

The decision-making process of employing facilitators in inclusive primary schools

By

Tumisang Ruth Mtsweni

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Abstract

There is a growing phenomenon of employing facilitators in support of learners with learning disabilities in schools offering inclusive education; however there is a scarcity of literature internationally regarding the decision-making models used to make this critical decision. Furthermore, there is also no research done in South Africa regarding facilitators, nor on decision-making models used to determine the need for facilitators or how they should be hired. In spite of the benevolent intentions of parents and teachers who assign facilitators to learners with disabilities, research shows that facilitators are employed according to perceived needs rather than real needs.

The research conducted in this study is qualitative in nature; the narrative case study explores the deliberation process of employing facilitators in a manner that provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The study focused on three different schools (Remedial school, Traditional private school and Montessori) that perceive themselves as inclusive primary schools. The purpose of the study was to understand the decision-making process of the various stakeholders (parents, teachers, and facilitators) involved in making the decision to employ facilitators.

Through the case the three respective schools were categorised into proactive, reactive or passive, based on their approach to appointing facilitators for special needs learners. It is evident from the case studies that the proactive school (Remedial school) had better success with facilitators than either the reactive (Montessori School) or the passive school (traditional private school). The pro-active school displayed a more coherent successful system amongst all stakeholders in the decision to employ a facilitator, while the passive school was somewhat functional mostly because the stakeholders understood the needs of the child. However the system employed by the reactive school was chaotic as all stakeholders were dissatisfied and the learners who were being facilitated suffered the most.

Key terms

Facilitators, inclusive education, schools, decision-making process, South Africa.

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Chapter one

1.1 Introduction

South Africa prides itself on its ability to integrate various racial and ethnic groups. This principle is founded on the tenets of the Constitution, which upholds the rights of all citizens regardless of gender, race, age or even disability. There are many policies that mark the shift from the oppressive apartheid regime to a more democratic and humanistic approach. However, there are still many implementation issues which create gaps between policy and practice after almost two decades of democracy. Those who feel the impact are mainly children and women, particularly those with disabilities.

The South African government has a responsibility to all its citizens and one of its tasks is to ensure that citizens enjoy the fruits of democracy. It does so by putting in place policies that will govern different bodies to ensure that citizens are not segregated in any way. One such policy is the White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE 2001), which aims to provide a more intensive and specialised form of support to learners with special needs in order for them to reach their full potential.

White Paper 6 also aims to change special needs schools into resource centres for other schools and expand the number of special needs schools and colleges from about 30 to 500, with a vision of developing full-service school and college models of inclusion. According to White paper 6 there were about 280 000 disabled learners more than a decade ago who were younger than 18 years old; White Paper 6 envisioned these young people among their peers in school, learning productively instead of being locked in dark rooms in isolation. However, this vision has many challenges, because while many disabled learners may be in full-service schools, they are not always learning. In spite the effort to include learners with disabilities in mainstream environments they are more often than not excluded and marginalised, and therefore do not reach their full potential. The effort to include learners with disabilities is anchored by the support of facilitators and as such this phenomenon is a growing trend internationally as well as amongst private schools in South Africa.

Facilitators are often employed to work one-on-one or with a number of learners with disabilities. They frequently work beyond their scope of expertise, but in other cases they deliver a well-planned service in conjunction with general teachers, specialised teachers, therapists, parents and other stakeholders involved in carrying out inclusive education. In the international milieu, different terms are used for facilitator such as paraprofessional, para-educator, classroom assistant and teaching assistant. These terms will be used interchangeably, depending on the context and the literature. It is assumed that the way stakeholders understand the role of the facilitator is crucial in making the decision to employ them. The study explores this process through the theory of decision-making models.

1.2 General statement of the problem

While there is a growing phenomenon of employing facilitators to support children with learning disabilities in inclusive schools, there is no clear definition of what their role is, nor the criteria of their employment. Mueller (2001) defines facilitators, or paraprofessionals, as valuable members of an educational community. He argues that facilitators should not be seen as surrogate teachers but rather as a support service that promotes independence and not dependency. In this definition paraprofessionals are synonymous with para-educators and teacher aides. In another context, facilitators are perceived as custodians and mobility support (Cornoldi, Scrugg & Mastropieri 1999).

The challenge in employing or using facilitators as a support system to learners with disabilities is that it has no theoretical basis. The employment of facilitators seems to be a temporary solution to a long-standing challenge in inclusive education. However, it is acknowledged that learners with disabilities require a work force with expertise at a greater intensity than their counterparts. Yet learners with disabilities are the ones who are often left to the care of individuals with no pedagogical abilities.

1.3 Research question

The study will be founded on four principle research questions although it will not be limited to these specific questions:

1. How do stakeholders in inclusive schools in South Africa make the decision to employ facilitators?
2. How do stakeholders in South Africa understand the role of facilitators?
3. What are the factors that stakeholders take into consideration when employing facilitators in inclusive schools?
4. What is the role and influence of each stakeholder in the decision to employ facilitators?

1.4 Methodology

The above research questions were explored within the interpretative/constructive paradigm. This paradigm according to Ponterotto (2005) allows a multiple and understandable position unlike the positivist perspective which permits a single objective external reality. Hansen (2004) reiterates the same point by elucidating that reality is constructed in the minds of individuals and not externally through a singular entity. This study was informed by an interpretative/constructivist paradigm which sought a collaborative and conversational approach in making sense of reality.

1.5 Rationale

I became interested in the phenomenon of facilitators following my own experience as a facilitator. What intrigued me was the decision-making process used to employ facilitators. I was employed by parents to work at a Montessori Academy school as a facilitator from January 2009-January 2011, with a learner with hemiplegia who had behavioural challenges. I accepted the offer to work with the disabled learner because the opportunity to work with such a learner would expand and enrich my understanding, given that I was busy with my honours studies in Remedial Education. I was employed by the parents and not by the school, because parents seek better learning opportunities for their children and they are willing to pay an extra fee over and above the fees paid to those private schools.

I later worked as a Grade 2 teacher in a private school, where I witnessed the nature and perceptions held by the school and parents about learners with disabilities in a

mainstream environment. One of my learners had a younger sibling who had low muscle-tone disorder. This younger sister was dependent on the facilitator for her mobility; I was intrigued by the process that the parents went through to ensure that their daughter was enrolled in a mainstream school. In retrospect, as a facilitator and an educator, I witnessed many of the challenges learners with disabilities, as well as involved stakeholders, face in striving for inclusion in mainstream schools. I realised that we need to have a better understanding of the route parents and schools take to “ensure inclusive education”.

This research could add to the body of knowledge pertaining to academic soundness behind the employment of facilitators. I share the same apprehensions as the leading researchers in studies regarding facilitators, Giangreco (2010) and Murphy & Mueller (2001), who are alarmed at the rate at which facilitators are employed without sound conceptual and theoretical support. This study can add to the knowledge on inclusive education in South Africa, as there is currently no literature on facilitators or on the decision-making process used when employing them.

1.6 The limits of the research

The method used in exploring the decision-making process, namely, case studies, results in a small sample, three schools in this case and as such the findings from the study may not be applied to the general population and are not representative of the national population. Furthermore, case studies are based largely on self-reporting by identified stakeholder and as such there may be some subjective reporting. Lastly, as the study does not analyse any data there is no verification of qualitative and quantitative sources

1.7 Organization of the thesis

This thesis comprises of seven chapters, a reference list and appendices. Chapter One provides the introduction for the study and sets up the research questions as well as the rationale for such a study.

Chapter two –Literature review

This chapter entails a brief history of inclusive education and the underlying theory behind it. It explores the phenomenon of the employment of facilitators in South Africa and internationally, and highlights the absence of literature regarding the process of hiring facilitators.

Chapter three- Theoretical framework

This chapter provides the theoretical frame work under pinning the decision-making process of employing facilitators. Two theories have been reconceptualised for this study. The theory by Billroy Powell's (2008) decision making model, focusing on the levels that can influence the decision making process, and Elwyn and Shatz's (2010) decision making model, focusing on the deliberation process that leads to a good-quality decision.

Chapter four- Methodology

This chapter examines the types of instruments used in collecting data and the motivation for this selection. Purposive sampling was used to select participants and information was collected through semi-structured interviews. The study is defined by the interpretative/constructive qualitative paradigm, which employs a narrative case study approach to give me a deeper understanding of the decision-making process of employing facilitators. Credibility and reliability of the data are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter five: The narrative

This chapter encapsulates the stories of three learners in different schools. In each case the school, teachers, parents and facilitators tell their side of the process of employing facilitators. The different contexts elucidate the dynamics of the various stakeholders and the kind of influence they had on each other in reaching the decision to hire facilitators. The first case study is of Stanley, an eleven year old autistic boy; the next case study is on Nqobile, a seven year old girl with mitochondrial disorder, and the final one is on Avril, a 14 year old hemiplegic girl.

Chapter six – Analysis of data

In this chapter the data from the three narrative stories is analysed and interpreted. Part of the findings are the crucial for all stakeholders to know and understand the role of the facilitator. Role clarification can eliminate chaos and dysfunctional systems. Facilitators are not always the panacea for children with barriers to learning.

Chapter seven- Conclusion of the study and recommendations

The last chapter answers the research questions through the integration of the literature review, theoretical framework and data interpreted. Recommendations for further study are also included in this chapter.

Chapter two -Literature review

2.1 Introduction

According to Creswell (2008: 89), a literature review "...is a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describe the past and current state of information". The written summary of the literature review differs according to the approach a researcher uses. There is a slight contrast between quantitative and qualitative research. Creswell (2008) distinguishes the two approaches in the following way; in a quantitative and qualitative study the literature primarily justifies the importance of the research problem and provides the rationale for the purpose of the research question or hypothesis. Quantitative researchers predict their findings while in qualitative studies the researcher does not predict the findings but rather allows the views of the participant to emerge without being altered by the views of others from the literature.

Therefore the purpose of this literature review is to summarise past and current information, and to compare or contrast it with data that has been collected. The comparison and contrasting will be dealt with in the final chapter. In this chapter the focus will be on the past and current information concerning the employment of facilitators and the gap in the literature, which this study intends to address. The gaps that have been identified in the literature were the inadequate decision making models in inclusive education and the lack of literature concerning facilitators in the South African context. The literature review will entail the following discussion topics:

- Inclusion in the South African context
- History of inclusion
- Merging of various learners
- Preventive measures of avoiding the misuse of facilitators
- Growing trend of hiring facilitators internationally

2. 2 Inclusion in the South African context

The South African education system has a dark past of discrimination, where black learners were not given equal opportunities as their counter-peers because of their race. Although access to education was not entirely denied, discrimination marked

education policies. In order to understand apartheid education policies, there is need to understand the theoretical assumptions underlying them. De Clerq (1997) emphasises a point by citing Harman (1984), who distinguishes two different ways in which policies can be analysed. First, policies can be seen “as rational activities aimed at resolving group conflict over allocation of resources” (De Clerq 1997:128), and second, policies can be seen “as exercises of power and control and authoritative allocation of values (both social and material)” (De Clerq 1997:128). The latter description is more applicable to the apartheid education regime. The theoretical assumptions of the apartheid regime did not only result in racial injustices but also had a negative influence on individuals with disabilities.

According to Sedibe (1997), following the recommendation of the De Lange Report in 1981, education in apartheid South Africa was administered through three “own affairs” houses in parliament and one “general affairs” subcluster which was merged with other departments. The three “own affairs” houses were for whites, Indians and coloureds. African people were not represented in parliament. This discrimination illustrates part of the theoretical assumptions of the apartheid education regime. However, this paper does not focus on the racial tensions that were experienced prior to 1994. This brief background serves as the basis for the literature review of the history of the South African education system.

At the dawn of the new South Africa, the newly elected government had a mandate to transform an apartheid education regime into one that upheld human rights and was no longer discriminatory. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, every policy has a theoretical assumption underlying it. The Minister of Education post-1994, Professor Sibusiso Bhengu, had a theoretical assumption of inclusiveness which was embedded within various educational policies.

It was a colossal responsibility to merge “19 racially, ethnically and regionally divided Departments of Education” (Jansen & Taylor 2003:12) into one Department of Education founded on a non-discriminatory school environment. There were a great number of Green Papers, White Papers, new legislation and amendments to existing laws and regulatory procedures that had been accumulated within the education bureaucracy, in order to transform the system from exclusiveness and discrimination

to inclusiveness (Jansen & Taylor 2003). The paradigm shift from an exclusive and discriminative approach in education to one of inclusiveness was taxing on all stakeholders from policy developers right to the learners with disabilities themselves. There are success stories documented by several researchers on the success of inclusion in South Africa such as Pather (2011:1114) where despite “evidence of massive poverty and lack of basic resources at schools, such as. sanitation, safe buildings and access to electricity and water, remain a central challenge to the implementation of inclusive education” such schools bore the fruits of true essence of inclusion. Pillay & Di Terlizzi (2009) report on success stories of inclusion but with emphasise on the transition phase learners with disabilities go through from one environment (specialised school) to the other (mainstream school).

