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# Teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment


**by**

**Gabré Nel**


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**at the University of Pretoria**

**SUPERVISOR: Dr M.A.U. Mohlakwana**

**March 2018**

**Declaration**

I declare that the mini-dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted my me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

**.....**

**Gabré Nel**

**31 March 2018**

## Ethical Clearance Certificate

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**Ethics statement**

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this mini-dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

**.....**

**Gabré Nel**

**31 March 2018**

**Dedication**

I dedicate this research to the following individuals who made the completion of this dissertation a reality:

(i) My supervisor, Dr M.A.U. Mohlakwana for her professional conduct and support from our first introduction meeting, throughout all my course work modules and assignments, my proposal defence journey as well as the writing of all my chapters for this dissertation. Thank you for all the experience and expertise that you shared with me over the two year period.

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**Language editor's disclaimer**

TRANSLATION – EDITING – PROOFREADING

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# CERTIFICATE OF PROOFREADING

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**Teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment**

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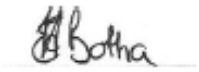


H. E. Botha (I.D. nr. 5904250079082)

**Abstract**

Despite increasing attention to legislation to ensure inclusive learning for all, gaps exist between ideals as strived for by legislation and classroom reality when it comes to the implementation of inclusivity by teachers. These challenges call for peer support and coaching as mechanisms for creating an acceptable learning environment. The way teachers support one another in an inclusive school environment is becoming increasingly important. All types of learners, especially those with special educational needs, are to be included. Teachers are responsible for implementing inclusivity in their classrooms. National and international literature shows that teachers are fairly supportive of inclusion policies. However, there is a concern that many find it hard to implement inclusion practices. Difficulties arise due to a lack of training, limited teaching experience, low confidence, negative attitudes towards inclusion, lack of legal knowledge, pedagogical issues and environments with scarce resources, among others.

Therefore, this qualitative case study seeks to contribute to understanding teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching from one another in an attempt to implement and maintain inclusive practices within a fee-paying, mainstream secondary school. Data was collected through document analysis, as well as by the use of semi-structured interviews with focus group and individual grade 9 teachers. The main findings are that post level one teachers are not included in the school-based support team; that schools have no formal coaching sessions aimed exclusively at the professional development of teachers in order for them to cope with inclusivity; that teachers' professional burdens with regard to academic and extra-mural activities are overwhelming, which creates an environment where teachers do not have the time or motivation to regularly provide support to learners with special needs; teachers do not adjust their curriculum content to accommodate individual learner needs; due to constraints, teachers are also not inclined to further their own professional development or to accept training by the school or district offices.

This study will provide rich and detailed data as evidence to schools, the department of education and policy-makers, as to how teachers (in both the national and international context) experience peer support and coaching when it comes to implementing inclusion strategies and managing their classroom practice accordingly.

**Key words:** peer support; peer coaching**;** public school**;** mainstream school; learners with special educational needs**;** inclusive education**;** teacher development

**List of most used abbreviations**

DoE – Department of Education
EFA – Education for All
EWP6 – Education White Paper 6
GDE – Gauteng Department of Education
HOD – Head of Department
LSEN – Learners with Special Educational Needs
SASA – South African School Act
SEN – Special Educational Needs
SMT – School Management Team
UN - United Nations
SBST – School Based Support Team

**Table of Contents**

# Chapter 1
# Introduction and background to the study

## 1.1 Title

Teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment.

## 1.2 Introduction and problem statement

The way teachers support one another in an inclusive schooling environment is increasingly important. An effective and accomplished school is an inclusive school. Inclusion means that learners with special educational needs (SEN) are not to be placed in special schools or classes (Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 16; Miles, 2000). Most learners will struggle at some point during their schooling career, therefore teachers as peers need to work together in a school, especially when diverse learners are involved (Boyle et al., 2011: 170).

Mainstream schools should provide professional development platforms for teachers in their effort to accommodate and support learners with SEN, within the regular (ordinary) classroom and school context, in such a manner that all their unique and challenging needs are realised and they should not be segregated from other learners (Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 16-17).

For a school to be inclusive, success will depend immensely on the schools capability, and therefore the capacity, attitudes, actions and investment of all stakeholders (principals, heads of departments (HOD's), teachers, parents, community members, expert professionals, representatives of the department of education, researchers and international communities, among others), to be innovative, accept, organise, implement and maintain inclusive practices (Thomazet, 2009: 556; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 17; Zollers, Ramanathan & Yu, 1999: 160; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12; Mattson & Hansen, 2009: 477; Linqvist & Nilholm, 2013).

Inclusive education has been universally and comprehensively accepted, approved and promoted as an ideal, national and international model for education (Maher, 2009: 20; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 13). The platform for the integration and inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream schools was created by the famous Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 with its emphasis on the Least Restrictive Environment, the UK Warnock Report of 1978 and the subsequent 1981 Education Act (Department for Education and Skills, 1978; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 144; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199). These acts abolished categories of disabilities and introduced SEN as a dominant term that set the foundation for international action and have since resulted in many national and international policies.

Inclusive education as an ideology also gained tremendous international acceptance and was provided a universal evolution accelerator through international declarations such as the United Nations (UN) advocacy and endorsement of the Education for All (EFA) idea at the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Conference in Thailand, 1990; the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education at the World Convention in Spain, 1994; the World Declaration for EFA by 2015 at the World Education Forum in Senegal, 2000 and the Incheon Declaration for EFA 2030 at the World Education Forum, Republic of Korea, 2015, among others (UN, 1989; Kuyini & Desai, 2007: 108; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 146; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 45; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199; UNESCO, 1994: 6; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 221; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010: 93 ; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Thomazet, 2009: 556; UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO, 2015). These declarations opened up conversation about human rights with international communities, where governments reaffirmed a promise and an undertaking to realise and achieve the goals of the Education for All declarations (UNESCO, 1994: 6-10; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 146; UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO, 2015; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 45). The latter refers to the provision of full educational access to all learners, especially learners with SEN to regular schooling in their local social settings, without any exclusionary practices. The declarations also set out goals and targets to achieve full inclusion and complete educational transformation

through equitable and non-discriminatory Education for All objectives (UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO, 2015; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 44-46).

From a national perspective, the pre-1994, apartheid era in South Africa, was not only characterised by discriminatory educational practices according to race, but also according to learner disability (DoE, 2005; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 16-17). The latter needed to be addressed to promote and guarantee equitable educational opportunities and practices in South Africa, in line with international trends where learners with SEN are included in mainstream schooling in recognition of human rights (Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12).

Inclusivity in a South African school setting is led by government adopted policies in the form of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) of 1996, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) and the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6): Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive and Training System, to provide quality education for all (DoE, 2002; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 5; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 17).

In South Africa as a democratic country, communities have been transformed to be inclusive so that all South Africans have learning opportunities of equal quality (Badat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134). The new political order constructed by the Constitution promotes equality (RSA, 1996; Makoelle, 2012: 93-97).

The South African government is obliged by its constitution to provide basic education to its citizens as a basic right (RSA, 1996). This government has to do everything within its power to make education increasingly attainable and accessible, through compulsory schooling for all South African children (between the ages of seven and fifteen) and the elimination of exclusionary and segregated learning and teaching practices in order to ensure a more inclusionary and democratic system (RSA, 1996, section 29(1)).

SASA is an important law governing schools. According to section 5(1) of SASA, a public school should provide the educational requirements of all learners they accept without

discriminating in any way (race, language, financial suitability and disability, among others) and no learner may be denied access to any school grounds (DoE, 2002; DoE. 2005; Makoelle, 2012: 94; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18).

EWP6 was introduced in 2001 as a legislative and policy framework**,** towards the implementation of inclusive education in public schools (DoE, 2002; DoE, 2005; Makoelle, 2012: 93; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18)**.** EWP6 defines inclusive education and training as the support and changing of attitudes and behaviour of teachers, through changed approaches in classroom instruction, educational programmes (modified, flexible and suitable curriculum) and teaching environment (leadership and management of resources) to satisfy the educational needs of everyone involved in the education process, especially learners who experience barriers to learning (DoE, 2002; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 5; Mittler, 1995: 10; Chhabarra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 221).

Research conducted by Boyle et al. (2011: 170) in Scotland, shows that teachers recognise the importance of peer support above all other forms of support and suggests the support of school psychologists (SP) to provide in-service training to teachers. Research in Sweden, Botswana and Hong Kong indicates that leaders in education believe that teachers' lack of experience should be made up for by a special educators' needs coordinator (SENCO) and by a professional allied educator for learning and behaviour (Lindqvist & Nilholm, 2013). Research in Hong Kong, South Africa, Sweden and England reports that, teachers should participate in professional development in order to improve their skills and readiness for teaching in inclusive classrooms (Forlin & Sin, 2010: 17-19; Makoelle, 2012: 95; Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180; Goodman & Burton, 2010: 225). Research in Switzerland and Hong Kong indicates that educators are exceedingly complimentary towards inclusion but are progressively uncomfortable with its implementation (Forlin & Sin, 2010; Opertti & Brady, 2011: 462).

In the South African context, a study conducted by Nel et al. (2014: 908) indicates that teachers predominantly use strategies to immediately refer learners to expert professionals, who are singled out, because they are more experienced with boundaries

to learning. They choose this option, rather than addressing the problems themselves, as they lack the relevant skills, familiarity and confidence (Nel et al., 2014: 908). According to Makoelle (2012: 95-96), who conducted action research, found that teachers used their own way of teaching, which they thought was inclusive, without bothering to know what was going on in other classes.

Teachers are responsible for realizing and achieving inclusivity in their classrooms and research, nationally and internationally, shows that teachers are fairly supportive of inclusion policies (Linqvist & Nilholm, 2013; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 17-19; Makoelle, 2012: 96; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 5). In contrast to this finding, there is also significant scholarly research that indicates that teachers experience difficulties in implementing inclusion practices due to inexperience, environments with scarce resources, a lack of training, inadequate knowledge of legislation and insufficient pedagogical strategies, among others. This situation results in negative attitudes and low confidence towards inclusion (Boyle et al., 2011: 170; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 17-19; Operrti & Brady, 2011: 463; Makoelle, 2012 94; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 5; Chataika et al., 2012: 387). These challenges call for peer support and coaching as mechanisms to create an acceptable learning environment for all.

## 1.3 Purpose of the study

Despite increasing insistence on inclusive education, gaps exist between the ideal as strived for by legislation and the classroom reality of the implementation of inclusive teaching. Therefore, we need to have a better understanding of how teachers experience peer support and coaching from one another in an attempt to implement and maintain inclusive practices within a fee-paying, mainstream secondary school, so that learning for all is included in a grade-group setting.

## 1.4 Research questions.

### 1.4.1 Primary research question

The primary research question for this study is: How do teachers experience peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment?

### 1.4.2. Secondary research questions

How do teachers engage with their peers to enable support in an inclusive learning environment?

How is peer coaching experienced in an inclusive school?

How is peer support and coaching managed in an inclusive school?

Which factors contribute or hinder peer support and coaching in an inclusive environment?

## 1.5 Rationale and significance of study

The researcher has personal experience of working within a mainstream setting where an increasing number of learners with SEN in the form of academic and physical barriers to learning have been included over the years. The researcher has observed how teachers find it difficult to embrace learners who have barriers to learning. These teachers face daunting challenges in order to manage learning in the classroom. The researcher has observed teacher conduct, attended workshops and furthered his tertiary studies to improve his knowledge and empower himself, but still struggles to successfully accommodate all types of learners in the classroom. That a problem remains can partly be attributed to a lack of training for teaching in an inclusive environment, insufficient confidence and not enough support from colleagues, management and the education department (Boyle et al., 2011: 171; Linqvist & Nilholm, 2013; Forlin & Sin, 2010; 17-19; Operrti & Brady, 2011; 463; Makoelle, 2012: 96; Dalton et al., 2012: 5).

Limited support for working in an inclusive environment by way of in-service training is provided. Teachers find it challenging to attend workshops and further their tertiary studies because of individual and institutional budgetary and time constraints (Boyle et al., 2011: 171; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 17). Teacher observations and opportunities for formal and informal talks about their teaching practice among colleagues are also limited due to the structure of scheduled academic and extra-curricular programmes (Nel et al., 2014: 908). Therefore, it is very important that both an internal and external platform should be created where teachers can be supported and developed to successfully implement inclusion practices.

Kaikkonen (2010: 171) maintain that teachers primarily interpret and focus their teaching on guiding specific well-adjusted learners, to academic success. However, currently schools accommodate learners with diverse characteristics that are not all well-adjusted and teachers need to be skilled and equipped to be able to successfully include all learners they are entrusted with, whatever their individual abilities and needs (Swafford, 1998: 54; EWP6, 2001; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012; 6). For many teachers, meeting the needs of individual learners seems to come lower down on their priority list (Kaikkonen, 2010; 171). For this reason Swafford (1998: 54) and Makoelle (2012: 94) deduce that teachers lack inclusive skills and need sufficient training to become more responsive, more insightful and more attentive to efficient methods of instruction for individual learners and they need to collaborate with peers to support learning and teaching. According to Robbins (1991) teachers of all levels need to challenge factors that place constraints on their professional development and build bridges across classrooms so that schools can exploit and take advantage of the talent that exist in each classroom. Teachers working in isolation are not inclusive and supportive in nature and in-class and out-of-class activities should be structured so that teachers can collaborate with each other on a frequent, scheduled basis (Swafford, 1998: 54; Robbins, 1991).

This research will add to the body of knowledge on peer support and coaching that teachers experience from one another in an attempt to implement and maintain inclusion in their mainstream classroom and grade-group setting. This case study can provide useful evidence to schools, the department of education and possibly policy-makers, to realise how their teachers (in their national or international context), especially in grade-group settings, experience support and coaching by their peers to enable the implementation of inclusion strategies and for them to manage their classroom practice accordingly. Knowing what the status of teacher support, training, experience with inclusive education, attitudes, legislative knowledge, pedagogy issues and resources is, will certainly fill gaps in current research. Schools can then use the findings to improve their teacher support, coaching and inclusion practices for greater future success (Boyle et al., 2011: 170; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 17-19; Opperrti & Brady, 2011; 463; Makoelle, 2012: 96; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahone, 2012: 5; Nel et al., 2014: 908; Chhabarra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 221).

## 1.6 Research methodology

This study is focused on an interpretivist, qualitative research approach and design, because of a desire to gain a better understanding of the peer support and coaching context and realities in which teachers find themselves in implementing and maintaining inclusive practices (Maree at al., 2013: 51; Delmont & Jones, 2012: 85). The participants (teachers) were selected according to pre-defined characteristics that made them the source of the data that was needed for the research study (Maree et al., 2013: 79; Gaskell, 2000: 44; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; 193). Requirements were that the teachers had to teach at a fee-paying, mainstream secondary school, had to be involved with the same grade group (grade 9) and teach learners with SEN.

## 1.7 Data collection strategies and analysis

A case study, by which data was gathered through conducting semi-structured interviews with and collecting documents from interviewing participants by spending time at the identified schools and interacting regularly with the participants was done. Data was collected and transcribed electronically by using Microsoft Word. The researcher carefully read through his interview notes and sorted them according to relevance and importance, through the method of inductive coding by making use of reflective notes (Maree et al., 2013: 105). Combined interview responses led to descriptive summaries and the emergence of core themes on which the analysis and findings are based (Maree et al., 2013: 104; Merriam, 1998; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002: 13). The latter shows correlations with matters raised in the literature review, but also adds new insights. All conclusions are, therefore, based on verifiable data (Maree et al., 2012: 112).

## 1.8 Ethical considerations

All protocol as regards to ethics was observed by embarking on the following process: an ethical research application was submitted and approved by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Research request documents were submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) where approval was obtained and all prescribed conditions of doing research in GDE institutions were upheld during sessions at sampled

schools. Approval and support were gained from the relevant school principals and SGB chairpersons and they were fully informed about the research and the necessary approval from the university and GDE. Teachers were informed about the research and that their participation was voluntary, that they would receive no compensation and could withdraw or refuse to take part in the study at any time (Maree et al., 2013: 41). Teachers signed informed consent letters and were ensured of anonymity (Maree et al., 2013: 300-301; Neuman, 2012: 62-63). Triangulation was ensured by using the collective findings from data collected through interviews and documents from the different schools, which led to similar conclusions. The credibility of the research study was ensured by providing participants with the opportunity to comment on or access the research findings, recommendations and conclusions (Maree et al., 2013: 114).

## 1.9 Outline of the study

A structured outline of the rest of the chapters is as follows:

### Chapter 2: Literature review

A literature review is provided that formed a theoretical background. The following themes are presented: a definition of inclusive education, international and South African perspectives on inclusive education, coaching as a form of support, an inclusive school culture, development in pedagogy, the roles of expert professionals as well as peer coaching. These matters form a conceptual framework.

### Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Methodology entails the research approach, research paradigm, qualitative research design, the sample procedures, data collection methods and procedures and data analysis. The focus is also on the trustworthiness of the study on research ethics.

### Chapter 4: Data analysis and presentation of findings

The data analysis contains a detailed discussion and presentation of data collected from interviews conducted with teachers and information from the documents. This analysis

provides insights into the perceptions of teachers regarding their experiences of peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment.

**Chapter 5: Summary of findings, recommendation and conclusions**

A summary of the results of the study is provided; conclusions, drawn from the research, are presented and recommendations are made.

## 1.10 Conclusion

The main focus of chapter 1 is to provide an introduction to and outline of the research study that has been undertaken. The introduction provides a background to the study by explaining underlying factors that prevail in schools regarding inclusive education. Detailed and explicit descriptions of national and international perspectives and realities on inclusive education are given in the problem statement. Research questions are formulated and the research methodology and ethical considerations are explained.

# Chapter 2
# Literature review

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of international and South African perspectives, initiatives and actions taken for the development and implementation of inclusive education systems. It includes considering of the importance of coaching in a school environment, the influence of peer support among teachers on school culture, the development of pedagogy, and the role of professionals with regard to peer coaching.

Peer teacher support within schools takes various forms, such as training, consultation, mentoring and coaching through support programmes such as staff meetings, staff development activities, formal and informal observations and the coaching of individual teachers, among others (Brown & Henderson, 2012: 178-180; Joubert & Prinsloo, 2013: 252; Tod et al., 2011: 46). Many teachers have exposure to particular learners with SEN. They have identified and explored effective approaches to support their peers and learners in classrooms (Boyle et al., 2011: 172-173). Finally, this chapter will focus on a framework of peer support coaching to support and develop teachers to successfully implement and maintain inclusion strategies.

## 2.2 Inclusive education

The perspectives on special education have changed, in all societies, over the last few decades (Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 221). These changes are evident in the terms used to refer to special education. The move has been from integration to mainstreaming, and more recently to inclusion.

