

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The South African Department of Education has over the years developed a range of policies aimed at transforming the education of the country. These policies have had different impacts on people in the education sector in different provinces. The Eastern Cape being the area of interest in this study, has its own experiences which also have a variety of responses in the different districts of the Province. The area of interest in the study is formal education of youth with special needs in the General Education and Training band. This band starts at the entry level called grade R up to grade 9. Grade 9 is the exit point for learners getting into high school known as Further Education and Training.(FET)

The new policies introduced by the Department kept on redefining the approaches and strategies of teaching and learning in the country. These changes are not readily accepted by the people who are supposed to be implementing them due to the fear of many challenges that these policies come with. The current approach that has been introduced is learner-centeredness, which is replacing the old teacher-tell method of teaching. This change affects all schools in the province, special schools included. The study, therefore aims at looking at the impact of the introduction of this policy, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) with special reference to schools for learners with disabilities.

The National Curriculum Statement has three aspects, namely, the values of the South African constitution and Manifesto, the Critical and Developmental Outcomes and the Outcomes-based education. The values of the South African constitution and manifesto include the issues of democracy which empower people to exercise their democratic

rights and act responsibly, social justice and equity which stipulates that everyone under the age of eighteen years has a right to basic education and that all South Africans are entitled to schooling, and lastly, the aspects of non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu, an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation among others. (Department of Education 2004)

The specific focus of the NCS policy that this study is about is Principle 1 which is about social goals. This principle has four areas of emphasis. The first emphasis is on social justice and equity which stipulate that everyone under the age of eighteen years has a right to basic education and that all South Africans are entitled to schooling and respect. The second area is human rights relating to developing the human rights culture that not only respects individual and group differences but celebrates them positively as well as protecting the rights of people with disabilities. The third one is a healthy environment, which entails making it possible for whatever activities being undertaken to be successful. The fourth area of inclusivity, relates to among others, ensuring that all learners fully participate in the school curriculum irrespective of their ability, disability, language and socio-economic status. (Department of Education 2004)

The interest of this study is on the third and fourth aspects of principle1, namely a healthy environment and inclusivity. Inclusivity cannot be separated from a healthy environment since these are about accepting that learners come with different experiences, interests, strengths and barriers to learning which need to be dealt with in the classroom. Inclusivity acknowledges that all children and youth can learn and that all of them need support.

According to Kapp (1991) disability refers to a physical and or sensory impairment., anyone labelled as learning disabled, mental health users and or survivors, people with HIV positive status or others with hidden impairments and long term health conditions. In essence this refers to anyone who needs support of an organization in order to ensure a barrier that may have excluded them from participating in the economic, social or political life of their community. Kapp

concludes that disability, therefore refers to an identifiable deficiency in the persons' given potential such as sensory, neural, intellectual or physical deficiencies. The handicap is usually of a permanent nature and cannot be done away with and tends to complicate the persons' education and teaching.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Curriculum 2005 was phased – in, in 1998 and the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement Policy followed as an effort to streamline this policy. At the time there was no mention of special needs of learners with disabilities in the formulation of these policies. This implies that during the formulation of this policy the needs of the learners with disabilities were not considered. As a result, when it comes to assessment of learners with special education needs the educators are expected to improvise and to adapt the policy to suite the condition of the learners.

A further complication is that many schools for the disabled youth were designed such that they catered for a specific disability, for example the school for the blind and schools for the physically disabled learners. With the introduction of the policy of inclusivity and the National Curriculum Statement schools are now complicated centres of learning in the sense that they have to cater for more than one disability. This leads to a situation where the learners receive little or no education support.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to assess the implementation of the NCS policy in relation to the principle of inclusivity regarding learners with disabilities in schools. The

study did this by finding out how the educators are coping in a situation where they are expected to improvise learning and assessment methodologies to cater for a large variety of disabilities of which they are not trained to work with. This has been achieved through going to the field.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to a policy review which should focus on the needs of learners with disabilities. The study will also help to promote community support whereby partnerships with the parents of learners with disabilities, government and other organizations can be more effective in the planning and implementation of inclusion activities. The community support would be that of helping in bringing into these schools all the school-going age disabled youth who are not yet at the schools. The study will also advocate that whatever changes aimed at improving the situation at these schools should consider creating balances between black and white schools to make the system more efficient.

1.5 DELIMITATION

The study has had a restricted scope considering that it has covered all the schools for disabled learners in the Eastern Cape province as a whole. Only two districts and one school in each district will be used in this study. This is due to the fact that Eastern Cape as a province has twenty three districts and the vastness of the information could lead to the data not being manageable. Furthermore, the larger number of these schools are in the vicinity of the two districts chosen by the researcher. Although the NCS policy has five principles, for the purpose of this study it was possible to make reference to some aspects of social justice and the outcomes-based education principles. The findings of this study must be seen as tentative as well providing ground for further research opportunities.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was constrained by ethical and legal considerations since it was conducted on human beings. The researcher has considered the human subjects who need to be protected from physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger. There was a need for informed consent from all the participants. This was done by not mentioning their names as well as the names of offices and schools that they come from.

The study has also avoided unduly interfering with the daily processes and programmes of the different sites at which the data collection processes took place. The context of real life makes the study meaningful, but the researcher was aware of individual differences among people and a myriad of situational elements that needed to be considered in the process. This is due to the fact that in some instances the interviewees had a tendency of creating stories that they thought the researcher needed to hear.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivism is a theory which takes inclusivity into account because it is based on the belief that learning is active. This means that learners learn by doing, and particularly the construction of meaning through social interaction with others. Unlike in the past where learners mainly worked alone and achieved learning by repetition, learners work mainly in groups, and learning and knowledge are dynamic and interactive (Bruner, 1986).

The main principles of constructivism are centred around the learners and the educators. Each learner is considered to be a unique individual, who brings his or her own experience to learning, and has a unique background and unique needs. This happens to be the case in the education of learners with special needs. The variety of disabilities found within the special schools demands that each and every need be catered for according to its uniqueness. The complexity and multidimensional nature of humans is seen by this theory as a strength, and is encouraged in order to enrich the learning experience (Bruner, 1991). The learner is also treated as a unique individual in the National Curriculum Statement policy and hence inclusivity tries to accommodate for the different needs of the learners since each one of them comes with different knowledge and experiences.

The role of a teacher in a constructivist classroom is viewed in terms of three main roles as modeling, coaching and scaffolding. Modelling has implications that children learn from observing what others do. The educator therefore models the attitudes to learning that he/she would like the learners to adopt. In coaching, the educator does the

directing, guiding and helping the learning process. Scaffolding, is whereby the teacher guides and helps the learners to reach the next level of learning. The educators in the process of “scaffolding” help their learners to build up from existing knowledge by providing the necessary support on which learners can expand their understanding (Bruner, 1986).The constructivist approach has enormous implications for educators and teaching methodologies in inclusive education considering that both adopt the learner-centredness approach of teaching.

The NCS policy also sees the educator as a facilitator who guides the learner and allows him/her to do the work while in the process the learner learns to solve problems. It is one of the principles of NCS that educators should guide learners into becoming citizens who can work together and be able to solve problems (Vygotsky1978), highlights the combination of practical and social elements in learning. He states that the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development happens when practical activity and speech happen together, because, meaning is constructed on an interpersonal level, through activity as well as connecting intrapersonal meaning with the social world in which we live (Vygotsky 1978).This view in inclusive education is about learners working in groups and sharing information while getting to know and understand one another in the process.

Some authors in the debate on the education of disabled youth have come to one decision about its complications. The view is that it is a problematic issue and educational errors should be avoided at all costs, that is the educator himself should avoid making mistakes through ignorance (Kapp,1991). Ignorance, in this instance could be referring to a situation where due to lack of proper training the educators may not be dealing with the learners in these schools in the expected and appropriate manner.

This is an indication that education errors, like misinterpretation of issues do occur in the mainstream schools where educators are specialists in their fields / learning areas. Considering that the educators in these institutions have been trained to be masters of their trade, one starts to wonder how many instances of “ignorance” mistakes do occur in the case of those educators who were not trained to work in special schools. Such instances could be a disadvantage to the learners who depend on their educators for guidance.

Most educators argue that the learners’ disability and his/her earlier experiences create difficulties in the learning situation and makes it hard for the educators to achieve the expected outcomes. According to the National Curriculum Statement, educators should always remember that learners experience a variety of barriers to learning. Among these mention is made of medical, pedagogical, societal or systemic barriers in nature (Exploring the RNCS in the Senior Phase 2004).

This implies that educators should adapt the content and methodology of what they teach and assess in order to ensure that all learners learn at their own level. They are also expected to always remember that they should treat each case as it presents itself and avoid taking things for granted at all times. Adapting the content is not as easy as it sounds considering that the educators are still grappling with the idea of planning for themselves. This problem stems from the old system days where educators were given instructions on how to present already existing plans in which they were not involved in creating.

It is argued that most educators in the mainstream schools have no training and have little knowledge with respect to teaching children with disabilities, they have to put extra effort and adjust their teaching styles considerably (Dovey & Graffom,1967 , Olive 1996). Reference here is made to the mainstream schools but the situation is the same in the special schools.

It is believed that inclusive education is good because it is about changing attitudes, behavior, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of the learners (Education White Paper 6,2001). This stems from the view that given the right level of resources, the appropriate training of teachers the above statement could prove to be true (Olive, 1996). The attitude of teachers who have not been trained for teaching learners with disabilities tends to be negative. This is a serious problem since learners need dedicated interested teachers with plenty of enthusiasm to enable them to achieve the potential they do have (Dovey & Gaffom, 1987). Dedicated teachers with positive attitudes would have a profound impact on the education and social experience of disabled learners which would even go beyond the years in the classroom.

There are some authors who are against the idea of special schools because they see them as places that encourage isolation of the learners with disabilities, as they are separating them from family, friends and peers. However, these schools have a positive side since their classroom environment makes individualised instruction much easier than the mainstream schools (Dovey & Graffom : 1996). There are views that advocate for the disabled learners to be put in the mainstream schools. This goes with having to adjust the conditions at these schools.

The adjustment involves making the environment free of barriers. The educators at the schools have to cater for both teaching and learning as well as play the role of caregivers. There is also a view that inclusion has not been achieved and can only be achieved through politics, through groups getting together and forcing change through the political system (Olive,1996).

Among the problems that might lead to complications in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement and inclusivity may be a lack of coordination among government departments and the NGO's (Richard, Mail & Guardian : 2006).This view is supported by this study because it would seem that the government officials work in compartments that have a tendency of not making proper linkages and appear not to be

exercising transparency as expected of them. Although this may seem to be the case, it still needs working on by meeting the people in question and making sure that the situation is dealt with through discussions and negotiations

In the policy document for Curriculum 2005, reference is made to the education for learners with disabilities where it is suggested that the curriculum can be adapted to make it more “learner friendly” and skills oriented, which meant a parallel “lower academic level” system (Department Of Education Senior Phase Policy Document 1997). This proves to be one of the big challenges at many of these schools considering that for some of the management teams this is considered not necessary or is left out with the hope that it would not create problems. What seems to be creating this problem is the fact that in the reviewed policy, there is no mention of how this adaptation of the curriculum for the special schools could be done. This makes it more necessary to reach common ground about these two views.

A healthy environment is about, among other things attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies and curricula. Good teaching strategies accompanied by positive attitudes and behaviour benefit all learners. Curricula and the environment need to be changed in order to meet the needs of all learners. The curriculum should be made more flexible across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners, because it would accommodate them irrespective of their learning needs.