Pillay & Di Terlizzi (2009) place great importance on the environment as an integral part in permitting and promoting inclusion. There are numerous factors that influence a smooth transition of learners with disability from a specialised environment into a mainstream environment, such as hostile environments or the negative attitude of teachers towards learners with disabilities. Pillay & Di Terzilli citing Chadsey & Sheldon 1998 in Greene & Kochhar-Bryant (2003:9) state that “The educational environment of the school plays a major role in the efficacy of transition. Learners entering into less supported environments, especially in terms of vertical transition, experience negative self concepts, poor socialization skills, stress and anxiety”.

2.2.1 Construct ‘inclusive school’

It is not enough that a school can call itself an inclusive school. There are components that it needs to bear in order to be considered as an inclusive school. According to the (DoE, 2008) inclusive education addresses barriers to learning and exclusion caused by a number of factors, including poverty, language differences, inflexible curricula, inaccessible environments, inadequate support services, and lack of parental involvement in addition to impairment and illness. Therefore when a school is flexible in curricular, has accessible environments, provides adequate support services to learners with disabilities, then it is inclusive in nature. It is the constitutional right of all learners to access education, regardless of their race, gender or disability. However there are some schools that claim that they are not

ready to be inclusive and deny admission to learners on the grounds that they cannot accommodate or cater for them (Walton 2006). According to Walton (2011:244) the problem with this kind of thinking is that without learners whose presence demands the modification of physical amenities or the addition of human or technical resources, there is little reason for a school to make any changes. The presence of learners with disabilities stretches the school to be more inclusive in nature, therefore fulfilling the essence of true inclusion and the aims of the White paper 6.

2.3 History of inclusion

South Africa, like any other country in the world, has a spectrum of learners who may be put into simple categories (without minimising the complexities within the categories): learners with barriers (physical, cognitive and developmental) to learning and learners without barriers. In the past, learners with barriers were enrolled in special needs schools and their peers in mainstream schools. Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001) highlight the history of special education in South Africa as highly influenced by international trends.

In the 1960s a dominant American model was followed: that of categorising learners in special needs schools according to their physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities. Then 20 years later the South African government appointed the De Lange Commission (1981), which reported a shift from strict labelling and categorising of learners with disabilities to a broader focus on “special education needs”. The journey continued: in 1990 a reconceptualization of special education needs resulted in a considerable breakthrough – the learner was no longer seen as the problem as it was the environment that was seen to be problematic (Adelman 1992; NEPI 1992; Donald 1994).

According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report on education for disabled black people, “the extremely high incidence of disability in the black population group had attributed it to factors associated with environmental disadvantage, such as poverty, lack of awareness and access to medical and health care facilities, exposure to political violence and lack of opportunity for learning” (HSRC 1987). The reconceptualised definition of special needs education

emphasises the environment as the focus and a catalyst for change, rather than the disabled child. If black children were exposed to such disadvantaged environments, then their situation would be far worse than that of their non-disabled peers.

The dawn of a new South Africa began to dispel the darkness of apartheid, especially for those who were oppressed in more than one dimension. The greatest injustices that were suffered by various individuals came not only from racial tensions but from discriminations based on ignorance and prejudice about individuals with disabilities. The new government needed to correct the wrongs of the past, not only those of racial injustice but of all kinds of injustices especially those against individuals with disabilities. One of the objectives of White Paper 6 is to prevent learners with disabilities from being isolated and denied education because of their disability; therefore efforts were made to provide education for learners with disabilities by merging them with their counter-peers.

2.4 Merging of various learners

The idea behind disabled learners being merged into the same schools with their counter-peers is noble and pivotal for the South African education system with a theoretical assumption of inclusiveness. However, it seems to be burdening an education system that is still recovering from inequalities under the apartheid regime. William (2000) highlights the commitment the South African government has and continues to have of transforming the education system of South Africa. Graaff and Parker (1997) elucidate this point in the following statement: “It is seldom that an education system has had to absorb so many changes as is currently the case in South Africa”. This statement was written almost two decades ago but is still valid in today’s conditions in the South African education system.

Twenty years ago various policies were introduced into South Africa’s education systems that were intended to reach a spectrum (abled and disabled learners) of learners. Today the education system is not only faced with the problem of HIV/AIDS (learners being the heads of households), but with the extra burden of taking care of refugees and immigrants from other African states, those seeking a better life for themselves in South Africa. All these challenges are social issues that are pressing

hard on a system that is barely coping. To add to this overburdened system by merging learners with various disabilities into the equation, might do more harm than good even though the intentions are benevolent.

Merging a diversified spectrum of learners into one classroom is the constitutional right of South African learners. It must, however, be achieved through careful consideration of the strengths of the education system, because “the reality is that South Africa, as a developing nation, is not equipped with resources and facilities to meet the needs of inclusion” (Pillay & Di Terlizzi 2009:493). Nonetheless, educationalists cannot be passive or discouraged by the enormous responsibility that rests on the education system as well as on all other stakeholders who are passionate and concerned about education.

Therefore White Paper 6 is a strategy that seeks to achieve inclusiveness in various environments. In the past it catered only for abled learners, but today it hopes to merge all abled and disabled learners in one classroom. The strategy (implementation, execution and management) is not monitored meticulously, because ever since the launch of the White Paper 6 more than a decade ago, there has not been a review of the guideline, its failures and successes. The White Paper 6, in fact, is still a guideline, not yet a policy.

There are a number of pitfalls that need to be addressed before it can become a policy. One of those pitfalls is the practicality and feasibility of merging learners (both able and disabled) into one class without adequate support. It is the right of every learner, whether able or not, to access education and not be denied it based on gender, race or disability. However, if a learner with any disability (minor to severe) is enrolled at a school and placed in a classroom where there is no thorough understanding of that learner or appropriate support given, the essence of inclusion could be lost and compromised, even in the effort to maximise education accessibility for all learners. Currently most efforts made towards progress are bound to cause some sort of stress. Merging learners, who were once, taught separately, into one classroom, where they are now studying together, calls for an understanding of Bronfen Brenner’s theory of ecological systems. According to Brenner’s theory, “an individual exists within layers of social relationships: the family,

friendship (micro-system), organisational, neighbours (exo-system) and culture and society (macro-system)". These layers influence each other interdependently (Visser in Duncan et al. 2007:106). The essence of this theory is elucidated by Levine and Perkins (1997:113): "to understand a tree it is necessary to study both the forest of which it is a part as well as the cells and tissue that are part of the tree".

Placing learners who were previously in specialised schools in mainstream schools, into the hands of teachers who are sceptical of and anxious about learners with disabilities, could be taxing to the ideology of inclusiveness. Moreover, research shows that teachers' attitudes were more positive about including learners who did not require extra instructional or management skills on their part (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden 2000; Soodak, Podell & Lehman 1998).

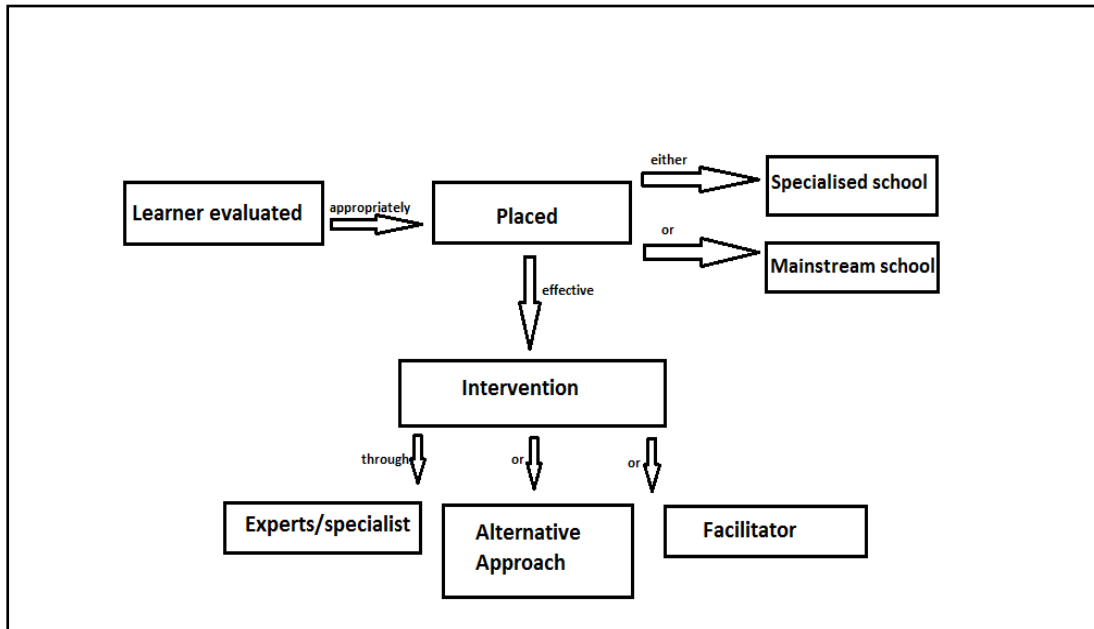
Engelbrecht, Swart & Eloff (2003) cite Avramidis et al(2003:295) on the challenges of placing a learner with special needs in a mainstream classroom: "Apart from learners with behavioural or emotional difficulties, it is especially the acceptance of learners with intellectual disabilities that seems to raise the most sensitive issues for teachers and provoke the most disagreements about the wisdom of inclusive education". Understanding the 'tree' (learners with disabilities) of inclusion is crucial to its success. If it is misunderstood it can mean that learners with disabilities were better off in specialised schools than being included in schools that marginalise them and infringe on their right to be educated.

2.5 Preventive measures of avoiding the misuse of facilitators

Inclusion has the dual role of strengthening education and reaching out to a spectrum of learners, according to White Paper 6. In this section there will first be a discuss on its role in strengthening the "education system through barrier-free zone environments, curriculum modification, assessment, learning material, and instructional methodologies" (WP6 2001:28). This strengthening can be achieved through support to avoid violating the rights of learners with disabilities. Support requires implementation and management at district level (provincial, regional and head office) and institutional level (learner, teacher, expertise from local community, district support team and higher education institution) (WP6 2001:29). Implementation of the support is visible at institutional level, particularly between the

learner and the teacher. The following diagram Figure 2.5.1 is based on the White Paper 6; ideally this is what the White Paper 6 envisions inclusive school following the steps depicted in Figure 2.5.1

Figure 2.5.1 Placement of disabled learners



It is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the learner before he or she can be placed in any school. Once the learner has been evaluated, the school must assess whether it is in a position to help that particular learner. Some schools deny access to learners with disabilities, based on their evaluation of the learner and their subsequent decision that they are not equipped to enrol that particular learner into their school. However as Mueller and Murphy (2001) highlight; a thorough understanding of the learner’s needs and proper placement might prevent a number of detrimental issues that result from assumptions and outcomes that are not rigorously assessed.

After the learner has been assessed, he or she needs to be placed at a school that will best cater for his or her needs. Adjustments might be needed, as the government wants specialised schools to be resource centres, and mainstream schools to cater for a spectrum of learners. Observing the current state of inclusion, South African teachers and schools are not ready to accommodate some disabilities, particularly intellectual disabilities. In a study conducted by Soodak, Podell and Lehman (1998),

they found that teachers have negative views about the inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and behaviour disorders, and that learners with intellectual disabilities evoke feelings of anxiety in the teachers. Successful inclusion is dependent on the school's ability to deliver appropriate services to all learners, especially those with disabilities. Failure to deliver appropriate services has led to a growing phenomenon called paraprofessionals or para-educators, commonly referred to in South Africa as "facilitators"

In some cases, the presence of a facilitator could alleviate the anxieties teachers have about learners with severe disabilities. According to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2010), in South Africa by the year 2010 the use of facilitators was already in operation, as many examples of individual learners with disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, and physical and sensory disabilities, were successfully integrated in regular classrooms and schools. Some of these learners have facilitators (usually by private arrangement) who help them in the classroom.

Placement at an appropriate school has a direct influence on the success of inclusion. Giangreco, Smith & Pinckney (2006) emphasise the importance of service delivery models in schools that serve as indicators of whether a school is proactive or reactive in dealing with learners with disabilities. A reactive school views a learner with disabilities as a challenge, and the attitude of the school is visible through the kinds of interventions the school uses. Generally, such schools choose the option of facilitators to help learners with complex learning styles as the only solution, seldom exploring any other avenues. On the other hand, a proactive school is conscious of intervention strategies and explores various options when dealing with learners with disabilities. The school may, for example, use peer assistance or specialised help. The school prepares both the environment and the teachers to adjust to the needs of the disabled learner. Facilitators are a service delivery component, one that is widely used, but often with little theoretical soundness behind it.