### 2.2.1 A definition of integration and mainstreaming

The terms integration and mainstreaming, from the 1970s and 1980's fundamentally correspond and relate to each other (Engelbrecht et al., 1999). They both refer to the placement (integration) of a learner with SEN into a general school environment and regular curriculum (mainstreaming), on a case-by-case basis, to normalise the learner in

age-appropriate activities with their peers without SEN, usually without the curriculum being adapted to provide individualised support (Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 221; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 146; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 310; Dyson, 1997b; Murphy, 1996: 470; Sebba & Ainscow, 1996: 12). Additional classroom support is generally provided to the learner to assist him or her to do the required work, based on their needs and the requirements of the class. The objective is for the learner to fit into the school programme and not for the school programme to adjust to learner differences (Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Engelbrecht et al., 1999). Farrel (2000: 154) and Farrel (1997a) indicated that learners with SEN can experience integration by occasional and frequent visits to fulltime placement in a mainstream school. Therefore, one learner's integration experience can be very different from that of the next learner (Farrel, 2000: 154). A major critique of integration and mainstreaming is that it provides no clarity about the quality of education that is provided to learners with SEN within the integrated system of mainstream education (Farrel, 2000: 154; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2).

Inclusion cannot exist in an educational environment where learners are placed at mainstream schools, in mainstream classes (integrated) but receive separate teaching and substantially different pedagogy from their peers or spend some or most of their day in separate and segregated environments (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2). If that is the case then these learners are quite isolated and excluded (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2).

Some of the advantages of mainstreaming are that it encourages, acknowledges and supports diversity and acceptance, increases tolerance and allows opportunities for all learners to advance. It improves the motivation of learners with SEN through competition, and collaboration with expert professionals by teachers is promoted (Tremblay, 2007). The disadvantages of mainstreaming is an acceptance of segregation and stigmatization, especially where learners attend schools that still maintain segregated beliefs and settings because mainstream schools did not change and adapt their social and cultural practices towards learners with SEN (Tremblay, 2007).

### 2.2.2 Definition of inclusive education

Pruslow (2003: 68) and Irvine et al. (2010: 72) stated that governments, researchers, principals and teachers should no longer ask whether inclusion works, but rather what can be done to make inclusion work. There should be a shift from the individual SEN learner fitting into the school programme, to the school making the necessary changes to accommodate and support that learner (Khochen & Radford, 2012: 146; Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12; Devecci & Rossi, 2010: 92; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222; Haigh, 2002: 52). The latter will lead to a context and situation where learners can fully develop their academic and social potential and where they are physically and psychologically safe with the support of all stakeholders participating in the life of the school.

The term inclusion, however, refers to a much more radical model of change and acceptance of SEN (Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222). Inclusive education is anchored as a component of human rights through social justice, because every learner, whatever his or her needs, has feelings and aspirations and wants to belong, gain membership and feel accepted within any environment (Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 16-17; Badat, 2009: 458; Badat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134; Alur & Timmins, 2009: 14). Social justice, from the perspective that education is a human right, will produce inclusive aims by promoting, valuing, constructing and guaranteeing full and equal educational access, opportunities, participation and support to all individuals or groups of learners, especially those with disabilities who were previously not included in mainstream education. This has to be achieved through social, economic and political practices and systems by promoting views of accountability, control, choice and diversity (Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 16-17; Opperti & Brady, 2011: 468; Engelbrecht, 1999; Miles, 2000; Badat, 2009: 458; Badat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 45; Ainscow et al., 2006). The key principles of inclusive education are rights, democracy, participation, community, partnerships, collaboration, attitudes, diversity, fairness, equality, transformation, change and sustainability (Tremblay, 2007).

Inclusive education and training can be defined as the support, changing and adapting of attitudes and behaviour of all education stakeholders, through teaching methods, educational programmes and teaching environments to satisfy the educational needs of everyone involved in the education process, especially learners who experience barriers to learning (EWP6 OF 2001; DoE, 2002; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 6; Mittler, 1995: 5-7; Chhabarra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222-224).

Inclusion goes beyond integration and includes all forms of diversity, not just disability and means that all learners are a part of the regular school system from the beginning of their school journey (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2). With the integration model, learners have to adapt to school requirements, whereas under inclusion, regular schools and classrooms adapt to accommodate and meet the requirements of all learners, as well as to appreciate and value their differences (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2). Differences can be based on gender, nationality, culture, language of origin, level of education achievement and ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic context and background, religion, disability or any other area by which learning and/or development of learners are impacted (Loreman; Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 310).

Geldenhuys and Weyers (2013: 16-17) and Miles (2000) advocated that an effective school is an inclusive school and inclusive learners' differences should be seen as assets (Nilholm, 2006; Lindqvist and Nilholm, 2013; Chhabarra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222-224). Schools fundamentally exist to meet the educational needs of learners and not the other way around (Loreman et al., 2010: 1-2). Learners should receive education from their neighbourhood school, where learners with 'additional' support needs are accommodated with full and sufficient resources to ensure that they are not hampered educationally or excluded socially from their peers (Fetter-Harrot, Steketee & Dare, 2008: 63-65; Pruslow, 2003: 70; Irvine et al, 2010: 72-74; Alur & Timmons, 2009: 14). The latter places a responsibility on the school to create an inclusive environment that will require additional resources, at additional costs, for inclusion to be successful. Therefore, inclusion not just encourages and enhances the physical presence of learners with SEN

and disabilities, but also their participation and achievement through the balancing of academic and extra-mural activities (Lim, Wong & Tan, 2014: 126-130). The latter provides a platform for schools to shift from instructional and physical inclusion to the more desired authentic (credible) inclusion (Irvine et al., 2010: 72-74). Authentic inclusion is not situated in the learner or where the learner is placed, but rather, diversity resides in the social and cultural practices, values and beliefs that make up a society (Irvine et al., 2010: 72-74).

Teachers and schools need to become familiar with the range of syndromes, disorders, defects and conditions that constitutes the population of SEN learners and to gain knowledge and develop special educational practices to successfully include these learners (Slee, 2001: 167-170). The challenge is to reduce, eliminate and avoid barriers to learning and to ensure the development of all learners (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 310). The latter will make the regular teacher and school more responsive and inclusive towards the diverse needs of learners. What is required is a systems approach to inclusive education (Haigh, 2002: 55-58; Slee, 2001: 167-170).

The education system is responsible for including learners with SEN to ensure education for all (Chhabarra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222-224; Naicker, 1999: 12; Naicker, 2006: 1-6). The responsibility and success of inclusion lies with the classroom teacher to purposefully adapt, alter and transform curriculum and classroom structures, through effective planning structures, to meet the diverse needs of learners, benefitting both teacher and learner (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 310; Alur and Timmons, 2009: 15).

There is a complete and determined shift away from a medical approach (diagnostic criteria as the reason for the individual student's educational failure so that treatment and assistance outside regular education are required) to a systems approach such as provided by inclusive education (Haigh, 2002: 55-58; Pottas, 2005; Naicker, 1999: 12; Naicker, 2006: 1-6).

Inclusion enhances the adjustments of cultures, policies and school practices to create platforms for community education stakeholders to respond to learner diversity (Lim, Wong & Tan, 2014: 126-130). Engelbrecht (2006: 124) affirms widespread community support for government initiatives and actions of realising and achieving quality education for all learners through partnerships with them, especially in previously disadvantaged communities, by the provision of new educational opportunities.

The following barriers, putting the majority of South African learners at risk, to successful South African implementation and maintenance of inclusive education have been identified as (DoE, 1997b: 11-19, 209; DoE, 2001; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002: 116-119; Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1999: 53; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 311-312):

- Systemic and pedagogic barriers: curriculum inaccessibility (lack of appropriate learning materials and access to such due to budgetary difficulties; subject content that lacks relevance, inflexible and inappropriate teaching styles, classroom management and ways of assessment that intentionally or unknowingly do not cater for learner differences); overcrowding of schools and classrooms (high volumes of students in the same classroom make inclusive teaching and management thereof more difficult, especially within a limited timeframe); lack of adequate, initial and ongoing training and insufficient support for teachers through development opportunities that would influence teacher conduct; language and communication blocks (when the medium of instruction is not the first language of the learner, sign language is not provided for deaf learners or there is a lack of assistive devices or alternative and augmentative communication strategies for non-speaking learners); among others.
- Socio-economic barriers: poverty; poor living conditions; undernourishment; lack of proper or overcrowded housing; lack of basic services; scarce health and welfare provision; chronic illness and HIV/AIDS; unemployment; negative attitudes (in terms of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion and disability); crime; dysfunctional families; sexual abuse; physical abuse; civil war; violence and crime; and a lack of parental involvement, among others, have devastatingly negative effects on attempts at inclusivity.

- Intrinsic barriers: disabilities, including neurological, physical, sensory (blind and deaf) and cognitive barriers to learning are not met, specifically the needs of learners with difficulties in reading, written language and mathematics, speech, language and communication difficulties.

There are, however, some long-held and generally unsupported beliefs that learners with SEN will disrupt classes and impair the learning of others in class; that teachers will be unable to cope with the extra tasks expected of them, and that learners with differences will ultimately receive an inferior education and come through the process with damaged self-esteem (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 13). The latter is disputed by a growing body of research that indicates that many of these beliefs are founded on myth, preconceived notions or anecdotal support rather than on any solid empirical evidence.

### 2.2.3 Advantages and disadvantages of inclusive learning

The following are advantages of inclusion:

- Inclusion provides better short- and long term educational and social outcomes to learners with SEN (better self-confidence and self-esteem because they are part of the majority and are accepted) than separate LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) school systems (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2009: 45). Learners with SEN realise greater academic benefits such as higher levels of academic attainment in mainstream schools (Fisher, Roach & Frey, 2002: 66-69; Frederickson et al., 2004: 44; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 13).
- The academic achievement of learners without SEN is not negatively impacted by the presence of learners with SEN (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 13). Learners without SEN also have access to more teachers. The latter can lead to a situation where teachers use different strategies and instructional technologies as well as resources such as teaching assistants, mentors and caregivers that are available to help all students to learn (Bateman & Bateman, 2001: 84; Moran & Abbott, 2002: 163; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 58; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 13).
- Inclusion is more cost-effective than segregated models of education in the long term (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 13). Schools must be creative about the best

way to use resources to support inclusion (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2). The provision of adequate resources will help to ensure commitment from teachers who implement inclusion (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2).

- Teachers benefit from inclusive education. It can act as a catalyst to enhance the development of skills in professional learning communities (Carrington & Robbinson, 2004: 147; van Kraayenoord, 2007: 390-394; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 13).
- It provides parents with a say about their learner's educational options and ensures that their learner, just like any other learner, can develop optimally (Schoeman & Schoeman, 2002: 17; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 59). Parents should be welcomed as school collaborators, and supported so that their views, knowledge and skills are used and valued by school staff (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2).

The following are disadvantages of inclusion:

- The mainstream classroom is aimed at the needs of the group and does not necessarily have the same structured focus as in LSEN schools (Bateman & Bateman, 2001: 84; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 59). The latter can hamper the progress of learners with SEN. Despite the possibility of greater academic and social benefits, they do not always reach their full potential in mainstream settings.
- Mainstream teachers do not have specialised knowledge or the relevant training to provide for the needs of learners with SEN (Bateman & Bateman, 2001: 84; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 60).
- Infrastructure defects can occur because of budget constraints and then the needs of learners with SEN cannot be fully met (Bateman & Bateman, 2001: 84; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 59).
- Because of fiscal shortcomings from government, implementation of an inclusion policy (concerning the implementation of inclusive education for developing communities) is not always sustainable (Muthukrisna, 2002: 7-8; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 59).
- Inclusive education practices increase the workload and stress levels of teachers and reduce their time for reflection about their productivity (Haigh, 2002: 61-62; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 59).

- The implementation and management of inclusivity have greater financial implications for parents, learners, schools and teachers than was the case in the original, segregated system (Haigh, 2002: 61-62; Potgieter-Groot, 2009: 59).

## 2.3 International and South African perspectives of inclusive education

Despite the international community's success with regard to the implementation of inclusion, many nations, including South Africa, are still far from successfully implementing inclusion practices (Nguyet & Ha, 2010; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 14). According to Donohue & Bornman (2014: 8) up to 70% of South African children with SEN, of a school-going age, are not attending school, despite the fact that by law schooling is compulsory, and those who do attend are mostly accommodated in LSEN schools (RSA, 1996, section 29(1)). The latter is still common practice in South African schools, again despite legislation which dictates an inclusive schooling environment for all learners (Irvine et al., 2010: 75). Even if learners with SEN are accommodated in mainstream schools, many do not receive the attention they deserve, which can lead to individuals dropping out of school and losing confidence, all of which could have been prevented (Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 14; Rossi & Stuart, 2007: 142-146).

### 2.3.1 Legal framework regarding inclusive education in the international community

Numerous important international declarations have fundamentally covered the right to a more inclusive education system, including (Tremblay, 2007; Peters, 2003: 68; UNESCO, 1994: 6; UNESCO, 2006; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 151; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 224; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010: 91-95; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Thomazet, 2009: 555; Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 25):

- The Charter of the United Nations (1945);
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966);
- The International Covenant of on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976);
- The World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (1982);
- The UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989);

- The World Declaration for Education for All (1990);
- The United Nation Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1993);
- The UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994);
- The Expert Group Meeting on International Norms and Standards Relating to Disability (1998);
- The Dakar Framework for Action (Education for All) (2000);
- The Incheon Framework for Action (Education for All) (2015).

These declarations and legislations report that inclusive education is in place in the majority of countries (Peters, 2003: 68). The first two international declarations that mentioned the right of a child to education was the Charter of the United Nations (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 24-25). The Human Rights Declaration was adopted by all member states and advanced constitutional rights for all, a move towards an appropriate education that is not discriminatory towards any citizens regardless of gender, race, colour and religion (Kisanji, 1999: 196-199).

In the 1950's there was a move to compulsory schooling by the creation of special education classes or schools for learners with disabilities (Kisanji, 1999: 196-199). During the late 1950's, Kisanji (1999: 196-199) reports that exclusionary practices of learners with SEN and disabilities through categorisation and separate schooling practices began to be questioned. The creation and provision for special education led to the following educational problems and societal perspectives that were challenged:

- Learners who have SEN cannot cope with the regular curriculum because they have something wrong with them and should be provided with an easier curriculum that differs from their peers (leads to disjointed knowledge) (Kisanji, 1999: 196-199);
- Learners with SEN are labelled and excluded from mainstream society (Jenkinson, 1997). The categorisation of learners has damaging effects on the perceptions, assessments and expectations of teachers and parents on the ability of their learners

to succeed (Ainscow, 1991: 297; Jenkinson, 1997; Sebba, Byers & Rose, 1993; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199);

- An exaggerated and disproportionate number of learners from ethnic minorities were being admitted to special schools and programmes because of exclusionary and unfair identification and assessment procedures (Jenkinson, 1997; Wang et al., 1994: 154; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199). For example, in Europe and North America, Black, Asian and Latino-American learners were being over represented in special schools and programmes (Jenkinson, 1997; Wang et al., 1994: 154; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199).
- The presence of expert professionals in special education systems created a practice whereby regular classroom teachers could refer learners with SEN to these professionals without taking on the responsibility themselves (Ainscow, 1991: 294; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199).

Learners' rights were further enhanced in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959 (Engelbrecht, 1999: 24-25; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46; UN, 1959). The latter expressed that parents, primarily, were responsible for the education, supervision and guidance of their learners and for the learners' moral and social development. Their education should provide them with equal and full opportunities (Engelbrecht, 1999: 24-25; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1976 provided further indications on how the latter might be realized (UN, 1966, article 26). This covenant placed greater emphasis on education as a social right (Engelbrecht, 1999: 24-25; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46; UN, 1966, article 26). It set out guidelines for the development of a system of schools at all levels and the continual improvement of the material conditions for teaching staff (Engelbrecht, 1999: 24-25; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46). Equal rights to education were also included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that it was recognized that in general, every person was equal before the law and should be equally and fairly protected by it with regards to provision for education (Engelbrecht, 1999: 24-25; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46; UN, 1966, article 26).

During the latter part of the 20th century traditional models of separate education provision began to be widely questioned. There was criticism of special schooling on the grounds that it labelled people on the basis of a disability irrespective of a person's educational needs and abilities (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 47). In addition, provision of separate special education was increasingly criticized for reasons of its costliness as the number of children being identified as having SEN continued to grow (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 set the scene for significant international attention and action towards SEN integration and inclusion through the Least Restrictive Environment in 1975, the UK Warnock Report of 1978 and the subsequent 1981 Education Act (Department for Education and Skills (Dfes), 1978; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 147; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199).

The Warnock Report of 1978, in England, for instance attempted to frame special needs within the broader context of the school, family and community rather than simply in terms of individual deficits (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46). The latter attempted to construct a more rational framework for identifying and dealing with children failing in, or failed by, the mainstream school system. The report identified recognised that SEN arose from the context of the learners' experiences which included family life and the quality of schooling (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46). The report also identified the presence of a large number of learners in mainstream schools who were failing because their SEN were not being addressed. Because the report declared the legitimacy of the educational and socio-economic disadvantages experienced by young people, it led to significant improvement in their educational opportunities (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46).

Inclusive education as an ideology gained considerable international acceptance when the United Nations (UN) advocated and endorsed the Education for All (EFA) idea at the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, at the world conference in Thailand in 1990 (UN, 1989; Kuyini & Desai, 2007: 109; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 147; Armstrong, Armstrong

& Spandagou, 2010: 45). The latter was endorsed because of actions by the professional and political community at the EFA, Sundberg Declaration, that was adopted at the World Conference on Action and Strategies for Prevention, Education and Rehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities, held in Torremolinos, Spain in 1981 (UNESCO, 1981). The emphasis at the Torremolinos Conference was the call to abandon categories of disability and for it to be replaced by educational integration and the provision for learners with SEN to enter regular schooling within their local social settings as would be agreed on and enforced at local and national levels (UNESCO, 1981; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199). The latter was also encouraged in the United States of America, during the same period, where professional advocacy groups launched and promoted the Regular Education Initiative (REI) movement (Skrtic, 1991: 148-150; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199). The REI movement called for the emergence and advancement of a single education system in which learners with SEN and ordinary learners all attended the regular local school (Skrtic, 1991: 148-150; Kisanji, 1999:196-199). All special education teachers, resources and learners with SEN, they recommended, should also be integrated into the regular local school (Skrtic, 1991: 148-150; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199).