Barriers to learning prevent the possibility of the full range of learning needs being met and this leads to an unhealthy environment. Barriers to learning need to be uncovered and minimized, learners have to be empowered by developing their individual strengths so that they are able to participate critically in the process of learning. There is also a need to adapt the support systems available in the classroom.

Generally speaking, in the case of schools for learners with disabilities, a healthy environment is about having well-trained educators and care-givers who know what is expected of them as well as what to expect in their everyday lives with disabled learners. The school should provide remedial classes and programmes that are

appropriate to the needs of the learners, as well as life skills and programme-to-work linkages. Communities who support the special schools help them to become resource centres that are of full service to the community. Schools that consider the psycho-social needs of the learners.

The school building should accommodate barriers to learning such as building ramps to accommodate wheelchairs and constructing user-friendly toilets and bathrooms and other facilities to make life easier and to accommodate a variety of learners' needs in the process. The necessary materials and equipment such as among others, hearing aids and wheelchairs should be made available and accessible to the learners. The consideration of the needs of learners with disabilities and acting on such is the key factor that would give rise to a healthy environment in the special schools.

The disabled people have been marginalized for a long while in many countries by being deprived their rights. Among the countries that have gone down that route , countries as geographically dispersed and politically different as the USA, Sweden, Australia and some African countries have conditioned their disabled young into accepting a devalued role as sick, pitiful and burdensome cases of charity (Olive & MacMillan 1996).

Britain has a long history of shutting down any tortured and convulsed and grotesque and absurd, useless and foolish from sight in spite of 50years of government policy to close down these institutions. England also introduced" idiot asylums" in the 19th century, these were places where 'idiots' would be educated and then return to their homes which they never did. These people lived in an environment in which social existence and relationships were replaced by the constant testing, diagnosing, assessing, classifying and organizing that have become integral to institutional life (Hubert J. 2000).

After World War One a conference was held at which the World Health Organisation's definition of disability and impairment was challenged. It was made

clear that disabled people's restricted participation in society is a socially created barrier and not the result of physical limitations or impairments as stated by the World Health Organisation. This had implications for society and the changes required, because this view sees disability as civil rights and highlights prejudice, discrimination and oppression (Millington. 2006). This indicated the end of an era of discrimination and prejudice against the people with disabilities because of the belief that the cure of disability lies in the changing society.

This shift led to disabled people fighting for their rights resulting in campaigns for human- rights based approach to disability. The campaigns led to accepting that disabilities discrimination, prejudice, negative attitudes and stereotypes are not acceptable. The struggles of disabled people to gain civil rights led to legislation in the USA, the UK, and many other countries including South Africa, India and Australia. This led to the belief that the challenge to discrimination against disabled people should begin in schools where the fight for inclusion of all disabled people would be properly taken care of (Haines 1986).

The right-to-education for all campaign took place in Norway in the mid 1970s. Parents and guardians fought for out-of school children with disabilities to be given an opportunity to learn regardless of the severity of their disability. They won a court case and in 1974 an Education Amendment was passed on fully educating all children with disabilities.

It would seem that many countries in the world fought against the discrimination and prejudice of people with disabilities. What comes out of all the different situations in different countries is the change towards accommodating learners with disabilities which is an indication that it is accepted in many countries in the world what still needs to be deciphered is whether its implementation became a success in all or some of the countries in question.

In Germany, two cities, Berlin and Hessen practice inclusivity and the child is at the centre of attention, this in the South African situation is called a learner-centred education which is typical of the National Curriculum Statement policy approach. This, on its own is an indication that inclusivity can be successful if the learners are given the support that they need. All primary schools in Berlin, Lectzen, Bal Segeby and Schleswig are supplied with special education basic equipment (Maikowski, 1998).

The situation in Germany is an encouraging indication that it is possible to have an ethos in schools where all children feel welcome and safe. This would help to alleviate the problem of learners leaving school early because of intimidation that leads to frustration, which is the case in some instances. Racism, disabilism, sexism and all forms of prejudice need to be challenged and to promote equality through measures that would develop positive thinking in all learners.

Furthermore for all the special schools to function effectively, they need accountable managers that are empowered to effectively perform their mandated functions such as dealing with policy on social issues such as differences in disabilities, religion, race, gender, HIV/Aids, and others. (Jones & Cloete , 2005). If this could be the case the implementation of the policies would be much easier and more effective than if the situation was the opposite.

The NCS policy serves to remedy an experienced dissatisfaction with Curriculum 2005. It further serves to improve the existing situation and relieve an existing problem, that being the confusion and frustration brought about by Curriculum 2005. This being the case, the NCS falls under incremental policy making mode where the policy makers seek to adjust present difficulties rather than anticipate future ones in order to promote incremental improvements which is sometimes called the “acting out” approach (Analytical Case Studies No.10).

The adjustments that are made to the policy are normally tentative, and in some instances they are temporary and need to be revised as the dynamics of the situation

evolve. This study is concerned therefore, with the stage of the policy cycle where the policy impact is assessed after implementation has taken place. This assessment is with special reference to schools for youth with disabilities

The literature review in this study has given an opportunity to look at what has already taken place in the other countries about the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement Policy. This gives the researcher an idea of what to expect as well as knowing what needs to be done for the policy implementation to be successful.

CHAPTER 3

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Curriculum 2005 was phased – in, in 1998 and the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement Policy followed as an effort to streamline this policy. At the time there was no mention of special needs or of learners with barriers in the formulation of these policies. This implies that during the formulation of this policy the learners with disabilities were not considered. A policy on assessment for learners with special education needs is still being developed. The White Paper 6 policy acts as an effort by government to overhaul the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools, and it acknowledges that all learners can learn if provided with a broad range of teaching styles.

With the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement policy in 2004, came a definite number of specific outcomes to be considered and covered for each phase. Specific outcomes describe what learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do. This, therefore means that these outcomes act as a guide as to what educators should teach the learners at different stages of their development. For example, there are 29 outcomes for the Foundation Phase, 35 for the Intermediate Phase and 36 for the Senior Phase.

This change made a big difference and brought relief to the educators who felt that they could forge ahead with the change under the circumstances. This relief was brought about by the fact that previously there was no definition as to which specific outcomes belonged where, educators had to guess as to which ones belonged to the level of their learners. The National Curriculum Statement has three corner stones, namely, the values of the South African constitution and Manifesto, the Critical and Developmental Outcomes and the Outcomes-based education.

The values of the South African constitution and manifesto include issues of democracy to questions of empowering people, social justice and equity or on-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu, an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation (Department of Education 2004).

The critical and developmental outcomes describe the kind of citizen the education and training system aims to develop. This includes within its purview the OBE. The critical and developmental outcomes form the main focus of this study as outlined below.

3.2 The Critical and Developmental Out-comes:

These are rooted in the constitution and they describe the kind of citizen the education and training system aims to develop. These outcomes continue to overarch all teaching and learning and are a guide to everything that is done in the classroom. These critical and developmental out-comes aim at teaching the learners to be able to solve problems, work effectively with others, organize and manage themselves while communicating effectively using science and technology. The learners also reflect and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively and in the process they become culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts. All these aspects are aimed at developing entrepreneurial opportunities and creating responsible citizens in the lives of local, national and global communities.

There are five major principles that underpin the National Curriculum Statement policy and are therefore given greater emphasis. The principles are:

- Social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity.
- Outcomes-based education.
- A high level of skills and knowledge for all.
- Clarity and Accessibilities.
- Progression and Integration.

Out of these five principles only the first two are the focus of this study. The principles of social justice and that of outcomes-based education are the two that have a bearing and more relevance to this study.

3.3 Principle1:Social Justice:

This is the first principle that strives to make learners and educators sensitive to issues such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability and challenges like HIV/AIDS. The values of this principle are promoted in order to prepare learners for contributing to a national South African identity that respects all people. Within this principle there is an emphasis on certain areas like:

- Social justice, which relates to responsibility to care for others, recognizing and respecting that all people have basic human rights.
- A healthy environment, which relates to people accepting that a healthy environment is everyone's responsibility and further promoting educational values that emphasize preserving environment and keeping it clear from pollution, waste and abuse.

- Human rights, relating to developing a human rights culture that not only respects individual and group differences but celebrates them positively as well as protecting the rights of people with disabilities.
- Inclusivity, relates to, among others, ensuring that all learners fully participate in the school curriculum irrespective of their ability, disability, culture, race, gender, language and socio-economic status. The acceptance that learners come with different experiences, interests, strengths and barriers to learning which need to be accommodated in the classroom.

3.4 Principle 2 : Outcomes-Based Education:

The outcomes-based education serves to support the National Curriculum Statement policy especially with regards to teaching and learning. The approach focuses on “how” to teach the learners while the NCS policy guides educators on “what” to teach. The NCS policy is about learner-centredness, cooperative group work and role play in the classroom.

The outcomes-based education has its own principles which guide the educators with the classroom activities. This approach has five major principles that underpin the National Curriculum Statement and are thus given greater emphasis, these being:

- Design down, which is about identifying what learning outcomes and assessment standards are to be assessed through what has been taught and learnt.
- Clarity of focus, is about the principle that everyone involved in learning must have a clear picture of what needs to be achieved. Educators should talk to learners about what they will be learning and criterion to be used when assessing an activity.

The out-comes based approach to teaching and learning was also used in Curriculum 2005 but lacked the principles of design down and clarity of focus which make teaching and learning an easier task for both learners and educators since both parties under the circumstances know exactly what is expected of them. The study therefore, aims at investigating the impact of the implementation of this policy with special reference to institutions for learners with disabilities.

3.5 The vision of the NCS

The National Curriculum Statement is informed by the vision for democracy and redress in South Africa. This policy therefore, deals with correcting the wrongs of the past by ensuring that there is equal access to education for all. This goes together with an effort to strike a balance of opportunities between black and white learners and educators in the country.

The Learning Area statements were developed by the South African Council of Education Ministers which was a group of ministers who belonged to a committee and working groups that developed and produced the National Curriculum Statement Policy. This committee took the decision to replace the Apartheid education by an Outcomes-Based approach in February 1997. The transformation came with the introduction of learning area fields of knowledge, previously known as subjects. These have specific and unique features and connections with all the other fields of knowledge.

Each one of the learning areas has its own learning area statement which contains the definition and purpose of the Learning Area. Learning Outcomes describe in broad terms what learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do. Assessment

Standards on the other hand describe the level at which learners are and what knowledge they acquire and can do in each grade. These also serve the purpose of giving direction to the educators on what content to teach and what activities to give to the learners at a particular level/grade. The learning out-comes, therefore, serve a purpose of indicating what content should be taught while the assessment standards of each learning outcome guide the educator as to how to teach the particular content.

As far as the design features are concerned, there were eight of them in Curriculum 2005. The purpose of design features is to give direction to all teaching and learning and they also have practical implications for the classroom. These were tailored down to only three in the National Curriculum Statement. The three that stood out were the Critical outcomes, Learning Outcomes Learning outcomes and Assessment Standards which were easily understood by both trainers and educators in the schools. The environmental issues, which are of great importance in all aspects of life, were not emphasized in each Learning Area in Curriculum 2005 whereas in the National Curriculum Statement a strong environmental focus is included in every Learning Area Statement.

Pace Sequence and Progression give guidance on what skills, knowledge, attitudes and values should be taught in each grade per learning area. With Curriculum 2005 there was too little guidance as far as these aspects are concerned which is the opposite with National Curriculum Statement which goes further to give guidance as to what depth each aspect in each grade and Learning Area should be taught. With the National Curriculum Statement there is also an indication of how the above procedures should be followed progressively from grade to grade, so that the educators know what to teach and what learners should know and do.