2.6 Growing trend of hiring facilitators internationally

It is important to reflect on the inception of paraprofessionals and have an understanding of where the phenomenon comes from and where it is heading. The

historical roots of facilitator or paraprofessional support for learners with disabilities emerged in the second half of the 20th century, when facilitators were used to address persistent shortages of qualified professionals (Pickett 1999) within a cultural context that largely devalued people with disabilities (Wolfensberger 1975; Taylor & Blatt 1999). The roles and responsibilities of facilitators slowly grew beyond their scope of expertise. Facilitator support appeared by default and not by design; facilitators mediated between learners with disabilities and the school at large. Dating back to the late 1990s, research focused primarily on the roles, training, responsibilities, remuneration and impact of paraprofessionals. Giangreco, Edelman and Broer (2001) reveal that between 1991 and 2000 research focused on facilitators who supported learners with disabilities, with the emphasis being 58% on their responsibility and 42% on orientation and training; but little research has been done on the employment and assigning of facilitators. Little research was also done on the soundness of hiring paraprofessionals, and Giangreco, Doyle & Suter (2010) began to look at the alarming rate at which facilitators were demanded and used in mainstream classes.

They were puzzled by the absence of supportive data or sound a theoretical basis for assigning the least-qualified, often inadequately supervised, personnel to learners with the most complex learning challenges. They argued that this was an injustice to disabled learners which called for scrutiny, because abled learners would not be subjected to an unqualified teacher under any circumstances. Research further showed that facilitators are effective if they are supervised by specialised as well as general teachers, and their responsibilities are mediated and agreed upon based on the facilitator's level of training, expertise and education (Giangreco, Doyle & Suter 2010). Angelides, Constantinou and Leigh (2009) also mention positive outcomes that result from facilitators who work in conjunction with teachers in Cyprus. Facilitators help increase learning participation, keep learners' attention focused, and raise the standard for learning for all learners. Giving this kind of supervision to facilitators prevents them from working beyond their scope of knowledge, thus not compromising the quality of education for learners with disabilities. In a large-scale study in the United Kingdom, teachers reported that using facilitators had a positive impact on their job satisfaction, stress levels and classroom organisation; yet these same facilitators' services were negatively correlated with learner's achievement in

Mathematics, English and Science (Bassett, Blatchford, Brown, Martin, Russell & Webster, 2010).

A follow-up study was conducted by Bassett et.al (2011) to get a clearer understanding of the impact facilitators have on the learning outcomes of disabled learners. It was evident that the negative findings (disabled learners performed poorly in comparison to their peers because the bulk of their learning was conducted by facilitators and not general teachers) were due to the qualitative difference between teacher-to-learner and assistant-to-learner interaction. Even though disabled learners are physically included in the classroom, research indicates that they are marginalised and deprived of the most integral part of being taught solely by qualified teachers. French (2001) and, Riggs and Mueller (2001) reiterate the same concern when they highlight that general and special educators are responsible for planning instruction carried out by facilitators. However, there is still documented evidence of facilitators operating with high levels of autonomy, making instructional decisions providing the bulk of instruction to some learners, and doing so without adequate professional direction based on the research mentioned above.

On the other hand, these challenges are not evident in some schools in Italy, according to Palladino, Cornoldi, Vianello, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1999). Facilitators are utilised less extensively in Italian schools, because their role is primarily to provide personal care and mobility support for disabled learners. The Italian concept of who facilitators are and what their role is, has shed light on how their inclusive classrooms successfully cater to the needs of the disabled learners without further marginalising and excluding them from properly functioning inclusive environments. It is almost exclusively the role of the teacher and special educator to provide instruction. While cultural differences are undoubtedly factors in this comparison, as Palladino et al (1999) point out, presumably teachers and special educators are able to spend more time with learners with disabilities in Italian schools because both general class sizes and caseloads for special educators are smaller.

It is evident that role clarification could be one of the integral elements of properly functioning inclusive environments. When roles are clearly defined, when the different stakeholders (facilitators, general and special teachers) will play their roles

and not impinge on their colleagues' areas of responsibility; then inclusion will occur. Facilitators would not find themselves working beyond their scope of expertise, and individuals who are trained for the various services that they are qualified to render would cater for disabled learners. Whatever perception a country, town, district or even school holds about the employment of facilitators, it will influence the quality of inclusion needed by learners with disabilities.

The question one needs to ask is “what is the root of inappropriate use of facilitators?” Giangreco (2011) argues that the use of facilitators stems from a reactive stance, in the sense that schools are not ready for learners with disabilities because of the measures they put in place (high incidence of using paraprofessionals in spite of detrimental factors). He emphasises that by adding a service without substantially reconceptualising service delivery in ways that integrate general and special education and align with the school’s mission and policies, we are not curbing the problem but actually exacerbating it. The challenge faced when employing facilitators without theoretical or conceptual soundness will result to many detrimental consequences (rather than beneficial outcomes) of having the assistance of one-on-one facilitators.

In his 2010 study, Giangreco shifts the focus from employing facilitators to that of offering alternative natural support for learners with disabilities. As pointed out above, he argues that hiring facilitators will not solve the problem, as has been witnessed over the years. Therefore there must be a way to use methods or intervention in special needs education, which will maximise the potential of learners with disabilities, without marginalising and denying them the opportunity to be taught solely by qualified teachers. Giangreco (2007) and Carter, Cushing & Kennedy (2005) point out various alternatives that would assist learners with disabilities without compromising the quality of education being offered by qualified general and specialised teachers.

These are some of the points they emphasised:

1. Resource re-allocation (e.g. trading a paraprofessional position for a special education position)
2. Co-teaching

3. Increasing ownership of general educators and their capacity to include learners with disabilities
4. Transitional paraprofessional pools (e.g. short-term, targeted assignments for roofing staff)
5. Reassigning paraprofessional roles (e.g. from one-on-one paraprofessional to the classroom)
6. Lowering special educator caseloads to increase their opportunity in the classroom
7. Peer support

These alternatives by no means undermine the role that facilitators play; they are merely alternative means of support. It would be impractical to eliminate totally the support of facilitators, as they play a vital role. As mentioned earlier, Italian schools define facilitators as “custodians”, and in the UK and US facilitators fulfil various roles ranging from teaching to custodianship. The greatest concern that research has shown is the alarming extent to which facilitators are employed and the heavy reliance put on them by schools. A solution to this challenge had to be found urgently and, in a study conducted by Murphy and Mueller (2001), a district in Vermont was selected to provide the district with procedural and recording documents to ensure that the IEP (Individual Educational Program) team members shared a common understanding of how facilitators functioned. The IEP team is a group of individuals (specialised and general teachers, parents, paraprofessionals and principal) who are responsible for compiling a tailor-made programme that will match the needs of the disabled learners with an appropriate intervention. Part of their preparation is in deciding all issues concerning provision of assistance to the disabled learner: when, where, how and who.

The role of the IEP team is to ensure that appropriate individuals meet the needs of learners. Murphy and Mueller (2001) mention such strategies as being responsible inclusion. In order for this to occur, a progressive planning matrix is needed so those involved can recognise and “protect” the essential components of successful inclusion. Nine years later Giangreco (2010) underlined five crucial results that have been neglected in the growing trend of employing facilitators and subsequently relying heavily on them.

1. Insufficient data are available regarding one- on-one support to guide policy and practice.
2. Overreliance on facilitators is conceptually flawed.
3. Research has identified a host of detrimental effects.
4. Current approaches to decision-making are inadequate.
5. Overreliance on facilitators hampers attention to important changes.

This is the reason for this study, although small numbers of published guidelines and decision-making tools exist. Mueller and Murphy (2001) have managed to compile guidelines, despite the absence of any widely accepted or research-based tools for making decisions about when facilitator support is needed. Some schools have developed their own processes and practices. However, there are currently no research-based tools founded on a theoretical basis, internationally or in South Africa. This is the gap that this study, “Decision-making process in employing facilitators”, hopes to address as well as the lack of literature in the South African context about employing facilitators. In Chapter three the decision-making models that will be used as a lens to explore the process of employing facilitators in South Africa is discussed.

Chapter three -Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical lens, as Creswell (2008) defines it, is a guiding perspective or ideology that provides structure to research. Since this study has explored the decision-making process of employing facilitators in inclusive schools; Two different models of decision making process as both a guiding perspective and the theoretical lens of this study have been used.

3.2 Models

The first model, discussed by Powell (2008), deals with individuals who have the greatest influence when decisions are taken at a university. The second model discussed, by Elwyn and Miron-Shatz (2010), deals with the deliberation process that impacts on reaching a good quality decision when dealing with patients. Both models were reconceptualised to serve the purpose of this study. Powell (2008) describes the four basic tenets of the decision-making process, which he terms “the four I’s”:

1. Idea
2. Information
3. Initiative
4. Influence

Powell sums up these four I’s as: first, an **idea** that must be cultivated; second, checking the originality of the **information** in terms of where it comes from; third, **initiating** action to attract support and gather momentum; and finally, having the necessary strength and conviction to **influence** others to adopt what is proposed. He further elaborates on the fourth tenet through research conducted at two higher education institutions where he sought to find out who had the most influence in decision-making.

He describes four types of influence:

1. Eminent influence
2. Low influence
3. Opportunity to influence
4. The influence of resources

Powell discovered that those who have eminent influence in the context of higher education institutions are those in top management positions (administrators, deans, academic vice-presidents and librarians). These individuals are responsible for running the business and strategic planning. Low influencers are those individuals who are part of the faculty (academics) and the union (faculty associates). In terms of the research conducted, they are the kinds of individual who react to the decisions taken by those with eminent influence. They do not give real input into the decisions taken, and usually most decisions are taken without their involvement and impact on them negatively. The opportunity to influence has to do with the collaborative process of decision-making, which is time-consuming but has to be carried out in spite of the constraints (time, and consensus from all parties involved).

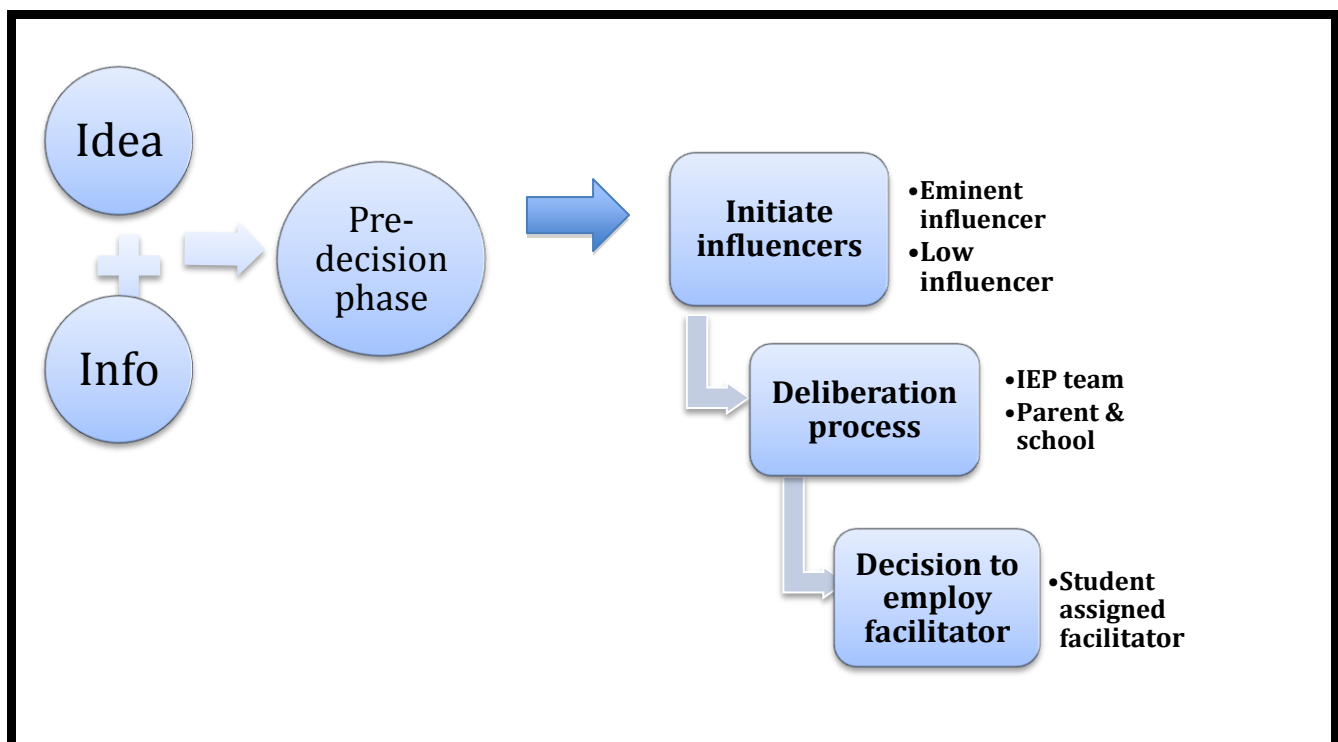
The best decision must be taken, based on the will of the majority of people who opt for a certain choice over other choices. In most cases those in top management positions exert more influence on the decision-making process than other members. The last influence has to do with finance. Stakeholders with no authority over the allocation of resources have little opportunity to influence decision-making with respect to the allocation of resources, and consequently tend not to have a say in decision-making.