Another important contributor and accelerator of the universal movement to inclusive education was the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education of 1994 (Knochen & Radford, 2012: 147; UNESCO, 1994: 6; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010: 94; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Thomazet, 2009: 556). Representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations met in Salamanca, Spain. They advocated and endorsed the human rights conversation on EFA through social justice, by realising and accommodating full access to all children, young people, and adults, as learners, with their peers, within their regular or mainstream educational setting, despite their economic, physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or any other exclusionary conditions using adaptable and child-centered pedagogy to cater for the unique needs of each learner (Knochen & Radford, 2012: 147; UNESCO, 1994: 6-10; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010: 94; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Thomazet, 2009: 556; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 45).

In 1994, the Senegal World Convention was significant in that the international community's promise and undertaking to achieve education for all by 2015 was reaffirmed (UNESCO, 2006; Knochen & Radford, 2012:147). Years later the UN General Assembly accepted and approved the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was aimed at ensuring that governments should not exclude individuals with disabilities from the regular education system on the basis of their disability (UNESCO, 2006; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 147).

In April 2000, the aim of achieving equal worldwide education for all citizens of all countries by 2015 was adopted at the World Education forum in Dakar, Senegal (UNESCO, 2000; Smith-Davis, 2002: 77; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 46). The World Declaration of EFA led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), led to a platform where national education assessments were undertaken by 183 countries (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 45). The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All set out goals and targets to achieve the Education for All objectives namely to provide hope and power for educational transformation in education (UNESCO, 2000; Smith-Davis, 2002: 77; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 44-46). The following goals among others were formulated: goals were: remodeling and enhancing of full early childhood development and that every learner, by 2015, would have complete access to free and compulsory primary education of acceptable quality; ensuring that all learners had equitable, non-discriminatory access to schools and educational programmes; eliminating gender inequality and achieving equality in primary and secondary education; improving all aspects of quality education so that excellence of all instruction could be ensured through recognized and measurable outcomes (UNESCO, 2000; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010: 44-46).

To achieve these goals, all international stakeholders (governments and organisations) agreed and committed themselves to strong national and international assurance to attain

EFA. They undertook to: develop government adopted policies and action plans; “increase basic education investments; promote EFA policies and initiatives within a well-integrated educational framework; ensure participation of civil society in the formulation and monitoring of strategies for educational development; develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management; create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning, with clearly defined levels of achievement for all; enhance the status, morale and professionalism of teachers”; among others (UNESCO, 2000).

In May 2015, the EFA 2030, Incheon Declaration was adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, by 184 UNESCO member nations. The declaration aimed to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning for all and to set out new visions for education for the next fifteen years (UNESCO, 2015). The declaration was inspired by a “humanistic vision of education and development based on human rights and dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, shared responsibility and accountability” (UNESCO, 2015).

Aspects emphasised by the declaration are the reaffirmation that “education is a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights; the recognition that education is a key to achieving full employment and poverty eradicators; ensuring twelve years of free, public funded, equitable, quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory and that children have access to quality early childhood development, care and education; addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequities in access, participation and learning outcomes to have a transformative agenda of inclusion and equity; to make the necessary changes in education policies and focusing efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure no one is left behind; ensuring that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems”; among others (UNESCO, 2015).

Other main influential policy acts on more inclusive education in the international community are acts such as the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 and the Removing Barriers to Achievement Act of 2001 in the United Kingdom (UK) (Zigmond; Kloo & Volonied, 2009: 192; Boyle, Topping & Jindal-Snape, 2011: 169; DfES, 2004); the Children's Act of 1995 in Scotland (Zigmond; Kloo & Volonied, 2009: 192); the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice Act of 1994 (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010: 93) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act of 2001 (DfES, 2001) in England; the Individual with Disability Education Act of 1997 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in the United States of America; the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; the Special Education Law 573 of 1997 in Turkey; the Equal Opportunity Rehabilitation and Service White Paper of 1995, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance of 1996 and Inclusive Education Implementation Guide of 2000 in Hong Kong; the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 in Australia and the Framework for Action on Special Needs in Education in Botswana; among others (UNESCO, 1994: 6; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2012).

### 2.3.2 Legal framework regarding inclusive education in South Africa

The international policy guidelines provided a comprehensive framework for policy developments in inclusive education in South Africa (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). The pre-1994, apartheid era in South Africa, was not only characterized by discriminatory and categorized educational practices, by which learners were separated according to race (black, coloured, Indian and white), but also by learner selection according to disability. There were eighteen different fragmented education departments governed by different legislation. Social, political, economic and educational discrimination was rife (DoE, 2005; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18; Badat, 2009: 458; Badat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 310; Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 25; Engelbrecht, 2006: 122).

This state of affairs needed to be addressed in order to promote and guarantee equitable educational opportunities and practices in South Africa, which would be consistent with and corresponded to international trends (Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 13-14).

In 1994, the South African Federal Council on Disability (SAFCD) called for the development of a single, unitary, national education system with homogeneous standards in all nine provinces that ensured unlimited access to all learners in public schools, especially learners with SEN (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 310, Engelbrecht et al., 1999).

Inclusivity in a South African school setting is governed by government adopted policies in the form of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) of 1996, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) and the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6): Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive and Training System, to provide quality education for all of 2001 (DoE, 2002; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 6; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18).

The new political order constructed by the Constitution has transformed communities to inclusivity and promotes equality that is based on the Freedom Charter statements that “the doors to learning and culture shall be open to all”, “South Africa belongs to all” and “all South African groups shall have equal rights” (Badat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134; RSA, 1996; Makoelle, 2012: 93-97). The South African government and institutions are obliged by its constitution to provide basic education to its citizens as a basic right with the acceptance of “values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, the advancement of non-sexism, non-racialism, human rights and freedoms” and to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights” that the Bill of rights demonstrates and embodies (RSA, 1996; Badat, 2009: 458; Badat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134). The South African Constitution and Bill of Rights adhere to the notion of a rights culture for all South Africans, regardless of ‘race, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, disability, religion or language and embracing the democratic values of liberty, equality and human rights’ (RSA, 1996, section 29(1); Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006: 122; Sadat & Sayed, 2014: 132-134).

SASA is an important law governing public schools. Section 5(1) of SASA indicates that a public school should provide the educational requirements of all learners they accept and may not discriminate on any grounds. The latter refers to being denied access based

on grounds relating to race, language, financial suitability and disability (DoE, 2002; DoE, 2005; Makoelle, 2012: 96; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18). By law, education for all learners (between the ages of seven and fifteen) is compulsory (RSA, 1996, section 29(1); Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). By ensuring seven years of compulsory primary education and two years of compulsory secondary education, the right of every learner, especially learners with SEN, towards education is protected by the Constitution and SASA, by ensuring 7 years of compulsory primary education and 2 years of compulsory secondary education (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308).

With the introduction of compulsory education, problems regarding the provision of learning support for learners with SEN occurred. Support was required on a much bigger scale that was available in regular South African school classrooms (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). Problems arose due to a large number of school-age learners that were not in school (disaffected, dropouts or overaged learners) that still needed to be incorporated into and accommodated within the education system (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308; National Policy Investigation (NEPI), 1992; Donald, 1994). This resulted in teachers having to accommodate the educational needs of diverse learners with limited or no support (Lomofsky et al., 1998; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305-308).

New policy also allowed for the introduction of public schools governing bodies which granted greater autonomy in school governance and funding (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). For this reason, the principal, teachers, parents, learners and the community members who all form part of a SGB, have become the main stakeholders of a school (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). Section 23 (5) and section 30(2) of SASA states that the SGB of an ordinary public school must co-opt an expert individual assigned with the responsibility of representing the portfolio of learners with SEN as well as establishing a school based support team (SBST) focused on managing SEN on a day-to-day basis (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 26).

EWP6 was introduced in 2001 as a legislative and policy framework**,** towards the implementation of inclusive education in public schools (DoE, 2002; DoE, 2005; Makoelle,

2012: 96; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18)**.** The law dictated that schools were responsible to fulfil the right to equal access to educational opportunities and were expected to meet the diverse needs of all their accepted learners (Waghid & Engelbrecht, 2002: 22-23; Williams, 2000: 3).

The EWP6 of 2001 followed the Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) in 1997 (DNE, 1995: 2; Engelbrecht et al., 1999; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). These reports advised the Minister of Education on matters of urgent and long-term educational needs of and strategies of learners who experience SEN on a national and provincial level (DNE, 1995: 2; Engelbrecht et al., 1999; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308). The latter included all forms of educational spheres, support structures for the implementation of inclusion as a service, the training and development of human resources and the organization, governance and funding of schools providing education for learners with SEN, among others. The report emphasized the need for a paradigm shift, from a focus on learners with SEN to a systematic approach, with regards to learning barriers, in identifying and addressing barriers to learning (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308).

EWP6 of 2001 went further and acknowledged the failure of the education system to respond to the needs of a substantial number of children, not only those previously defined as having special needs (DoE, 2002; DoE, 2005; Makoelle, 2012: 97; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 19). The conclusion is in line with the principles of the Salamanca Statement and the reaffirmation of education as a fundamental right at the EFA, World Education Forum in 2000 (Sandkull, 2005: 7; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001: 305-308)

Given that most schools in South Africa are poorly resourced and need assistance in the procurement of goods and services (no-fee schools, quantile 1 to 3 schools and fee paying schools, quantile 4 and 5 schools). Professional developments in these schools are greatly hampered (Chrisholm, 2004: 212; Education Laws Amendment Act, 2005; Heystek et al., 2013: 176).

Despite a more equitable allocation of resources across South African schools, the school system is still hampered by a lack of institutional administrative capacity as well as suitably trained teachers, drawbacks that hinder the successful implementation of new educational policies (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000: 35-38).

## 2.4. Coaching as a form of support in a school environment

Just as sport coaches advise, train and mentor athletes, teachers in peer coaching situations advise, train and mentor one another (Garmston, 1987: 18). Good coaches believe that the individual always has the answer to his/her own problems but understand that a person needs help to find the answer (Aguilar, 2013). The skills teachers used in the past are not always adequate for meeting the needs of learners in a modern classroom (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 466; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12). All learners are equally important in an inclusive classroom, but learners who experience barriers to learning will make special demands on teachers regarding their development (Kaikkonen, 2010: 172).

It should be noted that teachers' initial training is not always effective in preparing them for inclusive instruction (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2013: 251). Current teacher training programmes in South Africa focus on how to accommodate diverse learners in a single classroom (Oswald & Swart, 2011: 392; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12). The diverse characteristics that the learner population brings to the classroom create a more challenging teaching environment (Swafford, 1998: 5; EWP6, 2001; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 6). These characteristics are the differences in socio-economic background, cultural credentials and history that these learners bring to their unique mainstream educational setting (Swafford, 1998: 54; EWP6, 2001; Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012: 6). Engelbrecht et al. (1999) report that many teachers feel that they do not receive the necessary training or support to accommodate many of the challenges that learners present in their classrooms. There is a need for teachers to become more conscious, knowledgeable and observant of efficient methods of instruction for these learners and for them to work collaboratively with others in order to support learning and teaching (Swafford, 1998: 54; Makoelle, 2012: 97).

What further complicates matters is the fact that the largest proportion of the South African teacher workforce is over fifty years of age (Armstrong, 2009; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12). Re-orientating teachers in new ways of educating learners after many years in the profession remains a significant challenge to inclusive practices.

According to Kaikkonen (2010: 172) teachers are focused mainly upon transferring knowledge and delivering subject content to a specific well-adjusted learner, despite teaching different groups of learners, with different abilities, in the same classroom. Schools and education departments increasingly demand an improvement in academic achievement of learners within the system, which increases the pressures put on teachers to ensure academic performance and leads to an even narrower focus on content-specific aspects, ultimately at the expense of many learners' individual educational needs (Kaikkonen, 2010: 172).

Teachers need to address these needs by routinely providing learning support on a continuous basis (Kaikkonen, 2010: 172). According to Engelbrecht et al. (1999: 156) teachers cannot accommodate all learners effectively without support. Therefore, peer support structures, which imply coaching, are essential as part of an effective professional development programme. Arrangements outside of the classroom are of the upmost importance if teachers are to be inclusive (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 156; Aguilar, 2013).

Peer support and collaboration are beneficial, although not fully utilised (Boyle et al., 2011: 172). If peer support is used efficiently, it can make up for the lack of inclusive training of teachers (Boyle et al., 2011: 172; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 14-15; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 223). Teachers are constantly in need of practical and efficient advice on how to handle difficult learners in all types of inclusion situations (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 157). It is suggested that if teachers are better qualified, they will have improved compassion with, understanding for and acknowledgement of learners' diversity, irrespective of their circumstances or characteristics (Opertti & Brady, 2011: 466). The quality of inclusive teaching will have positive effects on learning (OECD, 2005a; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 89).

School leaders, managers and governments have an important role to play in the development of teachers through creating and providing access to infrastructure and opportunities for formal and informal in-service training programmes (Lindqvist & Nilholm, 2013; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 14-15; Makoelle, 2012: 97; Goodman & Burton, 2010: 225; Garmston, 1987; Swafford, 1998: 55). Such programmes will create an environment where a climate and culture of professional development can exist in order to develop teachers' as well inclusive structures where schools, teachers, parents and learners can benefit equally.

Programmes that encourage teacher collaboration are considered an effective means of improving the quality of teaching (OECD, 2005b; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 89). A Hong Kong study of a professional learning approach for teachers by Forlin and Sin (2010: 14-15) supports the role of professional development of teachers through professional learning courses (PLC). A PLC is a course offered by a specialist in the relevant educational field of interest. Many teachers who are devoted to PLC join learning courses because they directly provide learning support within their schools.

Forlin and Sin (2010: 14-15) found at the start of a specific PLC, that only 40% of respondents had previous extensive experience with students with disabilities, while the majority had no prior background. After the PLC, findings suggested that teacher attitudes and perceptions towards the inclusion of different learners and their unique educational needs had generally changed significantly, but their impairment attitudes as well as mindset did not alter. However, unlike other research findings where male teachers recorded less tolerance for implementing inclusion (Ellins & Porter, 2005: 189) and lower levels of sympathy (Carroll et al., 2003: 71) male teachers within this study reported significantly more positive attitudes and sentiments towards inclusion with higher levels of self-efficacy than did female teachers (Forlin & Sin, 2010: 14-15). It was also found that teachers requested support from peers more frequently than from PLC lecturers and tutors, highlighting the value of peer support within and across grade groups and curriculum focus (Forlin & Sin, 2010: 14-15; Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180).

A South African study by Makoelle (2012: 98), about changing educator perceptions towards inclusion used a joint case study to help and to support teachers with implementing full inclusion. Before the action research (AR), analysed data indicated that teachers were hesitant to participate because they had no previous experience of research. Teachers taught in a way that they thought was inclusive, without experiencing a need to consult other teachers or to observe what others were doing (Makoelle, 2012: 98). There were no reflection practices as a staff collective and they preferred individualistic work (Makoelle, 2012: 98). Such a situation can result in inclusive classroom situations where trial and error strategies are implemented that, if not successful, lead to situations that create confusion, conflict and stress and that can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 157). After AR, acquired skills raised teacher confidence and it ensured sustained improvement of their practice (Makoelle, 2012: 98). Teachers learned to listen and share alternative ideas with their colleagues and successfully implement them in the classroom (Makoelle, 2012: 98; Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180). Teachers regarded observation of their colleagues as informative and were determined to create a formal and lasting grade and departmental group to carry on with the process of collaborating with and learning from one another (Makoelle, 2012: 98).

A study on promoting staff support in schools by Brown and Henderson (2012: 180) and a related study on the effect of team-initiated problem solving on decision-making by Tod et al. (2011: 44-46) identify the strengths of teacher support structures within and across grade groups to help teachers with the implementation of inclusion. They argued that teachers collaborating in teams are much more efficient and can accomplish more through problem-solving and decision-making opportunities than by individual efforts (Engelbrecht et al., 1999, 157; Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180; Tod et al., 2011: 46-48).

A team can be described as individuals who have particular expertise and are responsible for making separate decisions (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 158-159). These individuals hold a common vision and meet regularly to communicate, collaborate and consolidate knowledge, from which plans are made, actions determined and future decisions

influenced (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 158-159). Collective teacher experience, knowledge, skills, language and vision contributed to the improvement of the main performance of the school and the outcomes for learners (Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180; Tod et al., 2011: 46-48). Cooperation as a group results in a formal, supportive approach where teachers can talk and listen and it raises awareness of the difficulties their colleagues are facing. It creates a platform where ideas, advice and practical solutions are raised, considered, explored and trialed, among others (Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180). A collaborative team can create a positive and caring educational environment (Campher, 1997; Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 158-159).

Weaknesses and limitations to conducting peer support sessions are also reported. Time constraints (being forced to meet) are limiting, not everybody involved (only a small number of teachers within the school were involved in the study), there is the possibility of dissent from which conflict arises and the fear of exposure that could put working relationships at risk and might lead to ridicule when certain issues are raised (Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180; Tod et al., 2011: 46-48; Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010: 95).

A study on teacher experiences and recommendations on inclusion by Goodman and Burton (2010: 180) reports that schools in England implemented peer-programmes to encourage observation of teachers. Teachers must trust one another and share their practices (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010: 95). Teachers, who observe each other, experience hands-on what their colleagues are doing in class and discuss their findings with colleagues through reflections (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010: 95). These collaborative conversations form a constructive and integral part of improving teaching and student learning, and building professional knowledge (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010: 95). Making teaching practice available for others to examine and discuss can improve teaching and learning by building an individual's professional knowledge (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010: 95). Positive experiences of peer programmes were reported. However, insufficient time available for observation was an obstacle and

the programme was viewed to only be beneficial if teachers saw the method as worthwhile (Goodman & Burton, 2010: 181).

A study by Garmston (1987: 18-19), Swafford (1998: 54-55), Huston and Weaver (2007: 7-10) on how school leaders and managers can improve peer support, through the use of peer coaching models, supports the findings mentioned above. They argue that limited learning opportunities are available to teachers working with others and that the situation is being challenged by many school leaders and teachers (Garmston, 1987: 18-19; Swafford, 1998: 54-55). Teacher staff development programmes (SDP) should be designed so that school management and teachers can set mutual objectives and in-service training be developed to support teachers within and across grade and departmental groups (Garmston, 1987: 18-19; Swafford, 1998: 54-55).

A meta-analysis of studies that examines the outcomes of SDP's acknowledges that peer coaching is more efficient in transferring training to individuals than all other training components (e.g. information, theory, demonstration, practice and feedback) combined (Gingiss, 1993: 82-88; Showers et al., 1987: 43-48; Garmston, 1987: 18; Swafford, 1998: 54).

