular life experiences or socio economic deprivation, language barriers, geographic location as well as terminal disease.

2.3.1 Poverty and Underdevelopment

Harcombe, (2000:22) states that while there are a number of factors that could cause barriers to learning and development, a learner can also be affected by the structures in the South African context which causes poverty and underdevelopment. These barriers manifest themselves in different ways and only become obvious when learning breakdown occurs and when learners “drop out” of the system. The key to preventing barriers from occurring is the effective monitoring and meeting of the

different needs among the learner population within the system as a whole (Department of Education, 2002:13). For learners, the most glaring results of poverty are often caused by unemployment and other economic inequalities, and also the inability of families to meet the basic needs of shelter and nutrition. Because of the Apartheid regime, learning was not promoted for most South Africans. This could be evident by the fact that library services were scarce, parents were not available to help children with literacy, some were illiterate or could not afford books for their children, children were often cold, hungry, sick etc. All these deprivations still exist in the form of invincible barriers. The tendency now is that poverty stricken communities are poorly resourced and are characterized by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil\ teacher ratio, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning materials. All these factors raised the likely hood of learning breakdown and the inability of the system to sustain effective teaching and learning (Department of Education 2002: 133).

2.3.2 Negative attitudes to differences

Discriminatory attitudes resulting from prejudice against people on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, disability and religion manifest themselves as barriers to learning when these attitudes are directed to learners in the classrooms. Most often, negative attitudes towards different learners appears in the labeling of these learners. Sometimes these labels are just negative associations between the learner and the systems such as “drop out” or “repeaters” or “slow learners”. It is important to recognize how these labeling impacts on learner’s self esteem. Sometimes negative attitudes and labeling is as a result of fear and lack of awareness about the particular needs of learners or the potential barriers which they may face (Department of Education, 2002:166). Educators need to be informed of these attitudes and the consequences on teacher behavior in the classroom.

2.3.3 Inflexible curriculum

One of the most serious barriers could be found within the curriculum and relates primarily to the inflexible nature of the curriculum which prevents it from meeting the diverse needs of learners. When learners are unable to access the curriculum, learning breakdown may occur. Inclusion is essentially a curriculum issue and since curriculum creates the most significant barrier to learning such as the style of teaching

and learning, the content, the classroom management and organization, as well as materials and teaching aids used in the process. Sometimes, through inadequate training, teachers use teaching styles which may not accommodate the diverse needs of learners (Department of Education, 2002:137).

2.3.4 Language and communication

Furthermore, another area of barrier linked to the curriculum is the issue of language of learning and teaching. Teaching and learning for most learners take place through a language which is not their home language. This not only places learners at a disadvantage, but it also leads to linguistic difficulties which may result to learning barrier. In addition, educators often experience difficulties in developing appropriate support programs for English second language learners. Communication is essential for all learners both at formal and informal context. This also goes to learners who need alternative forms of communication due to the severity of physical and intellectual impairments they may have. In such cases of enormous barrier to learning and development, much expectation is placed on the ability of the class teacher to overcome these challenges (Department of Education, 2002: 139).

2.3.5 Lack of parental recognition and involvement

The active involvement of parents in teaching and learning is central for effective learning and development especially with children that experience learning barriers. Parents should be part of the intervention process (Department of Education, 2002:140). It is clear from the mentioned barriers to learning and development that if the education system is to promote effective learning and prevent learning breakdown, support should be organized such that a range of barriers are uncovered and addressed following an inclusive approach. The following are suggestions that may support learners experiencing barriers to learning (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:307).

- Flexible and one curriculum for all with learning outcomes and activities which can be adapted to meet the needs of learners.
- Teachers need to be empathetic towards learners by creating a welcoming and supportive environment.
- Labeling of learners should be discouraged since it makes it difficult for learners to grow beyond the limitations of the label and it is important for teachers to adopt positive attitudes towards those who experience barriers to learning.

- Recognition of home language as language for teaching and learning.
- Collaboration between departmental governments, such as transport, health and welfare, in order to provide the basic needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.
- Parents and the entire community should be fully involved and informed regarding the process of identification and intervention for learners who need extra support.

The EWP6 highlights the role of the ILST in the identification of barriers to learning and participation. The early identification of barriers to learning should focus on learners in the foundation phase and assessment of learners who have additional needs is the key to the success of the inclusion program. This is because the foundation phase is a stage where the "torrential and sudden outbreak of knowledge requires that learners learn how to find, select, organize, interpret and use that knowledge" (Marlow and Page 1998:26). To prevent barriers to learning from developing or intensifying, early identification of learners who are battling with such barriers is important. The process of early identification and intervention are aimed at preventing developmental problems in young children as well as minimizing the impact of the problems once they are identified (Landsberg et al,2005). According to Hayward, (2006:79) a variety of tools and assessments can be used such as; self assessment, use of academic and curriculum data, specific assessment tools used for basic skills such as in literacy, numeracy and reading, as well as observations around school, feedback from staff, discussions, specialist\ therapist support service input and more. Therefore, the ILST should support the foundation phase teachers as well as other role players in this process of early identification of learning barriers by providing opportunity for regular collaborative- problem solving around areas of concern and facilitating the provision of support. Hayward (2006:79) argues that, the key to the success and management of this process is based on the fact that there needs to be a common:

- Language around "assessment and what it means both within school and with multi- agency teams.
- Referral forms and subsequent action\ improvement planning format to measure progress.

- System of recording evidence including minutes of meetings
- Database recording support\ intervention and outcomes.

The ILST should enforce this concept of efficient service delivery by collaboratively working in partnership with the teachers to develop intervention strategies for learners who need additional support in the classroom (Campher, 1997:8). An understanding of the roles and duties of each member promotes effectiveness within the team. It is thus important that each member of the ILST should be clear about their responsibilities for the successful functioning of the team.

2.4 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTION LEVEL SUPPORT TEAMS

The EWP6 recommends three tier support systems which are: the Institutional Level Support Team, District Based Support Teams, Provincial and National Departments (Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback,1996).The District Based Support Team here after referred to as (DBST) refers to an integrated professional support services provided at the district level by providers employed by the Department of Education who draws on expertise from educational institutions and various community resources in their area. The core service provider at district level includes: psychologists, learner support specialists, curriculum specialists who provide general curriculum support to schools, institutional development specialists who provide management support to schools and specialist support personnel and teachers from existing special schools. The specific roles of the members of the DBST will be determined by the needs and task at hand as well as the particular competencies available (Department of Education, 2002:40). Thus the DBST are the primary channel through which support should be provided to the school.

The EWP6 states that the major role and function of the DBST are:

- "To support all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that a whole range of learning needs can be met. The focus will be on teaching and learning factors and emphasis will be on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners: on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent

it from meeting the full range of learning needs and adaptation of support systems available in the classrooms" (Department of Education, 2001:19).

- "To provide ongoing support to the ILST by identifying support needed to address the barriers to learning in their local contexts, by evaluating programs, suggesting adaptation of the teaching contents to accommodate diverse needs of learners in the classrooms (Department of Education, 2001:29). The ILST should be the structure around which support for schools are developed at the school level. The composition of the ILST is dependent on the size and needs of the school and the number of teachers available. It is made up more or less of the principal (who should be involved on a part time basis); school governing body representatives, learning support teachers, parents, class\ learning area teacher, a school assessment team representative, a learner support material committee representative as well as the learner where appropriate" (Department of Education, 2001).

According to Creese, et al (2000:308), the ILST is "an organized system of peer support that consists of small group of teachers on a voluntary basis". In addition the ILST are designed to give support and assistance to individual teachers. Chalfant and Pysh (1989: 50) as cited by Amod (2003) defined ILST as "a school based problem solving unit used to assist teachers in generating intervention strategies to help them with children whom they find difficult to teach or manage".

The ILST supports learners indirectly by supporting teachers (Creese et al, 2000; Amod, 2003). Amod (2003: 45) indicates that teachers engage in a "positive, productive, collaborative, problem - solving process to help learners directly". She went further to say that the focus is on teacher development and supporting and empowering teachers by increasing their instructional skills in order to enable them to better serve their learners. The author indicates that the concept of the ILST is based on the belief that regular classroom teachers can assist learners experiencing learning barriers. The author points out that, there is a belief that teachers have talents and considerable knowledge among themselves and many problems can be resolve when they are working as a team than alone. The ILST also provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their work and also obtain support from other members.

Jordan (1994) says that, the purpose of the ILST is to provide a pool of ideas and resources to any member of the teaching staff. Forlin (2001) also states that the main reason for supporting teachers is to ensure the provision of effective support for learners experiencing learning barriers. According to Forlin, (2001), there will always be a need for specialist support staff trained in educating learners; she therefore believes that the role of the support teacher is to assist the learners with learning difficulties who are included in the ordinary classroom.