Elwyn and Miron-Shatz (2009), on the other hand, highlight the quality of decision-making from a medical point of view. Their emphasis is on the deliberation process rather than the outcome, which corresponds to the first two I's in Powell's model – namely, **Idea** and **Information**. According to Elwyn and Miron-Shatz (2009), the decision-making process comprises of a pre-decisional process and an act of decision determination. This process needs to be guided by two elements in order for a good act of determination to occur. First, there must be sound, subjective and sufficient knowledge. We need to know what is meant by “knowledge” and how this construct can be evaluated. Knowledge is about the nature of outcomes, so we must ask what it might be to experience them, or instead we should ask if we mean the probabilities of those outcomes. Then there is the issue of knowledge about the features (attributes) of short, medium and long term future state, given possible pathways; or knowledge about perceived forecasts of different counterfactual states.

All these questions must be answered or at least be considered in the deliberation process.

Elwyn and Miron-Shatz emphasise that knowledge will never be exhausted; therefore it is a quantum process that widens one's scope of alternatives. They also mention the pitfalls of alternatives or preferences as following a mathematical process of preferring A–B or B–C, but people seldom go further to explore option A–C because preferences do not have the same features. In essence what they are saying is that in order to reach a quality decision, one has to explore extensively as many pathways as possible to gain knowledge. Secondly there needs to be an emotional processing and effective forecasting of alternatives. It is vital that when decisions are taken, they are done with sufficient knowledge, because choices made without enough knowledge are mere guesses.

Figure 3.2.1 Reconceptualised decision-making model



In figure 3.2.1 the reconceptualised model of the decision-making process that was used as the theoretical lens for this study is presented. This is based on the first two I's of Powell's four tenets are **idea** and **information**, which basically describe the pre-decision phase. In this phase no decisions are taken, yet there is an exploration of the information or idea at hand.

The next phase then deals with those with eminent or low influence in deciding to further the idea or information explored in the pre decision phase.

The deliberation process has to do with expanding knowledge and fully understanding various options available, weighing pro's and con's (IEP team, parents and school), and expanding and exploring various options in search of the best suitable solution for the idea or information. Once sufficient knowledge has been acquired and various alternatives have been explored, then a decision can be taken (assigning a facilitator)

Chapter 4 - Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain methods used, and also to describe the sample chosen and the mode of inquiry. The mode of inquiry used is qualitative research whose purpose, according to Creswell (2008), is not to generalise regarding a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon, which is the decision-making process of employing a facilitator. The aim of this research in exploring the decision-making process of employing facilitators was made possible through the means of utilising narrative research. Narratives are the stories which reveal the thinking process when various stakeholders (parents, teachers and facilitator) make the decision to employ a facilitator. Narratives are the stories people tell. They are first person accounts of the experiences of the people involved. They provide the opportunity to explore the context, the challenge and the thinking process when various stakeholders are faced with a decision regarding the employment of facilitators. The aim of this narrative is to reveal the power dynamics involved in decision-making processes and the importance of understanding the need to employ facilitators before employing one.

The following research questions assisted in exploring the phenomena:

1. How do stakeholders in inclusive schools in South Africa make the decision to employ facilitators?
2. What are the factors that stakeholders take into consideration when employing facilitators in inclusive schools?
3. What is the role and influence of each stakeholder in the decision to employ facilitators?

4.2 Research paradigm

The research questions mentioned above were used within an interpretative/constructive research paradigm. This paradigm, according to J.G Ponterotto (2005), allows a multiple and understandable position unlike the positivist which permits a single objective external reality. Hansen (2004) reiterates the same point by elucidating that reality is constructed in the minds of individuals and not externally through a singular entity. The interpretative/constructive approach helped in

understanding the decision-making process of employing facilitators through a narrative case study.

The theoretical lens that guided this study was a combination of a deliberation process (from a medical perspective between doctors and patients, when deliberating about a decision to be taken for the betterment of the patient) by Elwyn & Shatz (2010) and a decision-making process (from an academic institution, individuals with the greatest influence in decision making), Powell (2008). The two perspectives were reconceptualised to suit the intention of this study as there are currently no models in inclusive education for decision-making procedures.

The data used was collected from three different independent inclusive primary schools under the governance of the Department of Education as well as ISASA (Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa). These schools are all located in Gauteng. Qualitative inquiry enabled me to understand the procedure each of the three schools examined and the reasons behind the various processes they used in reaching a decision to employ a facilitator. While qualitative research was the method used, multiple case studies were also employed as a form of research design. According to Bromley (1990:302) a case study is a “systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. Cohen et al (2000) highlight the benefits of a case study as that of being able to provide the reader with an exclusive example of real individuals in real situations/context, recognising always that context is a demanding determinant of both causes and effects.

4.3 Scope of this research

The data for this research was collected over a period of four months, from the beginning of May 2012 and concluding at the end of September 2012. Purposive sampling for all three private inclusive schools was used.

4.4 Research participants

There search participants were various stakeholders from three different schools.

They comprised the following individuals:

- School A- Remedial (teacher, parent, & facilitator)

- School B-Traditional private school (teacher, parent, & facilitator)
- School C- Montessori (teacher, parent, & facilitator)

Purposive sampling, which was used in this study as defined by Patton (1990:169) states one has to select participant and a site that is “information rich”. The above-mentioned schools were information rich in terms of the site and the individuals themselves. These schools were among 5 potential schools that would have yielded rich data in answering my research question. Regarding the other two schools, however, there was lack of access. These schools were therefore specially chosen because they all have facilitators as part of the school’s support system. Although all three schools have facilitators as a common factor, what differed amongst them were the children with various disabilities (Boy from school A is autistic, girl from school B has mitochondrial disorder and from the last school is a girl who is hemiplegic with behavioural problems). Parents and teachers were additional participants in the study.

Table 4.4.1 participants of the study

	Parents	Class teachers	Facilitators
School A	1	1	1
School B	1	1	1
School C	1	1	1
Total	3	3	3

4.5 Gaining access

The criteria for this study included selecting independent schools that were inclusive in nature and had facilitators as part of the educational community. There were five potential schools that were regarded as information rich as Patton (1990) states it. However there were access restrictions to two of the schools where efforts to contact the school through e-mails and phone calls were unsuccessful.

Through exploratory discussions with the principals, the individuals whom were identified for the interviews were willing to offer their time in order to conduct

interviews. All three schools claimed to be inclusive in their nature (School A remedial, School B traditional private, School C Montessori) and therefore they were compatible for the study. Once the gatekeepers gave me access, I was then able to negotiate or rather ask for permission to conduct interviews with individuals (teachers) who had facilitators in their classroom and also parents of those children.

4.6 Data Collection Schedule

Table 4.6.1 Research Schedule

Phase	Research activity	Time frame
Pre-research phase	Discovering a theoretical framework and submitting a research proposal	February 2010- February 2012
Phase 1	Defence	February 2012
Phase 2	Interviews	May 2012
Phase 3	Coding and analysis	October 2012- January 2013
Phase 4	Manual analysis, re reading interviews	February 2013-May 2013
Phase 5	Writing up the research	May 2013-August 2013

1. Phase 2- Interviews: My past experience as a facilitator was a limitation, as I mentioned earlier in chapter 1. Nevertheless there were also advantages that come with the experience. Interviews with facilitators and teachers were more conversational than interviews with parents, possibly because I shared their experiences more than I did those of the parents.
2. Phase 3 and 4: Coding, analysing and re reading scripts was done manually. Although I am not intimidated by technology, I found coding the transcript better through colour coding and seeing themes emerge manually than doing the work through the computer.
3. Phase 5: Writing up the research report and reporting on the journey I took as a novice researcher was a relief. Merging literature with data and seeing both aspects through theoretical lenses made so much sense because all the pieces of the puzzle had come together. The only challenge was writing in an academic

format. The one chapter I thoroughly enjoyed was the narrative chapter in which I captured the stories of the three case studies.

4.7 Data collection techniques

4.7.1 Interviews

Data collection methods that assisted in exploring the research problem were conducted through individual in-depth, semi structured interviews. As Silverman (2005) states, there are no right or wrong methods, but rather only methods that are appropriate to the research topic and the model. The purpose was to understand the process of decision-making in employing facilitators; through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The advantages of an in-depth, semi-structured interview include being personal and flexible (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). Although there were some structured questions, the responses and the flow of the interview depend on the uniqueness of each individual. Some but not all respondents needed probing and as such; semi-structured interviews allowed more flexibility; and the opportunity to ascertain the mood and the level of knowledge of the person being interviewed.

4.7.2 Individual Interviews

In-depth interviews were based on questions that were open-ended and semi-structured. There were three different sets of questions, for the parents, facilitators and the teachers who had facilitators in their classrooms. The individual interviews lasted for 45 minutes in quiet environments.

Below are a few example of various questions asked in the interview. The rest of the questions are listed in the appendix.

Parent Interview

1. Tell me about your child.
2. What kind of problem/barriers does he/she have?
3. What kind of support does he/she have? Which schools did s/he attend before (if at all)?
4. Has he/she always worked with a facilitator?

5. Why did you hire a facilitator?
6. What other factors influenced your decision to hire a facilitator?

Teacher Interview

1. Tell me about your learner.
2. What kind of problem/barriers does he/she have?
3. What kind of support he/she had?
4. Which school/s did s/he attend before (if at all)?
5. Has he/she always worked with a facilitator?
6. What impact does the facilitator have on your learner in terms of his/her academic and social life?

Facilitator Interview

1. What is your job description?
2. How did you become a facilitator?
3. When parents ask you to help with their child, what did they ask you to do?
What kind of information about their child did they give you?
4. What factors did you consider when you took the job of being a facilitator?
5. With whom did you consult before taking the job? Parents? Teachers?
6. Is there an on-going discussion about the child you are facilitating – how often – what is the nature of this discussion?

4.8 Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2008:246) “hand analysis of qualitative data means that the researcher reads the data, marks it by hand, and divides it into parts. Traditionally, analysing text data involves using colour to mark parts of the text or cutting and pasting text sentences onto cards”. The method used in this study was hand analysis to analyse the data. Creswell (2008) further discusses the advantages of hand analysis through four points, namely:

- Hand analysis is preferred if the database is less than 500 pages, which was the case in this study
- The level of comfort ability is higher when done manually than with computers

- There is a hands on feel to the data without any intrusion from a machine
- Much time is committed to hand analysis as sorting, organising and the location of data is done manually

Figure 4.8.1 Description Process of Data Analysis

Phase	Data	Hand analysis
Phase 1	Transcript read	Side note
Phase 2	Transcript read and coded	Colour coding
Phase 3	Transcript organised into themes	Finding themes

Phase 1: The data is read with no intention of analysing it although side notes were made when intriguing or interesting aspects were noted in the data;

Phase 2: Key words /phrases identified as key from the theoretical framework and an understanding of the work were highlighted.

Phase 3: All the coded keys and phrases were then organised into themes or patterns. At this stage it was possible to distinctively identify patterns from the various case studies that emerged from the data.

4.9 Writing the dissertation

There is great importance in literature reviewing and. Literature review is a lamp upon your feet. It guides everything you would wish to do in research, and without it you would stumble and repeat what other researchers have done or, even worse, add nothing to the progressive academic knowledge. I made three to four attempts at writing Chapter two (literature review), but my supervisor felt that chapter two was not at the academic level at which literature reviews ought to be. Thus after all my attempts I became frustrated, but eventually I managed to produce work that reflected some understanding of the phenomenon of facilitators.

4.10 Narrative

The critical research question was explored by using narrative research to understand the logic and the reasoning behind employing facilitators. According to Creswell (2008), who cites Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative research is used

to “describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people’s lives and write narratives of individual’s experiences” (1990:521). The stories that were captured are written in Chapter 5 carrying the essence of the narrative research. Narrative research offered the opportunity to gain an in-depth insight into the processes of how parents and/or schools employ or recommend the employment of facilitators.

I retold the three case study stories from my position of experience of having been on this journey of being a novice researcher, because I agree with Osler and Zhu (2011) who state that narratives make reading more accessible, intriguing and engaging while in the same way they create a connection between narrator and the researcher on a common humanity relational level.

4.11 Validity

Validity is a crucial element in ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. Maree (2008) points out the prime difference between and importance of quantitative and qualitative credibility and trustworthiness in research. In quantitative research, the researcher can use measures and procedures that will minimise the chances of the data not being valid through the means of questionnaires. In qualitative research, however, “the researcher is the data gathering instrument” Maree (2008:80). This might increase the chances of data not being valid, if proper measures are not put in place to check the trustworthiness of data if the researcher took the role of being a data collecting instrument. Although both quantitative and qualitative researchers begin their studies with an assumption, what sets them apart is their epistemological approach. Constructivists who are likely to be qualitative in their approach, according to Maree (2008), allow for a changing reality from their subjects, which mean that their assumptions do not supersede the reality of their subjects. The positivist approach, on the other hand, is pre-determined and seeks for conformation rather than enlightenment.