3.6 Disability in the NCS

Disability refers to anyone who has a physical and or sensory impairment., anyone labelled as learning disabled, mental health users and or survivors, people with HIV positive status or others with hidden impairments and long term health conditions. In essence anyone who need support of an organization in order to ensure a barrier that may have excluded them from participating in the economic,

social or political life of their community. Disability, therefore, refers to an identifiable deficiency in the persons' given potential such as sensory, neural, intellectual or physical deficiencies (Kapp 1991). The handicap / disability is usually of a permanent nature and cannot be done away with and tends to complicate the persons' education and teaching.

There is a wide variety of conditions under which people are referred to as being disabled. The following types of disabilities are included : epilepsy, cerebral palsy, mental handicap, aural handicap, early childhood autism and other childhood psychoses and multiple handicaps, The conditions mentioned above are manifested in various ways and they appear at different stages (Kapp 1991).

The National Curriculum Statement stipulates that learners should be allowed to work at their own pace. This poses a serious problem here in terms of the time factor considering that the learners at these schools have normally a lower pace as compared with those in the mainstream schools. Many of these schools do not have caregivers and this results into a situation where the educators have to play the role of caregivers while they are also expected to do their own bit very well. This becomes an indication that these learners may not be well catered for. It raises a concern

whether the educators are able to deal with and cater for the wide variety of disabilities found in these schools.

The National Curriculum Statement aims at a high level of skills and knowledge for all and it has high expectations of what learners can achieve. It aims at clarity and accessibility, both in its design and language. The Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards have been stated clearly, in simple language. This is aimed at enabling all educators to access the curriculum and know what they should teach and what learners should know and be able to do.

The National Curriculum Statement is made further accessible by being published in all official languages as well as Braille which accommodates learners with eyesight problems. As much as this being the case, the situation is not that easy for the educators who deal with learners with a variety of disabilities. This is due to the fact that the curriculum is designed such that it is common for all situations which is not the case for schools for disabled learners. There is a need for educators to try hard to adapt it so that it can be used effectively in their situation.

Progression and integration are some of the NCS major principles. Integration encourages the learning of skills, knowledge and values across the curriculum. It helps to minimize the danger of fragmenting knowledge into small compartments. The Assessment Standards show the sequence of what should be assessed across the grades and each becomes progressively more complex as the learner in that particular phase moves from grade to grade. Integration is very important and can be applied in schools for disabled learners without any problem. Integration helps all learners in all types of schools to understand that all subjects/learning areas are linked to one another and do not occur in isolation, it also gives a better understanding of certain concepts if and when they link to one another.

3.7 The OBE approach in the NCS

The Outcomes-Based approach emphasizes participatory, learner-centered and activity-based education which is central to the National Curriculum Statement policy. It is therefore an approach to teaching and learning. This approach focuses on “how” to teach the learners and what the learners should do in the teaching situation. The National Curriculum Statement on the other hand is the curriculum that guides the

educators on what they teach at each level in the different phases (Exploring The Revised National Curriculum Statement in the Intermediate Phase Grades 4-6, 2004). While the approach is very helpful for educators it might not be easy to apply in certain instances in the case of schools for disabled learners. This is due to the fact that in some instances the learners might not be able to be involved in participatory learning due to the nature of their disability.

A healthy environment is about, among other things, attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies and curricula. Good teaching strategies accompanied by positive attitudes and behaviour benefit all learners. Curricula and the environment need to be changed in order to meet the needs of all learners. The curriculum should be made more flexible across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners, because it would accommodate them irrespective of their learning needs.

Barriers to learning prevent the possibility of the full range of learning needs being met and this leads to an unhealthy environment. Barriers to learning need to be uncovered and minimized, learners have to be empowered by developing their individual strengths so that they are able to participate critically in the process of learning. There is also a need to adapt the support systems available in the classroom.

Generally speaking, in the case of schools for learners with disabilities, a healthy environment is about having well-trained educators and care-givers who know what is expected of them as well as what to expect in their everyday lives with disabled learners. The school should provide remedial classes and programmes that are appropriate to the needs of the learners, as well as life skills and programme-to-work linkages. Communities that support the special schools should help them to become resource centres that are of full service to the community and that consider the psycho-social needs of the learners.

School buildings should accommodate barriers to learning such as building ramps to accommodate wheelchairs and constructing user-friendly toilets and bathrooms and other facilities to make life easier and to accommodate a variety of learners' needs in the process. The necessary materials and equipment such as among others, hearing aids and wheelchairs should be made available and accessible to the learners. The consideration of the needs of learners with disabilities is the a factor that should give rise to a healthy environment in the special schools.

The implementers of the National Curriculum Statement policy are trying to effect a change from the old approaches and strategies of Bantu education. This was a kind of education system which did not give the educators and learners an opportunity to be creative. Educators were prescribed as to what to teach the learners (syllabus) who were expected to absorb all the information from the educators without questioning it.

With the NCS both educators and learners are afforded the opportunity to be involved in the education processes. Educators are given an opportunity to be involved in the designing of the syllabus which is known as the learning programme. The fact that educators are hands-on with the development of the learning programme is an effort to encourage their sense of owning the process and its implementation. This learning programme serves the purpose of guiding the educators as to what to teach in each phase in a period of three years, for example from grade seven to grade nine.

The NCS further accepts that learners do not come to school as blank slates, it acknowledges the fact that all learners have acquired some knowledge from their home teaching which is known as informal education. This takes place before they came to join the school's formal education. This policy further encourages participation and involvement of learners in the learning and teaching situations. The educator acts as the facilitator who sees to it that the expected outcomes of learning and teaching situation are achieved.

When it comes to assessing the work that is done in a classroom situation it is no longer only the educator who is responsible for doing assessment. The learners are also involved in this process, learners are given an opportunity for self assessment when they perform individual activities as well as peer assessment if they work in pairs and in groups. This approach gives learners an opportunity to think critically which will further develop them into problem solvers who are able to work in various situations as well as being able to share information.

A further requirement of the NCS is that the educators are expected to allow the learners to work at their own pace. This does not consider what kind of learner is referred to, which means that this applies to all learners whether they be in special schools or in the mainstream schools. Educators are also expected to give the learners as many opportunities as possible so that they are able to move on or progress to the next level or grade.

This study would like to draw attention to the fact that change is not easily accepted and more so if and when it comes with complications. The new approaches and strategies that accompany the implementation of this policy are not simple and straight forward as educators would have preferred them to be. This is even more so in the case of educators who teach the youth with disabilities. This situation is worse in these special

schools where educators are expected to implement the principles of the policy while they are also expected to improvise learning and assessment methodologies to cater for the various disabilities they deal with in these institutions.

This is further exacerbated by the fact that in some instances more than one kind of disability is dealt with in one school. This situation is further complicated by the fact that the NCS examinations are very rigid, in that besides the fact that educators have to improvise for accommodating the learners with disabilities, the examiners do not do the same with the setting of the exam papers. Examinations are designed such that they are a 'one size fits all' kind of questions.

The study therefore is trying to draw the attention of all the officials who are involved in the writing and the implementation of the policy. This is done with the hope that action will be taken by the relevant individuals who will try to level the grounds and balance the scales as far as the schools for learners with disabilities are concerned so that they are given an opportunity to succeed in life.

This does not necessarily mean that a substandard education be designed for these learners. This means that these learners need to be accommodated according to their needs. This would then lead to them being given an opportunity to progress into the upper levels in their education and be able to be creative and responsible citizens as how they should turn out as expected in the NCS policy education.

During the implementation of the NCS at the educator training stage there was a glaring absence of district officials who are directly involved with the support and monitoring of the education processes at the schools for learners with disabilities. This situation on its own could be one of the causes of complications at these schools considering that even

the trainers of educators at these schools are not specialists regarding the conditions of the learners with disabilities.

The implication is that if the trainers of educators at these institutions were also the officials who are responsible for giving support to them maybe it would have made a great difference. This could be due to the fact that the special needs officials, as compared to the curriculum officials, are the ones who are more knowledgeable in this field and are in a better position to give advice and guidance to the educators at these schools.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4 Data collection approach and reasons

4.1 Techniques of data collection

This study used two techniques, the face to face interviews for the senior education specialists in the districts and the educators in the schools. Questionnaires were used for the managers in the schools as well as in the districts. The approach with the managers was aimed at avoiding the disturbance of their daily programmes as their duties have sometimes unplanned occurrences that need their immediate attention. The advantage of using the interviews as a data collecting technique are that it allows for direct interaction between the researcher and the primary source which allows for greater depth than do other data collecting techniques.

Open-ended questions were used in semi-structural interviews with the subject advisors and the educators, the choice of these was made because these offer the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another. Open ended questions allow the respondents the freedom to express themselves.

In qualitative research, data analysis is primarily an inductive process which involves organizing, analyzing and interpreting data that has been collected by the researcher. The data collected was divided into parts by a classification system called coding. The strategy that was used for this process was that of segmenting data into units of meaning called topics and grouping of topics into larger clusters to form categories. For

instance the responses were divided into categories like implementation, training of educators and others guided by the expected responses with relevance to what is needed by the questions asked. Segments were formed from each one of the codes in order to divide each code into different topics. These topics were further grouped into larger clusters in order to form categories. The categories that were organised reflected the responses of each group with regards to each one of the topics that came up.

This study seeks to assess the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement Policy in relation to the principle of inclusivity with special reference to schools for learners with disabilities. Information was gathered in a form of questionnaires which were followed up by interviews for clarification purposes as well as learning more from the participants by also taking into consideration their body language.

The information was gathered from different levels and categories. There was the school level where educators, the school governing body member and the principal were given questionnaires as well as being interviewed thereafter. This is a procedure that was followed at all levels that were involved in the study. Two districts and two schools were used, out of each district four people were from the school while six were from the education district office.

Qualitative research was used in the field. This approach was used to collect data and to accumulate sufficient knowledge to lead to the understanding of problems that are encountered at different levels, in conjunction with the implementation of the policy. Data was collected from using more than one source of information as well as applying different techniques.

The approach that was used to collect data from the schools and from the district officials was that of leaving the questionnaires with the participants for them to read through in preparation for the interviews. In both instances the questions were

answered in writing and after going through the written responses arrangements for meetings with the respondents were made. The meetings were necessary for clarifications in some instances in order to make sure that there were no misunderstandings.

The interviews helped in clearing some of the written responses. For instance, there was a lot of the use of acronyms at the school level which were clarified during the interview sessions. This was an opportunity to ask follow-up questions as well as getting more information as the body language also helps in giving an opportunity to read the feelings of the interviewee. The “yes” and “no” responses were also attended to by asking follow-up questions which led to better clarity as reasons for these were explained.

For one manager in the district level the interview was done in one session. This was due to the fact that this respondent claimed that he was ready to give the answers to the questions there and then. According to him there was no need to go over the questions considering that he is hands-on with all the activities in his section.

In the case of subject advisors in the district level, the responses differed slightly depending on how they saw the situation. This was brought about by the fact that some of them were involved in the training of educators for the implementation of the policy while others were not.

As far as the target population is concerned, it was not easy to get to meet with some of the participants in the district level as they claimed that they were very busy preparing for the training of educators who were never trained for the implementation of the NCS

policy. The questionnaires in this instance were left with the respondents and arrangements were made to fetch these at a later stage.

The sample size was not a problem except for the fact that at both the school and district levels the educators as well as the subject advisors decided to work on the questions as teams, meaning that the written responses were done in pairs. However, it came out during the follow-up sessions that their interpretation of some situations was different. This helped in gaining more information during the follow-up interview sessions as it so happened that only one view was recorded by the respondents.

In the case of managers at the district level the responses were reflective of the manner in which things were done at the curriculum section than at the special needs section. This led to an understanding of how different the involvement of the managers was in the implementation of the policy.