### 2.5. The influence of peer teacher support on school culture

School culture has a whole school influence and refers to how teachers work, in this instance, in an inclusive environment (Boyle et al., 2011: 170-171). Teacher inclusive conduct is acknowledged as being the most significant factor for the success of inclusive education (Forlin & Lian, 2008; Forlin & Chambers, 2011: 18-20). It does not matter how good an inclusion policy is, if staff members are not involved, do not support inclusion or are not supported by management, there must be a question about how successful that policy can be (Boyle, Topping & Jindal-Snape, 2013: 532; Castello & Boyle, 2013: 130). According to Boyle et al. (2011: 170-171), teachers are the stakeholders who solely dominate the implementation of formal policies, because they are the ones serving learners with SEN in their classrooms (Rakap & Kaczmaker, 2010: 63). Even though this is true, Opperti and Brady (2011: 462) and Forlin and Chambers (2011: 18-20) state that

teachers should realise that they are not solely responsible or accountable for inclusion implementation and that they are also dependent on other stakeholders in the process of responding to the needs of all learners. Even if the management team of a school is not fully supportive of inclusion, Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013: 532) found that teachers can still hold positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Both principals and teachers have the ability to challenge or support inclusion (Ainscow, 2002; Donohue and Bornman, 2014: 12). Principals, deputy principals' and heads of departments (HODs), as members of the SMT and school-based support team (SBST), are in a position of power and trust (Irvine et al., 2010: 74-76). Therefore, they are ideally placed to create an inclusive culture, to involve teaching staff in implementing inclusion policy, to be visible, active and vocal in campaigning for inclusive practices, to promote and sustain teachers' professional development. They should ensure that teachers have access to adequate materials and support staff to develop optimally (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2001: 44; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 141; Irvine et al., 2010: 74-76; Boyle, Topping & Jindal-Snape, 2013: 532).

Knochen and Radford (2012: 141) and Lim, Wong & Tan (2014: 126-127) indicated that principals need to acknowledge and evaluate aspects and approaches such as a need for more qualified teachers and effective training for inclusive instruction, to monitor teacher implementation of inclusive practices on a daily basis; to identify the types of disabilities that mainstream schools can accommodate; to establish relationships between learners with and their peers without disabilities; to gain acceptance from the parents of non-disabled learners for their learners being educated alongside of learner with disabilities; they need to have efficient administrative processes in place that identify and refer learners with SEN and have a SEN support team to manage the progress of individual learners; among others.

School culture is the ethos of a school as reflected by shared norms, symbols and traditions (Mitchell & Willower, 1992: 7-9; Heystek et al., 2012: 174). Inclusive schooling requires an understanding and acknowledgement of respect for cultural, local and individual diversity among different groups of a given society and culture (Opperti &

Brady, 2011: 463). Without such an agreement, should the school community express prejudice, disrespect and discrimination towards learners with SEN, exclusionary practices would continue to increase (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 463; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12). An inclusive school culture will develop a meaningful mutual relationship where parents and their inclusive learners can collaborate with teachers to ensure quality decision-making, support and accountability (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 463; Halinen & Järvinen, 2012). The latter promotes reform, where each stakeholder commits, plans and provides support that promotes and maintains change (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000; Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006: 123-125).

A welcoming and effective inclusive environment can be created if all staff is involved. According to Rakap & Kaczmaker (2010: 63), the least and most experienced teachers will have slightly more positive attitudes towards inclusion. The latter can be ascribed to novice teachers, just graduating from university, having some knowledge of special education, while older teachers will have more experience with inclusivity (Rakap & Kaczmaker, 2010: 63). Novice teachers can add modernity and innovation to the staff milieu and culture and influence mature and accomplished teachers to change and customise their instruction (Boyle et al., 2011: 170-171). No mention is made of new teachers being seen as a threat to more established teachers. Mature teachers welcomed the ideas and innovation that newly appointed staff provided within classroom settings (Boyle et al., 2011: 170-171).

Having the courage and ease to request support from colleagues, formally or informally, is an important factor for inclusion (Boyle et al., 2011: 170-171; Brown & Henderson, 2012: 180). What other colleagues are doing within departments and classes (despite experience and curriculum focus) can provide an excellent learning experience for teacher inclusion and act as a source of confidence (Boyle et al., 2011: 170-171; Goodman & Burton, 2010: 224).

Goodman and Burton (2010: 224) report teamwork should be encouraged where two teachers co-teach a class of learners. This will benefit inexperienced teachers as one

teacher leads the class, another circulates, allowing time to work closely with learners who need extra support (Goodman & Burton, 2010: 224). A local study conducted by Nel et al. (2014: 906-910) supports teamwork in a classroom as an efficient formal and informal strategy for the provision of support.

In contrast, a negative atmosphere towards inclusion can also arise. For instance, teachers starting their career and who are at a crucial stage of professional development, may find it difficult to ignore levels of negativity from staff towards inclusion (Nel et al., 2014: 906-910). This is a career development stage where the new teacher needs positive role models in order to form a perception of inclusive education that can help form a positive outlook regarding learners with SEN (Nel et al., 2014: 906-910). According to Boyle, Topping & Jindal-Snape (2013: 532) teachers become less inclusive after their formal probation period is over and this is also true towards the middle part of their career. They suggest that intervention is required in the form of support through professional development opportunities so as to prevent teaching staff from leaving the profession. The high turnover rate of teachers, new appointments and the training of novice teachers create a big challenge with regards to the prevailing culture of successful inclusion (Boyle, Topping & Jindal-Snape, 2013: 532).

Schools should become places where teachers, parents and their learners with SEN and parents and their learners without SEN, are constructively included and engaged in activities to create a context of collaborative problem-solving, in order to become more successful at understanding, implementing and supporting inclusion practices in classrooms (Ainscow, 1991: 35; Miles, 2000; Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010: 63). The latter can be seen as an opportunity for the whole school to learn and to develop, and so become more effective (Miles, 2000).

If parents and their inclusive learners are not treated as equal partners by the school, with regards to individual educational development, collaborative relationships can be hampered, which places a strain on teachers in their effort to include learners with SEN (Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013: 18). According to Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey (2010: 106-107) every learner in every classroom has a voice that should be heard by every

adult working at an inclusive school. They believe that learners and parents of learners with SEN are in the best position to give an authentic voice to who they are, what they value and believe and to raise their concerns (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey 2010: 106-107). Their engagement will enable teachers to expand their understanding of family structures and actions that will contribute valuable insights into the situation of a specific learner with SEN that might otherwise not have been available. This will lead to a situation where principals and teachers can use this knowledge to support school decisions about teaching and learning environments that support the unique challenges and interests of a parents' learner (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010: 106-107).

## 2.6. Developing pedagogy

An inclusive curriculum is defined as core curricula content, settings and actions that can be identified as a refined, adjustable and applicable commitment between the government, society and teachers that considers, reflects and enhances an increased understanding of learner diversity and ensures the right to lifelong learning opportunities for all learners of the school (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 463; Blanco, 2009; UNESCO IBE, 2008). Makoelle (2012: 94) states that South Africa is composed of learners of different races, ethnic groups, eleven official languages and learners from different political, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers need to engage and orientate all learners about inclusive differences that are a reality in the school and classroom setup to ensure that learners are knowledgeable about diversity and learn to respect and tolerate one another (Makoelle, 2012: 94). Teachers and learners are the greatest resources available for promoting inclusive practices (Miles, 2000). Teachers should be actively observant in protecting their learners from being teased and bullied (Williams, 2000: 3) and should execute their function as translators and ambassadors of inclusion (Segall & Campbell, 2012: 1158). It is critical that teachers, as important and active inclusion stakeholders, are recognized, engaged and empowered as co-developers of inclusive curricula to develop a sense of value and ownership of their own practice, their colleagues practice and their own learners' progress (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 463; OECD, 2005; Segall & Campbell, 2012: 1158). Therefore, teachers should be knowledgeable about their inclusive learner and the various teaching practice options and strategies

available that will facilitate inclusion for the individual student to make learning more manageable (Dahle, 2003: 66; Fisher, Frey & Thousand, 2003: 44; Segall & Campbell, 2012: 1158).

Makoelle (2012: 94) asks whether the teachers of South Africa are in a position to make such changes in their beliefs about pedagogic practices, due to the kind of training they received and the kind of special education that seems to have influenced their thinking about inclusive education.

Forlin and Sin (2010: 14) and Ylonen & Norwich (2012: 308) recommend that an engagement of a learner-centered approach to learning and teaching should be attained by all teachers, to develop and adjust learner educational programs, through learning support, to include all learners and all types of assessment outcomes. Through the use of a learner-centered approach to learning by teachers, learners are increasingly given ownership of their own learning and provided with time to reflect on their own experiences (Ylonen & Norwich, 2012: 308).

Research indicates that teachers are able to develop a more flexible and relevant range of objectives and methods (shifting focus from the teacher and teaching to the learners and their learning), media (video and audio materials like video clips, film, music, visual prompts like instructions cards, task sheets, displays and other visual materials which includes interactive whiteboards, PowerPoint presentations and the internet), activities and assessment (by repetition and recapping, using and producing visual aids to show what has been learned, teacher questioning and using self or peer assessment, using specific techniques to inspire and motivate the learners which could take the form of verbal feedback, continuous reinforcement and by using concrete rewards like stickers, certificates, praising and encouraging the pupils) (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 463; Makoelle, 2012: 93-97). These might include cooperative teaching and learning, collaborative problem solving, mixed-ability groups (team work), and individual education plans developed in line with the rest of the curriculum, along with cognitive instruction, self-regulated and memory learning, multi-level teaching, competency-based approaches,

and interactive, digital teaching tools (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 463; Makoelle, 2012: 93-97).

## 2.7. The role of professionals with peer coaching

Teachers predominantly use strategies to immediately refer identified students with educational boundaries to expert professionals (Nel at al., 2014: 906-910). Teachers are not addressing problems themselves, because they lack training, experience and confidence. This leads to a situation where they are unable or unwilling to provide inclusive intervention (Nel et al., 2014: 906-910). Bornman and Rose (2010: 7) and Donohue and Bornman (2014: 12-13) state that South African schools lack support and resources to successfully implement and maintain inclusive practices due to the existing negative attitudes of principals and teachers towards general disability.

A teacher's specialist expertise lies in promoting the learning and development of the learners in their care (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 128-130). It may seem at times as if they are being expected to take on the additional roles of parent, nurse, social worker, occupational therapist and psychologist, among others (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 128-130). Many expert professionals can offer useful insights and practical suggestions to teachers, but teachers themselves have the responsibility of ensuring that learning and development do take place (Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 128-130).

Partnerships between teachers and inclusion professionals should be formed, especially at district levels where teachers can be supported and their attitudes towards inclusion can become more positive (Nel et al., 2014: 906-910; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 310; Nel, Muller & Rheeders, 2001: 49; Donohue and Bornman, 2014: 12-13). This is the level at which teachers will have access to support personnel (for example psychologists, special educational needs specialists, curriculum and management experts, medical practitioners, occupational therapists, speech/language therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, university academics and researchers, administrative specialists and community role players, among others) (DoE 2005; Johnson & Green, 2007: 162; Nel at al., 2014: 906-910; Goodman & Burton, 2010: 224; Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010:

101). Principals should also encourage staff members with specific inclusive instructional problems or needs to attend appropriate departmental courses that are presented at various centres for educators (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2013: 252-253).

Collaborative partnerships with teachers are important to create the most appropriate and effective inclusive environment for learners (Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222). The importance of school psychologists (SP), special educators' need coordinators (SENCO) and para-professionals called allied educators (learning and behaviour) in providing valuable support and in-service training to teachers is recognised because these professionals hold higher levels of training, knowledge and experience of learners with SEN compared to general school management members and classroom teachers (Boyle et al., 2011: 170; Williams, Johnson & Sukhodolsky, 2005: 120; Segall & Campbell, 2012: 1158; Lim, Wong & Tang, 2014: 126-130).

Education leaders believe that a teacher's lack of experience should be supplemented and complimented by the role of special educators' need coordinators and para-professionals (Lindqvist & Nilholm, 2013: Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 222; Lim, Wong & Tan, 2014: 126-130). Special educators' needs coordinators and para-professionals are educated to teach learners in need of specialised support as well as to supervise teaching staff, do documentation of assessments, complete evaluations, provide case management and help further the school's inclusive developments (Linqvist & Nilholm, 2013; Lim, Wong & Tan, 2014: 126-130). However, teachers have expressed dissatisfaction with the help of psychologists and special educators' need coordinators. Teacher concerns include insufficient emotional and psychological support and a lack of availability of specialised staff due to demanding workloads (Goodman & Burton, 2010: 224).

## 2.8 Conceptual framework

### 2.8.1 Introduction

This study will be based on support through peer coaching by using a peer support coaching model (developed by Joyce and Showers, 1985) to support and develop

teachers to successfully implement and maintain inclusion strategies with the support of their peers.

### 2.8.2 Definition of peer support coaching

Peer support coaching can be defined as teaching groups (teachers of similar or more experience and training) that are voluntarily formed to cooperate and support one another in a non-evaluative way, to improve or expand their approaches to teaching and help them to learn (Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1996: 54; Huston & Weaver, 2007: 10; Waddell & Dunn, 2005: 87; Topping, 2005: 632; Aguilar, 2013; Ladyshewsky, 2010: 80; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 89). Ladyshewsky (2010: 80) and Joyce and Showers (1982) state that peer coaching was originally developed as a strategy to support the development of teachers, who often work in isolation in the classroom through increasing self-awareness and personal responsibility and by fostering informed decision-making. Peer coaching is not intended as a remedial activity or strategy to fix teachers and the coach (expert) does not act as an "expert", but rather as a facilitator of learning (Robbins, 1991, Aguilar, 2013). These coaching groups determine collectively what learner needs are, express and devise teacher training and development to meet those needs, and evaluate the impact of classroom practices (Joyce & Showers, 1996: 12-16; Swafford, 1998:54; Huston & Weaver, 2007: 10-13; Ladyshewsky, 2010: 80; Topping, 2010: 440). Coaches should ask probing questions so that groups can find the best solutions together. According to Robbins (1991), we need to build bridges across classrooms and restructure our schools in ways that capitalise on learner and teacher talent that exists in individual classrooms.

Peer support coaching is a planned and systematic process through which two or more professional colleagues work together, within and across grade and departmental groups, to reflect upon current practices, expand, refine, build new skills, share ideas, conduct action research, teach one another, solve problems, provide feedback, and evaluate results, all within the classroom and based on mutual trust and shared commitment (Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998:54; Huston & Weaver, 2007: 10-13; Ladyshewsky, 2010: 80). Such support can lead to enhanced student and teacher performance and efficacy,

dedicated, energised teachers and a stimulated workforce (Robbins, 1991; Huston & Weaver, 2007: 10-13). Aguilar (2013) advocated that coaching can build will, skill, knowledge, and capacity because it can go where no other professional development has gone before: into the intellect, behaviours, practices, beliefs, values, and feelings of an educator.

The reason for the selection of a peer support coaching model as a conceptual framework is because research, nationally and internationally, indicates that teachers struggle to implement inclusion practices. This hurdle is caused by a lack of formal and informal training and support provided, as well as by limited teaching experience with regards to the required knowledge of legislation and of pedagogical challenges faced by teachers in scarce and highly resourced environments which results in low confidence and negative attitudes toward inclusion, among others (Boyle et al., 2011: 170 ; Linqvist & Nilholm, 2013; Forlin & Sin, 2010; Operrti & Brady, 2011; Makoele, 2012 93-97, Dalton et al., 2012; Nel et al., 2014: 906; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 221).

Limited learning opportunities are available to teachers working with others and this situation is being challenged by many school leaders and teachers (Garmston, 1987: 18; Swafford, 1998: 54). We have to move away from the traditional mindset where teachers attend workshops or tertiary training where new knowledge is shared and attained, but which result in little change and minimal transference of learning to practice (Nel et al., 2014: 906-910). Approaches to develop staff through staff develop programs (SDP) where peer support is the form of coaching as the main element should be pursued (Showers et al., 1987; 78; Costa & Garmston, 1994; Swafford, 1998: 54). Therefore, it is very important to create a platform where teachers can be supported and developed to successfully implement and maintain inclusive practices within a mainstream setting. With the use of peer support coaching models, the implementation of learning that is inclusive can be successfully achieved by teachers getting involved with not only their own but also other teachers' teaching practice.

Professional development and learning that takes place in its natural context (classrooms) promotes, instills and creates collaborative learning through the creation of professional networks and has greater implementation outcomes than traditional methods of acquiring skills that occur outside of the day-to-day context (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15; Dunlap et al., 2000: 428-430; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Garet et al., 2001: 917).

Peer coaching accommodate out-of-class and in-class movements. Out-of-class movements of peer coaching comprise co-planning, study groups, problem solving, and curriculum development (Swafford, 1998: 54). Activities in-class mainly concerns teachers observing another's instruction. Pre observation meetings create the platform for observation and teachers asking for help and support to express the aim of observation (Swafford, 1998: 54). Post observation meetings accommodate the platform where teachers and coaches can debate, evaluate and reflect on teaching practices within classrooms (Garmston, 1987: 18; Swafford, 1998: 54).

### 2.8.3 Peer support coaching model

In peer coaching, the focus is on the teacher as learner (Robbins, 1991). Whitmore (2009: 8) maintains that the essence of coaching is to unlock teachers' potential in order to maximise their performance. A coach is the one who works with teachers to improve support in the implementation of their duties as teachers by providing direction and guidance in accomplishing goals (Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009: 158). Peer support coaching models include technical coaching, collegial coaching and challenge coaching (Garmston, 1987: 18; Robbins, 1991).

#### 2.8.3.1 Technical coaching

Technical coaching usually takes place after staff development workshops (SDW) in specific teaching methods. The model pairs consultants with teachers or teachers with one another (Garmston, 1987:18; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). Teachers who receive technical coaching will practise and apply newly learned strategies properly in the classroom and develop even greater skill by receiving non-evaluative feedback to build

on their competencies (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81). Coaches will advise teachers as learners about these new strategies and demonstrate them for longer periods of time (Showers, 1985: 46; Garmston, 1987:18-19; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15).

After staff development workshops, consultants or teachers will observe and assess the teacher classroom practice in which a new strategy is applied. Clinical assessment forms are to be used to report on specific behaviours and the quality of thoroughness and awareness with which these strategies are performed (Garmston, 1987:18). The observer has an evaluative function through this model and provides a platform to encourage and give recommendations that the teacher can improve on.

Therefore, this model supports teachers in transferring training to classroom practice while expanding collegiality, increasing professional dialogue and providing teachers with a shared vocabulary by which to communicate about their practice (Garmston, 1987: 18). Evaluation must not be the focus of the peer coaching relationship otherwise a status difference and power relationship emerges between peers or teachers and expert professionals as coaches (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81). Objective feedback should be given in a non-threatening and supportive climate that can improve teaching performance (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81). If the peer coach starts to engage in evaluation or confrontational coaching by telling the teacher what they are doing wrong, the coach begins to take the role of an evaluator (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81).