As this is a qualitative constructivist study, the “data gathering instrument” (Maree 2008:80), and therefore I did not have fixed ideologies about my participants. However I knew that they would present multiple realities which would consequently lead to crystallisation of the data. Crystallisation according to Richardson (2000:934)

is seeing the world in “far more than three sides”. Her argument stems from her defence that qualitative outcomes are not fixed positions that should be triangulated but rather crystallised. Constructivists know participants’ realities as ever “changing whether the observer wishes it or not, and that there are multiple realities that people have in their mind, the different insights gained describe different perspectives that all reflect the unique reality and identity of participants” (Maree 2008:81).

Exploring the three different case studies in this study proved the statement above. Although there were limitations in the methods of gathering data, only used semi structured interviews were used to explore the decision-making process of three unique realities of context in employing facilitators. The three schools provided insight into the different perspectives of the process of employing facilitators. The study support Richardson (2000:934) when she says that the world is “far more than three sides” fixed position (triangulation), but crystallised especially when dealing with the possibility of ever changing realities of participants.

Maree (2008:81), citing Richardson, says that “crystals grow, change and alter, but are not amorphous”, and this is how the participants were experienced, as an instrument that gathered the data. Thus having multiple case studies guarded against data being invalid because of the various contexts and realities that emerged from the data. According to Maree (2000), the crystallisation which I experienced in my study provided a deeper and more complex understanding of the phenomenon and added to the trustworthiness of my search.

4.12 Ethical Consideration

For a researcher, it is vital to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Creswell (2008) highlights four points that were used to ensure that the participants were not harmed in any way or form.

- Respecting the rights of participants

There are various guidelines that provide a researcher with tools on how to ensure that a participant’s rights are not infringed. The following rights were given to participants.

1. The purpose and the aim of the study were explained to all the participants.
 2. Participants knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time.
 3. Information they provided was protected through pseudo name usage and their anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed.
- Honouring research sites

Before entering the various schools I had to gain permission from the different gatekeepers via a letter I emailed to them. In the letter I stated my intentions and what I would require from them. After gaining access I also needed consent from prospective participants. I stressed that I would not take too much of their time (30-45 minutes) and would come at their convenience.

- Reporting fully and honestly

My study on the decision-making process of employing facilitators is my original work. Where I have used other authors, however, I have acknowledged those individuals appropriately and I did not plagiarise anyone's work. I have even signed the declaration form attached as an appendix stating that I have not used anyone's work and claimed it to be mine.

Chapter Five -The three stories

Narrative 1 the story of Stanley

The first story is about an 11-and-a-half-year-old boy by the name of Stanley. Stanley was diagnosed with autism when he was six months old. At that stage the parents did not know if it would be verbal or non-verbal because the spectrum is quite broad. “Fortunately for us it turned out he was verbal, but he had lots of sensory problem, he still has sensory integration problems” said the mother. Stanley had auditory problems as well; apparently when he was a baby even the sound of a flushing toilet would be too loud for his sensitive auditory abilities. Stanley’s parents embarked on a journey to start interventions to help their son. From the tender age of only six months Stanley began intensive physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

As he grew older, Stanley started his formal learning at one of the best remedial schools in the Gauteng. After three months into Grade 1, the parents were called in for a meeting, and advised that they should employ a facilitator to assist the child in class. Stanley’s parents had never heard of a facilitator, nor did they know the procedure necessary to hire one. The parents knew that their son had challenges which are why he was enrolled at this remedial school. They thought that enrolling their son at a remedial school would resolve their problems, but to their surprise they were told that their son needed extra help. Stanley could not open his own pencil case, take objects out of his pencil case, or put the cap on a pen. All these skills took him much longer than it did the other children. Yet in spite of these weaknesses, at the age of four Stanley could type faster than his peers, because of the extended exposure he had had in computers, according to his mother.

Since the parents were new to the concept and the idea of employing a facilitator, the school took the lead in recommending available facilitators for the parents to interview and to select the one with whom they were most comfortable. One of the reasons behind parents selecting their own facilitator was that of remuneration. The school is only responsible for recommending a facilitator based on the child’s need that they have observed, but parents interview and employ the facilitator, because it is for their account. Several facilitators would be presented to the parents and then interviews would be conducted in order to appoint the appropriate facilitator.

After all the logistics had been dealt with, the parents introduced Stanley to his facilitator. This process was challenging because the parents needed to prepare Stanley and ensure a personality match between Stanley and the facilitator. That was successful, and the appointed facilitator then worked with Stanley for four years from Grade 1 to Grade 4 on a full-time basis, except during the times when Stanley attended physical education and therapy sessions. When he was ready to be promoted to Grade 5, Stanley's parents were called in for another meeting to discuss terminating the role of the facilitator.

Stanley's mother's perception of the facilitator

As I mentioned before, Stanley's mother knew nothing about facilitators until she was called in by the school. She knew that her son had learning barriers, but the school's recommendation to her to employ a facilitator brought to light the challenges that her son was facing. She began to understand the value and the presence of a facilitator in her son's life. Stanley's mother said that her son's facilitator was a safety net, something she became very aware of after the facilitator's contract was terminated. This was done because the school did not see that he needed to have a facilitator any more. Apparently Stanley would lose his tracksuits, his writing materials and other personal pieces, and his facilitator helped him to find and keep his belongings safe. The facilitator was also able to help Stanley refocus on the task at hand. The facilitator in question is an experienced, woman, fairly elderly and somewhat strict, who had been facilitating for about six years when the interview was conducted. When she began her career of facilitation, the facilitator was known as a class shadow, having had no training, but as years passed she formalised her training. Stanley's mother does not want a facilitator with teaching experience. She says "A facilitator should not be a teacher because they shouldn't be teaching, they should be assisting".

Stanley's mother's perception of the school

The remedial school that Stanley attends directs which path is to be taken based on the circumstances of the various stakeholders (parents, teacher, therapist and facilitator). There was a time when Stanley's parents were rather annoyed with the school because the school varied from moment to moment, suggesting that Stanley

would need facilitation and then deciding that he did not. The argument put forward by Stanley's parents centred on the practicality of the whole process of employing and remunerating the facilitator. They felt it was not fair suddenly to remove the facilitator from the pay roll, because the IEP (individual Educational Program) team felt that the facilitation was no longer necessary. The actions of employing the facilitator and then terminating the contract were controlled by the school although the parents were the ones responsible for paying the facilitator.

At some point Stanley's parent disregarded the advice to terminate the facilitation in case the "wheels came off", as Stanley's mother put it. She wanted that safety net to be there as long as it could. She felt at times that the school was just switching on and off and she and her husband merely followed their instructions. "When the school said to us no more facilitation we said that's fine, but unbeknown to them we had an agreement with Helen (facilitator). Just because it's very easy for them to turn the switch on and off but it's very difficult to find people. There are very few very good facilitators", Stanley's mother said in frustration.

Stanley's facilitator's understanding of facilitating

Helen has been working for the remedial school for six years, four of them as a facilitator. She started off as a carer for children, known as a "class shadow". At that time she was the only one at the school, but there was an increase in the number of parents who needed facilitators for their children. Helen says "though it's a remedial school there are children who need extra help in the classroom", and now she is facilitating a total of 10 children from Grade 1 to Grade 3. Helen does not work with the children on a full-time basis, but only according to the child's needs. She works with some children for three hours, others for four hours. The reason behind her working fewer hours with the children is to promote their independence as much as possible.

This team comprises class teacher and speech or occupational therapist (depending on the child's need), but excludes the facilitator and parents. The team would look at the learner's profile and check to see his/her progress. The facilitator works closely with the class teacher and she informs the teacher if she realises that the child is becoming too dependent on the facilitator. Then the teacher meets with the team to discuss with them any recent developments concerning that particular child. The

irony here is that Helen is not part of this team although she plays a vital role. Her concerns and contributions are represented by the class teacher, since she works closely with her in class. Helen has had tertiary education, but she had training in facilitation a year after she began facilitating. She believes it is important that facilitation occurs in the foundation phase of school; and she expressed her concerns when she said “quite often the gaps they had are not being addressed soon enough, in their early numeracy and literacy and so on”. In Helen’s experience as a facilitator, after the third grade the children don’t normally require the assistance of the facilitator, because of early intervention. This is generally the reason to terminate the employment of a facilitator in the intermediate phase.

Stanley’s teacher’s perception of the facilitator

Miss Thornhill is a young teacher in her late twenties. She is well versed and expresses herself confidently and clearly. She displays a comprehensive knowledge of her class. She has three learners which are facilitated by two facilitators. One facilitator facilitates two learners and the other facilitates only one. The learners which are facilitated in her class have different needs that are attended to by the two facilitators. One of the learner needing facilitation suffers from epilepsy and struggles with sequencing, grammar and recalling of information. The various limitations that the learner has are addressed by the facilitator and at times by the teacher. The facilitator and the teacher work together, with the facilitator presenting much prompting and explanation to enable the particular learner with epilepsy to be as much as possible at the same level as the rest of the class. According to Miss Thornhill, the facilitator’s role is not rigid, but flexible; and her role is defined by Miss Thornhill and the needs of the disabled learner. The facilitator will be instructed by the teacher or at times will be driven by instinct. It must be noted that the facilitator is not only tied down to that specific learner. There are times when the facilitator helps other learners, thus giving the teacher more time to spend with the learner who is being facilitated.

Miss Thornhill has a very good relationship with both facilitators in her class, because according to Miss Thornhill, they show good open communication, honesty and transparency. If the facilitator realises that the learner is becoming too reliant on her, then the facilitator must make the teacher aware so that appropriate steps may

be taken. An open communicative relationship enhances learning amongst those in authority and thus trickles down to the rest of the class.

Miss Thornhill says “a facilitator is not a babysitter. They are not there to watch this child and make sure that they don’t do anything wrong. They are there to help them learn and to grow and change and to overcome those barriers. That is exactly what they are there for”. The continuation or termination of facilitation is evaluated at a case conference where various stakeholders (various therapists, headmistress and teacher) discuss the learner’s profile, and then reflect on the year’s progress to evaluate if facilitation is needed or not. The prospective teacher (the next grade teacher) must participate in the meeting to look at the learner’s progress and decide if facilitation will still be needed.

After the assessment has been done by the panel, they then decide either to terminate the service of the facilitator or to continue with it. However facilitators and parents are not participants in these conferences. They are simply told what has to happen and they must follow instructions

Narrative 2 the story of Nqobile

The second story concerns a little girl called Nqobile, aged seven, who has mitochondrial disorder. Mitochondria are known as the powerhouses of the cell; they are organelles that act like a digestive system, taking in nutrients, breaking them down and creating energy for the cell. The process of creating cell energy is known as cellular respiration. Most of the chemical reaction involved in cellular respiration happens in the mitochondria. Mitochondria are like the body’s power supplier.

The analogy is the same as when Eskom cuts our electricity while we are at work. Depending on how long the electricity was cut we might, on our return home, find food in the fridge spoiled if the power cut lasted for the whole day. We would also find the water in the geyser to be cold; and other inconveniences. The same applies to mitochondrial disorder. Nqobile’s energy (power) supply does not function well. Therefore everything that requires energy on her part is only partially achieved as a result of her suffering from this disorder.

Nqobile is a tiny girl who wears reading glasses, can’t smile, needs assistance to walk properly, and cannot engage in play with her peers. Nqobile was diagnosed with this disorder at the age of three, but from birth Nqobile’s parents were concerned about her developmental milestones. However Nqobile’s mother

describes her as a determined child who is accepting of and pragmatic about her condition. The kinds of limitations that Nqobile is facing are all energy related. There must be an adult near her all the time, whether it is her facilitator, mother, dad or brother, to help her cope and manage.

Therefore it is essential that a facilitator be available for her at school for practical reasons. Smiling for her is also a struggle as she is unable to show emotional expressions on her face. She cannot play with friends because she does not have the same energy as her peers, and she cannot run around and enjoy the same activities that they do. When she trips and fall she is not able to stretch her hands out in order to break her fall, because she lacks the physical strength to do any of these things. All these abilities take strength which is a luxury that she cannot afford. However, according to her mother, she is academically bright and a perfectionist. .

Nqobile's Grade 1 teacher told the mother that Nqobile is very confident and mature for her age. The mother was not surprised to hear that because Nqobile "does not have the mind of a normal seven-year-old, which is also to be expected because her life experience is completely different". The mother explained further that Nqobile's struggles have put her at both an advantage and a disadvantage amongst her peers. Nqobile is well aware of her strengths and weaknesses: for example she often says things like, "I know I can't ride a bike on my own, but I can draw very well", explained her mother. The physical progress that Nqobile has made thus far is due to her determination and her commitment to strengthen her muscles in order to progress. A normal day at school tires her out physically much more than it does her peers. So in order to compensate, she attends physiotherapy twice a week.

Nqobile's mother's perception of a facilitator

Nqobile has been with the same facilitator for three years. The mother describes the facilitator as "Nqobile's legs and arms". The mother adds that Nqobile struggles to navigate her way to the bathroom and thus needs assistance. However "it's important for Nqobile to be allowed to do what she needs to do at her own pace in all her work even if she is slow" the mother emphasised.