The following are the roles and responsibilities of core members of the ILST as stipulated in the guidelines for the establishment of the ILST (Department of Education 2002: 10- 12).

2.4.1 Coordinator of the Institution Level Support Team

The coordinator should be able to create meeting situations that allow full participation of all members and ensures that goals set by the team are met and time frames are adhered to. Further more, the coordinator must ensure that all team members understand and respect their roles. The coordinator should collaborate with other sectors such as non governmental organizations, and welfare department and initiate teacher development where teachers hold information sessions regarding intervention strategies (Department of Education, 2002:10)

2.4.2 Referring educator

The main role of the referral educator is to refer learners to the ILST for additional intervention strategies. Regular feedback should be given by the referring teacher to the ILST with regards to the progress made by the learner. If the learner does not show any progress, the case will be reported to the DBST for intervention or placements in special school (Department of Education, 2002:11).

2.4.3 Scribes

Members can either rotate or become scribes or one member can be elected to be holding the post. The scribe will take the minutes of all the meetings held in order to track progress made and the minutes should be kept for future reference (Department of Education, 2002: 12).

2.4.4 Other representatives

Others include the foundation phase teachers (Grade 1-3) and the intermediate phase (grade 4-6). These phases should have their own representatives as members of the school based support teams. Their role is dealing with issues regarding each particular phase such as monitoring the completion of the support forms for learners who need additional support (Department of education, 2002:12)

The above aspects as well as the fact that the entire school culture and time table needs to be adjusted to accommodate the extra time and responsibilities demanded of the ILST members are important with regards to inclusive education as it will help to reduce learning barriers and increase involvement for all learners. Every stake holder involved in learners' lives should collaborate to help learners experiencing barriers to learning.

2.5 COLLABORATION AS A TOOL IN DEALING WITH LEARNING DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

According to (Calitz, 2000: 85), collaboration refers to the challenge of working together as a team. These include problem-solving, decision-making, planning and intervention strategies. Collaboration and teaming have long been considered crucial for school reform efforts (Phillippo & Stone 2006). These researchers argue that, collaboration may lead to positive learner related outcomes, increase learner motivation and love of school, as well as reduced dismissal and special education referral rates. This is important for the research which aims to provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the positive effects of collaboration in addressing diversity in the classrooms. A variety of perspectives and skills are necessary to address the massive challenge of addressing the diverse needs of learners in the classroom. This is what drives collaboration (DoE, 2002: 121).

Lee (2000), states that collaboration is the method used by the professionals to accomplish shared goals. Jordan (1994), views collaboration as a means for all members involved to learn from each other through collaborative consultancy. In addition, Graden and Bauer (1992:88) argue that "collaboration is …a fundamental way of working together in a true relationship". It is a process organized to achieve

shared goals. Inclusion will be effective when educators, specialists, parents, administrators, pull together their resources and efforts.

The value of this collaboration lies in the enabling of a deeper understanding of teaching practices and the provision as well as development of a collegial relationship that includes trust and mutual respect (Hosen & Postelthwaite, 1994:17). Thus teachers should be encouraged to function collaboratively in order to meet the challenges presented by learners in their classrooms. Teachers working in collaborative consultancy can accomplish much more than individuals on their own. The team can, through collaborative consultation that is problem-solving orientated, bring about changes to the curriculum; create a positive and caring educational environment (Campher, 1997: 48).

According to Villa and Thousand (2000) as cited by Phillippo and Stone, (2006), collaborative teams are assumed to function at their best when team members pursue shared goals, hold mutual levels of respect for unique areas of expertise and inputs of members, engage in distributive leadership, and hold members accountable. Issues related to professional territorialism and micro school politics potentially threatened effective team process. Further more, Ericedrs (2000) argues that, the process of collaboration includes a mutual benefit or a desired outcome. He emphasizes on trust, respect, openness, active listening, clear communication and risk bearing as fundamental requirement for collaboration.

The interactions that takes place throughout the process of working in collaboration according to West and Idol (1993), is characterized by consideration of each issue from an ecological point of view: consensual decision making; pooling together of personal resources and expertise; and co ownership of the problem being addressed. West and Idol (1993) also point out that for collaboration to be effective in a school, the school should clearly define how it will go about implementing collaboration in its individual school culture. Following this model of collaborative consulting, there are roles and responsibilities for the consultant and the consultee, which focus on parity and equality as well as cooperative problem solving. A collaborative model has different roles and responsibilities when compared to other model of consultation such as expert, advocacy, mental health care or medical models (West &Idol, 1993).

Collaborative consultancy relies on the shared expertise of different members, who work together and acquire required skills from each other. This view is even more strongly endorsed by Reich (1999:20) as cited in Lloyd (2000:144) who points out that in collaboration, "individual skills are integrated in the group…over time, as group members work through various problems… they learn about each other's abilities and how they can help others perform better; what each can contribute to a particular project and how they can best take advantage of one another's experience".

The argument brought forth by Graden and Bauer, (1992:90) is that true collaboration is demonstrated if all member of the team feel that their contributions are valued and goal is clear, where they share decision making and where they sense and feel respected. Welch (2000), is of the opinion that, within an inclusive context, collaboration is aimed at providing opportunities for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development to become meaningful members of the community. He saw collaboration as the key to inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning. The development of collaboration between all the stake holders can be a useful approach in addressing diversity in classrooms, because collaboration enables educators to share their expertise, diverse specialized knowledge and skills for the benefit of all learners. Inclusive education would be effective when educators, specialists, parents, administrators and learners bring together their resources and efforts. Everyone involved in collaboration has to understand the dynamics and process of collaboration. Thus for collaboration to be effective every stake holder involved in learners' lives has to be informed about the education system.

Graden and Bauer (1992:90) stressed that the two goals of collaboration are "to remediate the current concern related to the learner's performance of functioning"… and "to prevent future problem for that learner and others and not to help the learner who is the target of the concern". The emphasis is that accommodations and alterations lead to prevention so that the future functioning of learner may be improved. The second goal leads to the confidentiality and trust. A trusting positive relationship underlies successful collaboration. There should be a high level of trust during discussion when sharing ideas.

The following aspects are necessary for collaboration to thrive (Sethosa, 2001: 92): A

belief system that all members of the team have unique and needed expertise; participation must be voluntary; commitment to a shared vision; recognition that all members' opinions are valuable and making use of unique talents and abilities of all teachers; there should be excellent communication; encourage individual freedom of expression and accept differences, needs, concerns and expectations. Teachers must be made to understand that many of the processes, practices and strategies that are already in existence, have the potential to address diversity within their classrooms. The class teachers are the ones who describe the classroom scenario and who are also able to select adaptations that can fit into the natural environment of the classroom. Time should be set aside in order to allow for the implementation of collaboration.

West and Idol (1993) summarizes the importance of collaboration by arguing that:

- Collaboration is not an end in itself; it is a catalytic process used in interactive relationships among individuals working towards a mutually defined, concrete vision such as the ILST and learner outcomes. It is argued that when professionals address problems together, they identify more problems, causes, objectives as well as intervention plan than when they work alone.
- Educational collaboration is an interactive relationship first, then a vehicle for change. This point was confirmed by Robison et al (2000) in their argument that, different sectors can enhance development since the development of the child is understood when home, school, and socio- cultural environments are linked together.
- The effects and outcomes of educational collaboration are multiple; with learner achievement being only one important outcome- the others being adult and system organizational outcome.
- Collaboration as an adult to adult interactive process can influence learners' outcome, since this interaction among team members causes change in attitudes, skills and knowledge.
- Collaboration may be used as a team process for effective planning; decision making, as well as problem solving thus it can be useful and effective for proactive and strategic planning.

Working more collaboratively is a new experience for teachers who have been used to

working in isolation (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). Teachers should therefore be motivated in their new roles of identifying learners experiencing learning difficulties and equally developing intervention strategies. Therefore, they should commence by sharing information among each other in a concerted way for the benefit of these learners and in the interest of achieving quality education for all.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section starts with the formulation of the research questions, a description of qualitative research and a rationale for its use in this study, the methods of data collection is then presented and a case study and the participants will be explained. Methods of the data analysis will be explained and the issues of ethics will also be described.

3.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

As mentioned previously, this study aims at investigating the perceptions of foundation phase teachers in a single public school in Johannesburg North, regarding the kinds of support offered by the institution level support teams in their school. The focus will be on finding out how the foundation phase teachers of this school work together with the ILST in providing support and assistance for learners experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation. It specifically sought to answer the questions:

- What are the perceptions of the foundation phase teachers regarding the support they are offered by the institution level support team in their school?