With the use of a fairly complex teaching strategy, it can take up 20-30 hours of instruction, 15-20 hours of demonstrations, using these strategies with different learners and subjects as well as an additional 10-15 coaching sessions to attain higher level skills (Shalaway, 1985: 6; Garmston, 1987: 19). This has a negative effect on consultation time and will cause teachers to be out of class for longer periods (Garmston, 1987: 19).

#### 2.8.3.2 Collegial coaching

Collegial coaching is operated by pairs of teachers, where the coaching focus is determined by an area the observed teacher wishes to learn more about (priority) and not

by an instructional method attained from a staff development workshop (Garmston, 1987: 20; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15).

The peer coach will gather routine information about the teacher's priorities, evidence of student learning and the teacher's instructional decisions and behaviour by observation in class (Garmston, 1987: 20). The coach then helps the observed teacher to also self-evaluate and interpret the findings so that the teacher will be determined to make purposeful changes to future instruction affecting student learning (Garmston, 1987: 20). The latter refers to the identification of the problem, identifying and prioritizing goals, developing an action plan and evaluating outcomes to enable teachers themselves to implement the plan (Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009: 158).

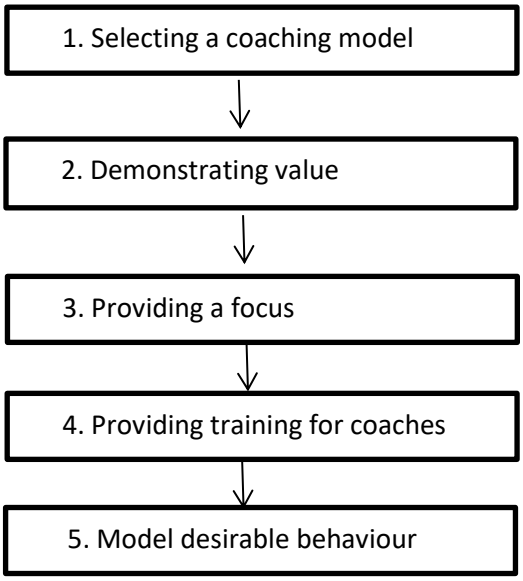
Therefore, this model supports teachers in refining teaching practices, deepening collegiality, increasing professional dialogue and in helping teachers to think more deeply about their work. It accepts that teachers will have a need for self-reflection about their teaching should they have the opportunity to develop and practice these skills (Garmston, 1987: 20; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). The long-term benefit of this model is self-coaching for continuous self-maintained improvements in teaching.

The school management team can use this model as an efficient starting point from which to affect school culture (Garmston, 1987: 21; Opperti & Brady, 2011: 643; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 12-13). It creates open professional dialogue and helps teachers feel competent and influential (Opperti & Brady, 2011: 643). The result will be that teachers that are more willing to experiment will be collegial, experimental, supportive and have honest and open communication lines (Saphier & King, 1985: 60-70; Garmston, 1987: 21). When teachers' professional dialogue increases, the school system itself becomes capable of change (Saphier and King, 1985: 60-70; Garmston, 1987: 21).

### 2.8.3.3 Challenge coaching

Challenge coaching usually takes place in small groups where teachers find solutions to continual problems that they face with classroom instructional methods and delivery (Garmston, 1987: 21). This model often evolves from the other coaching approaches and assumes that the teachers responsible for classroom instruction are the best suited to produce insightful and practical improvements to solving problems collectively (Garmston, 1987: 21). The group (learning community) identifies a continual problem and challenges it to attain a desired goal through planning and conducting action research (Garmston, 1987: 21; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). Unlike technical and collegial practices, non-teaching professionals are sometimes included in challenge teams for their special perceptions, expertise or potential role in a solution (Garmston, 1987:21).

The following diagram (Garmston, 1987) will be used to demonstrate how a school management team (SMT) in collaboration with teachers can successfully develop and maintain peer coaching in schools.




Firstly, when selecting a peer support coaching model, the SMT and teachers must identify and establish achievable outcomes and resources that they are willing to commit to (Garmston, 1987: 21; Showers, 1985: 46). Technical coaching is quite efficient for transferring teacher training to classroom practice, but it has a negative effect on

consultation time and trainer cost as well as leads to teachers being out of class for longer periods (Garmston, 1987:21; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). Collegial coaching is most efficient at promoting self-initiating, individual teacher input and at improving school culture, but trainer coaches are expensive (Garmston, 1987: 21; Showers, 1985: 46; Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81). Challenge coaching provides the best solution to instructional problems, but usually requires experience with one of the previous models (Garmston, 1987: 21). It is usually done with small groups who have experience with the other models and have high interpersonal and problem-solving skills (Garmston, 1987:21; Showers, 1985: 46). This last coaching model does not include the entire teaching staff.

Secondly, the SMT should indicate that they value peer coaching by providing resources, restructuring coaching teams, acknowledging coaching practices and devoting staff meetings to coaching topics (Garmston, 1987:22). Coaches (independent expert professionals or expert teachers) will only succeed with the approval and active support of the school principal, displayed through actions such as individual and group meetings with the coach, connecting coaches with the teaching staff and ensuring that information is shared with the coach (Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). Having gained permission and therefore access for the purpose of coaching teachers still does not necessarily mean that each teacher will allow (or accept) a coach in his or her classroom (Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). This can be alleviated when a principal communicates the importance of the coaching process to teaching staff by explaining the purpose and role of the coach's visit (Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15).

Thirdly, peer coaching needs to be supported by the SMT by the provision of a structured focus for data gathering and feedback and by ensuring that coaching can take place on a regular, scheduled basis (Garmston, 1987:24). If this process is to be successful, teachers need to take ownership of the situation so that teacher satisfaction can be attained. For this reason, it is very important to include all teachers in establishing peer coaching (Berman & Mclauglin, 1975; Lieberman & Miller, 1981: 53; Garmston, 1987:24).

Fourthly, providing limited and quick training for coaches is not sufficient to ensure successful peer coaching (Garmston, 1987: 25). The best available information about adult learning (providing teachers with theory, information and demonstrations, addressing teachers' concerns about giving and receiving feedback and helping teachers develop and refine specific coaching skills) is very important for good training and coaching practices (Garmston, 1987: 26). It is very important for teachers to attend follow-up workshops that can help monitor and refine coaching practices and solve problems that tend to arise (Garmston, 1987: 26).

Lastly, it is important for SMT members to display their willingness to also be observed and to receive feedback (Garmston, 1987: 26). This will convey an important message to teachers and show that they value and respect the coaching process and are willing to risk their own vulnerability as they also learn (Garmston, 1987: 26).

What teachers do to interact with one another on a regular basis (formal or informal) in the form of observations, peer meetings or programmes that include the help of qualified practitioners such as psychologists, special education needs specialists, curriculum and management specialists, is important as this can provide an excellent learning experience. These models can be very helpful to teachers who struggle with inclusion within their classrooms by improving their skillset at inclusion and aiding them in successfully application in their day-day instruction (DoE, 2005; Nel et al., 2014: 906; Goodman & Burton, 2010: 224).

## 2.9. Conclusion

The main aim of chapter 2 is to provide an introduction to inclusive education and a discussion of the phenomena from national and international perspectives. Literature pertinent to the study with regards to coaching as a form of support in a school environment, the influence of peer teacher support on school culture, developing pedagogy and the role of professionals in peer coaching is discussed. Lastly, the focus is on a conceptual framework that is based on a peer support coaching model.

The focus of this research is to explore how teachers experience peer support and coaching from one another, within their specific contexts, at including learning for all. It will also be beneficial to determine their attitudes, legislative knowledge and pedagogical issues so that a holistic picture can be obtained. Teachers need to realise their individual as well as their institutional and curricula strengths and weaknesses, especially within a grade-group setting, in order to successfully implement and maintain inclusion with the support of their peers.

# Chapter 3
# Research design and methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will focus on the research design and methodological approach of the study based on an interpretive, qualitative case study through ontological and epistemological propositions. The researcher will therefore focus on the most relevant research methods to assign meaning to teachers' experiences of peer support and coaching and also make interpretations as needed of their realities as concerns the implementation and maintenance of inclusivity in their contexts. To strengthen the reliability and validity of the study, the process of the sample selection is broken down, the manner in which data was collected, coded and analysed and the way that ethical considerations were ensured through informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, is scrutinized.

## 3.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach proved the most valuable approach to use in this study because of the nature of the research questions, the type of data that the researcher aimed to gather and the strengths of the different research methods that ware used to gain new insights of the phenomenon at hand (Neuman, 2012: 89). A proposition to conduct a qualitative study was made, because of a desire to gain a better understanding of the peer support and coaching context within which teachers find themselves (Maree et al., 2013: 51; Delmont & Jones, 2012: 185).

An explanation of certain social, cultural and didactic phenomena is given where behavioural patterns, noted in peer observation, in providing formal and informal support (written or verbal), in confidence levels, knowledge, planning and application of legal and pedagogical issues, in perceptions towards in-service training and peer coaching, among others, observed in their natural setting, are taken into account (Maree et al., 2013: 51; Boyle et al., 2011: 171; Dalton et al., 2012: 6; Forlin & Sin, 2010: 14-15).

This study (design and conceptual framework), therefore makes use of the interpretivist paradigm, where the researcher focuses on the significance of real teacher experiences and interpretations of their school context through an ongoing and cyclical research approach. The latter refers to data collection, processing, analysis and reporting that are intertwined and not merely a number of successive steps that are followed to collect new data, construct meaning and gain new insights (Maree et al., 2013: 99-100; Neuman, 2012: 89). Therefore, in qualitative research, it is very important to remember that multiple perspectives can be held by different individuals and that there isn't just a single, ultimate truth or reality to be discovered (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1998: 197-200; Leedy & Omrod, 2013: 139). According to Creswell (2007) and Leedy and Omrod (2013: 139) multiple perspectives and realities of individuals can potentially have equal validity and truth and can differ across time and place (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1998: 197-200; Leedy & Omrod, 2013: 139; Maree et al., 2013: 59). The purpose of this research is to explore how teachers experience peer support and coaching from one another in an attempt to implement and maintain inclusive practices, within a fee-paying, mainstream secondary school in a specific grade group setting, to include learning for all.

### 3.3 Research paradigm

This study uses the interpretivist paradigm. This means that the focus is on interpreting participants' experiences of inclusive support and coaching within the realities of their school context (Maree et al., 2013: 21).

Qualitative interpretivist researchers believe that individuals' qualitative life experiences, especially their social experiences will differ from phenomena or circumstances of the familiar natural world (Neuman, 2012: 48). This is in strong contrast to the quantitative positivist researchers' view where they see no significant distinction between the social and natural scientific world and where only observable and hard facts can be the basis for scientific research (Maree et al., 2013: 21). According to Maree et al. (2013: 59) quantitative facts do not speak for themselves and a description will advance deeper understanding. Therefore, we can only understand social experiences that are unique

and important to the social life and conscious human interaction of individuals or groups of individuals through social sciences (Neuman, 2012: 48).

Social science depends on what individuals think, believe and perceive of their subjective reality and not only the objective and material facts of reality (Neuman, 2012: 48). Interpretivist researchers have aspirations to internalise the research participants' inner-most world view, through an ideographic approach, by “standing in their shoes” and accurately representing a detailed description of findings of how and why they see, feel and act in the way that they do with regards to social settings, processes, or type of relationships (Neuman, 2013: 49).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002: 13) research is about understanding the world and as a researcher, his understanding is informed by his own view or reality, by what he believes and how he views understanding to be (Maree et al., 2013: 31). A paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs, that acts as a lens, about what reality is (ontology), the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge that is described through the phenomena (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies (Maree et al., 2013: 54-55). Peer support and coaching structures with regards to inclusivity are created by teachers, school management teams and governing bodies within their unique school environment, according to legislation and community perceptions and needs, through the ontological approach.

As a researcher and a teacher, one is well aware of the realities in education that teachers are facing with regards to inclusivity in a national and international setting by one’s own work experience, research read and conducted, and legislation studied. Although, the exact same legislation, rules and guidelines are binding for each school concerning inclusion and the implementation thereof, each school structures and experiences support and coaching differently. Therefore, through the epistemological approach, the researcher has found, in his own professional and work experience that teachers come from similar and different racial and cultural groups, have different personality types, training and confidence levels, teach learners from different social-economic

backgrounds, among others, and will therefore interpret their situation differently. Within the specific case study, teachers from the same school environment, provided differing responses about their realities as related to support, coaching and inclusive implementation. Teachers will follow inclusive instructions and implement them if they are taken up in school policy structures, enforced, monitored and supported by management. The stories, experiences and voices of the participants create the medium through which the researcher explores and understands their reality in terms of support, coaching and inclusion (Maree et al., 2012: 55).

Through the methodological approach, responses were provided through social interaction in the form of focus group and individual semi-structured interviews, as well as the researcher's interpretation of documents. Focus group interviews were beneficial in broadening the range of teacher responses, activating forgotten details of experiences and clearing obstacles that may otherwise have discouraged teachers from revealing information on peer support and coaching (Maree et al., 2013: 91). Individual interviews were conducted to add to the validity of findings (Maree et al., 2013: 91). The interview questions were formed and asked by the researcher to explore teachers' experiences as pertain to peer support and coaching within their mainstream, inclusive school environment. The findings of the study cannot be generalised, but can provide a holistic picture of the specific teachers' and schools' reality.

### 3.4 Qualitative research design

The researcher used an explanatory case study. Explanatory research identifies the sources of social behaviours, beliefs, conditions, and events and provides reasons by asking "how" and "why" questions to explain situations (Neuman, 2012: 17-18).

A case study is a complete and ordered analysis into an event or a set of related events of which the aim is to describe and explain the phenomena of concern (Maree et al., 2013: 75; Hamilton & Corbett-Winter, 2013: 10; Hofstee, 2006: 123). The case study will help the researcher to understand how teachers experience peer teacher support and coaching (the case) within their own unique fee-paying, mainstream secondary school

environment and grade group (the phenomena). This study not only includes the views of one or two teachers but includes the whole grade-group teaching staff to gain a better understanding of the support interaction between them (Maree et al, 2013: 76; Hamilton & Corbett-Winter, 2013: 16; Hofstee, 2006: 123). The individual case study schools provided greater insight and understanding of the support dynamics and teaching experiences within each school and data was combined and looked at in its totality.

The following are benefits of using a case study:

- This case study provided a predetermined platform for the researcher to make use of multiple collection methods through semi-structured interviews and document analysis to attain a valid, comprehensive and in-depth qualitative description of teachers' social, cultural and didactic experiences with regards to peer support and coaching, where data was gathered in their unique schooling context in which their everyday inclusive conduct takes place (Zainal, 2007; Maree et al., 2013: 77; Tellis, 1997).
- By the use of interviews and documents, case studies are highly effective in clarifying and simplifying concrete concepts that improve analytical-thinking, develop one's ability to defend one's own point of view with logic, enhance communication and further the development of tolerance for different views on the same subject. The team work of the participants is also enhanced, making them more efficient over time (Zainal, 2007; Maree et al., 2013: 77). The main solutions that came out of the case, act as ready reference when participants face similar problems at the workplace and leads to collegiality and open lines of communication (Zainal, 2007; Maree et al., 2013: 77).
- According to Zainal (2007) the solutions in such a case study may not be captured is experimental or survey research through quantitative statistical results were to be used. For example, a case study of peer teacher support and coaching experiences can provide access to not only numerical information concerning the strategies (peer coaching, mentoring, observation, management support, among others) used to support or not to support peers, but also the reasons for strategic use and how these strategies are used in conjunction with other strategies.

The following are disadvantages of using a case study:

- The generalisation of case studies may not be objective in qualitative research, because each study is unique, important or interesting in its own right (Zainal, 2007). Criticism of case study methodology is frequently levelled against its dependency on a single case and it is therefore claimed that case study research is incapable of providing a generalising conclusion, but this is not the purpose or intent of case study research (Zainal, 2007; Maree et al., 2013: 77). Therefore, when using multiple case studies as a research design, the replication of real life events with different cases, by linking several pieces of information from the same case to arrive at some theoretical recommendation (Campbell, 1975: 82), multiple-case design enhances and supports previous results and can show numerous sources of evidence to suggest generalization (Zainal, 2007; Maree et al., 2013: 77).
- Case studies contain the study of observation and perceptions of the researcher as an individual and are often accused of lack of rigour (Zainal, 2007). Yin (1984: 21) notes that “too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions”. There are chances that the researcher may completely present findings in one manner missing other aspects (Zainal, 2007). Since there is no one right answer, the problem arises in the validation of the solutions because there is more than one way to look at things (Zainal, 2007; Maree et al., 2013: 77).

## 3.5 Research methodology

### 3.5.1 Sampling

The researcher used purposive sampling for the research because the participants (teachers) and settings (schools) were chosen according to pre-defined qualities which made them the holders of the data that was needed (Maree et al., 2013: 79; Gaskell, 2000: 44; O’Reilly & Parker, 2012: 193). Purposive sampling also involves the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for data collection (Maree et al., 2013: 79). The study’s pre-defined characteristics were that the participants had to be employed at a fee-paying, mainstream secondary school, had to be responsible for the same grade group (grade 9) and teach learners with special educational needs.

The key participants were teachers (post level 1, post level 2 (HOD's) and post level 3 (deputy principals)) as they are directly involved with the implementation of inclusion within their management and classroom setting. The research conducted took place in the inclusive school environment of three fee-paying, main stream secondary schools. These schools are homogeneous neighbouring, schools that accommodate learners from the same environment. The schools selected form part of the Tshwane North District and were chosen because the researcher teaches in a similar mainstream schooling environment that is situated in the same area and district. The reason for not including special needs schools (LSEN schools) is that mainstream schools now include learners with a diverse range of needs as were previously mostly catered for in specialised schools with specialised staff and infrastructure. Mainstream teachers need to be skilled to handle these types of learners to create and maintain a successful, inclusive environment. The interviews took place in a boardroom at each school that created a safe and quiet interview environment (Hofstee, 2006: 123).

From each of the selected secondary schools, all teachers teaching within the grade group (grade 9) were invited and encouraged to be part of the interview process. Any school grade group could have been chosen. Grade 9 teachers were selected because many of them had taught the learners the previous year in grade 8. Most of the learners' strengths and weaknesses were therefore known and teachers could be more inclusive through early intervention with learners who had SEN. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to have a better understanding of teacher experiences of peer support and coaching from each other in an attempt to implement and maintain inclusive practices for future success. Participation was voluntary and thus only schools and teachers that voluntarily agreed to participate were selected to be a part of the research. Five mainstream secondary schools were contacted and only three schools provided the researcher with feedback and approval to conduct research at their school.