The purpose of this study was to seek understanding, and to explore the effect of the implementation of the NCS policy with special reference to the schools for learners with disabilities. It is claimed that the purpose of qualitative research is to collect information and to accumulate sufficient knowledge to lead to an understanding (Maykat & Morehouse.1994). In this study sufficient knowledge has been collected from using more than one source as well as using different techniques. The approaches in this methodology are relevant to this study because the researcher, besides asking questions from the educators in the schools, has noted the proceedings of implementation in the classroom situation. The observations have served the purpose of enriching the information gathered from the interviews.

4.2 Target population

This study has used purposive sampling where the sample was built to satisfy the needs of the research. The two schools that were chosen for the study fall within the General Education and Training (GET) band which has relevance in the study. In this case the target population from the offices and the schools in East London and King Williams Town districts were the responsible sectors for the implementation of the policy as follows:

- ❖ The Deputy Chief Education Specialists for curriculum in the district Department of Education office is a manager who coordinates this sections' programmes as well as play a supervisory role to the subject advisors. The curriculum subject advisors are responsible for the training of educators in all the schools in the district. They further are responsible for monitoring and supporting the progress at the schools.
- ❖ The Deputy Chief Education Specialist for special needs co-ordinates and operates special needs policies and ensures that the code of practice containing procedures for guidance on the identification, assessment and review of the pupils' special educational needs is adhered to.
- ❖ The special needs subject advisors work with their manager on the above-mentioned duties as well as on ensuring that the educators at special schools are supported and monitored on the special needs programmes.
- ❖ The principals who ensure that the schools have a current policy for special needs that meet the requirements of the Special Needs Policy of the departmental code of practice.

- ❖ The school governing bodies whose duty is to team up with the principals in management duties including ensuring that the requirements of the Education Law and Policy of the Department of Education are adhered to.

- ❖ The last group that was included was the staff members of the schools for learners with disabilities whose responsibility is to follow class-room procedures in the school policy on special education needs.

4.3 The Sample size

The sample consisted of 20 people who were selected from the target population which is central to this study. From each one of the two districts, East London and King Williams Town, one Deputy Chief Education Specialist, and two Senior Education Specialists from the curriculum section were interviewed. These are the people who are responsible for giving direction as to how the policies are to be implemented at the special schools. Out of the special needs section in the two districts, one Deputy Chief Education Specialists as well as two Senior Education Specialists were approached. The curriculum section at the district level is responsible for the training of educators in preparation for the implementation of policies at school level.

From each of the two schools for learners with disabilities, the study identified a principal, one school governing body member and two educators were central to the study because each category of these people serves a different purpose in the institution. The principal gave insight on current school policy and strategies followed in the school in order to implement the policies. Educators gave insight as to the impact of the implementation on teaching and learning in the school.

4.4 THE RESPONSES BY THE VARIOUS RESPONDENTS

4.4.1 Introduction

This section is about the manner in which in which all the participants in different groups responded to the questions directed to them. The questions were about how they felt about the introduction of the NCS policy and the manner in which they handled the transformation. The responses to the questions are arranged such that they are linked to the questionnaire itself. The arrangement of the responses is such that it starts with the policy implementation which is the main focus of this study, followed by the views of the participants on the training for the policy implementation, thirdly the infrastructure which impacts on the activities at these schools, disparities between black and white schools follows, stakeholder participation is the next one and lastly the improvements on the schools. In some responses the parents' involvement is linked to the disparities as is the case in the educators' response. The stakeholders' participation is linked to the infrastructure in the response by school managers.

4.4.2 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.4.2.1 Educators

According to the educators the National Curriculum Statement Policy is for the betterment of the standard of education of the learners because its approach of learner-centredness gives the learners an opportunity to develop into critical thinkers. However, the view that the National Curriculum Statement Policy has a "fit all" approach that gives a variety of problems, starting with the "working in groups" approach that is

encouraged by the policy. Working in groups is an approach of the outcomes-based education which is practised in a classroom situation where learners are asked to assess their own or another groups' performance. In this approach learners are taught to cooperate, help one another, divide work up and combine their individual efforts. The educators pointed out that this is not always possible and practical because the expected responses and outcomes are not achieved in many instances. This is due to the fact that not all the learners at these schools have the capability to work in groups, because the pace of individuals is controlled by the severity of the handicaps that are experienced when certain activities have to be embarked upon. The situation ends up being frustrating to both learners and educators due to the inability to meet the learning expectations. The assessment of social skills and time management is not as easy as it would be if the learners were all at the same level in terms of responding to and comprehending issues the group/s have to deal with. It is easier to manage time and assess how well the learners work in a group when the group members have a relatively similar understanding of the instruction and of the concepts they are expected to deal with.

In terms of motor skills it is even of a more serious problem when it comes to common grade 9 examinations which are called Common Task of Assessment (CTA). This name is given to this examination because all grade 9 learners in the Eastern Cape Province are required to write this exam as this grade is an exit point for learners who are to proceed to grade 10 into 12, earlier known as high school. The educators complained that there are some types of questions that do not accommodate the physical conditions of some of the learners in many instances. For instance, in the case of questions where learners are requested to draw an "eye/ear" it becomes a frustrating situation because some of these learners cannot draw diagrams as is the case with amputees. The educators further said that it would be better if, for this category of learners, the approach of labelling a diagram could be what they are asked to do as they are capable of doing such an activity. Educators felt strongly that they do not

expect the standards to be lowered for the learners at their schools but that the questions need to be adapted accordingly.

The issue of Inclusivity as one of the components of principle 1 in the NCS policy has an impact on the manner in which things are done at these schools. Inclusivity is based on the acceptance that all learners have the potential to learn. This leads to a situation where most of the schools for disabled learners deal with more than one type of disability in order to practice the principle of inclusivity. Therefore the educators find themselves having to cope by adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the learners. Adapting the curriculum refers to a situation where an educator has to accommodate all the disabilities in his/her classroom in order to cater for all the barriers to learning that are experienced by the learners. Educators stated that although it is not an easy task, they manage this by breaking the information and concepts down and simplifying them while at the same time giving more time for certain individuals to finish the same task. The feeling is that it would be much easier if they dealt with curriculum that was already adapted for the situation so that their task is to make simple modifications in order to accommodate learners in a few instances.

For the success of the implementation of the policy, the educators felt that they needed more guidance on how to draw up assessment programmes properly. This, they pointed out would give them direction as to how to go about dealing with the assessment processes. They also stated that they needed more support and monitoring on the strategies to use with regards to the implementation of the policy.

4.4.2.2 School managers input

When the school managers were asked whether the policy caters for the needs of the learners, the response was that it does so because the curriculum caters for the needs of each learner. They also made mention of a concession that the government gives to each individual learner which states how the learner should be aided in order to access and achieve better education results. The concession serves the purpose of granting learners a right to undertake and profit by specified activities linked to their specific conditions. However, the managers pointed out that while this sounds fair enough because the learners' problems are acknowledged, the problem is that the granting of the rights does not come with the assurance that the services granted will be available. This is with reference to those situations where the educators are not coping with the handling of a variety of disabilities in one classroom.

The management was of the opinion that implementation strategies need to be worked on and be continually improved upon since the policy is relatively new at these schools. This statement was an acknowledgement that the educators need guidance on how to deal with the practical side of the implementation process, hence the mention of strategies. By strategies, reference is made to the policy's outcomes-based approach which is learner-centred and activity-based. The educators therefore need support on how to move away from the old teacher tell strategies and be able to introduce activity-based education where learners are actively involved in the teaching and learning situation. The managers also pointed out that the educators dealt with the problems they encounter and also refer those they cannot handle to the district officials. Educators also have Institution Learner Support Teams that work hand in hand with the District Based Support Team in trying to solve the problems, with little or no success in many instances because of the indirect manner in which they deal with the problems. The learner support teams are made of some members of the teaching staff. Their duty

is to look into learner problems as well as ensuring that there are relevant committees to drive all the programmes in the school.

These teams only serve the purpose of drawing attention to a variety of the problems of the learners but they are not responsible for solving these problems. They further make arrangements for solving the problems by contacting the relevant parties capable of coming with solutions, which in most instances happens to be the district officials. The district based support team serves the purpose of attending to all the problems experienced by the schools whether they are administrative or connected to curriculum matters. This team is answerable to the provincial office which makes it difficult to come with immediate solutions to the problems since certain channels of communication have to be followed before coming to a solution of any problem discovered.

The fact that the district based support teams are unable to deal with problems timeously gives rise to a situation where the managers at these schools appear to be incompetent or negligent in their administration styles. Furthermore, this can result in a situation where a manager may take a decision that proves to be detrimental to the educators and the learners. Although this may be the case, such instances are rare because the district officials normally put temporary measures in place in order to deal with some of these instances.

Although the educators have a problem with the adaptation of the curriculum they hold a Diploma qualification in specialised education which is for training educators to be able to teach at the special schools. However, the problem is that it is not based on the NCS policy criterion. The fact that educators also undergo NCS training conducted by the curriculum section district officials is testimony to the diploma not covering the NCS policy specifications on its implementation.

One other major challenge is that of the age of the learners. Some of these learners are far beyond school going age. These children are in some instances over the age of ten years and have never been to school. The duty of the school is to refer these learners to the district office whose duty is to redirect them to skills' development area. There is also a problem of out of school youth who are involved in an outreach programme put up to cater for communities in need of these, but this programme needs a lot of support from the district office. The out of school youth is the category of disabled children who are supposed to be at school because they are of school-going age but for some reason or another are out of school. The outreach programmes cater for skills development for some of these learners.

Although the centres that cater for these two categories of learners are an initiation of the Department of Education, the people who are put in charge of the programmes are in many instances not professionally qualified to cater for the needs of the youth with barriers to learning. The trainers of the out of school youth and the over-age learners who have been referred to the centres are known as instructors as they are not trained as educators. The Social Department of Development is in charge of these centres therefore, the instructors are answerable to the social workers. The social workers are responsible for the orientation of these trainers on how to deal with these learners according to the needs of different cases.

4.4.2.3 Curriculum subject advisors

According to this group the major problem that is experienced by the educators at these schools is having to adapt the curriculum to suite their situation. Adaptation is not an easy process, the success of this activity needs the support and guidance of the district officials. The curriculum officials suggested that the situation may be solved by the combined efforts by themselves and the special needs staff.

Another problem identified was the grade 9 examinations are concerned where all learners in the province write common question papers in all the learning areas/subjects. This examination, known as the common task of assessment (CTA), does not consider and accommodate the situation at the special schools. As a result the educators have to restructure certain questions to suite some learners at these schools.

4.4.2.4 Special needs subject advisors

This sections' officials feel that the policy does not adequately cater for the needs of both the learners and the educators of the special schools. They felt that the outcomes according to the policy do not stipulate what is expected of the learners with barriers to learning due to their disability conditions. The above statement implies that as much as the policy learning outcomes are clear for the mainstream schools it is not the case with the situation of special schools. This is due to the fact that there is nowhere in the instructions according to policy where there is reference as to how to deal with certain aspects like assessment, for example, instead everything is generalised, which is to the disadvantage of the special schools.

They further argued that handling the variety of disabilities at the schools is a difficult job for the educators. The educators have a task of adapting the curriculum to suite the needs of these learners, this is not an easy task. It becomes more difficult considering that in adapting the curriculum they have to cater for the needs of all the disabilities that they deal with. This is a task that needs the guidance and support of the district officials. The combined efforts of both the curriculum and the special needs officials could alleviate the educator's problem and enable them to do this task properly.