- Can collaboration between the institution level support team and the foundation phase teachers help in addressing learner diversity in an inclusive classroom?

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for this project is a case study approach and it will be applied to

gain an in-depth knowledge of a situation and meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1998). It refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular small group of participants themselves as teachers in a particular school setting. This was emphasized by Stake (1995:1) who argues, that, a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. It is through the case study approach that results of qualitative research can be presented in a most effective way. According to Brown and Dowling (1989:62), "a case study is an approach that is appropriate for qualitative research because it allows for one aspect of the problem to be studied in some dept within limited time scale". This means that, the case study allows the qualitative analysis of data to pay attention to one phenomenon that the researcher chooses to study irrespective of the number of participants, sites or documents for a study. There are two main types of case studies, that is, single and multiple case studies (Leedy, 1997). Multiple case studies involve two or more sites as the settings, where relevant data can be collected. Where as a single case study focuses on one setting as a case for investigating that particular research question (Leedy, 1997).

Furthermore, in a case study, the main assumption is that a phenomenon is investigated as a bounded system. This system may be a group of people; it may also be a set of documents. Any social entity that can be bounded by parameters and that shows a specific, dynamic and relevance revealing information that can be captured within these boundaries, may be a case study"(Henning, Gravett, & Van Rensburg, 2002:32). The researcher will be using a particular case study which is a school, to richly describe the perceptions of foundation phase teachers regarding the support given to them by their ILST. The researcher will be the primary research instrument in need for a general understanding of the research questions, thereby studying how the foundation phase teachers collaborate with the ILST and will be intensely involve in all aspects of the research, getting quality data directly from the participants.

Anderson and Ausenault (2001) state that, unlike quantitative research which seeks to prove or disprove hypothesis in search for the truth, the qualitative research seeks an understanding of phenomenon from multiple perspectives, within a real world context. They defined qualitative research as "a form of inquiry that explores phenomenon in the natural setting, and uses multi methods to interpret, understand,

explain and bring meaning to them". The above statement was supported by Henning, Van Renburg and Smit (2004: 31) when they stated that "a qualitative study is a study presented in language and is about the meaning constructed from the language that present data". Merriam (1998:7) also argues that qualitative research is conducted "in an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and interpretations thereof". The purpose of a qualitative data is to create new ideas that are based in context, as the research aims become more specific with the process of the study. Thus a qualitative research design will be conducted to research this issue, because the researcher aims to describe the perceptions of the foundation phase teachers in regard to the support provided by their ILST as well as how they collaborate with each other in supporting learners experiencing learning difficulties.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods can be defined as the specific and concrete means that the researcher uses to carry specific tasks (Mouton, 1996:36). The following aspects of the research methods are discussed: Data collection methods and selection of participants.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The purpose of data collection is to learn something about people or things (Mertens, 2005). Collecting data always involves selecting data, the techniques of data collection are determined by the researcher's theoretical orientation; by the problem and purpose of the study and by the sample selected. Lanshear and Knobe (2004) indicate that the data process is always selective, as the researcher cannot collect everything. The following methods will be used in the research study: questionnaires, individual follow up interviews, some observations and document analysis. Authors such as (Glensne, 1999; Silverman, 2003) advocated the use of multiple methods of data collection as this enhances the trust worthiness of the data. The above methods are relevant for this research because according to Marshall and Rossman (1999:105), these methods form the core of qualitative inquiry, as they incorporate perceptions, understands knowledge and experiences of people. The above methods, the motivation for the choice of the methods and how the researcher will go about using

them will be discussed below.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

The researcher will make use of questionnaires to gather information from the sample group i.e. the educators. The purpose of this qualitative data is to create new ideas based on the context, as the research aims becomes more specific with the process of the study Bassey, (1999). Qualitative data consist of "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge obtained through interviews; and excerpts, quotations or entire passages extracted from various types of documents" (Merriam, 1998: 69). It is fundamentally a scientific instrument for measuring and gathering particular kinds of data.

Since the study aims to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives and not from the researcher, questionnaires for the foundation phase teachers and the members of the ILST will be designed. The questionnaires will be used as the main method of collecting data from the participants, to gather information on their perceptions of the support offered by their ILST and also about understanding collaboration as a team. The questionnaires will contain both close and open ended questions and they will be both generic and specific. Open ended questions will trigger feelings, knowledge, thoughts and ideas about support offered by the ILST and about collaboration. The close ended questions will focus at obtaining more background information about each participant in relation to their gender, marital status, age, teaching experience, qualifications, grade, first language and second language. Mertens (2005:344) states that questionnaires are used for a person who needs a quick and \ or easy way out to get lots of information in a non threatening way from participants. The author considers questionnaires as easy to administer, easy to compare and analyze using themes and subthemes. In addition, the participants will have a greater feeling of anonymity as the researcher will not influence them as they complete the questionnaires.

3.5.2 Observation

Observation implies seeing as well as using other senses and participating in the actions of the participants in the research setting and getting to know their ways of doing well (Henning, et al, 2002). The researcher observed the manner in which the

team collaborates during the meeting held with the researcher. After consultation with the head of school, the head of department for the foundation phase and the teachers, the researcher carried out observations in two classrooms of the ten foundation phase teachers who volunteered to participate in the research. Observations were carried out in grade one and two classrooms during contact period. The essence of these observations were to understand the ways in which teaching is done and to see how learners interact in the learning process as well as how the teachers assist those learners that are experiencing barriers to learning. The researcher further observed the facial expression of the educator who took part in the follow up interview. Observation would be one of the researcher's tools, because the researcher wants to gather data from the natural setting - the school environment and the classrooms. Observation would be effective since the researcher as the observer may notice relevant things within the schools' environment which the participants may be taking for granted, and it also gives room for the researcher to ask questions where necessary with the teachers and some members of the ILST in the school.

3.5.3 Interviews

In other to get a better understanding about participants' perceptions on how the ILST and the teachers collaborate to support learners, a follow up interview was conducted in order for the researcher to gather more information and persuade participants to clarify and say more about what they had written in the questionnaires. Marshall and Rossman (1989) indicate that interviews access immediate follow up data collection clarification and omissions. If questions are unclear to the participants, the researcher is able to rephrase the questions and similarly the participants will elaborate on answers which are unclear. Furthermore, Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) point out that the previous occurrences of participants' thoughts, feelings and intensions and their behaviors cannot be observed. That is, the researcher cannot observe the collaboration and support at some point in time therefore an interview is required. The follow up interview used for this study was semi structured and include a list of prepared questions which researcher used as a guide and it allows the researcher to probe interviewee's responses. The questionnaires encourage the elaboration of important emerging themes in the course of the interview rather than limiting interviewer and interviewee to a fixed schedule that can reduce opportunities to enrich spoken data

and gain information on how interviewees "see" and understand the world. Thus semi structured interview was adopted as a data collecting tool because it would be important in structuring the responses of the participant so as to gain information on the required area (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

3.5.4. Document analysis

Documents are valuable sources for supporting findings made through other research methods such as interviews and observations (Best & Khan, 2003: 201). Documents such as the school's support forms and the Gauteng Department of Education referral forms as well as minutes from meetings held by the ILST and the teachers will be used by the researcher. The school's support form is a form which is supposed to be completed by the class teacher for learners who need additional support in the class from the ILST. Referral forms are also completed by the learning support specialist for learners who need additional intervention from the department. Records of minutes kept will serve as prove that regular meetings are being held whereby the ILST share ideas and information with the rest of the staff. As a researcher, one cannot be at all places at the same time, thus one would have to rely on documents and records to get the necessary background information and insight into the dynamics of every day functioning of participants. These documents will served as proof to whether or not foundation phase teachers are getting the maximum support needed to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and development in their classrooms as well as the nature of collaboration that exist in the school.