### 3.6 Research methods

By using a case study, comprehensive data was collected and explored by the researcher by using multiple research methods on the individual(s), programme(s) or event(s) which

the study was focused on, within a specified timeframe (Neuman, 2012: 141). The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect the relevant data for his research, by spending time at the identified schools and interacting regularly with the participants.

### 3.6.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews provide opportunities to gather a considerable amount of appropriate and useful information on facts, especially the perceptions, feelings and motivations that guided past behaviour of individuals or groups and influence their conscious behaviour and actions in present conditions (Neuman, 2012: 141).

The use of semi-structured interviews was an effective method that required participants to answer questions that were prepared beforehand. The interviewer developed an interview schedule and expected the best possible responses pertaining to the questions (Maree et al., 2013: 87; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 104). Semi-structured focus group and individual interviews with grade 9 teachers in all three case study schools involved were used to attain the highest response rate possible.

### 3.6.2. Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were used to encourage group interaction. It was productive in broadening the range of teacher responses, activating forgotten details of experience and clearing obstacles that may otherwise have discouraged teachers from revealing information on peer support and coaching (Maree et al., 2013: 91; Hofstee, 2006: 391). Focus group interviews were conducted with 6 teachers per case study school (school A=6, school B=6 and school C=6) that consisted of post level 1, HOD and deputy principal teachers, with the purpose of collecting in-depth qualitative data about their attitudes, perceptions and experiences with regards to support, training, coaching, inclusive education, legislative knowledge, pedagogical issues and available resources, among others (Maree et al., 2013: 91; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 105; Hofstee, 2006: 391-394). Therefore, a funnel structure format of focus group interviews was utilized by the researcher (Maree et al., 2013: 91). The latter implies that the researcher started with

broad and less difficult questions, later working towards more complex questions. The goal was to hear participants' general perspectives and to ease them into a process of actively debating the issues at hand (Maree et al., 2013: 91). As the interaction picked up, the interview became more structured and the researcher led the teachers into the questions pertinent to the study (Maree et al., 2013: 91; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 104).

### 3.6.3. Individual interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews followed focus group interviews with teachers who were not part of the focus group. Data was gathered from teachers (two teachers (post level 1 and HOD) per case study school and one deputy principal), who formed part of the grade group, to obtain rich information. The same questions were asked, which added to the validity of the focus group interview findings. Deputy principals (one deputy principal per case study school) were interviewed to verify and attain additional management information regarding support and coaching structures for teachers. A separate interview schedule was developed for deputy principals that only included ten of the eighteen questions asked in the individual and focus group interviews.

### 3.6.4. Challenges experienced during data collection

It was not easy to find a suitable time and date for conducting interviews where all teacher participants would be available and involved (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 113). The reason for the latter was because of curricular, extra-curricular and personal activities that teachers were involved in.

Focus group and individual interviews provide limitations in the sense that interviewee participants depend on their recollection of events when asked about their past and present experiences, behaviours and perspectives (Brainerd & Reyna, 2005; Schwarz, 1999: 96; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 141). According to Brainerd and Reyna (2005) and Schwarz (1999: 96), interviewees are not always predictable or remarkably insightful and are sometimes intentionally dishonest about their perceptions, feelings, and motives (Uziel, 2010: 248; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 141). The reason for the latter is that

participants' responses are not always within the scope of the specific question or research focus or that they rather give account of a situation(s) that might have or should have happened rather than the actual events (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 141). Therefore, the researcher had to be prepared to ask additional questions to gain additional and insightful information and had to verify and validate participants' responses by conducting multiple interviews and conducting document analysis to substantiate responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 141). Another limitation that occurred was when discussions were dominated by more outspoken focus group individuals which led to difficulty in assessing the viewpoints of less vocal teachers (Maree et al., 2013: 91; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 105). The silence of these individuals can be described as valuable input that could have been attained but is lost for research purposes. This can lead to biased information as certain participants' voices overpowered other participants. To address the latter, the researcher encouraged full participation and interaction among the participants and also used probing to steer discussions or to clarify concepts (Maree et al., 2013: 91; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 105). Other factors that may affect an interviewee, contributing to the biased nature of interviews, can be the appearance, tone of voice and wording of questions by the interviewer, to name a few (Neuman, 2012; 197). According to Neuman (2012: 197) the biggest limitation to conducting interviews is the time spent and the high costs in terms of both time and money accumulated due to traveling and constant communication.

### 3.6.5. Interview sessions

The interview process was undertaken in three sessions. The first session was an introductory session where the researcher introduced himself and the research focus to the participants as well as explained the value that the case study could have for their future inclusive conduct as a grade group and their support of one another. The second session involved focus group interviews and during the third, individual teacher interviews were conducted.

The researcher made use of a recording application on his cell phone to record interviews, as well as took notes. This is a very efficient method because one can listen to the recordings and review one's notes in order to reflect on the interview (Maree et al., 2013:

89; Hofstee, 2006: 397). The interview period was four months long, from March to June 2017. Focus group interviews were an hour and a half per session and individual interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour in duration.

### 3.6.6. Document analysis

Document analysis is an important data gathering technique as it provides a platform to collect, analyse and summarise primary written communications that can give useful information for the research to be conducted (Maree et al, 2013: 82, 101; Neuendorf, 2002; Neuman, 2012: 239). Primary resources were analysed by gathering official information directly from the teachers and schools in the form of school policy documents on the topic of inclusion (policies on teaching, facilitating and learning; admission policies; School Based Support Teams (SBST) policies; learner intervention and support forms, the Department of Basic Education policy documents (guidelines for the establishment of SBST; referral procedures); documents of learners who experience SEN (learner progression schedules; intervention schedules and minutes of meetings; concession learners), teacher training and coaching programmes and schedules with regards to peer support, formal and informal grade group meetings, minutes of those meetings, among others (Maree et al., 2013: 83; Neuman, 2012: 239). These documents provided a basis for identifying what policy, communication and support platforms existed within the schools between teaching staff and if support was given to teachers and to what extent with regards to an inclusive environment and peer coaching. The document analysis process provided a platform to view collected data from multiple angles (Maree et al., 2012: 101). Therefore, the analysed documents were triangulated with information obtained from the interviews (both focus and individual) to strengthen the validity of the study.

## 3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis as a research activity is aimed at summarising data, making sense of the data, interpreting it and then theorizing about it (Schwandt, 2007). Qualitative data analysis entails that data collection, processing, analysis, descriptions and reporting are connected (Maree et al., 2013: 99; Hofstee, 2006: 140). Maree et al. (2013: 100) indicated

that it is very important and necessary for researchers to go back to their original notes and to verify conclusions.

### 3.7.1. Content and thematic analysis

Due to the length of the interview data and the intensive examination, understanding and reading thereof, organising the research data was of great value (Maree et al., 2013: 104). The data collected came from the different individuals and schools used in the case study. A description of the participants' and schools' background information was invaluable to aid the researchers understanding of their perceptions provided during the interview sessions (Maree et al., 2012: 103). Included in the information were the particulars of the school's learner capacity, annual learner intake, the school's academic, sport and cultural codes, the total number of teaching staff and the experience of participants at mainstream secondary schools. All these details and more were obtained through the interview sessions and from documents collected (Maree et al., 2012: 103). The data collected was transcribed, which means that the texts from the interviews were entered word by word into word-processing documents (Maree et al., 2012: 104). Interview data (focus group and individual) and documents collected were kept apart and clearly marked with regards to when, where, how and why information was collected (Maree et al., 2013: 104).

### 3.7.2 Reflective notes

The participants' responses are seen as raw data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002: 13). Therefore, the researcher carefully read through his interview notes and sorted them according to importance, through the method of inductive coding by making use of reflective notes (Maree et al., 2013: 105). Reflective notes were valuable in combining and organising the responses of the eighteen interview questions asked in each school's focus group, post level 1 and HOD teacher interviews. This was done for each interview from every school involved. What followed was an intensive examining of interview question responses upon which document analysis information was grouped together according to the relevance of the responses provided to each interview question. The responses of all three schools' focus group, individual post level 1, HOD and deputy principal responses, firstly as an individual school combination and then as a case

collective, were combined through formal writing by the use of reflective notes. These notes provided a single platform from where all interview question data, from all three schools, were combined in one document. In this document similarities and disparities were evident and these gave rise to the emergence of core themes (Maree et al., 2013: 104; Merriam, 1998; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002: 13).

The content of the interviews and the analysed document were arranged and grouped according to the following topics: peer teacher support and the prevailing inclusive school culture, coaching as a form of support in the school environment, factors that contribute or hinder peer support with regards to inclusivity and classroom pedagogy and external professional support within the school environment.

All data was recorded electronically using Microsoft Word and was backed up by keeping a hard copy of the text. The descriptive summaries of what teacher participants said and the content analysis lead to a level of interpretation where emerging patterns, concepts as well as explanations of the school and teachers' natural setting and experiences were identified and clarified (Maree et al., 2012: 110).

In interpreting the information, the ultimate aim of the researcher is to come to findings from the data reported in relation to what is already known so as to reveal possible new insights (Maree et al., 2012: 112). The formal summaries of data given through the writing of descriptive summaries of the unique experiences and settings of these teachers showed correlations and new insights to the literature review themes. All conclusions were therefore based on verifiable data. The coding process, through reflective notes, proved invaluable in facilitating the retrieval of information as well as in checking and verifying data that was examined within the broader context of the study (Maree et al., 2012: 107-108).

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

According to Neuman (2012: 53) ethics is a moral conduct that informs us about proper and adequate behaviour and decisions. Ethics is also a measure of the distinction

between right and wrong, good and evil (Neuman, 2012: 53). The research ethics process prepared and guided the researcher through a proper, ethical way to approach (design) and conduct the study in a professional manner that provided a pursuit of knowledge by the researcher and also protection of the rights of all participants (Neuman, 2012: 53). Therefore, the researcher developed a sensitive approach towards ethical issues by not just advancing his own potential benefits through completion of the study, but also safeguarding participants against a loss of dignity, self-esteem, privacy or democratic freedoms through actions of unnecessarily releasing information about specific individuals or institutions that was collected for research purposes (Neuman, 2012: 53-55).

### 3.8.1. University of Pretoria

The researcher is a student of the University of Pretoria and by conducting this research he is a representative of the University. Before conducting the case study, the researcher had to submit an ethics application to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria that was approved (Maree et al., 2013: 41). Research was continuously conducted according to the Ethics and Research Statement provided by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria (Maree et al., 2013: 301).

### 3.8.2. Gauteng Department of Education

The research conducted took place at public high schools and the participants were teachers employed by the department (government appointments) or by the relevant schools (SGB appointments). Due to the fact that the research took place in the education sector, the department had to legally and contractually approve and agree to all action which its employees were part of (Maree et al., 2013: 42). The researcher submitted the relevant Research Request documents to the GDE that were approved and the researcher upheld all prescribed conditions of conducting research in GDE institutions.

### 3.8.3. Communication with the school governing body (SGB) and the school principal of the school

After gaining the approval to conduct research by the University of Pretoria and the GDE, the researcher contacted the five purposefully selected schools via email as well as telephonically. The principals and school governing bodies of the relevant schools that reacted to the research request were fully informed about the research to be conducted. The principal and SGB have the responsibility to act in the best interest of the school as well as of the DOE and are therefore in charge of managing educators. A briefing session followed and confidentiality for the protection of all individuals and entities who took part in this study was emphasized (Maree et al., 2013: 41). All three principals and SGB chairpersons were very inviting, provided their full support and allocated a staff member to help organize the communication to the teacher participants. Arrangements for the visits were professionally finalized.

### 3.8.4. Information to the teachers

The principals of all three schools and the allocated staff members informed staff about the researcher and his proposed study and provided them with the letter of invitation to participate in the research. The researcher then had a formal meeting with teachers participating in the research study and fully informed them about the research and interviews to be conducted at their specific school. They were given relevant and adequate information on the purpose of the research, the contributions they could make if involved in the study, the procedures to be followed, the credibility of the researcher and how the results would be used. They were also informed that the University of Pretoria, GDE, SGB members and school principal gave permission for them to take part, that participation was not compulsory, that they would receive no compensation for their efforts and that they could withdraw or refuse to take part in the study at any time, without any penalty (Maree et al., 2013: 41).

### 3.8.5. Protection from harm, privacy and confidentiality

During the study the researcher strived to be honest, respectful and sympathetic and if by chance the participants required debriefing after an interview, the researcher provided

such, or made the necessary referral to a professional who could provide such a service (Maree et al., 2013: 300). Teachers were ensured that their participation, information and responses shared during this study would be kept private and the results would be presented in an anonymous manner in order to protect their identities (Maree et al., 2013: 301; Neuman, 2012: 62-63). Teachers were given informed consent letters to sign in order to gain permission for interviewing them and all the above-mentioned information was conveyed (Maree et al., 2013: 301; Neuman, 2012: 62-63)

## 3.9 Trustworthiness of the study (reliability and validity)

### 3.9.1. Triangulation (reliability)

Triangulation entails data retrieved from different sources such as text, individuals, groups and settings, using differing methods to facilitate validity and trustworthiness (Terre Blanche, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Maxwell, 1996: 93). The use of multiple data collection techniques assisted the researcher in his attempt to establish more trustworthiness (Maree et al., 2013: 39). The researcher used collective findings from the data collected through data analysis of the interviews (focus group and individual) and document analysis to enable him to draw similar conclusions as well as to note disparities. If there is a correlation between the analyses of data in the individual case study, as well as within different case studies, then the trustworthiness of the findings is more well-grounded (Maree et al., 2013: 113).

### 3.9.2. Credibility (validity)

Credibility is regarded by Maree et al. (2013: 113) as the process of validating trustworthiness so that research findings can be proved and believed. The credibility of the research findings can be confirmed by allowing participants to comment on or access the research findings (report), interpretations and conclusions by asking for written or oral comments (Maree et al., 2013: 114). The researcher had formal and informal meetings with the participants after the initial interviews (transcriptions and summaries) and on the data interpretations and findings (providing copies of final draft) to ascertain that their personal experiences were in line with the interpretations (verifying and validating findings) (Maree et al., 2013:114).

One of the limitations to the researchers' study includes the fact that only selected case study schools in one district were used for the research study. The findings on how teachers in their unique setting experience collaborative support from each other to successfully implement inclusive practices can only be applied to those specific schools, within a specific grade-group level and with those specific teachers. The findings cannot be generalized to other school settings, but it can be of great value to other schools (teachers and school management teams) and subject and management advisors of the DOE in conducting the same kind of research in their work environments.

## 10. Conclusion

In chapter 3 the research methodology is discussed and also the research style used to attain the desirable information through individual and focus group interviews as well as by document analysis. Reasons are provided why primarily interviews were used as a research instrument and the advantages and disadvantages of case studies are discussed. Lastly an outline is provided of how data was analyzed and which steps were used to ensure validation and reliability of the research process, analysis and findings. Within the three schools, twelve interview sessions were undertaken with four interview sessions at each school. Twenty-seven teachers (seventeen post level 1 teachers, six HOD's and four deputy principals that were involved with the school's grade 9 group) took part in this study and had between one and thirty-five years of experience teaching in an inclusive, mainstream secondary school. It is conducive to the aims of the case study that the participants had a good variation of teaching experience and represented their schools at all levels.

# Chapter 4

# Data analysis and presentation of findings

## 4.1. Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed categorization and interpretation of transcribed information that was gathered from the interviews conducted and documents collected in order to provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions as stated in chapter 1. These answers will describe and represent teachers as the key participants of the three mainstream inclusive schools involved in the case study. The secondary aim of this chapter is to provide evidence that there is a connection between the literature review findings and the data collected by conducting the study.

The identified themes for this chapter were developed out of transcribed data from each interview question and grouped accordingly. Relevant webpage information on the participating schools' academic, sport and culture codes and services was also consulted to provide additional background information to strengthen interviewee responses and document information provided by the schools.

## 4.2 Research questions

### 4.2.1. Primary research question

The primary research question for this study is: How do teachers experience peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment?

### 4.2.2. Secondary research questions

How do teachers engage with their peers to enable support in an inclusive learning environment?

How is peer coaching experienced in an inclusive school?

How is peer support and coaching managed in an inclusive school?

Which factors contribute or hinder peer support and coaching in an inclusive environment?

## 4.3. Data analysis

### 4.3.1 Background information of the schools involved in the research

Schools A, B and C are fee-paying, public mainstream secondary schools for boys and girls that are situated in Pretoria, Gauteng and form part of the Tshwane North, District 3. According to their websites and policy for teaching, facilitating and learning, their annual learner intake of all three schools ranges from 220 to 300 learners and the schools are currently at full capacity with between 1,200 to 1,400 learners in total each. Learners in each grade group are divided into nine register classes. The schools have rich academic, sport and cultural history backgrounds that define the schools. They provide the same type of educational product to each prospective learner that resides in their geographical neighbourhood.

The following academic subjects are offered at the three schools: Afrikaans Home Language; English Home Language (only school C); English First Additional Language; Afrikaans First Additional Language (only school C); Mathematics; Mathematics Literacy; Life Orientation; Accounting; Business Studies; Economics; Information Technology (only schools A and B); Computer Applications Technology; Engineering, Graphics and Design; Civil Technology; Life Sciences; Natural Sciences; Consumer Studies (only schools A and B); Hospitality Studies; Visual Art; Tourism; Geography; History and Dance Studies (only school B).

The following sport activities are offered at the three schools: cricket; tennis; table tennis; chess; athletics; hockey; rugby; softball; cross country; swimming; golf; fishing; netball and mountain biking (only schools A and B).

The following cultural activities are offered at the three schools: idols; light music orchestra (only school A); cheerleaders (only school A); public speaking; revue; musicals; Voortrekkers; drama; choir and photography.

Each of the schools involved has a big teaching staff complement: school A has a staff of sixty-two, school B a staff of sixty and school C a staff of fifty-five. Schools A and B have

sixteen staff members on the school management team (one principal, three deputy principals and twelve heads of departments), while school C has fifteen (one principal, three deputy principals and eleven head of departments). It is evident that approximately 20% to 25% of the teaching staff of these schools is part of the SMT and has a stake in the management of school structures, especially their inclusive programmes. The schools also employ fulltime administrative staff in the form of a disciplinary head each (school A, B and C), a social worker each (school A, B and C) and an educational psychologist (only schools' B and C). The function of these staff members is to support the SMT with the management of inclusive structures.

**The information from the three schools given above can be summarised as follows:**

**Table 1**

| | **School A** | **School B** | **School C** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Staff complement** | 62 | 60 | 55 |
| **School management team** | 16 | 16 | 15 |
| **Academic subjects** | 20 | 23 | 20 |
| **Sport activities** | 14 | 16 | 10 |
| **Cultural activities** | 10 | 10 | 7 |

Based on the information above, the following can be deduced:

The three schools participating in this research offer a wide range of academic subjects, sport and cultural activities, and this is the reason their staff complement is as high as it is. The information supplied is an indication of the kind of support these learners receive at various levels. Parents of learners in these inclusive public mainstream schools can afford to pay fees, therefore resources are affordable.