4.4.2.5 Curriculum managers

The view of the curriculum managers was that the National Curriculum Policy does not cater for the needs of the schools for learners with disabilities because there was no special mention of these schools during the training of educators in preparation for the implementation of this policy. This is due to the fact that in all the instructions that were given in all the activities especially assessment, there was no indication as to how differently it can be done in the case schools for learners with disabilities. Assessment is referred to as an example here because it is normally a thorny issue for educators in all schools, special schools included.

In addition to problem cited above these managers felt strongly that there is a need for educators at the special schools to be trained in curriculum adaptation since what they were trained in was relevant for all the other schools except that the variety of disabilities were not considered in the plan. The only thing that reference was constantly made to was the barriers attached to each learning area, this was without referring to specific forms of disabilities as they are catered for in the special school.

It was argued that the implementation of the policy is problematic at most schools and more so in the special schools. This is due to the fact that educators complain that there is too much writing and recording demanded in the implementation processes. The task team in place has to assess and monitor the processes so as to be able to make the necessary amends that would lead to the alleviation of the problems encountered by educators at these schools. The task team should be working on the strategy for curriculum adaptation with special reference to the special schools that need this kind of support. In connection with handling the wide variety of disabilities, this is very tough for the educators, "actually I do not know how they manage" (said one manger). Having to

adapt the curriculum makes life even more difficult for these educators especially without them being trained on how to deal with the adaptation process.

4.4.2.6 Special needs managers

According to the special needs managers the NCS policy does not adequately cater for the needs/situation of schools for learners with disabilities. They further argue that the problem is that of curriculum that needs adaptation. Without guidelines as to how to adapt it for the different disabilities and to what level/s it can be adapted the process becomes very complicated. Concerning the adaptation process the major gap is the training of educators involved in the teaching of learners with disabilities on how to do this process. It was suggested that the special needs officials who are responsible for monitoring and supporting these educators in the implementation of the policy be put on board. This will be done by involving them in the sessions that will be run for the educators on the adaptation process.

Furthermore, on the adaptation of the curriculum the respondents felt that it is a serious problem because there are no standards stipulated for guiding the educators as to how this should be done. They suggested that educators therefore need guidance from the government in order to be able to do this task especially when it comes to assessment. Assessment is very crucial because at the end of the day it is through proper assessment strategies and guidelines that learners are able to progress from one level to the next. The feeling of the respondents was that the task team is working on planning strategies and approaches on how best to implement the policy by planning on the best ways of adaptation whereby all the disabilities will be taken into consideration. This view was brought about by the fact that there is a dire need for this adaptation to be dealt with so that there is progress with implementation of the policy.

According to these managers the task team's main strategy should be to involve the curriculum staff members in their deliberations. The feeling was that this is necessary because they are the ones who trained all the educators at all the schools and are therefore conversant with what the policy entails. They are in a sense more knowledgeable as far as the policy requirements are concerned. The adaptation therefore could be made easier and more fruitful by the combining of forces by these two sections. On handling the variety of disabilities, the managers felt that it is a complicated task and demands that the educators should be trained in the ability to deal with all the barriers to learning that they might come across in any one of the special schools.

4.4.3 THE TRAINING OF EDUCATORS

4.4.3.1 Educators

As far as the training in the National Curriculum Statement policy is concerned the educators feel that the course presentations were good but that they could not grasp the concepts well enough because too much was covered over a short space of time. Their problem areas are the three levels of planning, of the learning programme, the work schedule and the lesson plan. The allocation of the knowledge focus according to the relevant learning outcomes is another sore point, and lastly, not knowing how to assess an activity properly as well as which tool of assessment to use at the time.

The findings reveal that the educators are at a loss because the implementation process is guided by knowing how to plan guided by the policy's knowledge focus. Furthermore if an educator extracts content from the knowledge focus his/her teaching becomes relevant for the grade he/she is dealing with. According to the policy,

assessment should be continuous, it also needs to take place every time teaching and learning is in progress. From this one may infer that if there is implementation taking place at these schools, it does need to be seriously improved upon.

Another complaint was that the training that they received was not enough for them to be in a position to implement effectively. This problem was brought about by the fact that these educators needed to be trained effectively by the officials of the special needs section who specialise on the special schools' programmes. They argue that although training by the curriculum section officials has relevance because these officials are experts in curriculum related matters, the problem is that they are not conversant with the special schools procedures. With the combined efforts of both the special needs and curriculum officials the training of these educators on the policy implementation would lead to better approaches and the learners would be afforded an opportunity to develop into responsible and creative thinkers.

As far as problems with the implementation of the policy are concerned, the educators felt that as much as they were trained for planning and assessment they are not comfortable with these areas. The reason given was that it would be better if from the onset their training was adapted such that it fits the situation at their schools. They further made mention of own efforts in an attempt to help one another in dealing with the problem areas that they come across, but that there is never enough time as they have too many responsibilities besides making sure that the teaching and learning takes place.

4.4.3.2 School managers

The management alluded to the fact that educators at these schools are holders of diplomas for special education and are improving their education at universities. It is up to the government to see to how or what can be done about the educators who were not trained to teach at the special schools. It sometimes happens that some educators join the special schools without having been trained to teach learners with disabilities. There are certain conditions under which this takes place, the most common is the absence of an educator who specialises in a certain learning area. Under such circumstances the educator receives on the job training while he/she engages in the diploma that specialises in the training for teaching in these schools.

Concerning educators not being trained for a certain learning area, this is caused by some school principals who consistently change the learning area allocations at the schools. This means that although the educator was trained for a specific learning area previously, there is a need for training for dealing with another learning area since there are slight differences in the way in which different learning areas approach implementation due to the needs of that particular learning area. The educators undergo training at workshops run by curriculum section which also does frequent visits for support and monitoring. What is good about this arrangement is that the curriculum officials are specialists with curriculum matters, but unfortunately they are not conversant with the special needs programmes.

4.4.3.3 Curriculum subject advisors

This group of respondents is of the opinion that the policy does not adequately cater for schools for learners with disabilities because even at the training stage there was no

specialisation made for the educators from these schools. All educators were trained in the same manner and no adaptation was made for the special schools educators. The training sessions for all educators were about the steps to be followed when planning for the policy implementation. The planning entails designing the learning programme which takes the place of the former syllabus, the work schedule which adds teaching and learning strategies to the first step. The first two steps guide the educators as to what to teach and when to teach it. There is no problem with these steps as they can be followed by any educator for that particular level. The comments by subject advisors suggest that some of them do not understand the plight of the educators.

The group also mentioned that the lesson plan which is the stage that prepares an educator for the classroom practice is where the approaches should differ. This is where the situation should have been arranged such that the all the barriers to learning at these schools were taken into consideration. What happened during the training was that reference was made to barriers to learning in relation to the different learning areas but not according to the needs of special schools. Reference to assessment forms, tools and methods were also general in nature which makes it difficult for special schools to implement as nothing was available on how differently these could be applied in the case of schools for learners with disabilities.

4.4.3.4 Special needs subject advisors

The gap, as identified by these officials, is themselves as special needs subject advisors, not being involved in the training for the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement policy. This, they point out, has led to a further complication of them not being able to be of good help when it comes the support and monitoring of the policy implementation at these schools. They further made mention of the need for their

section to hold a long meeting in conjunction with how best they can deal with the implementation problems at hand.

Concerning the provincial task team, these respondents felt that it should be the idea of the provincial office in their endeavour to close the gaps that they may have identified in conjunction with the implementation as people at the head office level. The group hoped that the team would deal with all gaps that were identified at the schools through empowering the district officials who will in return cascade the information to the special schools. Although not everybody at this stage was aware, the task team referred to, is indeed the idea of the provincial office and has an aim of dealing with the current problems associated with the NCS policy implementation at the schools for learners with disabilities.

The feeling of the officials is that educators who teach learners with disabilities should have been trained with materials that are especially designed for the situation at these schools. This activity could have been done such that a variety of disabilities at these schools be considered at the planning stages when preparation for training was undertaken.

The subject advisors suggested that government should contract people who are specialists in this regard for a period of ±10 years with incentives of course. These people will be expected to be giving the educators continuous quality training. The comment is brought about by the feeling that, since these officials do not know much about the NCS policy implementation, to them it needs other specialists either than themselves. It would seem that they do not know how well they could contribute to monitoring of and support the educators when they have undergone the training themselves.

4.4.3.5 Curriculum managers

Concerning the training of the educators, the respondents mentioned that they felt pity for the educators and were of the view that the training that was undergone by the subject advisors is not enough for them as it did not train them on how to adapt the curriculum for their situation. They further suggested that government needs to do the planning for the educators. This should be so because in most instances the educators do not continue with the planning for implementation, they become stuck with the examples they worked on with the guidance of the facilitator/s during sessions. This complicates the implementation process because planning gives direction as to where to start with the process.

The respondents pointed out that the Department of Education has plans for a National Professional Diploma in Education. This is a plan that the government has put in place in order to help the under-qualified and non-qualifying educators to improve on their education status.

4.4.3.6 Special needs managers

The view of the managers on training was that educators at these schools do not only need training on policy adaptation and specialisation on the variety of disabilities but they also need to be trained on how to manage time. By managing time reference is made to the fact that although the policy requires that learners be given a chance to work at their own pace, this has more implications at these schools considering that the pace of the learners is comparatively slower than in the main stream schools.

With regards to the training that the educators have undergone, their view is that it was not adequate because there was too much information dealt with over a short space of time. In this regard the training itself did not specify each type of disability, there was too much generalisation about dealing with learners with disabilities. They were all generally referred to as barriers to learning and no details were given on how each one of them should be dealt with.

Concerning the educators who are not trained to work at these schools, the respondents stated that the government encourages them to improve and direct their education to suite the situation. Bursaries for this kind of education improvement are made available by government. However, the only problem is the fact that the decision to further studies is left open; there is no binding rule as to which candidates are supposed to use this opportunity. This leads to a situation where the actual people to whom the opportunity is given do miss out on it since there are no controlling measures of making sure they use the opportunity.

4.4.4 INFRASTRUCTURE

4.4.4.1 Educators

Among the responsibilities the educators were referring to was that of having to act as caregivers since there were few of these at the schools. Some of the caregivers need training on how to perform their duties properly. Hence the response to the ability of the caregivers to do their duties properly was a “yes and no”. The caregivers are people who are appointed to provide direct care for the learners whose condition requires that there be special attention given to them. These people have undergone training as nurse aids with enough information on health care. The need for this kind of support

varies from learner to learner since it is controlled by the severity of the learner's disability. People who are appointed into these positions are trained so that they know exactly how to handle the various conditions according to need. It was pointed out that during tuition time the educators do support and care for the learners although there are incidences of disruptions caused by a learner falling ill. Reference was made to a variety of illnesses, and epilepsy was identified as the most disturbing, followed by incontinence in some of the learners.

4.4.4.2 School managers

The team is satisfied that the previously disadvantaged schools are given subsistence in the form of redress fund, contingency fund and funds for buying assistive devices which are used by the schools. These schools also get donations and funds from people, organisations for skills development and the betterment of the disabled learners. They assert that the stakeholders are given enough space to contribute to the improvement of the schools' conditions where improvements are necessary. The management at these schools also start with the welfare and health of the learners. This is done by making sure that the assistive devices are made available for the learners according to their needs. Furthermore, the schools are addressing barriers to learning by applying for concessions where there is need as it is the case with scribes, computers, wheelchairs and crutches and many other facilities depending on particular cases.

4.4.4.3 Curriculum subject advisors

Educators who were not trained for working with learners with disabilities learn on the job. This situation is to the disadvantage of the learners at these schools as their

condition needs people who know how best to deal with a variety of disabilities as well as eventualities that are linked to these. The shortage of caregivers in some instances complicates the situation even further.