3.6 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

An important task in a qualitative research is deciding on those to participate in the research. De Vos, et al (1998:253) stress that participants should be informed richly, as they form the integral part in the selection of the sample for this study. Silverman (2000:104) argues that "purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some features of process in which we are interested. In order to get accurate data in relation to this study, ten foundation phase teachers from one public school in Johannesburg were purposively selected to complete the questionnaires. Also, four members of the ILST from the school equally completed questionnaires and a follow up interview was carried out with a core member of the team. The core member of the

team was selected on grounds that she was better informed on how the ILST is functioning in the school given her role in that school. The participants informed the investigation regarding their perceptions of the support offered by the ILST in their school and also about how they collaborate with each other in giving support to learners experiencing barriers to learning. The reasons outlined in the beginning, regarding the importance of foundation phase (refer to chapter 1 & 2) in supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning and development were also regarded as selection criteria.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Bassey (1999:84) identifies the process of data analysis as an 'intellectual struggle' with the raw data collected. The goal of data analysis is to yield significant and valid answers to the research questions. When doing analysis, it is useful to bear in mind that analysis essentially means breaking something up into smaller parts. Basic raw data will be processed by transcribing the responses from the questionnaires and the informal interview that will be done with some of the teachers and members of the ILSTs. Once the data would have been processed, the next step will involve preparing the data and working systematically through it. Qualitative analysis will be employed throughout the data collection process where the analysis will commence with viewing of all the data and then dividing the data into smaller and more meaningful units (Henning et al. 2004:127). One will compare the material within the subthemes to discover connections between the subthemes and themes. In this study, the constant comparative method will be used. This will be done by doing content analysis, which entails identifying, coding and categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994:13). It involves the organization and reduction of data from questionnaires and interviews by means of the constant comparative method in order to construct themes and subthemes in the data. These questions will be organized under the research questions that they help to answer.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Fraenkel and Wallen, (1993), ethics refer to questions of right or wrong. It is the method used to conform to the standards of conduct of a given profession or

groups. In educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interests and wellbeing of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear &knobel, 2004). It is in line with these that the researcher will endeavor to bear in mind several measures throughout the study.

3.8.1 Consent clearance

Before the commencement of this research, permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education. A letter of application for gaining access into the school was written and permission granted. The researcher personally approached the school.

3.8.2. Voluntary participation.

Participants were informed to partake in this research out of their free will. They were informed of their right or freedom to leave the research site if they in anyway feel uncomfortable to respond to the questionnaires and interviews.

3.8.3. Possible harm to participants

Participants were assured that they will not be exposed to any danger or harm either physically or psychologically.

3.8.4. Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the course of the research. No real names were used in feeling the questionnaires or when writing up the research. Also, questionnaires and interview transcripts would be kept confidential. No one will have access all the above documents. Participants were told in advance that the private data identifying participants would not be reported publicly.

3.8.5. Feed back

All participants will get feedback about the findings of the research and conclusions arrived at.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the aims and research questions have been highlighted as well as the rationale for chosen a qualitative approach. The discussion also contained some details of the data collection methods and how this data will be analyzed. Lastly, strategies to ensure trustworthiness, ethical measures relevant to the study were also outlined.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Re stating the research aims as well as the research questions mentioned in chapter one and two will be the starting point for this section (refer to chapter one for more details). This will help in analysing the various themes and subthemes to be discussed in relation to the focus of the study. These themes and sub themes are all interrelated. This will be followed by a presentation of analysis of data collected from ten foundation phase teachers and four members of the ILST. The data was collected by means of questionnaires that were completed by the members of the ILST and the foundation phase teachers. A follow up interview was carried out with a core member of the ILST for further clarification of the questionnaires completed. Furthermore, records of minutes of the ILST meetings were used as well as observations carried out in two foundation phase classroom were analyzed using a constant comparative method. The data collected from the foundation phase teachers and from the members of the ILST were analysed separately. However, it is important at this juncture to include briefly the details set out in the research aims and questions.

Research aims: The research study aimed at investigating and describing the foundation phase teacher's perceptions of the support offered by the institution level support team in a single public school in the Johannesburg North District. The focus was on how working collaboratively to support and assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and development may facilitate in addressing learner diversity in the inclusive classroom.

Research questions:

- What are the perceptions of the foundation phase teachers regarding the support they are offered by their institution level support team in their school?
- Can collaboration between the institution level support teams and the foundation phase teachers help address learner diversity in the inclusive classroom?

4.2 RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF THE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHER'S

RESPONSES

The table below will give an overview of the process of analysis in terms of the initial themes and subthemes that were conceptualized from the data.

4.3 TABLE 4.3 SUMMARIES OF THEMES AND SUBTHEMES.

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Description of learning barriers	**Procedures used by teachers to overcome these barriers in the class room**
Functionality of the ILST	**Meetings and workshops with the foundation phase teachers**
Collaboration	**Benefits of collaboration**
Support	• **Support offered to the teachers** • **Support offered by the foundation phase teachers in the class rooms** • **Responsiveness of support towards learner's diversity** • **Parental support** • **Barriers to parental support**
Frequency of the visit made by the DBST to the school	None
Recommendations and expectations of foundation phase teachers	None

4.3.1 Theme 1: Description of learning barriers.

Those factors which prevent learners from accessing educational provision have been

conceptualized as barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 2002:130). Teachers responses to questions regarding whether they have learners in their classrooms who are experiencing learning barriers where all positive. The barriers mentioned include: Language, reading, spelling, lack of oral expression, writing, emotional problems as well as behavioural problems. The teachers reported on the various range of barriers experienced by learners in their school in statements such as "...children cannot understand and follow instructions clearly because of language barrier..." This point was emphasized by one educator who said that "... children in my class cannot express themselves orally and in writing due to lack of conceptual thinking in English..."

Another educator stressed that reading was a problem as well: "...children have difficulty in reading with comprehension...learners whose home language is not English and join the school in grades higher than their level". It had been argued that communication is essential for all learners both at formal and informal context.

Three teachers mentioned that children in their classes' exhibits emotional problems, this was noted in statements such as "children in my class have emotional and social problems which have reduce their self esteem and it is a barrier to their learning"; "learners cannot concentrate and this could be due to emotional problems coming from their homes"

One participant said that poverty is a learning barrier in her class: "some learners in my class come from a nearby orphanage and they are often hungry... cannot concentrate..." This point was reiterated by another participant who said that "...learners come to class without having breakfast..." Teachers are therefore faced with the challenge of hungry learners.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: Procedures used by teachers to overcome these barriers in the classrooms.

This section explains the procedures taken by the foundation phase teachers in their respective classrooms to address these barriers. The following points were highlighted: Individual remedial lessons by the class teachers; repeated teaching of the same concepts; reduction of content; ask help from other colleagues; refer to the

learning support teacher; invite parents and discuss the issue during phase meetings. All the educators reported that the first step they take to overcome barriers to learning in their classrooms is to give multiple opportunities through repeated teaching on individual basis. One teacher said "I normally intervene where I do one on one teaching...explaining concepts using pictures concrete or real objects..., I also do peer tutoring and group work". This was reiterated by another educator by saying that "I give learner individual attention".

Two teachers said they try to address the barriers by reducing the content of work that particular learner is expected to do and give activities based on the learner's level. This was noted in statements such as: "I give learners who are struggling different exercise from those who are coping"; "I give him more time on a task..., translate in his mother tongue and reduce the work load"; "I prepare different tasks for my learners and also group them according to their level of performance".

Three teachers said that they refer learners to the learning support teacher for extra lessons when the learners are not responding to the support given in class. One of the respondents said that "...if learner shows no progress I refer him or her to the learning support teacher for assessment". Another respondent made a similar remark saying that "the children are assisted in class with extra lessons and others are referred for remedial classes".

Two teachers reported that, apart from giving individual attention, they asked help from other colleagues and inform parents. This was noted in comments such as: "I ask other teachers to help in my class during our phase meetings"; "I raise the issue for discussion during phase meetings".

One participant mentioned that she makes efforts to question about the learner's home background and equally talk to former teachers. It is clear from the responses obtained that referring learners for extra support is the last resort as the foundation phase teachers try to accommodate these learners in different ways.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Functionality of the ILST

The Do E (2002:46) stated that, one of the sole functions of the ILST is to support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and promoting

effective teaching and learning. However, it is apparent from the responses obtained from the participants that the ILST is not helping to address these learning barriers for various reasons as mentioned in statements such as: "... the ILST is not functioning properly because some foundation phase teachers are also members of the team..., they have so much work load in their classes and no extra time to give us support".

4.3.2.1 Subtheme 1: Meetings and workshops with the foundation phase teachers.

When asked about the frequency of meetings held between the ILST and the foundation phase teachers as well as about workshops organized for the foundation phase teachers, the responses vary. Some of the respondents stated that the ILST seldom hold meetings with the foundation phase teachers. This was noted in responses such as: " we only meet I think twice a year with all other phase teachers"; " They seldom hold meetings with us as a phase"; " they have meetings with the entire staff once per term and the agenda is often on the retention policy and not on how support should be offered to us". This was true given the evidence of the minutes noted down during staff meetings as well as from the response obtained from the follow up interview with a core member of the ILST. In the interview, the participant mentioned that the team does not meet with the foundation phase but with the whole staff: … "I think we meet once per term to discuss general issues regarding the school". In one of those meetings the issue on the agenda was on how to handle the issue of repeaters (Refer to appendix for evidence of minutes and of transcript of interview). Most of the responses regarding the frequency of meetings held between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST were mostly vague as many were not sure of how frequent these meetings were held.