Nqobile takes offence when people assume she needs help without checking up with her, especially regarding academically related tasks. The mother said that if she noticed that Nqobile is struggling with a word and she, the mother, rushes to help her. Nqobile would be upset and tell her mother "I'm going to sound it out, I'm going

to figure it out, I'll tell you if I can't read it, I want to figure it out myself and if I can't I will ask for your help". The role of a facilitator, according to the mother, is to be Nqobile's arms and legs; but the role changed over the years because of the demands that Nqobile faced. When she was still in pre-school the facilitator did little more than assist with custodian responsibility. Now that Nqobile is in Grade 1, the facilitator checks to see if Nqobile is battling to grasp a concept, after which she will direct the teacher's attention to the matter.

Nqobile's mother's perception of the school

The pre-school was the one that pointed out to the parents that Nqobile could not cope independently without the presence of an adult (facilitator). Therefore their journey with the current facilitator was established and recommended by the pre-school. Towards the end of Nqobile's pre-school years the parents needed to enrol her in the same school as her brother Jabu. They began the process by applying for Nqobile just as they would have for any other child, but they needed to inform the school of Nqobile's physical disorder which required that there be an adult with her all the time.

The parents wanted an environment that matched their daughter's academic abilities, and they thought that a mainstream environment would afford Nqobile an opportunity to thrive in it rather than for her to attend a special. The mother's assumptions and concern about special schools is that they cater for children with mental issues, including Down syndrome children, and not just children with only physical disabilities. This was their reason for enrolling her in a mainstream school, to give her the opportunity to excel academically in mainstream education.

There were many deliberations before Nqobile could be accepted at the school. The parents had to convince the school that the environment was best suited to their child. However the school did not agree with them. The parents then informed the school that they would not force them to admit their child in a school that could not cater for her and thereby burden the system. One reason for the school refusing to accept Nqobile was because other learners with disabilities were denied access; therefore it would be unfair for Nqobile to be admitted.

The parents mentioned that the characteristics of a Down syndrome child and a physically challenged child are very different and could therefore not be judged by the same standard. The principal suggested that an IQ test be administered.

Nqobile's parents eagerly anticipated that the result would expose their daughter's ability. The test was not administered, however, but a week later a letter of acceptance was issued and Nqobile's journey at this school began. Both the school and the parents are aware of Nqobile's limitations, acknowledging that in order for her to overcome she would need the assistance of an adult, as Nqobile's mother clearly states. Nqobile would need a facilitator's "arms and legs" only because she is more than adequately academically competent.

Nqobile's facilitator's understanding of facilitating

Zanele is Nqobile's facilitator. She has had neither tertiary education nor any training regarding facilitation. Zanele started working with Nqobile approximately four years ago whilst the latter was still at play school. She was employed by Nqobile's parents via the suggestion of a woman who used to work at Nqobile's nursery school. According to Zanele, the parents told her, "our child can't walk and we want you to help her to walk". Zanele saw this task as an easy job. As the years progressed Zanele and Nqobile grew closer. Formal school began, and the role of the facilitator needed to be redefined since they were stepping into a new environment.

Zanele had been Nqobile's legs and arms, but now that academics are involved she is aware of her different role as seen by what she says about her facilitation. "In the classroom I would help her if maybe she can't see clearly from the board, I don't really help her with her school work; her teacher does that for her, sometimes when she does not understand instructions I try and clarify them for her".

When Nqobile needs the attention of the teacher Zanele will call the teacher but will not take on the role of a teacher because, as she said, "I will do the things I am capable of doing, as for the rest the teacher needs to explain and help her". Although Zanele has no tertiary education she has a nurturing and educating attitude. She wants to get the necessary training so that she can be the best possible facilitator to Nqobile. That, however, might not be possible because of the kind of the relationship Zanele has with her employers. Apparently they don't have an open communicative relationship. Zanele complains about the parents not asking her about the progress of their daughter. She feels that it is their responsibility to ask about Nqobile and also to commend her or complain about her work with Nqobile. However Zanele has a good relationship with the class teacher, even though she cannot talk to Nqobile's parents about the child's progress. There is clearly no

collaboration amongst all the stakeholders who are working towards Nqobile's success at school.

Nqobile's teacher's perception of a facilitator

Mrs Hatfield is an experienced teacher who has been teaching for 30 years. She loves her job and performs excellently in the classroom. This is one of the reasons why Nqobile was assigned to her class. The other Grade 1 teachers were fairly new teachers and felt that it would be intimidating to have the presence of an adult accompanying a learner with special needs. Mrs Hatfield has had children in her class with various disabilities, but she has never before had a facilitator accompany a learner.

Mrs Hatfield and Zanele have a good relationship because their roles are clearly defined. Mrs Hatfield says the role of any facilitator depends on the child being correctly facilitated. "For Zanele her role would be to provide physical support because Nqobile suffers from a physical disability. She can't walk properly. She needs protection because she doesn't pick up her feet properly when she walks. She also has to be protected from other children bumping her because she has no stability. She needs help going to the bathroom. She is slower than other children at physical tasks like cutting. She does not have strength in her hand so she can't rub out or open her pen. So from that point of view that's what she does a huge amount with and intellectually Nqobile doesn't need a lot of help. She (facilitator) is there as a backup but Nqobile certainly doesn't need someone to assist her with her work".

Mrs Hatfield's philosophy of teaching embodies the vision and the mission of inclusive education. She treats all her learners as individuals whose unique make-up needs to be addressed. Having a facilitator in the class does not, however, mean that Mrs Hatfield is relieved of her duties as a teacher. Zanele is there to help Nqobile, and Mrs Hatfield acknowledges that it is Nqobile's right to be treated as a person and not as a mini-Zanele or something similar. In her dealings with Nqobile, she tries to promote a healthy teacher-learner relationship. Mrs Hatfield and Zanele work well together because all the expectations are known and their attitudes are geared towards helping Nqobile. They make a conscious effort not to marginalise Nqobile but to ensure that she is included in everything. .

Narrative 3 the story of Avril

The final story concerns a 14-year-old girl who is hemiplegic. Hemiplegia is a condition affecting one side of the brain, which can happen as a result of an injury or before, during or soon after birth. The cause of this condition is not known; mainly it happens by chance especially to premature babies. When a child is born with the condition it is known as congenital hemiplegia; When the child suffers from a brain injury due to a stroke or a blood clot, which is known as acquired hemiplegia. Avril suffers from congenital hemiplegia. The condition varies from child to child and in Avril's case, the condition is accompanied by behavioural problems.

Avril goes to a Montessori school that follows Maria Montessori's philosophy of following the child. The classroom set-up is different from that of a traditional school, where there would be children of more or less the same age and grade in the same class. The Montessori set up is different in the sense that children of different age groups and grades are placed in the same class. This is done because children tend to learn easily from older children and their peers. However this set up poses a threat in Avril's case, alienating her. The presence of a facilitator in a classroom full of teenagers, who focus on appearance and being identified with the right crowd, cannot be comfortable for a growing teenager who despite her disability has a need to belong and to be part of a school community.

Avril has had facilitation from Grade 4 to Grade 7. The mother has spent most of her time trying to find the best possible set up so that her daughter's learning and potential can be maximised. Avril has attended several schools before she settled down in the current school in which she is in today. One of the reasons that she changed schools so often was because of her behavioural problems. The schools she attended did not understand her and the best way to deal with her condition was to ask her to leave. In total Avril has attended four different schools.

Although Avril has a visible physical disability, much effort went into dealing with the emotional barriers that she displayed during her first two years of school. The school and the teachers did not understand Avril, but the mother felt that as long as her daughter did not disturb the peace of the class she was kept busy. She didn't really learn anything, as the teachers at Avril's previous schools had no idea of how to deal with her nor did they have the training to deal with a special needs child. This was evident when the school asked that Avril be removed and seeks help elsewhere. Even Avril was aware that the school had wasted two years of her life.

The lack of understanding and empathy led Avril's mother to other schools in search of a mainstream school that would fit her daughter's special needs. Avril's mother thus thought that the presence of a one-on-one facilitator would afford her daughter the learning she so desperately needed but failed to get at the previous school. The two reasons that motivated Avril's mother to look for a mainstream school were that she wanted her daughter to be part of a community of learning, and she wanted her to learn rather than simply be kept occupied so as not to disturb the other children.

The only way it seemed possible to achieve this goal was employing a facilitator who would serve as a behaviour modifier and somehow allow her daughter access to a school; because her history had shown that she could not be left alone in the classroom situation. Avril's emotional outbursts were one of the reasons that she was asked to leave her previous school. In order to be proactive, Avril's mother offered to take on the challenge by employing a facilitator to assist her entrance into the school. This arrangement worked in terms of building Avril's confidence and also introducing to the school the concept of her being a member of a school and functioning as a capable learner. She did fairly well because of the role the facilitator played. However the learning barriers were not resolved, but instead they persisted and grew stronger.

Avril's mother has been concentrating on her physical disabilities, including giving her physiotherapy, and monitoring and managing her epilepsy. It is only recently that she has discovered Avril's learning challenges. The mother feels that now her emotional outbursts have lessened; there are other issues that were not dealt with, because the focus was on her emotions and physical wellness. The mother says "Avril has a very particular package of learning challenges". These challenges were known but the nature thereof was not fully understood.

Avril has done a proper WISK assessment and the results show that she is functioning well below the expected level. Her reading is phonetically oriented rather than on meaning. Although she is doing fairly well at school and copes during exams, that is because her current facilitator encourages her to do a lot of rote learning which is not sustainable. The mother is concerned about her daughter's future in the current inclusive system. She said that there are very few schools in South Africa that could remedy her daughter's situation. She regrets not enrolling her daughter in a proper remedial school, because she believes that it might have changed the course of their lives.

Unfortunately, there are no high schools that cater for learners as remedial schools as primary level do for learners with various handicaps. Avril's mother has now begun to search for alternative schools overseas because there is nothing available for Avril locally. Her mother is dissatisfied with the status quo but because there is no alternative, she has to be satisfied with an inadequate inclusive school. At 14 years old, Avril has not yet received specialised help. The school, Avril, the facilitator and her parents are desperate for a solution. There is pressure from the school for Avril to meet the demands of Grade seven yet the parents feel let down by the school and the education system in South African. Avril is expected to meet the needs of a Grade seven even though she is functioning below the expected level. She reads phonetically and this compromises her comprehension of what she is reading.

Avril's mother's perception of the facilitator

Based on the history Avril had had with schools, a facilitator seemed to be a solution to the long standing challenge of her regrettably being unable to fit into the schools she attended. Therefore the employment of a facilitator was implemented. This was done in order to create an opportunity for Avril to become part of a functioning school community that would cater for her unique challenges. Another reason was also the peace of mind the parents would be guaranteed of if Avril was accompanied to school by an adult. However because of the nature and the complexity of Avril's barriers at school, this arrangement was unsatisfactory as it left other areas, specifically that of reading, unattended.

Avril's mother's perception of the school

Avril entered the Montessori school already burdened with the reputation of behavioural problems, and soon after she began attending the school with her facilitator, old habits crept back again. She could not deal with her emotions appropriately: she was thus alienated by her peers and misunderstood by the school, teachers and facilitator. To some extent the facilitator assisted her in being admitted to the school, because no other school would admit her with her track record of emotional and behavioural challenges. Although the school was not tailor-made for the kinds of barriers Avril faced, it was the only one willing to admit her as a pupil. The two to three years of her schooling at the Montessori were progressive but not excellent. When she entered the senior primary phase and began to mature, her emotional outbursts lessened but other challenges emerged that were mentioned

earlier, those of reading phonetically but not with any comprehension of the content. The pressures of senior primary school and the demands made on her overwhelmed the facilitator and the parents. Because it was not geared for the kinds of barriers Avril encountered, the school and all stakeholders felt out of their depth and the facilitator had to resort to rote learning to prepare her for exams as well as cutting the number of days she would attend classes. Avril's mother finally made a decision that Avril would be home-schooled, and would only come to the school to write tests and to collect work. This decision was made to relieve Avril's mother of the feelings of inadequacy she felt because she just could not cope with the demands the school posed on her daughter.

Avril's facilitator's understanding of facilitating

Lauren (the second facilitator who arrived after the resignation of the first one) is a university student which works as a facilitator and studies at the same time. Initially Lauren was employed as Avril's au pair. It appears that Lauren informed the parents that Avril was not coping with the academic demands, which she ascertained when she fetched Avril from school and interacted with her afterwards. Avril's parents had stopped the facilitation for some time after the previous facilitator had resigned; and thought that Avril was ready to cope with school without the intervention of a facilitator. But this was not the case, and this is when Lauren suggested to them that closer attention needed to be given to Avril. Subsequently Lauren was hired as a full time facilitator. Lauren defines her role as a facilitator as someone who helps a learner with whatever problem the learner might be experiencing. The demands of the grade were increasing, and even with the help of the facilitator Avril was not coping. Due to pressure and frustrations her parents cut the number of school days Avril went to school. Home schooling was introduced as a remedy and a strategy to deal with this challenge of not meeting the demands of the grade. Therefore the facilitator's role changed from that of au pairing to that of facilitating and now to teaching.