Through curricular, co-curricular and extra-mural activities, these learners are given opportunities to develop successfully both academically and socially so that they are guided in their career choices and are prepared for life after school. South Africa is

affected by global developments in technology and innovation. As future citizens, these learners need support at all school phases. They are an investment into the economy.

One of the findings determined from the school activities is the teachers' keen involvement in supporting various forms of extra-curricular activities. For example, these learners participate in many sport and cultural activities and teachers take on additional roles as sport and cultural activity coaches and not just as classroom teachers. The inclusive conduct of teachers and their support towards learners and peers are not only limited to the confined walls of the classroom. It is clear that support opportunities are available in abundance. However, within the classroom milieu, teachers spend approximately seven hours of a school day with their learners in the classroom and the time spent there is critical for their inclusive success.

Of the twenty-seven participating teachers, a total of ten teachers had between one and nine years of teaching experience, eight teachers between ten and seventeen years and nine teachers between twenty-three and thirty-five years, all of that at inclusive mainstream secondary schools. This provided a range of experience between one and thirty-five years. Teachers who participated in this research were enthusiastic and energetic.

There is a general interest from a good spread of teachers who want to be professionally engaged with learners at these inclusive schools. Novice teachers are keen to form part of these modern schools. These novice teachers have an opportunity to be mentored and coached by experienced teachers and they in turn can appreciate the ideas of novice teachers and learn from them.

This research is aimed at determining how teachers at inclusive, mainstream schools support and coach one another as peers to help learners realise their potential. Therefore, within this case study, it is important for the researcher to include the schools' background, their administrative structures and teachers' perceptions and knowledge of

inclusive education to gain an understanding of their supporting and coaching conduct and the extent of their inclusive efforts.

Through intensive examining of the research data, main findings were grouped and integrated according to the significance of the interview questions by the use of reflective notes. A study and refinement of these notes led to the identification of major themes. The themes emerged by coding, formulating categories and combining main ideas. The interpretation of findings based on the importance and focus of the interview question responses was advanced and important issues were accentuated by the use of the themes identified, which provided the basis for answering the research question.

The main and notable aspects that have emerged out of the data analysis are concepts such as peer support, inclusive teaching, peer coaching, inclusive learners, inclusive school culture, classroom pedagogy, expert professionals, and school management involvement.

### 4.3.2 Emerging themes

The following four major themes arose from the analysis of participants' responses:

- Peer teacher support and the prevailing inclusive school culture.
- Coaching as a form of support in the school environment.
- Factors that contribute or hinder peer support with regards to inclusivity.
- Classroom pedagogy and external professional support within the school.

A discussion of the identified themes, using an analysis of the viewpoints and realities of the participants' natural educational context by studying their interview responses and the content of documents provided, follows.

## 4.4. Peer teacher support and the prevailing inclusive school culture

In answer to the question if schools have an inclusive culture, it is evident that the three schools involved are inclusive, possess an inclusive culture and that learners and teachers with *"different abilities and disabilities are accommodated"* (all comments given

in italics are from the responses given by the participating teachers) and supported. According to DoE (2002), Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde (2012: 6) and Mittler (1995: 10), inclusivity refers to the human rights process of providing membership to each and every learner through admittance to a school, regardless of any barrier to learning. The latter refers to the importance of support through the positive changing of attitudes and perceptions of all educational stakeholders, especially teachers, towards the concepts of inclusive education and professional development through support and coaching.

Participants mentioned that they experienced a positive school culture towards inclusivity due to the inclusive support and accommodation that their school provided to the school community. Most of the learners with barriers, that the schools accommodated, were admitted on a *"trial and error basis."* Participants responded with comments like:

> *"…we have quite a lot of learners who have special needs."*
>
> *"…we have got 35 learners on our list, with special needs, the others we just have to accommodate."*
>
> *"…we do include them in our classes and we accommodate them."*
>
> *"…definitely in our school we take care of these kinds of kids."*
>
> *"…we have an array of learners coming from different backgrounds."*

The trial and error approach to accommodating inclusive learners in the classroom refers to new and unique cases that are reported to the school, where teachers have no or limited practical experience of how to attend to the specific needs of such learners. Participants mentioned that *"most of the time, the trial and error approach led to a successful accommodation of inclusive learners",* despite initial doubts about the specific schools' inclusive capacity.

In answer to the question why peer support was important for the inclusive school culture, participants stressed the importance of peer support for an inclusive culture, because when a school was confronted with a new *"inclusive learner with barriers, they as a staff collective needed to come up with strategies"* to initiate and sustainably accommodate the learner. Peer support was crucial as it allowed teachers to engage with one another

and to equip themselves with the necessary skills to the benefit of learners and themselves.

"*We've tried it and we are successful."*

### 4.4.1 Inclusivity within the school environment

"What do you understand by learner inclusivity within your mainstream school setting?"

Based on what participants understood by learner inclusivity within their mainstream school setting, led to a definition of those learners that presented a challenge in terms of being included as learners who were *"in need of any form of additional support that a normal learner did not need"* to reach their full academic and social potential.

These learners are different from what *"society classifies as a normal and healthy individual*" when factors such as socio-economic and intrinsic barriers negatively affect that individual's scholastic progress.

"…*anybody who needs that little bit of special attention…*"

"…*it could be anybody…*"

Participants defined mainstreaming as the process of *"trying to accommodate learners who experienced special educational needs"* in the form of physical, academic, behavioural, language, ethnic, cultural, religious and physical barriers, among others in their school.

*"…mainstream means they should be treated equally.*"

"…*to accommodate a child with any need, as best you can, and to see where you can help…*"

These concepts, referring to the inclusion and mainstreaming of learners, are in accordance with the statements of Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey (2010: 1-2). Participants predominantly referred to a prevailing situation where there have to be a *"balance between the school training"* and supporting a learner *"to fit into the school community"* and also the *"school fitting in"* with learner development. This refers to a combination of integration and inclusion and contrasts with the claims of Knochen and

Radford (2012: 144-146), Adams, Bell and Griffen (2007), Donohue and Bornman (2014: 643) and Chhabara, Srivastava and Srivastava (2010: 221) that there should be a shift from a learner with SEN fitting into the school environment to the school making all the necessary adaptations to accommodate the learner despite any logistic and financial challenges. Schools need to adapt to accommodate the *"requirements of all learners they admit"*. If the latter is not the case, then the school might be integrating learners with barriers, but there is no indication of the quality of education that these learners will receive (Farrel, 2000: 154; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2010: 1-2).

Participants' initial responses to learners with special needs were dominated by a discussion of learners who experienced academic barriers, but they acknowledged that the education environment involved more than just an academic programme. Learners are exposed to sport and cultural activities and *"if they find it difficult to adapt in the classroom"* the chances are that the *"same inclusive effect"* will rule in those areas as well. Therefore, *"a learner with SEN will need more than just a teacher standing in front of the class explaining work to them"* in order to be successful. Teachers need to have an *"attitude that they must successfully include and teach every learner in front of them on a daily basis"*.

Schools need to prepare learners with SEN for the inclusive world outside of their school milieu. In the *"working and adult world"*, there are "*no special categories or people*". It does not matter if a learner has a barrier or barriers to coping in a mainstream school, they have to "*learn to cope in the mainstream world*" and the sooner they can overcome or positively deal with barriers the "*better they will deal with normal life*".

Participants acknowledged that teachers have the responsibility to support these learners. All learners have *the "right to go to a mainstream school and learners with SEN should be treated the same as any other learner"*. Participants mentioned that there can be no discrimination and a human rights perspective, supported by the Constitution of South Africa, enforced by the DoE, should be the focus in any mainstream environment.

Therefore, schools have to include all learners who are a part of the mainstream community and environment and come from the vicinity of the school.

"*…you can't discriminate on grounds of anything.*"

"*…because of legislation we have to be inclusive…*"

"*…they are a part of our community and also go to the same churches, everyone knows them and therefore they should be included in the neighbouring schools.*"

"*…yes, they have special needs, but they shouldn't be treated differently."*

These learners should receive education from their neighbourhood school despite their individual challenges and the potential logistical challenges for the school and is also the contention of Fetter-Harrot, Steketee and Dare (2008: 63-65), Pruslow (2003: 68), Irvine et al. (2010: 74) and Alur and Timmins (2009: 14).

Participants made no specific mention of SASA or the Education White Paper 6, although they touched upon most aspects thereof throughout the interview discussion through practical and theoretical responses. The two pieces of legislation are important to this research in that they contain the main guidelines for inclusivity in schools.

### 4.4.2 Parental support for mainstream inclusion

The schools have an *"extensive school admissions policy that does not exclude a learner from* attending the school" and provide *"an open invitation"*. The *"school admission policy is made available*" to all current and prospective parents and stakeholders through the school website. The schools do not directly *"market themselves as being inclusive but they do market as being an English or Afrikaans multi-cultural school"*. When a parent of a prospective learner applies to attend the school, there is a *"specific section on the application form where parents have the opportunity"* to indicate and inform the school of their *"learner's inclusive need"*. If a parent has a query about inclusivity the school will provide sufficient correspondence on the matter.

"*I know parents have asked about it and then we will correspond with them.*"

"*Parents communicated with us beforehand and we told them that we are able to do that.*"

"*Parents must notify the school."*

*"…they have an open invitation to all, inclusive learners that they can attend their school.*"

All learners "*should be included in mainstream schools as far as possible, unless the school cannot provide for the practical needs*" of an individual learner. The latter refers to practicality regarding *"staff allocation, staff training and the land and buildings"* made available at the school, in line with other kinds of support provided.

According to the participants, parents are *"actually choosing to mainstream their learners"*. Schoeman and Schoeman (2002: 17) and Potgieter-Groot (2009: 59) maintain that parents should have a say about their learners' educational options and schools, therefore teachers need to collaborate with parents. Learners and their parents have the right to a mainstream education but the *"reality thereof should not be forced"* on to all learners with SEN.

Participants were of the opinion that if a learner can be accommodated by a mainstream school, have the academic capability and support structure at home to succeed, the learner should attend a mainstream school. Participants reported the unfortunate situation where *"parents force their learner with SEN to attend a mainstream school"* with the *"knowledge that their learner cannot cope emotionally"* in such an environment despite the school making the necessary adjustments. If exposure to a mainstream environment is going to have a damaging emotional effect on a learner, then mainstreaming is not the best option. The latter is in line with Bateman & Bateman (2001: 84) who stated that despite the greater academic and social benefits that a mainstream school provides an inclusive learner, if such a learner cannot cope in a mainstream environment it can hamper the learner's progress. The latter can *"lead to a situation where the learner with SEN will not reach their full potential."*

"*I believe that learners should be mainstreamed but if it is actually doing damage to your child then it is not a good idea.*"

Parents have the *"responsibility to notify and provide the necessary report of scholastic and/or psychological testing feedback to the school"* to help with the decision about including a learner with SEN. The reason behind the latter is *"not to provide information to the school to potentially exclude an inclusive learner"*, but to be aware of any special conditions so that the school and teaching staff can accommodate the learner *"as far as possible"*, as soon as possible.

> *"When a SEN learner applies, we will process the application without any discrimination. We request a letter of motivation and approval from the district office that the learner can cope in a mainstream school environment."*

If a learner cannot be included in the mainstream school because of a barrier or barriers, then the *"school will conduct an interview with the parents"*, and advise them, backed up by all relevant information, that in their professional opinion they recommend it will be better for the learner in question to attend an LSEN school or facility that will best suit their learner's abilities.

> *"We will admit any learner with special needs, the only problem is that if we can't at all help the specific learner, then we'll refer him to an LSEN school."*

If a learner with SEN can be included in the mainstream school, the school will also conduct an interview, as a form of support to facilitate successful inclusion, by getting the learner, parents and where applicable, the involved expert professional (psychologists, occupational therapist or social worker, among others) together for a meeting with the SBST. The significance of such a meeting is that the relevant stakeholders that are in charge of school inclusivity can *"brainstorm"* collaboratively and see how they can *"assist"* and accommodate the individual with SEN. Such a situation provides opportunities for the development of teachers on all levels who are a part of discussions, about inclusivity and can provide valuable insights.

> "…*now we've got a child in grade eight with medical reasons, she writes very slow and she's got lots of pain and we're know going to have a meeting next week so that we can see how we can help her.*"

Participants mentioned that networking between parents, management and teachers is of the upmost importance. The latter is in accordance with Opperti & Brady (2011: 463) and Halinen & Järvinen (2012: 80) who maintained that quality decision-making between parents, their child with SEN and the school is of great value so that the inclusive school culture can develop a meaningful mutual relationship where support can be provided to promote and maintain quality change. It is also in accordance with Loremann, Deppeler & Harvey (2010: 1-2) who claims that learners and their parents are in the best position to give their authentic voice to the barriers experienced by their learners and to raise their concerns. The attained knowledge can be used to provide the best inclusion support for the individual learner and inclusion training for teachers. Teachers need to take advantage of these support platforms to learn first-hand about individual learner barriers when it comes to inclusion.

### 4.4.3 Types of inclusion that teachers experience

Three questions were asked to acquire support information on the extent of the knowledge of and experience with learners with barriers that participants have and how they handle these learners individually and with the support of their peers, on a day to day basis. The findings provided an important starting point from which the researcher could deduce whether participants are in a position to provide support and coaching to peers based on their expertise at inclusion.

The questions were as follows:

“Is your school an inclusive school and why?”

“Do you have difficult inclusive learners at your school?”

“How do you handle a difficult inclusive learner during class lessons?”

Participants mentioned that their school accommodates learners with barriers as set out in table 2. They also mentioned the characteristics of these learners and how they handle them on a day to day basis.

**Table 2: Type of barrier(s) reported, characteristics of barrier(s) and how to handle the learner.**

| **Type of inclusive barrier** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Intrinsic barriers:** | | |
| **1.1 Neurological:** | | |
| **Learners with:** | **Asperger Syndrome (autism)** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Socially *"not well adapted"*<br>• *"Keep themselves away from other learners"* | • Constantly "*irritated and aggressive in behaviour*"<br>• Learners have a *"specific set of boundaries and rules within which they and others"* must operate. |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Be strict, consequent and communicate to the learner that their behaviour is not acceptable. | |
| **Learners with:** | **HDHD or ADD** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • *"Hyperactive"*<br>• *"Can't sit still"*<br>• *"Can't keep quiet"* | |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Teachers act intuitively through years of experience on how to best handle difficult learners with HDHD. Because teachers do not know how to *"correctly handle HDHD learners they tend to challenge those learners back because their busy behaviour gets labelled as being naughty."* Rather than *"challenge the learners back"*, participants recommend staying calm and talking to the learner separately about their behaviour.<br>• Participants mentioned that they had an ADHD learner who *"tended to fall asleep during lessons because of over-activity"*. They allowed him to *"sit at the back of the class"* and whenever he *"felt tired he could stand up and stretch without bothering any other learners"*.<br>• The teacher should ask the learner halfway through the lesson to "*go and give a message to another teacher and just let him or her walk around the school building so that they could get rid of some energy*". | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • They would also tell the learner to *"go and drink some water but walk slowly, take your time and then come back*". | |
| **1.2 Cognitive:** | | |
| **Learners with:** | **Behaviour problems** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • *"Difficult home circumstances'*<br>• *"Constantly have to handle the learner through disciplinary structures"*<br>• *"Academic program gets behind"*<br>• *"Other learners are getting aggressive against the disruptive learner out of frustration"*<br>• *"Negatively impacting"* teacher conduct and learner focus<br>• | • Negatively effects classroom culture<br>• *"Not doing homework*"<br>• "*Aggressive behaviour*"<br>• "*Talks through the whole period*"<br>• "*Deliberately misbehaves and tries to upset teachers*" and learners<br>• Very disruptive and *"challenges authority"* |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Have a *"serious discussion"* about his/her behaviour. Repeat the latter by having a discussion with the whole class about disciplinary problems *"without singling out the individuals."*<br>• *"Send the individual to the principal."*<br>• *"Go back to classroom organisation."*<br>• "*Move the learner to another space, maybe near the teacher in front of the class and isolate him or her from their friends*". | |
| **Learners with:** | **Emotional problems** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • *"Absenteeism from class"* on a regular basis and *"missing academic work"* that can negatively affect their performance. | |
| **How to handle the learner** | • "*Mostly handled by the psychologist, social worker and grade tutors*."<br>• Takes the *"responsibility and load of from teachers"* because these learners are primarily handled by specialists within the school system.<br>• Try to talk to those learners and tell them that their behaviour is not right.<br>• Help them to *"catch up with work that was missed."* | |
| **Learners with:** | **Academic problems** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • These learners have learning barriers in the *"form of reading and writing"*<br>• *"Keeping up with the classroom pace"*<br>• *"Keeping up with the curriculum"* | • Difficulty in understanding and expressing themselves<br>• *"In need of special concessions"* |
| **How to handle the learner** | Extra classes are conducted and learners are accommodated *"during break time or after school"*, but they "*don't think there is enough time to do the remedial work with them*". They mentioned that there is a lot more that teachers can do.<br>• Participants mentioned that at their schools they have a "mathematics centrum" and provide *"scheduled extra lessons on a Wednesday afternoon."* These extra lessons take place once a week for every grade and are free of charge. "*Attendances for these additional classes are poor because learners aren't forced to attend*".<br>• They are accommodated by applying for concessions, *"if their condition qualifies"*, to attain additional time to write tests and also to appoint individuals to assist in their writing and reading. | |
| **Learners with:** | **Language barriers** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • The schools have immigrants in their school population that do not have *"sufficient knowledge about the country or subject matter."*<br>• "*These learners will sit in your class and have no prior knowledge about the content that you are teaching*"<br>• "*It is almost as if the teachers have to start these individuals of on a grade one level, get them to do remedial work and then strengthen their knowledge*". They mentioned that it takes much more time and effort to explain content to them and "*to get them on the level which they should be*" at. | • Teachers experience language barriers from South African learners as well, where *"Afrikaans or English is their third or fourth language."* This has a negative effect causing learners to struggle to learn.<br>• "*The learner population of the school comprises of a wide, diverse racial group whose home language is mainly Sotho and English that is their second or third language. Because the school is an Afrikaans medium school as a language of teaching and learning, it is a problem for these learners*". |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Participants did not provide any information regarding handling a learner that has a language barrier. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Learners who:** | **Are very intelligent** |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Very disruptive in the classroom because they *"finish their work fast, become easily bored and that leads to disruptive behaviour."*<br>• "*These highly intelligent individuals are forced to sit in the same class with individuals who are not on their high level of academic performance*" |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Move learners to the front of the class, when they are disruptive and then *"they can retain their previous seating position if they behave."*<br>• Provide those learners with additional enriching work to keep them interested and busy. |