In regard to the running of workshops, all teachers agreed that the ILST run workshops with the entire school. These workshops were organized by the Department of Education and the workshops were not given in response to needs identified by the teachers. The responses however differ in terms of the themes of the workshop as well as the number of workshops organized so far. Some said they have attended one workshop on literacy; others said they attended one workshop on bereavement and one participant mentioned a workshop on discipline. This was noted in statement such as: "The ILST organized one workshop on phonics (read for Africa)

for the entire school"; "They organized one workshop on discipline in the staff room"; "they have organized two workshops... on bereavement and read for Africa". In relation to the frequency of the workshops, the responses were not clear as some respondents said they have workshops twice a year, while others said once a year.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Collaboration

Collaboration as experienced by the foundation phase teachers in this study can be described accordingly: collaboration among the foundation phase teachers themselves and collaboration with the ILST.

From the responses obtained, foundation phase teachers in this school have a unique bond among themselves. According to research done by Elliot and Sheridan (1992:235), team work involved professionals who possess unique skills and orientations, having a common purpose, working together co operatively to solve a common problem. In this case foundation phase teachers have a common goal, which is to give support to learners experiencing learning barriers in their respective classrooms as well as practicing inclusive education by making it possible for all learners to access the curriculum (Do E, 2002:21). Collaboration among foundation phase teachers is emphasized by the following statements: "... we do meet as per grade and share ideas"; "...by talking to colleagues during meetings we try and find solutions to the problems experienced in our classes". This statement was re emphasized by another educator stating that: "we normally meet as grade teachers and also as the phase to discuss different intervention strategies". These statements are clear indications that, grade teachers in the foundation phase are really committed and work cooperatively with one another to solve common problems. One educator reported that they seek information and delegate work, and at times they do not have to refer learners to the learning support educator due to the strategies they share. Elliot and Sheridan (1992:235) also noted that the key elements of team skills are common purpose, co operative problem solving and co ordination of activities. This seems to be very glaring in the foundation phase as teachers common purpose is to accommodate the diverse needs of learners by sharing intervention strategies as well as co coordinating activities by rotating the learners experiencing learning barriers among themselves particularly during contact time. This was noted in the following statements: "sometimes colleagues come to teach in my class when I struggle"; "I ask my colleague next door to help me out in my class"; "we exchange teaching

strategies".

With regard to collaboration between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST, five out of the ten participants indicated that there was some level of collaboration between themselves and the ILST. This was mentioned in sentences such as: "ILST members representing the foundation phase do collaborate as in grades...discuss some intervention strategies per grade in their meetings"; "the ILST is helping teachers with ideas, suggestions as well as for learners who are experiencing learning barriers".; there is some level of collaboration but we need more contact time with learners struggling with school". Two educators particularly made clear and positive remarks regarding collaboration "...I think collaboration is good, we have practical yet efficient ways to help learners"; "...communication and support is good".

Some participants however pointed out that they collaborate more with the learning support educator who is a core member of the ILST. This is noted in statements such as: "we communicate with our remedial therapist who writes possible strategies for support on our 450 support forms every time she checks it…we do not collaborate with the whole ILST".; "collaboration with the ILST is not very effective at the moment"; "collaboration is not effective …needs to be improved as we only communicate with the remedial therapist". This was reiterated by another educator who pointed out that "the ILST is supposed to help us with intervention…but the learning support educator works alone with us". According to Campher (1997:48) the team can accomplish much more than individuals on their own, through collaboration that is problem solving oriented, creating a caring and positive educational environment. The ILST seems not to be working as a team with the foundation phase teachers but rather the learning support educator works alone with these teachers. This was confirm by the response obtained from the follow up interview with the learning support educator who said that " I work with the teachers as on individual basis…I don't go to their classes… I write suggestions on the school's support form and send it to them".

4.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Benefits of Collaboration

All the participants expressed the same views about the impacts of collaboration and

the overall idea raised was that collaboration ensures that all learners have the opportunity to learn: " through collaboration, we learn a lot from each other…when others tell us how to deal with reading problem…"; " collaboration helps to develop the teacher as one would learn different methods and teaching strategies from others".; "… it enables others to appreciate the works of other colleagues as well as empathize with others".

4.3.4 Theme 4: Support

Support as experience by the foundation phase teachers of this school has two dimensions. Support from a single member of the ILST and support offered by the foundation phase teachers to learners experiencing learning barriers in their respective classrooms. As stated by Sethosa (2001:10), the ILST is made up of teachers whose focus and functions are to develop and empower colleagues in identification of learning difficulties and intervention strategies. In this case, foundation phase teachers' experiences with their ILST are that they are rather getting support from the learning support educator and not from the ILST as a whole. Furthermore, the theme also discusses the level of parental support and participation as well as barriers to parental support.

4.3.4.1 Subtheme 1: Support offered to the teachers.

This was evident in remarks such as: " we do not get direct support from them as a team, but we get support from the remedial therapist."; "I cannot say that the ILST support us…the remedial therapist is the only one who usually show concern and we report all learners experiencing difficulties to her". "I do not get enough support and sometimes the recommendations made on our support forms are not clear on what I should be doing".

One participant said that "the ILST organized a kind of workshop once where we were given ideas on teaching phonics (read for Africa)"

Another educator said that" the roles of members of the ILST have been defined by policy therefore certain people have been selected to do only specific things…so we cannot go to them for support". It should be noted that without adequate support barriers to learning cannot be addressed (Do E, 1997:8). Furthermore, Engelbrecht

and Green (2001:12) stressed the importance of building support for teachers and learners.

The responses reflected the foundation phase teachers' experiences towards support offered by their ILST. According to the participants this support is not adequate and the little that is given is not properly coordinated. As stated in the white paper 6 (DoE,2001:19), the key function of the support team is to support all learners and educators by identifying support needed and design support programs to address the challenges experienced by teachers.

4.3.4.2 Subtheme 2: Support offered by foundation phase teachers in the classrooms.

This category is the support offered by the foundation phase teachers in their respective classrooms to learners experiencing learning barriers. Inclusive education hold that, all children can learn and need support, therefore attitudes, curricula and environment should be adapted to meet those needs (Do E, 2002:50). The implication of this is that, foundation phase educators are responsible for accommodating the diverse needs of learners placed in their care. The completions of support forms as well as the recommendations made on the forms by the learning support educator are all evidence that foundation phase educators are really giving support to learners in their classrooms (Refer to appendix for evidence of the form). Evidence of support was further noticed during my observations in two classrooms:

4.3.4.2.1 Literacy lesson in Classroom 1: Grade 2

There were approximately 50 or more learners in the classroom. The lesson was on reading and the teacher was reading a story titled "Sipho scores a goal" from a book. She read the story out to the learners using picture sues. At the end of the reading, the teacher asked oral questions to see if the learners had understood the story. The theme was on **Verbs** for example: play, shout, kick etc. after the reading, she grouped the learners according to their level of performance and gave different activities for different groups.

Activity one: The more able learners were asked to look at the pictures and write out five short sentences from the story.

Activity two: Another group had to complete a worksheet where they were required

to fill in the correct action word (verbs) in the spaces provided: e.g.-

Sipho ---------- the ball (kicks; kills).

Activity three: This group of learners was asked to look at the pictures and write out five words relating to the story.

Activity four: The teacher called the rest of the group of learners around her table and asked them to look at the pictures and say what action that is going on. She did an example first and the rest took turns in saying what they can see.

4.3.4.2.2 Numeracy lesson: multiplication by 2: Grade two classroom

The class was equally crowded with about 50 or more learners. The teacher was teaching the multiplication concept. She explained the meaning of multiplication saying that it means continuous addition and she demonstrated practical examples using counters. Learners were grouped according to their performance and each group had different task.

Activity one: learners were asked to look for the answers of the following calculations without using counters.

2 X 5 =

2 X 7 =

2 X 9 =

2 X 10 =

2 X 12 =

Activity two:

This group was given the same task to do but they were allowed to use counters.

Activity three: This group had to do multiplication using the continuous addition method:

2+2+2 = 2X3

2+2+2+2 = 2X4

2+2+2+2+2 =2X5

2+2+2+2+2+2=2X6

Activity four:

The learners who needed extra support were called around her table and role played before giving them an exercise to do. She asked the learners to circle the correct answers on the worksheet. They had to use counters. e.g. 2 X 2= 6 or 4.