According to Lauren there was conflict amongst teachers about her responsibilities as a facilitator. She was accused of doing Avril's projects. The teachers did not believe her when she told them that Avril had done the projects herself. The situation was finally resolved when it was decided that Lauren should write a declaration statement explaining where she had helped Avril and where Avril had done the work

independently. This conflict also destroyed the relationship Lauren had had with the teachers. She could no longer address issues with them, but instead had to speak to Avril's mother who would then address the matter with the relevant people.

This meant that the vital relationship needed between teachers and facilitators was aborted, and an outsider – the parent – co-ordinated the interaction between individuals who were in the classroom and should have worked together. Thus decisions were taken about Avril's learning without consultation of all the stakeholders involved in it. Lauren was working beyond her scope of expertise, a problem which escalated the many other challenges that were Avril's "particular packed challenges". The barriers that Avril was experiencing, according to her mother, (reading phonetically and thus compromising on meaning) were not dealt with but worsened and were severely problematic. Learning for Avril was now nothing more than rote and a lot of drills were implemented because Lauren did not possess a remedial background, even though she is a tutor.

Avril's teacher's perceptions of facilitation

Nokuthula is in her early thirties and has had a fair amount of teaching experience in rural and urban mainstream schools. Nokuthula's perception of a facilitator is very negative. She sees Lauren as someone who is trying to outsmart her and show her up. According to Nokuthula a facilitator is someone who "stands with the child" whiles the child should engage in learning like every other child. She believes that facilitator is necessary only when the disability disturbs the child's speed of working and to reassure that child, as she acknowledges that most of the children with disabilities also have emotional issues. She feels strongly that the facilitator should not take a teaching role, but this is not the case with Avril, as she said:

"So the presence of a facilitator is a reassure or shadow that if the facilitator notices that there is something that this child didn't get that she should bring it to my attention because I've got other children to attend to. It may take time for me to eventually get to that child but the facilitator takes the interest of that child she's facilitating and brings them to my attention for me to remedy, not for her to remedy. So in the situation that I see is that the facilitators are remedying the situation, they are becoming teachers."

Nokuthula is highly frustrated with the level of involvement of the facilitator. She feels that the relationship between teacher and learner has been marginalised, with the

facilitator having been substituted in her place as the teacher. Nokuthula feels that the facilitator is personally antagonising her and in some cases has become a “spy” in her class. This seems to lead to unauthentic learning situations in the classroom:

“Sometimes I feel that the facilitator is invading into my parameters, lots of the time I feel invaded because sometimes the facilitator instead of communicating her disgruntlements with me, she would immediately go to my immediate bosses or the parents and tell them whatever her heart desires and email would come not to me but to my immediate boss. I always have to guess what the facilitator might find as a pothole and I always have to take cover so at the end of the day I am not friendly to facilitators. Because it’s like when they are not producing my work on time, or when the facilitator is only coming for a few minutes, I should drop everything I’m doing and attend to them so that they can go. When I want my work to be produced on time or in a certain way then she is slow to deliver”.

It is evident that the teacher, parents and facilitators are not collaborating in their efforts to help Avril, thus leaving all stakeholders frustrated and dissatisfied.

Chapter Six -Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The three case studies focused on three different children who exhibited different special needs, but also had some commonality. The diagnosis of all three children's disabilities was done from birth to early childhood. Stanley was diagnosed with autism at the age of six months, Nqobile was diagnosed with mitochondrial disorder at age three but since birth there had been problems with her; and Avril was diagnosed with hemiplegia at birth.

Because of their different needs, the children were placed in different environments. Stanley was placed in a remedial school, which provided him with all the specialised learning support of a speech therapist, an occupational therapist and a remedial/general teacher. Nqobile, seven year old, who copes very well with academic tasks, was placed in a traditional private school. Avril, at the time of the interview was 14 years old, has been changing schools from when she first began as a pupil until today; and has spent the longest uninterrupted time at the Montessori school. Her limitations were initially diagnosed as emotional and physiological but there were learning problems, which were only recently detected.

6.2 Perceptions of the role of the facilitator

It is imperative to comprehend the perceptions of the different stakeholders of the role of the facilitators before one can understand the decision to use or hire facilitators. The three cases provide distinctly different contexts which influence the decision of whether to hire a facilitator and it is evident that the processes and reasons for hiring a facilitator are directly related to the context. There is no distinct criterion for the employment of the facilitators; however the parents from all three schools were seeking for an individual who will be caring and sensitive to the needs of their child. Parents from the remedial school had an option of selecting from a number of facilitators from the school; therefore what they considered was the facilitator's experience and compatibility with their child. Nqobile's parents were looking for a caring and understanding individual. And Avril's parents were looking for an individual with post matric qualifications and can be in a position to tackle and understand high school content material (in all subject matter).

6.3 Parents' perceptions of the facilitator

6.3.1 Stanley's mother's perception

Stanley's mother sees a facilitator as a "safety net", for her son and explicitly rejects the idea that facilitators should occupy positions of teachers. However, she did not know what facilitators were or what their role was until the school recommended that she employ. Therefore had the remedial school not suggested that Stanley needed a facilitator, the mother would not have known that her son needed a safety net that would help him to navigate the school, open pens and concentrate on tasks until their completion.

Stanley's mother reaped the benefits of an environment that truly catered for her son's needs; conversely frustrations arose when the very same people who suggested the employment of a facilitator changed their minds. Stanley's mother elaborates "The teacher says your child needs facilitation and we say ok how much, they say so many hours a week and you listen to them. And then you get called into a meeting, where we literally threw our toys out the cot, where they say you are having too much facilitation for him, he's becoming helpless. It's learned helplessness".

The remedial school as a specialized school had mastered catering for the learner's needs to a certain extent. The communication level between the parents, facilitator and themselves, however, was weak. The school assumed the role of 'the expert' and made the decision without deliberating with the parents and facilitator. There appears never to have been a meeting with all three parties - parents, teachers and facilitators - present. Most of the communication occurred between the teachers and parents to the exclusion of the facilitator.

6.3.2 Nqobile's mother's perception

Nqobile's mother sees a facilitator as the access to mobility, her daughter's "legs and arms". As Nqobile's mother expresses her perception about facilitation she says "The things she can't do by herself and it's more like things like going to the bathroom which has a step which is difficult for her to navigate". The mother's definition of a facilitator being quite clear, it is evident that she knew from the

beginning that her daughter would need help in the form of custodianship but nothing else. The choice of a private traditional school also adds to the perception the mother has about facilitation.

Nqobile's mom was ambivalent about remedial school as she believed that they focused on mental retardation and cognitive limitation. Her daughter on the other hand has a perfectly functioning brain within a disabled body and she felt that a remedial school would not cater for her daughter's academic needs. Therefore she opted for a mainstream school with "mobility" as a facilitator.

6.3.3 Avril's Mother's Perception

Avril's mother sees a facilitator as a mediator and a manager. "Avril did not know how to manage her emotional self and she needed the facilitator there to mediate that emotional stuff for her", said the mother. The mother also felt that her daughter would not have been able to be taught without the presence of a facilitator, based on her past history (volcanic emotional outbursts). In her first two years at school, Avril did not receive the type of education she needed because not only were her limitations not thoroughly understood, but the school's service delivery system did not cater for the kind of needs she had. In Avril's case a facilitator was a ticket to mainstream education and the purpose of the facilitator was to ensure that the emotions were mediated and that some "learning" occurred, and that Avril was not marginalized and discriminated against. The choice of school for which Avril's mother opted was the Montessori College, one of the few that accepted Avril.

In sum it is obvious that each parent's perception of what a facilitator is, is influenced by a number of factors including the child's perceived needs, the nature and the culture of the school and/or past experience. Facilitators seem to serve as a ticket to schools, which cannot on their own meet the needs of the child.

6.4 Teachers perceptions of facilitation

The three teachers from the three different schools revealed how different in approach each school was. The perceptions of all three schools clarified the kind of delivery service that each school provided. The teachers were actually mirrors who reflected the attitudes held by their schools about inclusion.

The perception of the teacher from the remedial school is captured in the following sentence she said in the interview: “a facilitator’s job is not only to work with one child; it is also to work with other children to lessen my burden as a teacher in a sense. Although I need her to focus on one child, while she’s with that one child, she can assist other children so that I can come and assist the child that she is facilitating”.

It is evident that the approach of a remedial school is supportive in its nature; however this is not the case with the Montessori teacher’s perception. The teacher is despondent and very frustrated with the role of the facilitator. Subsequently, while Avril is home schooled by the facilitator, the teacher’s job is to hand out assignments, mark them and produces a report at the end of the term. The role of teaching now lies with the facilitator.

The traditional private school was passive (the school was not equipped for the needs of the learner) towards Nqobile’s needs, but the remedial school was proactive (the school is able to satisfy the needs of the learner) regarding Stanley’s needs as opposed to the Montessori school which was reactive (the school did not have any say, nor even a plan for the needs of the learner) regarding Avril’s needs. Avril’s mother and the facilitator were the eminent influencers in the decision to employ a facilitator, which is why the school reacts, at times negatively, to every request or change coming from the mother. All decisions are taken by the mother without exploring any alternative as is illustrated in the theoretical framework in the deliberation process.

6.5 Facilitator’s perception of facilitating

Both the perceptions of the teacher and the facilitator from the remedial school correspond. Helen, the facilitator from the remedial school, defines her role as a promoter of independence. She works with various children from Grade 1 to Grade 3 who need facilitation. Helen works with 10 different children at different hours according to the needs that were assessed. Usually after Grade 3, according to Helen, the children don’t need the facilitation because intervention occurred earlier

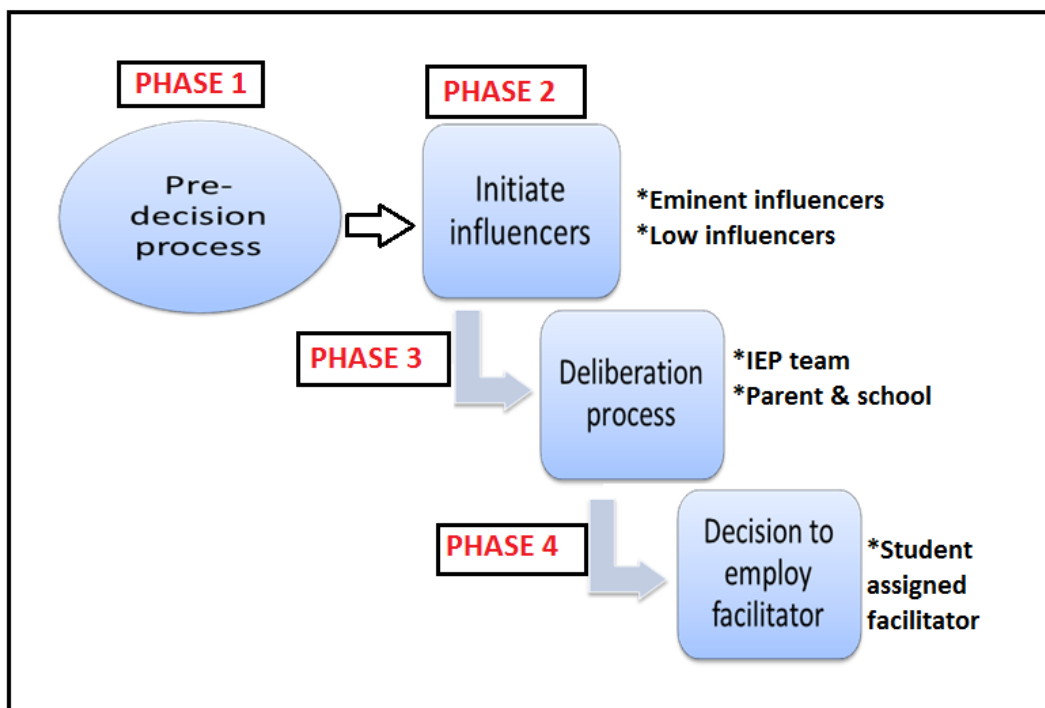
(Grade 1), thus preventing barriers, generally unnoticed, from becoming obstacles when they reach the higher grades.

Zanele, the facilitator from the private traditional school, had a clear idea of her limited role: “I know my own house, I would never jump into some else’s house”, which means she knows that her role is purely that of affording mobility.

However the perception of Lauren, the facilitator from Montessori College, regarding her role, is quite complex. She says she needs to help the learner with whatever help is needed; she has to alleviate frustration, and give step-by-step instructions and guidance. Bearing in mind the perception of both the Montessori teacher and the facilitator, there appears to be a contradiction regarding the role of the facilitator. This blurred understanding of the role of a facilitator caused frictions as well as frustrations and hindered the child’s advancement.

6.6 The decision to hire a facilitator

Figure 6.6.1 Step in hiring a facilitator



Looking at the reconceptualised model of decision-making from Powell (2008) and Elwyn & Miron-Shatz (2010), it is evident that there is a certain procedure that needs to be followed in order for the best outcome to be reached. I will discuss the different routes that each case took and then examine their outcomes.