4.4.4.4 Curriculum managers

The view of the respondents was that there is little of both facilities and manpower and it is not enough to correct the imbalances between black and white schools. The role of stakeholders and the NGOs is also minimal although they are given an opportunity to do their due. This implies that with insufficient resources it becomes difficult to deal with the disparities between black and white schools. Their view is that contribution by the stakeholders could lead to the solution to these problems.

4.4.4.5 Special needs managers

Concerning the infrastructure the respondents made mention of the need for support staff at all these schools. They stated that these should be according to the barriers identified, for example for schools for learners with disabilities there is a need for physiotherapists and nurses, while remedial educators are necessary at the schools for learners with mental problems. In the case of sport they argue that support people for sporting activities are also of great necessity because the learners at these schools need to be involved in sporting activities that are relevant to their condition. In terms of the government sector the suggestion is that it should be the of government to see to it that specialists for the different sporting codes linked to the variety of disabilities of the learners are trained. This will make this venture possible and fruitful for the benefit of the learners. These views on sporting activities are an encouragement to the schools out there on to how important it is to develop the learners both mentally and physically.

4.4.5 DISPARITIES BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE SCHOOLS

4.4.5.1 Educators

This aspect was brought about by the seemingly smooth running of the white schools for learners with disabilities. The aim of bringing this aspect up was to invoke a self-assessment and comparison spirit on the part of the black school communities. This was done with the hope of encouraging the need for improvement on the part of these schools. Different backgrounds and environments are the cause of the disparities between black and white schools. Learner support material and equipment are of a better standard in the white schools due to better financial status because of relatively higher amount of school fees paid by parents at these schools. Affordability is the issue in this case and it means therefore that poor parents cannot afford these schools. The situation is difficult in the black schools because parents cannot afford the high fees.

Also the parents' commitment level is better at the white schools because they have a say in the improvement of the school conditions as they contribute financially and in kind. They also avail themselves in sport facilities and other activities of the school. This is not the case with the black schools where the parents' presence and contribution is lower.

There is a view among the educators that very few parents are involved in school matters at the black schools due to the fact that most of the learners are from out of town and are staying at the school residents. Those parents who are members of the school governing bodies have a little impact on the school matters. The few that are involved are not fully committed to their duties. The reason for this problem is the mere fact that there are no incentives, they feel that if they get incentivised they would be

more involved and motivated. The findings reveal that the biological parents have, in many instances abandoned their children and the grandparents are taking care of them. From this one may infer that the grandparents feel that they are entitled to a form of incentive since they are doing a favour. This comment suggests that they have forgotten that the grandchildren are their responsibility in the absence of their own parents.

The parents' feeling is that they should be fully involved, motivated and consulted. They should know everything about the school, its challenges, needs and many other issues. They pointed out that there should be quarterly staff meetings where the parents are invited so that they are given an opportunity to exchange ideas and share information on how best to deal with all the school matters. They should also be invited to academic and other school activities and all be encouraged to monitor their children's progress and ask questions and give advice on how to improve on certain problem areas. The comments suggest that the management at these schools does not invite the parents to all the important meetings as it should, hence they are complaining.

4.4.5.2 Special needs subject advisors

The respondents pointed out that they are aware of the imbalances between the black and white special schools but are not so sure what the causes are as much as they do not know what the government is doing about the situation. This response by special needs officials implies two things, either a lack of transparency on the part of management or a lack of full involvement in the special schools developments on the part of the subject advisors themselves.

4.4.5.3 Special needs managers

The response by special needs managers to this issue was that all special schools black and white are subsidised by government. They further explained that the advantage of white schools is that parents of learners give donations to the schools, to add on this they are also very keen and good at raising funds for the schools. They went on to explain that besides the parents of these schools being able to raise funds they also know how to make good connections with a variety of organisations who act as their sponsors. This was an indication of how important the role of the parents is at these schools and how well they can contribute to the development of the school if and when they are involved in the school programmes.

4.4.6 STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

4.4.6.1 Educators

The educators are of the view that stakeholders and other organisations should play a positive role in acting as sponsors to the schools that are needy and cannot afford a wide variety of equipment and facilities. They pointed out that this is for the well-being of the learners, and also that this will help teaching and learning to become fruitful in these schools. The schools that the educators made reference to are the previously disadvantaged schools.

4.4.6.2 Special needs subject advisors

In terms of the role of stakeholders and other organisations, the subject advisors mentioned that they do not have information in this regard of how much involvement, but they are aware of the fact that the stakeholders as well as a number of other organisation NGOs included do play a role in the betterment of the conditions at these schools and they are given an opportunity to do so. This is done by their contribution in cash as well as the donations of equipment to the special schools.

4.4.6.3 Special needs managers

Mention was made of how the stakeholders , NGOs and many other organisations like Mfesane, Rotary club and many more support the schools by donating money or equipment and help in any other form where and when help is needed. The respondents pointed out that all the stakeholders are given an opportunity to contribute as much as possible to the betterment of these schools.

Concerning the white schools in this regard the situation is even better than at the black schools. This is brought about by the ability to raise funds by the white school parents and community. They go to an extent of looking up organisations that are willing to offer assistance to these schools through the internet search.

4.4.7 PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT

4.4.7.1 School managers

The view of the team is that everything that is done at the schools is done with the full approval of the parents. The community at large participates fully with every activity of the school. The involvement of the community has made them feel that they own the school and it is their duty to protect and take good care of it. This attitude has led to the decrease in the number of burglaries as compared to old times. Parents help with the disciplining of the learners. Concerning the response above, the SGB gave a different version of the situation. It would seem that because it is the grandparents of the learners at these schools who act as parents to the learners, they do not avail themselves at most of the meetings. This suggests that, to them the school should be allowed to do its due as they have done theirs by bringing the children to the school.

The school managers pointed out that the special schools are already viable in every sense accessible to say the least as the approaches used in these schools are inclusive in nature. The comments suggest that the special schools are already operating as resource centres. This is unfortunately not the case because the Department of Education is still working on strategies of developing these schools into resource centres.

4.4.7.2 Curriculum subject advisors

According to the observation made by the curriculum officials, there is little or no involvement of parents in the school activities and the planning thereof. This is mainly

due to the fact that learners at these schools come from faraway places and they stay at the school residences. To add to this, most parents are poor and cannot afford to travel to the school even in instances where they are relatively close to these schools. This observation may be referring to schools under general which may not necessarily be the case with all of these schools.

4.4.7.3 Special needs subject advisors

Concerning the parents' involvement this group pointed out that it is visible to some extent. They further mentioned that advocacy on learners with disabilities is done throughout the year and parents are invited to attend these sessions. They are involved in this fashion, as well as coming to the parents' meetings. The attendance is rarely good every time they are invited to these schools.

4.4.7.4 Curriculum managers

The feeling in this regard was that there is little or no involvement of parents and the community in the school programmes. The argument here is that the school together with the district office are planning a failure by not consulting the parents whose input together with that of the community is of great importance for the success of the school proceedings. Their feeling is that it is very important for the schools to involve the parents and the community in decision- making on school developments.

4.4.7.5 Special needs managers

The respondents pointed out that there is little or no impact of the parents in the school planning and activities. They made mention of the fact that the involvement of the parents depends on the invitation by the principal into planning as well as reporting sessions held at the school. They further stated that, alternatively it is the principals' duty to visit the homes of the learners if there is a need to discuss certain matters pertaining to the well-being of the learners. They further alluded to the fact that funds are allocated for such visits by government.

They believe that when the parents are involved, the running of the school becomes easier. Also if there are problems, the sharing of ideas and strategies make such problems even easier to solve when the members work as a team.

4.4.8 SUGGESTIONS ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

4.4.8.1 Educators

In terms of the school management the educators felt that if they were given a chance, they would start by acquainting themselves with the abilities of all the staff members very well, to know their strengths and weakness. They pointed out that this approach would help in deciding who fits well in each of the duties that need to be undertaken. They also argue that teamwork would be encouraged so as to give an opportunity for sharing ideas and supporting one another where problems are encountered. Fairness would be exercised in all matters. The staff members would be treated equally, with their strong and weak points considered all the time. When it comes to workshop

attendance all of the staff members would be given an opportunity to be involved, this would help to avoid allowing a situation where the same individuals attend events while others are left out.

The educators hold a common view that meetings need to be held as often as possible, particularly when there are cases of emergency that need to be attended to. At these meetings the contribution of all involved needs to be encouraged so that people feel that their views are important and are respected. This would be an indication that members have freedom of speech, and respect and accountability would be “instilled” in all the members. Moreover, that policies of the school would be agreed upon by all involved so that everybody commits with ease to the procedures that need to be followed.

4.4.8.2 Curriculum subject advisors

On improvements of the conditions at the schools, reference was made to those that were previously disadvantaged. The group suggested that government should work on the gradual improvement of facilities and equipment at these schools. The district officials should continuously and consistently assist and motivate the educators and the learners at these schools.

4.4.8.3 Special needs subject advisors

On trying to improve the conditions at the schools for learners with disabilities; parents must be involved in the planning and discussion sessions, they should also be given an opportunity to voice their opinions on all matters under discussion. The parents should also be encouraged to form committees that would drive towards reaching certain

objectives/goals for the benefit of the school. The implication here is that in many instances the parents are invited to attend meetings at these schools only to be given reports on decisions already made in their absence and they are expected to endorse these in the end. Regarding goals to benefit the schools, reference was made to activities like fund raising and supporting sporting activities so as to encourage learners to be involved in the sporting activities.

Furthermore the officials felt that there is a need to form partnerships with the other government departments in an effort to make these schools user-friendly. This could be done by putting up infrastructure that is suitable, make resources both human and physical available, and place people with skills and expertise in areas where they are needed in the establishment. The argument here is that the special schools should not be allowed to exist in isolation, campaigns to draw people from other departments will help eliminate the social exclusion affecting these schools. This would need that the candidates that show readiness and willingness to effect qualitative upgrading of the services be appointed at these schools

4.4.8.4 Curriculum managers

In terms of improvements the feeling was that more facilities should be provided and managers in the districts should start with the needs analysis of the schools according to the community of the learners it accommodates. It was further suggested that the special needs staff should play a role in the training of educators for implementation. Also that and the private sector should play a big role in providing facilities for making the schools places of success that are welcoming to both learners and the communities.

4.4.8.5 Special needs managers

As far as improvements of the schools' conditions are concerned, the respondents mentioned that they would call a meeting with the principals of these schools where the main issues on the agenda would be targeting the major problems that were encountered during the previous year. Furthermore they would work on sharing the solutions to these problems. They would also encourage discussions on several issues, including the question of how to handle school fees, strategies on how to raise funds, as well as sharing strategies on doing both these activities so that there are no more glaring differences among these schools regardless of where they are situated and who heads them. The aim of this meeting will be mostly on the proper running of these schools and the good control of the funds.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF FIELDWORK FINDINGS

RESPONSES BY THE VARIOUS PARTICIPANTS

5.1 Introduction

Generally speaking, out of all the categories of people that were interviewed the responses implied a not so successful implementation. What follows below is an analysis of each category for respondents. The analysis will endeavour to follow the pattern of the stated elements as in the research findings in the previous chapter.

5.2 Implementation

In terms of the policy implementation, managers at both curriculum and special needs sections stated that the NCS policy does not adequately cater for the needs of learners with disabilities. Where they differed is when each side supported the answer to the question. Curriculum side gave the reason as the non-consideration of learners with disabilities during the formulation of the policy, while the special needs strongly felt that the main problem with the policy was the absence of guidelines as to how the educators should adapt the policy implementation to suite the needs of learners with disabilities.