4.3.4.3 Subtheme 3: Responsiveness of support towards learner's diversity.

Teachers differed in their views about whether the support offered by the ILST is helping them to meet the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. However most of them pointed out that they were not sure if the support meets learner's diversity because according to them, each learner develops at his\her own pace. While others said that it helps to meet learners' diversity to some extent.

4.3.4.4 Subtheme 4: Parental Support.

The participant's comments regarding parental support and involvement vary. The participants were not positive regarding the participation of parents in their children's learning. Six participants mentioned that support is poor and they never get to see the parents despite several attempts made. This was noted in comments such as "most of the parents are not supportive at all especially the ones whose children have learning barriers"; "parental support is poor, 10% will help their children at home, the rest just don't care!"

One participant reported that most of the parents whose children do not have learning difficulties are the ones who come anytime when you need to discuss learners' progress or for meetings.

The rest of the participants pointed out that, some parents show interest in their children's learning. They made remarks such as "some parents show interest though they ignore suggestions"; "some parents are very supportive...they want to know how their children are progressing...they buy video CDs to support children at home" It has been argued that parent\ teacher collaboration will help in enhancing children's motivation and learning (Feiler, Andrews, Greenhough, HugheS, Johnson, Scanlan & Yee, 2008). The authors went further to argue that "if a child sees that their parents are enthusiastic about education, they are far more likely to view their schooling in a positive light and be more receptive to learning… thus engaging and working with parents is one of the most vital parts of providing children with excellent education" (Feiler et al, 2008:12).

4.3.4.5 Subtheme 5: Barriers to parental support

Most of the teachers reported that a majority of parents are busy with work and their

responses in helping their children is negative “some parents work until late and are unable to help with learners work”. Another educator remarked that “lack of knowledge, not having enough time and lack of interest” are some of the factors that prevent parents from getting involved. These parents argue that it is the responsibility of the school to help these children. One educator pointed out that, poverty, lack of resources such as transport and time constraints are all contributing factors. While another participant stated that: “most of the parents are denying that their children have problems and tend to blame the teacher”.

4.3.5 Theme 5: recommendations and expectations of foundation phase teachers.

Teachers made suggestions about what should be done in the future to improve the support they are getting from the ILST. Many of the educators suggested that more time should be set aside for the ILST to hold frequent meetings with the foundation phase teachers so that the intervention should come at an early stage. One educator suggested that, the school should have a psychologist to work as a team with the learning support educator: “we would like more specialists such as a psychologist to be involved in the ILST”.

The foundation phase teachers further suggested that because they are the ones to give support directly to learners in the classrooms, and the ILST is not able to offer the support required, the DBST in the future should rather train the foundation phase teachers and not the ILST members only. This was expressed by the following statements: “since we are the ones who are tied up with these learners, we are the ones to be getting the training as a team” “I think we should all be trained to deal with learners experiencing barriers to learning in our classrooms”.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Frequency of visits made by the DBST to the school.

This theme deals with the frequency of the visit made by the DBST to the school. Most teachers agreed that the DBST visit the school though not very often. One teacher indicated that the district visited the school only because the school is next to the district. Majority of the teachers said that the district visit their school once a term.

4.4 RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF ILST RESPONSES.

4.5 Table 4.5 SUMMARIES OF THEMES AND SUBTHEMES.

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Functionality of the ILST	**Management of the ILST**
Constitution of the ILST	**Management of ILST**
Collaboration	• **Barriers to effective collaboration** • **Benefits of collaboration**
Challenges of working together with the foundation phase teachers	**None**
Barriers to effective support provision in the school	**None**
Expectation and recommendations of the ILST	**None**

4.5.1 Theme 1: Functionality of the ILST.

This theme relates to the nature in which the ILST is organized to support learners who require additional support as well as the criteria for selecting members of the ILSTs. Based on evidence gathered from the questionnaires, as well as information from the follow up interview with a core member of the ILST, all the participants revealed that they have a functional ILST in their school. This was backed by the following statements: “our ILST committee overseas to the needs of the learners”; “we have a functional ILST committee, as well as a learning support educator whose main responsibility is to offer additional support to learners”. As mentioned by (Landsburg, Kruger & Nel, 2005), the institution level support teams should be very

visible and flexible in every school. This point was re iterated by the learning support educator who mentioned that learners with special educational needs are referred to the learning support educators who then decide what to do: “normally the learners are referred to me as the learning support educator, and I work with them four times a week” (Refer to appendix for details of transcript of interview).

4.5.1.1 Subtheme 1: Management of the ILST

The members of the ILST all have one voice regarding the way the ILST is managed. All four participants responded that the ILST hold meetings once per term with the teachers and each member of the team has a role, and the chair lady oversees the overall functioning of the team. The learning support educator re iterated this point by saying that: “... if there is a problem with a learner, that learner is referred to me ...my role is to give extra lessons, invite the parents as well as refer the learner to the district for additional support”

4.5.2 Theme two: collaboration

Two members of the ILST commented that, there is no collaboration between members of the ILST and the foundation phase teachers. This is evident in statements such as “very little collaboration, they tend to relate more with the school’s learning support specialist”; “I never go to their classes to give support...I work with these learners alone... I teach them quite different things from what is taught in their classrooms...I have my own approach”

Two educators however have a positive remark to the issue of collaboration between the ILST and the foundation phase teachers. Remarks such as “...educators always share information that will help learners”; “we discuss new ideas, and discuss on problem learners”.

4.5.2.1 Subtheme 1: Barriers to effective collaboration

All four educators reported that, the major barrier to effective collaboration is time factor: “I think time is a major problem”; “time factor is a huge obstacle as there are too many sub committees” This point was re emphasized by another educator who mentioned that barriers to effective collaboration in the school is caused by the fact that there are too many sub committees that operate differently.

The learning support educator noted that, "... too many assessment tasks have to be done as well as the fact that too many teachers are resistant to change". Fullan (1995) argues that, reform is not just putting into place the latest policy, it means changing the cultures of classrooms, the schools, districts, and every stake holder involved in the learning process. The context of change in inclusive education implies a total systemic change.

Another educator pointed out that, no sharing of information is a major barrier to effective collaboration in their school. The issue of individual differences was equally raised where an educator said that because people have different beliefs and have different ways of doing things, working as a team is often difficult: "individual differences and characteristics is a major barrier to effective collaboration". One participant stated that "foundation phase teachers deem every task as having to do more work!" This was reiterated by another participant who said that educators lack knowledge and are usually frustrated at having to do more work.

4.5.2.2 Subtheme 2: Benefits of collaboration

All participants have different views about the strength of working together as a team. The main idea that was emphasized by all the educators however is that collaboration helps educators to share ideas as well as relief educators from their work load. This was reflected in statements such as "sharing of work load and ideas leaves one with enough time to work and support learners"; "sharing of ideas, sharing of work load, makes teaching more effective"

Another participant pointed out that, collaboration leads to trust worthiness, appreciation of work done by others which leads to a good contusive learning environment: "working collaboratively ensures the child receives the best education possible". One educator said that sharing information, listening to each other, appreciation of what individuals do, leads to greater motivation of people at work.

4.5.3 Theme 3: challenges of working together with the foundation phase teachers.

The participants reported that, one of the challenges they faced when working with the foundation phase teachers is that educators have varying levels of motivation. One

educator mentioned that due to time constraints, it is very difficult to meet with the teachers or work as a team. Another educator pointed out that "lack of remedial knowledge, unwillingness to create extra time for support is one of the problems encountered with the foundation phase teachers. This point was noted in statements such as "focusing on the negative, always in a hurry to complete task is a major problem"; "sometimes they view every idea as a negative before even attempting what has been suggested".

4.5.4 Theme 4: barriers to effective support provision in the school

One educator stated that "resistance to change to new ideas and age differences is a major barrier to effective support provision". This point was stressed by another educator who said that "unwillingness to always go the extra mile is what stands as barrier to effective support provision in the school". One participant said that "lack of resources, lack of learning support training often led teachers to carry out subjective assessments of learners" lack of parental support was also raised as an issue that causes barrier to effective support provision.