Remedial School PROACTIVE APPROACH

Phase one: Pre-decision process

Through its supportive structures, the school begins the process, hosting brainstorming sessions amongst IEP team members (occupational and speech therapist, general teacher, and other specialist depending on the learner's needs) at the school. Essentially the team looks at the needs of the learner and assesses whether or not the learner is coping. If the team realises that the learner is not coping, various options are considered including employing a facilitator.

Phase two: Initiate influencers

Once the IEP team has assessed the needs of the learner (in this case Stanley), it then opts for the most appropriate support for the disabled learner. This resulted in a facilitator being identified as most appropriate for the kind of assistance needed by Stanley. The school, as the eminent influencer and initiator of the decision making process to employ a facilitator, approached Stanley's parents and informed them of the challenge they had encountered and how they could provide a possible solution to the problem. The solution, in Stanley's case, is the intervention of a facilitator, who would be there for him together with intervention from the remedial teacher, the occupational therapist and the speech therapist.

Phase three: deliberation process

Stanley's teacher meets with his parents after she has deliberated with the IEP team, and she gives his parents the names of possible facilitators who they could employ to help with Stanley, based on the potential facilitator's experience, rapport with their child and general ability in the field.

Phase four: assigning of a facilitator

The remedial school already has a number of facilitators who are there to give additional support to the needs of the children at the school.

This additional support is organised only after a rigorous and thorough investigation into the learner's needs. The choice of the specific facilitator is made by the parents after possibly several interviews with several candidates. The parents are responsible for employing who they feel is the best candidate because they will be financially responsible for remunerating the facilitator. Thus while the decision to employ a facilitator emanates from the school because of the expert knowledge it possesses, it is the responsibility of the parents to identify a suitable facilitator for their child and pay for the service.

Traditional private school PASSIVE APPROACH

Phase one: pre-decision process

The parents began negotiating for their daughter to enter this private school, because their older son was already enrolled in the school. The school was hesitant about allowing a disabled learner into its school. An IQ test was also part of the deliberation to gain access. The parents were very keen to allow their daughter to be given an IQ test because they knew that Nqobile's challenge was not cognitive but physical in nature.

Phase three – Phase four:

As the eminent influencers and the initiators of employing a facilitator, the parents knew that in order for their daughter to learn in an environment that would nurture and groom her, she needed to be enrolled at this private school. It was also very necessary for her to be accompanied by a facilitator. Nqobile would not function optimally if she was there on her own and not accompanied by a facilitator. Therefore the decision to employ a facilitator was also in this case solely the responsibility of the parents. However the difference between the remedial school and the private school was that the latter did not make the recommendation to employ the facilitator. The parents proposed the idea as a means to gain access for their daughter to the school, and the school passively agreed. Thus the traditional private school was passive in nature, and only responded to Nqobile's needs as they were explained by the parents.

Montessori College REACTIVE APPROACH

In the case of the Montessori College, the route taken was that the facilitator herself, who was Avril's au pair, initiated the idea of having a facilitator employed to assist the young girl. Based on her observations while interacting with Avril and helping with her homework, and other activities, she realised that her schoolwork was not up to the standard of that of the rest of the class. Lauren brought the matter to Avril's mother's attention, who then decided to offer Lauren the role of facilitating Avril. The result was that the action provided by the mother was neither thoroughly investigated nor well informed, but emanated from the need to provide Avril with all the necessary help. The facilitator and the mother influenced the process, the employment, and the role definition of the facilitator. This resulted in a lack of proper identification of Avril's real needs and subsequent friction at school level.

6.7 Summary

This analysis shows that the decision to employ a facilitator goes hand in hand with the parents' knowledge of the role of the facilitator. Ideally it is best if the school recommends employing a facilitator, because as an institute of learning it should of necessity possess some measure of expert knowledge about learners with disabilities, especially if the school claims to be inclusive. The remedial school follows the steps that are taken in order for the best outcome to be reached. The Montessori school, in contrast, was reactive, leaving the decision to employ a facilitator to the mother, and enabling the mother and the facilitator to take decisions without exploring alternatives. Elwyn and Miron-Shatz (2009) say that in order for a good decision to be taken 2 things need to happen Firstly, there must be sound, subjective and sufficient knowledge (knowledge is about the nature of outcomes, what it might be to experience them, or the probabilities of those outcomes). Secondly, there needs to be an emotional processing and effective forecasting of alternatives. It is vital for any decision to be taken with sufficient knowledge, because choices made without enough knowledge are mere guesses, which was the case in Avril's case. The Montessori school was reactive in nature and all the stakeholders became frustrated, which resulted in there being no order

and no cohesion. And in addition, the decision to employ the facilitator was more of a thumb-suck than a rigorously investigated decision.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion and recommendation

7.1 Introduction

Exploring the decision to employ facilitators has been a thought provoking and eye opening experience for me as a novice researcher. Research on facilitation dates back to around the early 1990s; its inception was a consequence of a persistent shortage of qualified professionals (Pickett 1999). And this challenge is still prevalent, with increasing numbers of facilitators being employed on an ad hoc basis without any sound theoretical backing for this growing phenomenon (Giangreco, Doyle & Suter 2010).

From the study a number of conclusions can be drawn.

- Facilitators are not always the solution for children who have barriers to learning.
- Facilitators can be used as an aid to children depending on their individual needs
- The type of facilitation should be dictated by the needs of the child and the context of the school
- Facilitation, whether permanent or temporary, will promote either independence or dependency on the part of the learner.
- Facilitation was less successful when the school was passive and the facilitator or the parent took proactive steps, sometimes against the school's wishes or policy.

The study indicates that the facilitator does not generally have the remedial background or pedagogical experience to be in a position to teach a learner with “a very particular learning barriers”, as the one mother expressed. Furthermore, it confirms the assertion that the benevolent intentions of parent, teachers and the facilitators themselves serve no purpose if they are not guided by rigorous and thorough investigation of the learner's needs (Mueller & Murphy 2001).

The three case studies show that facilitation can be a successful experience, but can also mask learners' real problems, delay proper diagnosis and cause friction at school. Positive results were achieved when facilitators were supervised by specialised teachers as Angelides, Constantinou & Leigh (2009) highlight. An example is the traditional private school. The school could have experienced the same challenges as the Montessori College. However, in the case of Nqobile, proper

diagnosis and understanding of her barrier resulted in the employment of appropriate intervention (the facilitator) who served as the custodian and was thus able to provide for the needs of the learner, according to Palladino Cornoldi, Vianello Scruggs and Mastropieri (1999).

7.2 The importance of role clarification

It is evident that when the roles of facilitators are clearly defined there are minimal frustrations, overload and over burdening with responsibilities that are beyond the facilitator's scope of expertise, such as was the case with the remedial school. Where all the stakeholders knew their responsibilities, the school was better equipped for learner with disabilities. Giangreco (2011) emphasises the importance of service delivery and the ability to honestly gauge a school in terms of their competency. The remedial school is proactive in nature because it is prepared in the way it supports the spectrum of learners who are enrolled at their school.

Conversely the traditional private school is passive in its nature; however the school was honest enough to gauge its service delivery ability and know that it was not in a position to cater to Nqobile's needs. The parents insisted that she had to attend there, and they convinced the school that their child should enter together with the aid of a facilitator, because they knew that their daughter's limitation was mobility. The role of the facilitator would be merely to provide "legs and arms" for her.

This was not the case with Avril. Although the school did gauge its service delivery and knew that it would not be in a position to cater for Avril, it still accepted her when the mother assured the school that Avril would be accompanied by a facilitator. The school was passive and abdicated its role to the facilitator. Avril's needs were not fully understood and the intervention strategy of employing a facilitator was not rigorously and thoroughly investigated. Avril was included as a pupil in the school but her needs were not met. Avril's school was reactive in nature, as were all the stakeholders, except for the mother who was proactive in her decision-making. Decisions were taken without thorough deliberation, and the consequences of those decisions impacted on Avril more than on any other stakeholder. The roles of the facilitator and teacher were not clearly defined after which numerous challenges arose between the various involved stakeholders. This resulted in the facilitator

becoming a home teacher with Avril growing more dependent on her. At the same time Avril's urgent educational barriers were not addressed, because the facilitator had no pedagogical or specialised abilities enabling her to deal with learner with disabilities.

7.3 Reflections

There is truth in the old cliché "prevention is better than cure". Intervention strategies that are put in place at the beginning will prevent learning barriers, the formation of sour relationships amongst stakeholders, and schools being over-burdened. At the end of my interview with Avril's mother, she said "If I would have known about a school like a remedial school I would have taken my daughter to that school". It seems that some schools and teachers in South Africa are not yet in a position to cater competently for a spectrum of disabled learners in the mainstream. Inclusive education is an ideal and not a reality. The White Paper 6 looks good in theory, just like all the other educational policies, but the translation of those ideals into reality is happening at a snail's pace and sometimes not at all. The South African education system is still grappling with improving literacy rates, and all that pertains to that problem. Issues of equality and access to the best possible education for learners with disabilities are not a priority in South Africa's overburdened education system.

The growing phenomenon of employing facilitators is prevalent in private schools amongst parents who can afford this service. Most parents are paying separately for school fees and for the service of facilitators. The majority of South African parents cannot afford to register their children in private schools, or to employ the service of facilitators. Parents are forced to enrol their children in poor public schools that lack teachers who should be constantly improving their career development as specialised educators. Therefore learners are caught in a vicious circle of poverty with little or no chance of escaping; and learners with disabilities are the most vulnerable and the most compromised.

There is an idiom in Zulu, "*Ihlela ibuzwa kwaba phambili*", which means that the road is known by those who have travelled it first. Developed countries have travelled the road of employing facilitators without theoretical soundness. We as South African researchers, teachers and policy makers must learn from their mistakes, because we cannot afford to make the same mistakes, given that we are a developing country

with a long way to go to improve our education system. All schools should have a decision-making model in order for true inclusion to be successful, instead of what appears to be little more than baby sitting by facilitators that is promoted as inclusion.

7.4 Suggestion for further research

To the best of my knowledge this is the first study on this topic in South Africa. However, this study is limited to only three case studies and cannot be generalised. There is much more that we need to learn about the process of employing facilitators in different contexts. More research can be done exploring the experiences of facilitation in different contexts so we can have an in-depth understanding of this growing phenomenon in South Africa. There is also a need for theoretical soundness in intervention strategies in inclusive education. Decisions must be based on well-tested theories and not just mere guesses

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Appendix A

Structured interviews

Facilitator Interview

1. What is your job description?
2. How did you become a facilitator?
3. When parents asked you to help with their child, what did they ask you to do?
What kind of information did they give you about their child?
4. What factors did you consider when you took the job of being a facilitator?
5. With whom have you consulted before taking the job? Parents? Teachers?
6. Is there an on-going discussion with the parents about the child you are
7. facilitating – how often – what is the nature of this discussion?
8. How do you work with the child? And with the teacher as well?
9. What are the challenges, advantages and disadvantages of the facilitation?
10. What impact do you have on the child in terms of his/her academic and social life?
11. What kind of support do you receive from the teachers/schools/ parents?
12. What advice would you give to parents who need to make the decision of whether or not to hire a facilitator for their child? What should be the main issues they need to consider?

Parent Interview

1. Tell me about your child –
2. What kind of problem/barriers does he/she have?
3. What kind of support has he/she had in the past? Which schools did he/she attend before (if at all)?
4. Has he/she always worked with a facilitator?
5. Why did you hire a facilitator?
6. What other factors influenced your decision to hire a facilitator?
7. Did the school support your decision?
8. Who have you consulted in the school? Who was involved in the consultation
9. (Teacher? Remedial; teachers

10. Whose advice did you follow?
11. Where did you find the facilitator?
12. How does the school work with you and the facilitator? What are the
13. challenges, the barriers? Advantages? Disadvantages?
14. How does your child work with the facilitators?
15. What impact does the facilitator have on your child in terms of his/her academic and social life?
16. What are your expectations concerning the school?
17. What is the policy of the school with regard to facilitators?
18. What were the conditions/criteria that you needed to meet before you employed the facilitator?
19. What advice could you give to parents who need to make a decision whether or not to hire a facilitator for their child? What should be the main issues they need to consider?

Teacher's Interview

1. Tell me about your learner –
2. What kind of problem/barriers does he/she have?
3. What kind of support has he/she had in the past?
4. Which school/s did he/she attend before (if at all)?
5. Has he/she always worked with a facilitator?
6. What are the advantages? And disadvantages of having a facilitator?
7. What impact does the facilitator have on your learner in terms of his/her academic and social life?
8. What is the policy/guideline of the school with regard to facilitators?
9. What kind of a school is this (mention the school's name)?
10. What kind of service does the school render?
11. Is it an ordinary school (low intensive support), full service school (moderate support) or specialised school (high intensive educational support)?
12. What has your experience being like regarding teaching a learner with a facilitator?
13. What do you think the role of a facilitator is?
14. Were you consulted when the decision was taken to allow a learner with a facilitator attending your class?

15. Is there any collaboration between you, the parents and the facilitator?
16. What advice could you give to parents who need to make the decision whether or not to hire a facilitator for their child? What should be the main issues they need to consider?