These responses suggest that indeed there is a problem with the policy whether it is in its formulation or in its implementation. These managers further suggested that the educators at the special schools need to be trained on how to adapt the NCS policy

curriculum. This needs to be done so that the teaching and learning strategies used should fit the situation /conditions at these schools.

The managers from both sections at the districts alluded to the fact that besides adaptation of the implementation strategies and approaches for the educators at the special schools, there is a need for the subject advisors at the special needs section to be involved in the training of educators at these schools. This, they claimed was necessary because these officials are the ones who are directly involved with the educators at these schools. The implication here is that if the training of these educators on implementation and assessment on the NCS policy could be done by the people who have a better understanding and knowledge of what is taking place at these schools, it could make a great difference. This means that the approach could lead to an alleviation of most of the problems that are encountered by the educators considering that these officials are the ones who support and monitor the situation at these schools.

In contrast to the view of the managers from the district office, managers from the schools pointed out that the policy caters for the needs of schools for learners with disabilities. To these managers the curriculum is “adapted” to accommodate the learners at these schools. This finding, reveals that as far as what is happening at the ground level, the actual implementation taking place in the classroom is an area the managers do not have first hand information about. It would seem that these respondents misunderstood the implication of curriculum adaptation more so for their schools’ situation. In terms of gaps in the NCS implementation, the response was mainly the concern about the age of the learners at these schools as well as the out of school youth. The concern about out of school youth has relevance because according to the policy all children have a right to education. The out of school youth, which are children who are of school going age but are not at school, is a serious concern as they need to be given an opportunity to attend school. The policy states that a learner is not

allowed to take more than four years in each phase. The conditions at the special schools do not make it easy for this rule to be followed as it is. This is due to the fact that it is not possible for all the learners at these schools to manage this time frame since there is a factor of having to consider the barriers caused by the severity of each learners' disability. This implies that in the case of the special schools there is a need to have to adjust this rule to fit the circumstances of each case accordingly.

When it comes to adaptation of the curriculum by the educators the school managers felt that because the educators at these schools have diplomas in special education (DSE), which prepare them for teaching in special schools, they are capable of doing the adaptation on their own. The managers further made mention of the fact that the educators at these schools are holders of diplomas and are in the process of improving their education at universities.

The response seems to be contradicting with an earlier statement where managers felt that there was a need to work on plans and strategies since the NCS policy is "a new thing". They further pointed out that the educators may try to adapt the curriculum if and when they are trained by the district officials on how to do the process properly.

From these responses it can be seen that the managers at the school level do not understand the situation that faces the educators. According to the policy the educators are expected to adapt the curriculum while they are struggling with the policy implementation. Both tasks are not easy for the educators since they are still grappling with mastering the principles of the policy. Having to add another task causes them a lot of frustration as it does not seem to be possible for them to master both tasks under the circumstances.

5.3 Parents' involvement

In the case of parents' involvement in the school programmes and activities different responses were received. The curriculum officials claimed that there was little or no involvement of parents in school matters because most of the special schools have boarding facilities and mostly learners are from out of town, which makes it not easy for some parents to avail themselves due to various reasons.

Contrary to this view the special needs officials claimed that advocacy is done throughout the year on learners' disabilities and this process normally takes place during the parents' meetings which are held at these schools. Furthermore, these officials mentioned that when parents are well informed on the school programme they participate well and if not they can derail the aimed objective. The implication here is that it is important to involve parents in school matters as they would be able to give their much needed support to the schools. From these responses we may infer that the curriculum officials have a different view about the situation because they are not as involved with special schools as is the case with special needs officials and probably have fewer contact session with these as compared to their counterparts.

5.4 Disparities

As far as the imbalances between black and white schools are concerned, the managers pointed out that all special schools are subsidised on an equal basis by government. Their view is that differences, are brought about by the ability of both the stakeholders and the principals of these schools being able to work together in an effort to raise funds. Furthermore, the parents from the white schools donate some funds and equipment for use by the schools in order to meet the needs of the learners. They also

make good connections with a wide variety of organisations who act as their sponsors. This suggests that the black school communities need to take note of the good things happening at the white schools and follow suite so that their schools are improved in many ways.

5.5 Improvements

Concerning the improvements of the school programmes through the involvement of parents to school planning meetings and other academic activities, it was suggested that the involvement of the parents and the acceptance of their views at these meetings would make the parents care more about the well-being of the learners. This approach would further make them feel that they also belong and share the ownership of the schools. It was further suggested that parents should also be made conversant of the new learning areas that came with the introduction of the new policy so that they could have a better input in the education of their children.

According to the educators there is a need to form partnerships with other departments so as to make these schools user friendly, this they stated, could be done by having suitable infrastructures, making resources both human and otherwise available and putting people with skills and expertise in relevant positions. The respondents also pointed out that it would be better if relevant committees drive all the programmes at the schools in order to ensure the success of all the activities undertaken.

The findings reveal that there are problems encountered during the implementation of the NCS policy, but also that there is willingness to continue working on solving these with the help of government officials responsible for different tasks at different levels. Reference to the parents indicated that there is a need for improvement on the

relationship between these schools and the parents as their involvement could mean a lot to the well-being of the learners.

What emerged from the findings when reviewed collectively is that there is a problem with the NCS policy implementation. By and large, the respondents concentrated mostly on the failures and their causes. According to the constructivism theory, we construct meaning in an interpersonal level through activities. In terms of the situation at the schools for learners with disabilities this is not possible, because if the educators are struggling with planning and assessment it is out of the question that teaching and learning is taking place as expected. An environment that is free of barriers still needs to be created starting at the district level if one considers the approach of working in compartments that is practised at this level.

With reference to the provincial task team, the response was that the special needs and curriculum sections should be working on planning strategies and approaches on how best the implementation should be done. To these officials, improving on the implementation of the policy means catering for all the different forms of disabilities that are found at these schools. It would be in the best interest of all concerned if the task teams' main strategy is to involve all subject advisors from the curriculum section in their deliberations. If this is not possible at least this section should be represented in the sessions undertaken by this team. This is necessary because the curriculum subject advisors are the ones who were responsible for the training of the educators at all the schools, special schools included. These officials from curriculum know very well what the policy entails and could be of great help when adaptation processes are undertaken and could make the process to be much easier and more fruitful.

Concerning the common grade 9 examinations known as the Common Task of Assessment (CTA) the special schools are provided with concession forms to fill in so

as to request extra time for learners who cannot manage to finish the tasks as per required time frames. The need for extra time for certain learners during the examination time suggests that special schools should have special exams. Their examinations should be designed to fit the conditions of the variety of disabilities for each special case. This means that all the learners should be accommodated according to their needs and abilities at all times.

In terms of specialisation on the needs of the learners, this is a process that should be practiced throughout the year so that when the time for examinations come, the learners know what to expect and what is expected of them in return. This would create a healthy environment at these schools as well as improve on the implementation process. This would further imply that by practising transparency the special needs of the learners are catered for, because according to the NCS policy, learners need to know what is expected of them at all times when teaching, learning and assessment are taking place in a classroom situation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 The Findings of the Study

At the beginning of this study reference was made to the fact that it is not easy for the people to accept change especially if it comes with complications. The principles of a healthy environment, and that of inclusivity form the main focus of this study. These principles were not easy to achieve due to problems associated with the approaches that were used for the implementation process.

A healthy environment and inclusivity in this study, as was mentioned earlier, refers to a situation where during the process of implementation all the necessary structures are in place. It would seem that this was not the case in this situation. Starting with the educators who were not ready for effecting the implementation processes through to the non involvement of some important role players like the special needs officials in the training process. The training these officials missed out on was very crucial to their being able to support the educators with implementation, especially where adaptation of the curriculum is concerned.

The first step that was taken in the training of educators was on how to plan for implementation. According to the outcomes of this study this is the area where the educators are still experiencing problems. The findings reveal that without proper planning, implementation is not feasible. The argument is that, before the educators can

be in a position to implement the policy they need to have their planning in place. Without the planning implementation is almost impossible if one considers that planning is about designing the syllabus which acts as a guide as to what educators should be doing in the classroom situation.

According to the policy, the learning outcomes and the assessment standards are aimed at enabling the educators to access the curriculum and know what they should teach and what the learners should know and can be able to do. This information on the learning outcomes and the assessment standards is used to compile the levels of planning that direct the route to be taken by educators in the teaching and learning situations. If the educators do not attach meaning to these concepts, the implication is that the struggle to try and implement the policy has more complications than it is perceived.

It is further expected that the educators have to improvise by adapting the curriculum to suite the situation at the schools for learners with disabilities. This is a very difficult task which is almost impossible in many instances because not all educators at these schools have enough experience in dealing with the learners with special needs. In terms of adaptation, the educators can be able deal with the process if they are guided and supported by the district officials especially the officials from the special needs section who deal directly with the schools for learners with disabilities.

This study is within the framework of the constructivism theory which takes inclusivity into account since it is based on the belief that learning is active and therefore learners learn by doing. It would seem that it is not all the time that this is possible in the case of schools for learners with disabilities. The findings reveal that the form of disability that a learner experiences depending on its severity may at times make it impossible for the

learner to be actively involved in certain teaching and learning activities. This has relevance in group work since the problem applies to the situation.

The policy of inclusivity has relevance because it allows all learners an opportunity to learn regardless of their condition whether physical or mental, as well as their race, religion and their status of health. Good as this may seem, the problem it has come with is the wide variety of disabilities found in one school at a time which result in complications considering that previously a school dealt with one form of disability. Inclusive education is about change of attitudes and behaviour as well as teaching methodologies. This change is difficult to attain under the circumstances because the educators pointed out that they still are in need of more training on the approaches and methodologies of the NCS policy. The argument is that if the officials at the district level work in compartments, the implementation efforts are compromised to the disadvantage of the learner's education. It would seem that the special needs officials need to be actively involved in the monitoring of the implementation progress at the schools for learners with disabilities. This would help the educators at these schools in using the correct approaches in the relevant situations.

Concerning the effectiveness of inclusivity, it would seem that although various types of disabilities in learners are accommodated at a school, justice is not done as far as meeting the needs of the learners is concerned. This is brought about by the fact that in many instances there is a lack or a shortage of caregivers. In some instances caregivers are available but lack the skills of doing what is expected of them. Caregivers are supposed to be supporting the educators in catering for certain needs of the learners so as to make it possible that teaching and learning runs smoothly.

The study focuses on the principle of social justice and the outcomes-based education. If social justice relates to responsibility to care for others, recognising and respecting

that all people have basic human rights, these qualities should be recognised and practised at all schools including the schools for learners with disabilities.

The findings reveal that the condition has proved to be difficult to attain in most of these schools due to, among others, the lack of or shortage of manpower. In schools where there is lack of or shortage of caregivers there is a tendency of suffering both in the case of educators and learners. This is brought about by the educators trying hard to double as caregivers while they are expected to deal with their normal duties.

It would seem that as far as the common external examinations for grade 9 are concerned there is a problem with time allocation as well as the way questions are asked. Time is normally not adequate for certain learners while some questions need to be adapted during the process of writing as the question papers are only opened at the start of the examination. This finding reveals that there is a need to set questions that consider and cater for all the disabilities of the learners and the barriers to learning these give rise to.

On the consideration of the specially set questions, the educators at these schools have a task of applying for concession that allows more time for the learners who are unable to finish the examination during the given time frame. Furthermore, there will be no need for educators to have to rephrase some questions in order to accommodate certain learners who need that the questions be adapted to fit their situation.