4.5.5 Theme 5: expectations and recommendations of the ILST

This theme deals with the expectations of the ILST regarding support for learners with special educational needs. One educator mentioned that "maybe every teacher needs to attend a crash course in inclusive education to broaden their understanding and tolerance level". This point was re iterated by one participant who suggested that: "reduce paper work on the part of the teachers and allow them to have more contact time… training on early identification as well as workshops on literacy in general should be done". Another participant mentioned that the government should employ more qualified educators as well as create affordable schools where children with special educational needs could attend.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the perception of foundation phase teachers regarding the support offered by the ILST to support learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation. Similar themes and subthemes were grouped together and clustered. The comparisons and contrasts between the responses of each group have been reported. Chapter five will summarize the findings and how they are

linked with previous studies related to teacher support. The limitations will also be discussed; recommendations will be highlighted for future use as well as implications for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, the researcher investigated the foundation phase teachers' perceptions regarding the support offered to them by the ILST in their school. The focus was on whether working collaboratively to support and assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and development may facilitate in addressing learner diversity in the inclusive classroom. This chapter will discuss and describe the perceptions of the foundation phase teachers as well as views of the ILST and conclusions arising from the research will be presented within the context of the theoretical frame work outlined in chapter two. Reference will also be made to the limitations and strengths of the study. Conclusion and recommendations will also be highlighted.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS.

The discussion of the findings of the study will focus on the research questions as well as the purpose of the study (refer to chapter 4: table 4.1) in order to summarize the findings of the research.

5.2.1 Description of learning barriers experienced by foundation phase teachers in their classrooms.

In this study, the kinds of barriers highlighted by the foundation phase teachers of this school have been classified under cognitive performance and socio economic factors.

Cognitive performance: Cognitive or scholastic barriers that were noted by teachers include: Language barriers, lack of conceptual thinking in English as well as reading and writing. The overall barriers noted were that children lacked basic understanding skills at expected grade level.

Socio economic factors: The extrinsic socio economic factors that gave rise to barriers were noted by the teachers. They commented on emotional problems that have reduced the self esteem of some learners and this could be emanating from the home background. The emotional barrier also manifest in the classroom through general lack of concentration and this was typical of those children who, due to poverty in their homes, come to school without having something to eat (Refer to chapter two:3).The various learning barriers highlighted reflected both the intrinsic as well as the ecosystemic factors. These findings are similar to what the EWP6 (2001) identifies as barriers to learning and development in South Africa.

5.2.2 Procedures used by teachers to overcome these barriers in the classrooms

The researcher found in this study that, all the teachers showed evidence of using diverse teaching methods or adapt teaching to accommodate learner's needs. Referring learners for additional support is the last resort among the foundation phase teachers.

5.2.3 Functionality of the ILST

In this study, there was contradictory evidence about the frequency of ILST meetings with the foundation phase teachers. While some respondents said that the ILST seldom hold meetings with the teachers, others said meetings are held with the entire staff once per term. The latter response could be the most probable one because the findings from the follow up interview as well as from the members of the ILST was that, the ILST is very functional and it holds meetings with the staff once per term to discuss general issues related to the school. However, it was noted that during these meetings, nothing was discussed regarding teacher support. The researcher also found out that, the ILST organized workshops with the entire staff, although the frequencies as well as the themes of these workshops were contradictory. Eloff and Kgwete, (2007), argued that support in inclusive education is a very complex and multilayered phenomenon. Quoting the case of South Africa, authors pointed out that, it is imperative to think about different ways to support teachers in coping with the challenges of an inclusive classroom. Long term studies, short term professional development as well as organizing workshops for teachers within the school could make a huge difference. This point was further stressed by Mackenzie (2002) who states that, it is best to equip teachers with the appropriate methods to deal with

diversity in their classrooms as this is the development of an inclusive school.

5.2.4 Collaboration

From the findings of this study, it was apparent that there is very minimal collaboration between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST. This was compounded by the fact that most of the meetings held with the ILST was based on other issues such as the retention policy meanwhile nothing has been discussed in regard to how the ILST should function. One may argue that there is lack of good communication between the ILST and the foundation phase teachers. It also seems as though the ILST was not working as a team but rather as individuals. At the follow up interview, the learning support educator made mention of the fact that, the teachers came to her directly for support and she handles the matter alone and not in consultation with the other members of the ILST. The above results contradict the works of Enelbrecht and Green (2001) who advocate that collaboration eliminates the duplication of services and provide a diversified approach to solving and providing services needed by learners. In addition, multiple problems are addressed through different solutions.

Furthermore, based on the findings, it was evident that foundation phase teachers are collaborating amongst themselves in supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation in their classrooms. Majority of the teachers indicated that during their phase meetings, they share ideas, skills, strategies, experiences and give each other some tips on how to help learners. The teachers pointed out that, they seek information and rotate teaching strategies and as a result, the tendency to promptly refer learners to the learning support educator is minimal. The work of Robinson et al (2002) corresponds with the results of the foundation phase since the authors argue that in collaboration, multiple problems are addressed through different solutions. A team working in collaboration can share ideas and mentor each other.

5.2.5 Benefits of collaboration.

In this study, all the participants felt that collaboration ensures that each learner, no matter the difference, have equal opportunity to learn. Most of the participants pointed out that in collaboration, different advice from different people helps in building self

esteem in the teachers, reduce work load and makes teaching more efficient as well as increase teacher's motivation. One educator mentioned that the advice which the teachers get from the learning support educator helps a lot. Through collaboration, hope is brought to the members particularly the foundation phase teachers because learners receive quick and ongoing support.

5.2.6 Barriers to effective collaboration.

From the findings, the members of the ILST pointed out that time factor stands as barrier to effective collaboration in their school. In this study, time factor was a real barrier to effective collaboration as members complained of the work load (too many assessment task) as well as the presence of too many sub committees within the school that equally require time to hold its meetings. The time does clash with other sub meetings which are schedule to hold after school hours. The learning support educator mentioned that because of the work demands of most teachers, they often complain when they are required to attend meetings or implement a proposed new strategy in their classrooms to assists learners. One educator stated that, teachers are resistant to change and also that the age differences amongst teachers equally stand as barrier to effective collaboration and teaming. It is understood that teachers might be afraid of losing their professional identity as pointed out by Robinson et al (2002) how ever if teachers are made to understand their roles as well as develop the confidence to express their opinion, this barrier could be elevated. This point was supported by the idea of Snell and Janney (2000) on collaboration. The authors indicated that there should be common understandings between members to enable them accomplish a common goal. Robinson et al (2002) in their study also found out that, within group dynamics, there can be lack of understanding of roles and the provision of services. In order to eliminate this barrier, it is evident that collaboration strengthens relationships and decreases the chance of misunderstanding among members.

5.2.7 Support

The EWP6 (D o E, 2001), stated that the key function of the ILST is to support all learners and teachers by identifying support needed and designing programmes to address the challenges faced by teachers. The data collected for this study indicated

that the ILST is not properly coordinated to perform its function of identifying learners experiencing difficulties as well as designing intervention strategies for teachers to support learners in their classrooms. The support that is given to the foundation phase teachers has been single handedly done by the learning support educator who sometimes provides the teachers with advice and ideas on how to support learners in their classrooms. The learning support educator also seems to be giving support to the teachers through the recommendations she makes on the support forms as well as giving individual support to the learners that have been referred to her. From the findings, it was not clear whether the workshops organized for the staff was the initiative of the ILST or the DBST. The study has shown that, the teachers do not have confidence in the ILST, who for their part did not take time to actually define their roles and how they would be functioning with the foundation phase teachers in supporting learners experiencing difficulties. From the findings of this study, the ILST of this school have not fully understood its role within the support structure of the school. This result does not concur with the views of Jordan (1994) who claims that, the purpose of the ILST is to provide a pool of ideas and resources to any member of the teaching staff.

The foundation phase teachers seem not to be getting enough support from the ILST but because they collaborate by sharing ideas, they are able to support learners experiencing learning barriers. The foundation phase teachers stated clearly that they give support to learners who need additional attention during contact time and they employ several strategies within their reach to accommodate these learners in the classroom. The completion of support forms (Refer to appendix) is also an evidence of support for learners who need additional support. They also made mention of the fact that because of the support that they give to learners in the classrooms, learners are seldom referred to the learning support educator.

In addition to these, foundation phase teachers thoroughly take time to prepare for lessons. This was evident during my observations in two classrooms whereby the educators made remarkable efforts at differentiating the curriculum to accommodate the needs of all the learners.

5.2.8 Responsiveness of support towards learner's diversity

The call made at UNESCO (1994) was that, inclusive education should focus on how to transform the education system in order to respond to a diversity of learners' needs. From the findings of this study, the participants were not convinced whether or not the support offered by the ILSTs is responsive to the diverse needs of learners. The key argument raised by the educators is the fact that, since each learner is different and develops at their own pace, it would be difficult to measure whether support offered is responsive. However, from the data gathered, it was noted that because of the support teachers are giving to learners in their classrooms, the referral rate is very minimal; coupled by the evidence of low repetition rates of the school. Therefore, one can say that the support to some extent is responsive to learners' diversity.