By and large, the respondents that took part in this study concentrated more on the problems that led to the implementation of the NCS policy. The argument here is that, if nothing is done about the problems at hand, the implementation of this policy will not be successful. Reference is made to the following responses by various groups that were

involved in the study. With regards to the managers at the district level in both the curriculum and special needs sections, the feeling was that the NCS policy does not adequately cater for the needs of learners with disabilities. That it needs to be adapted to suite the learners according to their different needs.

The responses by the managers at this level support the notion that there is a problem as far as the formulation of the policy is concerned with special reference to schools for learners with disabilities. This indicates that there is a need to consider both the learners and the educators in the formulation of this policy, because the learners depend on the educators for their guidance, the information should be made user-friendly for the educators.

In terms of the managers at the schools, the policy was seen as a change for the better. This group further mentioned that they hoped that the implementation of the policy would bring about improvement on the teaching and learning strategies at these schools. These managers further pointed out that there was a need for support to be given to the educators with the implementation processes. This suggested that educators experienced problems with implementation and the managers were aware, hence they saw the need for the support by the district officials.

Subject advisors at the district level also felt that the policy did not adequately cater for both learners and educators at the schools for learners with disabilities. They pointed out that it would have been better if the process of adaptation was done before the policy was introduced to the educators for implementation. These comments suggest that the difficulty experienced results in the delay of the process of learning and progress to learning. The special needs subject advisors, echoing the same view, further pointed out they felt that if they could be put on board they would be in a better position to monitor and support the situation at these schools. These officials feel that

with their knowledge of the policy specifics, they could be in a better position to help the educators with adapting the implementation process to fit the situation of the schools for learners with disabilities.

In the outcomes-based approach which emphasises learner-centredness, some of the expected teaching strategies are group work and role-play. These methodologies are some of those that are not easy to follow and sometimes are out of question to implement. This is because some of the learners cannot work in group situations while others are not able to do role play activities. Barriers to learning hamper the manner in which teaching and learning should take place in a classroom situation and the situation leads to frustration. The educator becomes frustrated because not all learners can be involved while learners become frustrated because they cannot be part of certain activities.

The situation at the schools for learners with disabilities needs attention along the lines of making it possible that the policy implementation occurs in the expected manner by putting all the necessary structures in place. The curriculum needs to be made flexible by seeing to it that barriers to learning are uncovered and minimised in order to enable learner participation.

What emerges from the findings when viewed collectively is that before the implementation of the NCS policy can be a success, there is a need to attend to all the problem areas as pointed out by the respondents. This would benefit everybody concerned, more so the educators considering that they see the transformation as necessary. This is brought about by their having pointed out earlier that the introduction of the NCS policy is for the betterment of education in the schools.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The study has revealed that the problems that are experienced in the implementation of the NCS policy are as a result of a variety of factors. The findings that are notable in this study are the non consideration of schools for learners with disabilities in the formulation of the policy, the failure to involve the special needs subject advisors in the training for implementation of the policy and the failure to adapt the materials for the benefit of the special schools situation. What has been revealed by the research suggests that something needs to be done to try and deal with the areas of concern.

7.2 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

The study led to a revelation as to how the implementation is taking place at these schools, as to what kind of problems the educators are encountering concerning the planning and the presentations in the classroom situation. The problem encountered by the educators are mainly linked to the materials that were used as well approaches that were followed during the implementation process. The instructional materials used for implementation were designed to be used by all schools whether they be in mainstream or special schools. This is problematic for the special schools since with them the approaches need to be designed so that they accommodate the barriers to learning as experienced by all the learners in each school.

Open-ended questions were used to give the educators an opportunity to point out and explain clearly what they think needs to be done in order to improve on the areas that needed attention. The educators' comments suggested that the training was too brief with too much information to comprehend, the classroom organisation and the presentations as well as the problem with the questions that are set for common examination which do not accommodate the situation at these schools.

The evidence that the special needs subject advisors were left out of the training sessions both for trainers of educators as well as the training of educators at the schools also came up. These findings support the notion that there is a need to do something about the situation so that these officials are involved in the implementation processes by giving the much needed support to these schools.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are a result of what came out of the responses by the various groups of the target population. These are not cast on iron and they may be varied to suite the needs of certain situations, changes and additions to these can be made. The following issues need further attention and detailed research;

- The policy makers should consult with the people on the ground, in this case the provincial and district officials. This should be done with the aim of finding out which structures will be affected by the changes made to the policies and how everybody concerned can be accommodated in order to make sure that implementation is run smoothly.

- During the training sessions for subject advisors in preparing them for introducing the policy to the schools, there is a need to involve subject advisors from curriculum and special needs sections. This would lead to a combined effort during the training of the educators and afterwards. This would also make matters easier for all concerned to be aware of changes in the curriculum.
- The district officials from both curriculum and special needs sections should be involved in the processes of adapting the policy so as to work towards better results coming from combined efforts by specialists on curriculum and special needs matters. This would benefit the educators as they would easily access information accordingly.
- Follow-up sessions after the adaptation need to be done by the specialists from both sections in order to make sure that there is a balance in the alleviation of problems encountered and to ensure success. This would help in making it possible for the educators to source information from both sides of curriculum and special needs.
- Grade 9 Common examinations (CTA) should be set such that they accommodate the variety of disabilities found at these schools in order to cater for all barriers to learning linked to these disabilities. This would alleviate the problem of educators at these schools and they will not have to make changes to the questions while the examination is in progress. as this is disturbing and confusing to the learners.
- Human resources should be such that they accommodate and cater for the needs of all the learners that are admitted at each one of these

schools. Appointments at these schools should be made in such a manner that people with skills and expertise are identified starting from management up to the lowest rank of appointees. This would result in a smooth running of these schools.

- School management teams and school committees should involve the parents and the community in the school plans. These parties should explain what is going on about the school programmes, development plans as well budgets and expenditures. This would help the schools in gaining the support of these stakeholders in the school improvement processes. People believe in knowing why they should be involved in certain activities and when they know they easily cooperate.
- Managers in the districts need to work together in determining which programmes call for the involvement of other or all sections especially when these have to do with education policy changes. This would help in making sure that all the people who are affected by the changes that need to be effected are aware and get involved.
- The schools should see to it that the school governing bodies that they have put in place are fully functional. Functional school governing bodies help in encouraging the parents and the communities to be involved in the school activities. This has a positive effect on the welfare of the learners as these parties work with the school management in making decisions as to what is best for the learners at these schools.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The recommendations above are aimed at trying to attract the attention of all the people who are affected by the introduction of the NCS policy. This study has relevance to the people who are at the national, provincial, district offices and at the schools in various districts.

The NCS policy has an outcomes-based education approach which is most welcome because it encourages the involvement of learners in a teaching and learning situation. This approach is most welcome as it helps to guide learners into being critical thinkers who will develop into responsible citizens. The educators are also given an opportunity to be involved in the designing of their own learning programme which acts as the former syllabus, a process that is aimed at encouraging them to own the implementation process. Furthermore, the glimpse of what is taking place at the special schools is a call for action to all concerned, and also an encouragement to work in teams in order to attain good results. In terms of the training of educators, the process needs to be sustained and made attainable.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NCS POLICY AT SCHOOLS FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES/BARRIERS TO LEARNING:

QUESTIONS FOR MANAGERS IN THE DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEVEL

1. In your opinion do you think the NCS policy caters adequately for the needs of schools for learners with disabilities?
2. If there are any gaps that you have identified with the implementation what do you plan to do with these?
3. The policy stipulates that the educators should or are expected to adapt the curriculum to suite the condition/situation depending on the learners they are dealing with. Do you see this as an activity they are able to do without any difficulties?
4. How do you think the educators are handling the variety of disabilities in their schools?
5. What is your feeling about the fact that educators who teach learners with disabilities were trained in the same manner, using the same materials that were used for the mainstream school educators' training?
6. How is government going to invest in the special training of these educators?

7. What is the governments' plan about the educators who were not trained to teach at these schools for learners with disabilities?
8. What is the function of the task team that is working on improving implementation strategies for the NCS?
9. What strategies does the team have in place for dealing with the problems confronted by the educators?
10. As far as facilities, manpower, equipment and other relevant necessities are concerned, the white schools for disabled learners are better equipped, what is being done by government about this imbalance?
11. What is the role of stakeholders like the NGOs and other organisations in the betterment of the conditions at these schools?
12. Are the stakeholders in question given space to contribute to the betterment of the conditions at these schools?
13. How much is the involvement of parents and the community in the school plans and activities?
14. What is the impact of their involvement or their being not involved in the school programmes' success or failure?
15. As people in management what do you think you would do to improve on the unsatisfactory conditions at the schools for learners with disabilities and where would you start?
16. What other solutions can you think of even if you think other parties either than you could handle and make them a reality in order to make these schools welcoming places of success?

Appendix 2

QUESTIONNAIRE

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NCS POLICY AT SCHOOLS FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES/BARRIERS TO LEARNING:

QUESTIONS FOR SUBJECT ADVISORS IN THE DISTRICT

1. In your opinion does the NCS policy adequately cater for the needs of schools for learners with disabilities?
2. If there are any gaps that you have identified in the implementation process what do you plan to do with these?
3. The policy stipulates that the educators should or are expected to adapt the curriculum to suite the condition/situation depending on the learners they are dealing with. Do you see this as an activity they are able to do without any difficulties?
4. How do you think the educators are handling the variety of disabilities in their schools?
5. What is your feeling about the fact that educators who teach learners with disabilities were trained in the same manner, using the same materials that were used for the mainstream school educators' training?
6. How is government going to invest in the special training of these educators?

7. What is the governments' plan about the educators who were not trained to teach at these schools for learners with disabilities?
8. What is the function of the task team that is working on improving implementation strategies for the NCS?
9. What strategies does the team have in place for dealing with the problems confronted by the educators?
10. As far as facilities, manpower, equipment and other relevant necessities are concerned, the white schools for disabled learners are better equipped, what is being done by government about this imbalance?
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13. How much is the involvement of parents and the community in the school plans and activities?
14. What is the impact of their involvement or their being not involved in the school programmes' success or failure?
15. As people in management what do you think you would do to improve on the unsatisfactory conditions at the schools for learners with disabilities and where would you start?
16. What other solutions can you think of even if you think other parties either than you could handle and make them a reality in order to make these schools welcoming places of success?

Appendix 3

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NCS POLICY AT SCHOOLS FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES/BARRIERS TO LEARNING :

QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS AT THE SCHOOLS

1. Why do you think the NCS policy was implemented?
2. Do you think the implementation is a success?
3. What reasons can you give for your answer?
4. What do you think should be done about the situation?
5. Considering that the NCS policy is a 'fit all' does this not give problems in the special school situation?
6. How do you as an educator adapt the curriculum to fit your situation?
7. What kind of problems do you experience with the implementation?
8. What do you do with these problems?
9. Do you have caregivers at your school?
10. If you have them do they do what is expected of them?
11. If you do not have caregivers what structures are put in place to cater for the needs of the learners?
12. Considering that inclusive education allows a variety of disabilities to be catered for in a school, how are you coping with this condition?

13. If you are not coping what do you suggest should be done to solve the problems?
14. During tuition time are you able to give support and care with ease to the learners?
15. What do you think of the training that you have undergone for the NCS policy implementation?
16. Do you feel that there are any gaps on the implementation?
17. In which areas do you think you need training to fill the gaps?
18. What is it that you need in order to be successful in your implementation of NCS the policy?
19. What is your opinion about racial disparities between black and white schools?
20. What do you think should be the role of stakeholders like NGOs and other organisations?
21. What is the parents and the community's involvement in the school matters?
22. What do you think should be their role in improving school programmes and procedures?
23. If you were put in charge of making changes for the better at your school what would you do and where would you start?