5.2.9 Barriers to effective support provision in the school

From the findings of this study, the members of the ILST pointed out that, lack of human resources such as trained learning support personnel would be a barrier to effective support provision. The school has only one educator that has undergone some form of learning support training to support all the staff and pupils. This cannot be enough for effective support to take place because a functional ILST, a learning support teacher, plus adequate communication with the District should ensure effective support occurs. The findings further indicated that the teachers are resistant to change as mentioned by some members of the ILST. The un- cooperative spirit in the school could make teachers feel disempowered since they would think that the members of the ILST are superior to them. The above finding contradicts the works of Karagiannis et al (1996) that, the ILST function to empower teachers and learners in a mutually supportive way.

The findings also indicated lack of parental support and involvement to be a barrier to effective support provision in the school. Most parents who cooperate with the teachers are those whose children are not having any difficulties. They respond to letters sent to them by the class teachers and some spent money to buy educative videos for their children. Some parents, who happen to come, tend to make promises to help these children at home, but they never show up again in school and lose interest in the children's learning. It has been argued that both teachers and parents have knowledge that is relevant to enhancing children's learning, but that this knowledge tends not to be successfully communicated and is often underutilized

(Feiler et al, 2008:13). Therefore if parents could be more co operative and get more involved in their children's learning particularly at the foundation phase, some of the barriers experienced by these learners could be properly addressed. The learning support educator however pointed out that she does not have too much problem with the parents because they support her and she indicated that she speaks to them before learners attend her class. She holds meetings with the class teacher and the parents and explains why the learner has to attend the learning support class and ensures the parents that the learner will return to his\ her normal class once there is improvement.

5.2.10 Barriers to parental support

In this study, it was found out that, a major barrier to parental support and involvement is time factor. Most parents are too busy trying to put food on the table and seldom find time to assist their children with home work or to attend parent\teacher meetings which often takes place after school. Some parents may be willing to attend meetings but are handicapped by lack of transportation to get to the school on time for the meetings.

The findings also indicated that parents do not have interest in their children's education; they also lack the knowledge to give support at home as well as the fact that some parents are still in denial that their children may be having learning difficulties. All these factors stand as barriers to effective support. It is apparent that parents should be made aware of how much their support and involvement matters in their children's learning.

5.2.11 Challenges of working together with the foundation phase teachers

From the findings of this study, the ILST indicated that lack of cooperation and motivation is one of the challenges they faced when working with the foundation phase teachers and all this could be attributed to the age differences, longevity of services, the desire to resist change, the divergent qualifications of the educators as well as the misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities of the educators. The findings clearly demonstrated that there is a kind of personality conflict between the members of the ILST and the foundation phase teachers. The foundation phase teachers collaborate amongst themselves but do not collaborate with the ILST. The educators do not trust each other, and this is contrary to the view held by Ericedrs (2000) who emphasizes on trust, respect, openness, active listening, clear

communication and risk bearing as fundamental requirement for collaboration.

The findings also pointed out that, most educators lack remedial background and therefore they find every efforts made to support learners as an extra burden. However, should the teacher support offered by the ILST be properly organized, staff will be motivated to work from a position of knowledge and confidence and perhaps most importantly will change their attitude. The above aspect is important for the success of inclusive education as it aims at minimizing barriers to learning and at the same time maximizing participation for all learners.

5.2.12 Frequency of visits made by the DBST to the school

All the participants claimed that the DBST visit the school once per term. From the findings, the participants seem to be disgruntled that the visits made to the school are very minimal and some claim that the only reason why the District made attempt to visit the school is because the school is next to the district. From the interview with the learning support educator, it was mentioned that the District is overloaded with work. This is supported by the fact that, the District has not responded to the referral forms submitted to them for learners who need placements into special school. This is a need that was requested since the beginning of the year.

5.2.13 Recommendations and expectations of the foundation phase teachers and the ILST.

The recommendations and suggestions that are described in this section are the responses from both the foundation phase teachers and the ILST regarding support for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.

The foundation phase teachers recommend that, more time should be given for the holding of meetings between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST as well as organsing meetings on a regular basis. The findings suggested that, most of the meetings held with the entire staff were scheduled after school hours and most often, the teachers are tired and the matters to be discussed are quickly rushed over.

The foundation phase teachers further suggested that, more human resources should be provided in the school. They suggested that the department should employ a psychologists and social worker to support the works of the learning support educator who is not coping because there are some learners who need more specialized

support.

They further suggested that rather than training only the members of the ILST, the District should also extend the training to include the foundation phase teachers who are the ones dealing with the learners directly in their classrooms.

The members of the ILST on their part suggested that, the department should constantly organize in-service training for the teachers on understanding the inclusive ideology as well as on identifying and addressing barriers to learning. They further suggested that the department should employ more qualified teachers who are dedicated to their work.

Reduction of paper work is another recommendation made by the ILST. They claim that the educators are burdened by too much paper work and this tends to affect their inputs in the classrooms.

One educator suggested that the department should create more affordable special schools for learners who cannot cope in the mainstream.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had various limitations in its design.

The methodology indicated that purposive rather than random sampling was used, thus only one school in the inner suburb of Johannesburg was involved and this renders it problematic to generalize the findings. Generalization was however, not the purpose of the study though what was found in this study can be used for further developments in other contexts.

The findings of the study represent only the foundation phase and not the intermediate phase, and the findings might not be a true reflection of what would happen with regard to the issue of support and collaboration in the school.

Observation was equally carried out only in two single classrooms thus one cannot generalize that all foundation phase teachers are actually offering support to learners in their classrooms.

Not all the participants who completed the questionnaires had a follow up individual interview as was intended. The learning support educator was interviewed because she was available, the rest of the participants were too busy with work and could not be interviewed. This hindered the collection of rich data to support the findings of this research.

Though the members of the ILST participated in the research, the questions in the questionnaires did not really give them the opportunity to explain the kinds of support they are giving to the foundation phase teachers, thus their voices regarding support they are giving to the foundation phase teachers were not properly heard.

5.4 ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A replication of this study using a wider sample representing teachers from different schools may provide useful information regarding support and collaboration.
Research should be undertaken concerning the experiences, challenges and needs of the ILST members currently functioning in schools.

The issue of collaboration between all stake holders involve in children's education needs to be investigated, i.e., how the school management team, teachers and parents collaborate.

Research on the current training models and possible training model used to train the ILST to ensure maximal delivery is needed.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above findings, the following recommendations for proper co ordination of support and collaboration among the ILST and the foundation phase teachers are suggested:

There need to be more developmental workshops organized by the district to educate schools on how the ILST should function.

The department of education together with the higher institutions of learning should

work towards professional development to overcome the problem of shortage of human resources particularly learning support educators.

There should be proper consultation, orientation as well as training of educators before any new policy is implemented.

The district based support teams should make it a point to conduct workshops with the ILST mainly on dealing with collaboration and support. The feedback of these workshops should be communicated to the entire staff immediately.

All the members of the ILST should be referred to the document compiled by the GDE, which mainly stipulates the guidelines for the establishment of the ILST. The roles and responsibilities are stated clearly in this document. The District based support team can include the discussion of this document as part of the training for the ILST.

Schools should establish two ILST- one for the foundation phase and one for the intermediate\ senior phase because the findings revealed that teachers collaborate largely amongst themselves at the foundation phase.

The district based support team that monitor and support the ILST continuously to ensure successful functioning, will require allocation of human resources to be able to deliver this essential service. The ILST cannot function properly without continuous collaboration, development sessions and support.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The literature review of this research study indicated that the sole function of the ILST is to support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and promote effective teaching. Collaboration between members of the ILST and the foundation phase teachers also seems to be a useful approach in addressing diversity in the classroom since it enables the teachers to identify what they need to do together and share their knowhow.

Although there was some evidence of support offered by the ILST to the foundation

phase teachers as noted from the findings, the support was not effective and properly co ordinated. Furthermore, it was also noted that, there was little or no collaboration between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST on how to support learners experiencing learning barriers. The collaboration among the foundation phase teachers as well as that between them and the learning support educator was not adequate to effect lasting change in the school.

However, it is hoped that the recommendations above would be noted so as to improve support through collaborative team work between the foundation phase teachers and the ILST. If inclusive education is to succeed, education support services should be strengthened from the DBST to the ILST level. The focus should be on supporting teachers by ensuring that the ILST members are carefully selected and trained on the development of intervention strategies and basic skills. ILST should further ensure that teachers also become more knowledgeable and skilled in addressing barriers to learning and development by continuously supporting and collaborating with teachers.

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