**1.3 Physical:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Learners with:** | **Medical barriers** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • "Functioning with one lung"<br>• Have "cancer"<br>• Have "heart problems"<br>• Have "Viral Syndrome" (has to do with "blood circulation to your fingers and the learner has to wear gloves, especially during the major changes of temperatures and always wears gloves)"<br>• Have *"Lupus"* | • Have *"bladder problems"*<br>• *"Experience heart arrhythmia"*<br>• Have a *"medical condition regarding recurring hick-ups"*<br>• *"Can't walk normally"*<br>• Are *"wheelchair and crutches bound"*<br>• *"Can't breathe properly"*<br>• Have a *"prosthetic leg"* |
| **How to handle the learner** | • They are helping these individual by providing them with all of their academic work through electronic media like *"Power Point lessons, copies of notes and memorandums put electronically on memory sticks"* because of learner absenteeism.<br>• The school has made some arrangements for those learners. *"The school had put railings on the stairs"* especially for learners with physical barriers.<br>• Teacher participants indicated that physical disability and needs can turn into *"emotional damage because of learners getting teased and mocked about their condition."* "*Learners then need to be temporarily moved away from other learners so that their class learners can be informed about the inclusive learner to better understand their condition and situation*". | |

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| **1.4 Sensory:** | | |
| **Learners with:** | **Impaired hearing** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Learners with mild to severe hearing loss | • *"Learners that do not wear hearing aids despite their barrier"*<br>• Financial restraints – unable to afford hearing aids |
| **How to handle the learner** | • "*If a teacher has knowledge of a learner that has hearing problems the teacher needs to report it to management*".<br>• The *"school will assist in the process*" of having a learner get referred and evaluated so that the learner can potentially get hearing aids that will have a positive educational impact on the learner.<br>• Do not place learners with hearing aids in the front rows of the classroom because "*their necks get tired from looking up all the time*".<br>• "*Depending on which ear is the better one, you should place them on the opposite side of the classroom in the second or third row*".<br>• In the past they accommodated learners who had *"technical Wi-Fi Bluetooth systems that the teacher wore around his/her neck"* to accentuate/amplify the sound that the teacher or the surrounding learners make.<br>• "*Never turn your back on such a learner and also make eye contact on a regular basis, because they rely heavily on reading lips*". | |
| **2. Socio-Economic barriers** | | |
| **1.1. Poor living conditions** | | |
| **Learners that:** | **Come from low income homes** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | They mentioned learners who do not *"eat enough and who faint in classes".* | |
| **How to handle the learner** | • The schools support learners through a *"feeding scheme"* where food parcels (collected from the cafeteria), *"stationary and clothes"* (through the schools clothing banks) are given to learners identifies as needy.<br>• These *"projects aren't necessarily budgeted for, but they do receive financial support from sponsors, churches and fundraisers"* that provide the school with additional resources to help these learners. Learners from *"children's homes benefit the most from these projects."* | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • They have learners who are found in wealthy areas of residency and also have learners that are in Ubuntu. According to the participant *"Ubuntu is a safe place where they take children in who do not have a place to go and provide them with shelter."* They also have *"learners in Jacaranda Children's Home, PW Botha Children's Home and then we also serve a few places of safety."* | |
| **Learners that:** | **Are multi-cultural** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • The schools' learner population comprises of a *"wide diverse racial group that includes many different cultures and ethnic groups."*<br>• Their schools are completely multicultural, multiracial and multi-phase and the mixture of *"different ethnicities brings its own set of problems*". | • Difficulties arise when teachers and learners from different ethnic groups do not understand one another's culture and the way things are done.<br>• This can lead to a situation where teachers think these learners are naughty but their behaviour is acceptable in their own cultures. "*The cultures of teachers and individual learners differ*". |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Participants did not provide any information regarding handling multi-cultural learners. | |
| **Learners that:** | **Travel far to get to school and back** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Many learners travel far by bus or train to get to school.<br>• They also have learners that "*attend their school that come from rural environments like Hammanskraal and Soshanguve that travel very far to attend their specific school and not closer township schools or an English* school." | |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Participants did not provide any information regarding handling learners that travel far to come to school. | |
| **Learners that:** | **Come from broken homes** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Learners are being *"abused physically and emotionally"* through peer bullying and it has a huge impact on their academic performance. | • If learners are abused at home, the school is their safe place and then sometimes that has a negative or adverse disciplinary effect. The reason |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • They also mentioned that learners were *"abused outside of the school premises by parents"* and those learners were very difficult to treat like other learners. They mentioned instances where learners had been raped in the morning before they came to school. "*Sometimes learners don't get picked up from schools in the afternoon by their parents or guardians*". | for the latter is because "*abused learners can do things that they cannot do at home and get away with their behaviour without getting abused. If they do what they want at home, they will get abused*". |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Teachers would immediately ask the learner if they can be *"referred to the school social worker or psychologist."* With these cases teachers should immediately refer abused learners to expert professionals "*because they are not trained to deal with such matters*". | |
| **Learners with:** | **A negative outlook on life** | |
| **Reported as difficult to include** | **X** | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Many *"learners live in a very negative environment and society."* Several of the learners they are teaching are very negative towards life and what the future has stored for them especially with regards to future studies, jobs and money. "*Students arrive negative at their school*". | |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Participants did not provide any information regarding handling a learner with a negative outlook on life. | |
| **Learners that:** | **Abuse substances** | |
| **Reported as a difficult inclusive learner** | ✓ | |
| **Characteristics of such learners** | • Learners *"arrive at the school with illegal substances already in their system"* which negatively affects their concentration and abilities. | |
| **How to handle the learner** | • Participants did not provide any information regarding handling a learner that abuse substances. | |

With regard to table 2, participants referred to intrinsic and socio-economic barriers to learning that put learners in their schools at risk and focused their attention on barriers to the inclusion of individuals. The latter is in accordance with Loreman, Deppeler and

Harvey (2010: 1-2) and Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001: 310) that identifies inclusion as all forms of diversity in which learning and/or development of learners are impacted. Systematic or pedagogic barriers to learning were provided and are discussed in section 4.6. Teacher responses about the characteristics of inclusive learners and how to handle them were noted and in some instances their responses were satisfying. It is evident that teachers are familiar with the range of syndromes, disorders, defects and conditions that their inclusive school population consists of, but their knowledge of learner characteristics and practices to develop and implement special educational strategies to successfully include inclusive learners in the classroom are lacking and therefore do not qualify as authentic inclusion as set out by Slee (2001: 167-170) and Irvine et al. (2010: 74).

The researcher has noted that participants understand the concepts of inclusion and mainstreaming, the effect thereof in their own mainstream environment and the role they as teachers have to play in support of learners in an inclusive environment. However, it is evident from Table 2 that they struggle with certain inclusive types, they do not have sufficient knowledge about different inclusive learners and their unique needs, they do not have an array of strategies to accommodate inclusive learners and they do not develop specific inclusive strategies for implementation. With the latter in mind, what type of support and coaching regarding inclusion can a teacher provide to peers if teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of and do not implement authentic inclusion naturally within their daily conduct?

### 4.4.4 The role of the school based support team

Participants mentioned that their SMT mainly consists of a principal, three deputy principals and twelve head of departments. They revealed that their schools have a formal arrangement that resulted in the appointment of one HOD to *“fill the position of an additional internal deputy principal”* to create an *“extended top management”* structure. These positions were *“created by the school SGB”* with the aim of *“providing teachers with more support”* regarding all formal and informal management aspects.

The following questions were asked:

“What kind of support do you get from the school management with regards to peer support?”

“Do you receive any support from your peers with regards to handling difficult inclusive learners?”

The schools have a SBST that is in charge of the inclusive school programme. A cascading approach towards managing inclusivity, which applies to a hierarchy of individuals supervising inclusivity, is utilized. According to the participants the *“SBST is an extended SMT”* and consists of a combination of non-teaching and teaching staff. Non-teaching support staff are incorporated in the form of a school psychologist, social worker and disciplinary head that are employed by the SGB as inclusion specialists that has *“the fulltime priority of dealing with inclusivity*” through institutional support.

The rest of the SBST is made up of post level 2 to 4 teaching staff in the form of the principal, deputy principals and head of departments. Twenty to twenty-five percent of the teaching staff serves on the SMT and the SBST. The school psychologist and deputy principal responsible for inclusivity are the individuals charged with administering school inclusion. One of the schools does not have a full time psychologist employed, due to financial constraints. The inclusive programme at that school is led by the deputy principal. Participants mentioned that they make use of a *“network of psychologists”* whenever they need assistance.

According to the participants, the schools’ SBST policy document, the policy for inclusive education and the policy for teaching, facilitating and learning, the cascading approach and reporting platform towards overseeing inclusivity of the SBST is structured and carried out as follows:

- Grade groups are split in to a junior (Grades 8 and 9), a senior one (Grades 10 and 11) and a senior two (Grade 12) group. The three deputy principals are *“each assigned a group”* of which they have to manage all administrative processes, including inclusivity. Deputy principals are supported within the grade groups by selected head of departments that, for this purpose, are called *“grade tutors.”*

"*For example, there will be five HODs that will act as a grade tutor and report to the deputy principal in charge who oversees matters*…"

A grade tutor is defined as an individual assigned with the duty of being co-responsible for a grade group, who deals with any issues regarding inclusivity of an administrative nature. Teachers as register and academic classroom teachers are encouraged to manage inclusive issues in their classrooms.

According to the schools SBST policy document teachers are expected to:

*"have educational talks with a learner; provide motivation and encouragement; provide individual guidance; provide assistance to a learner whose work is behind; provide additional assessment opportunities and extra-assignments for homework; provide learners and their parents with feedback of test results; notify parents of a learner by letter or SMS of extra lessons being offered by classroom teachers; notify parents of a learner if the learners academic work is not up to date; provide feedback to parents during parent meetings and also to make recommendations and to make use of the schools existing disciplinary system."*

Participants are, however, instructed to report any inclusive matter, especially instances *"of an academic nature and outside of the academic spectrum, that they cannot solve themselves"* to the designated individuals. The latter refers to issues that are sources of an external *"social and emotional"* nature. According to the schools' SBST policy documents, learners that have to be reported include those:

*"that are academically failing; who have been condoned the previous year; who reveal behavioural changes; who experience depression; that are unmotivated; whose behaviour is disruptive; who experience remedial problems (reading/sentence play/basic editing, etc.); who experience dyslexia; who experience teenage pregnancies; who have serious health problems (including HIV/epilepsy/anorexia/etc.); who experience aggression; who have physical disabilities (hearing impaired/deaf/blind/limbs); who experience difficulty adjusting; who are guilty of youth crimes; who are absent and any other learner who a teacher is worried about."*

- The first line of reporting is through the *"grade tutor or any other HOD."* The grade tutor then reports the case to the relevant authorised individual responsible for specific cases. These individuals are the psychologist, social worker, disciplinary head and/or deputy principal in charge of a group.
- When a case is reported by a teacher, the *"SBST immediately takes over the reported case."* This strategy lessens the administrative load of teachers dealing with cases of learners with SEN so that teachers can refocus and resume their academic responsibilities uninterrupted.

  *"What we usually do when there is a big problem, we refer the learner to the grade head or deputy principal and they will take over the reported incident so that you as a teacher can go on with your classes during the day."*
- Designated teachers within and across grade groups are then be instructed to provide the SMT with a comprehensive personal report, based on their professional opinion, of the reported learners' transgressions or issues experienced.

  *"…we then write a detailed description of the problems we experience with that learner."*
- What follows is that teacher responses are processed and assessed by the SBST. The support team compiles a report based on consulted information, notifies and schedules meetings with parents, provides relevant evidence, addresses and/or solves problems in conjunction with parents.

  *"Teachers provide management with information and management goes on to action."*
- The SBST has a meeting *"once a month"* (three times a term) in addition to SMT meetings to discuss all matters regarding inclusion that *"were reported during the time frame"* between gatherings.

  *"…all matters that come on to the table are discussed."*

  Discussions are dominated by interpretations, solutions and motivations based on the extent of the barriers experienced by learners and *"how to provide support to learners and teachers."* Participants mentioned that they made use of expert professionals, other than the school support staff to attain professional opinions on matters regarding inclusion. These individuals are role players from different areas in society such as

security, health and faith, because inclusion influences not only the school but also the community as a whole.

- The SBST, especially non-teaching support staff, is responsible to communicate cases to all school stakeholders which include management, teachers, parents, learners and the DoE.

The cascading approach and support structure of the school with regard to managing inclusivity is in line with research conducted by Irvine et al. (2010: 74), Knochen and Radford (2012: 144-146), Clement and Vanderberghe (2001: 44), Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013: 169). They contend that the SBST is ideally placed to be actively involved with the inclusive programme of a given school through advocacy, to lead by setting examples and by supporting teachers through optimal sustainable professional development and by providing support materials. A more expansive system that involves the utilisation of multiple individuals on a team through problem-solving and decision-making is also recommended. Such a system leads to groups, rather than individuals influencing future decisions. This line of action is corroborated by the findings of Tod et al (2011: 46) who stress team-initiated problem-solving.

Participants made it clear that post level 1 teachers are not part of the SBST.

> "…the SBST *which is mainly the management, the HODs, the grade heads, but post level 1 teachers don't, we are informed informally.*"

Post level 1 teachers are excluded from SBST meetings where planning is done and inclusive policy and strategies are implemented. If post level 1 teachers are responsible for implementing inclusivity in their classrooms the question is why they are not made part of the SBST. The SBST can serve as a valuable basis for the development of all teachers. Teachers are dependent on other stakeholders to support them in their quest for full inclusion.

Excluding teachers from the SBST meetings is not in line with the recommendations made by Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013: 46), Castello and Boyle (2013: 130)

and Boyle et al. (2011: 170). They state that if teachers are to fully support inclusion policies and practices, they must be involved in all matters regarding inclusion.

*"Teachers do receive feedback about inclusive cases"* during their *"morning meetings."* The feedback is predominantly about *"background information"* and *"diagnosis"* of a learner with barriers and is shared on a *"need-to-know basis."* It is to be asked if this feedback leads to any inclusive conduct on the part of the classroom teacher.

> "*Management only tells teachers to give special attention to specific learners.*"
>
> *"You really don't know, until someone tells you…"*

Besides the school psychologist, social worker and disciplinary specialist, participants mentioned that there are *"no teaching staff, according to their knowledge, that have specialised qualifications*", besides their BEd degrees, about treatment of inclusive learners.

> "…*it is very nice to ask the psychologist questions about a specific inclusive learner and receive expert advice and knowledge and then to collaborate with other staff members on how to handle such a learner in an educational setting.*"

If teachers were to be provided with the opportunity to be part of the SBST it could lead to professional development support and coaching opportunities. According to the participants, teachers are in need of detailed and *"specific advice on how to successfully handle and accommodate inclusive learners"*. According to Opperti and Brady (2011: 468) and Engelbrecht et al. (1999: 53) receiving exposure to cases managed by the SBST could lead to coaching and support opportunities, improved compassion, clarified perceptions and greater acceptance of all types of learners and the barriers that put them at risk of failing. If teachers were to be empowered, when it came to inclusion, it would lead to the enhancement of academic and social success for learners and a better distribution and more maintainable workload for the SBST and teachers, which might lead to improved work satisfaction.

> "*You will then not have 80 teachers running to management each day with a certain problem.*"

*"These individuals who help manage the inclusive structure of the school have a big task because they are only a handful of individuals and the school have more than a thousand learners."*

*"Teachers cannot refer each and every case to the SBST."*

Teaching is a very emotional job and learners with barriers can be challenging to cope within the classroom, especially when it is a difficult inclusive learner. *"If teachers don't help management with implementing inclusivity then the SBST cannot be successful"* in their quest for successful inclusion.

*"A teacher that stands in front of a class must realise the whole inclusive package."* If teachers are *"uninformed and unaware*" of barriers to inclusion, then support cannot be successfully provided. Therefore, *"it is very necessary for teachers to know",* be skilled and to sustainably transfer knowledge gained to the classroom. *"There is a reason why a learner is acting the way they are"* and teachers should be empowered by the SBST to *"work smarter and not harder, especially with disciplinary problems.*"

Participants indicated that it is important to communicate about inclusive challenges so that *"teachers can experience support and realise that they are not the only ones facing difficulties that can be overwhelming."* Communication about matters helped teachers appreciate the fact, that they were *"not alone in their quest to make a difference."* Teachers could feed off each other's experience when they saw or heard what others were doing for inclusive success. The conduct of a teacher in handling a difficult learner(s) with barriers depended on the *"information and the training a teacher had"* in dealing with different types of learners. Therefore, if teachers were uninformed and did as they thought right, rather than collaborating their efforts, *"their conduct could lead to more damage than good,"* especially when they did not understand the barrier to inclusion. *"Teachers could treat a very serious inclusive problem as something that a learner did on purpose"* and this could lead to behaviour and actions ("unprofessional conduct on the part of the teacher.") that was not in the best interest of the learner.

"*Everything is about the learner in the end.*"

Positive experiences and results were reported in cases where teachers were informed about a learner's barriers to learning and could provide appropriate and additional support related to academic work.

> "*The fact that a teacher is more aware that a learner is struggling with some issues, they will provide a little more tender love and care.*"
>
> *"…specific meetings our social worker analysed our learners as a group. She gave statistics on how many learners at home have parents, how many of them are in children's homes, how many of them are in foster care, how many of them are living with their grandparents, how many have a subsidy, so that staff can have a feel for the environment.*"

Participants mentioned that *"there is a support culture amongst teachers towards inclusivity with teachers who possess the right attitude but certainly not amongst all staff."*

> "*It is sometimes difficult to be supportive and teach learners with inclusive barriers.*"
>
> "…*the experience can be uncomfortable because you do not know the extent of their abilities.*"
>
> "*It is not always because of a lack of training or education.*"
>
> "*Even if you try to be as inclusive as possible, there is a difference between theory and practicality by having inclusive learners in your class.*"

According to the participants *"there are teachers who do not share the same enthusiasm for inclusivity"* that had a negative effect on the support culture for peer and inclusive support, especially at management level and that had a ripple effect within their departments. Nel et al. (2014: 908) state that staff, especially novice teachers can find the levels of negativity towards inclusion very difficult to ignore. Therefore, teachers need positive role models who embrace inclusivity so that they experience inspirational conduct which they themselves can aspire to.

Schools have *"a certain norm of acceptable behaviour within a classroom*" that is promoted and that needs to be upheld by all teachers in a grade, as is in accordance with the school culture and disciplinary code of conduct for teachers and learners. This is

extremely important because current and future ideals as pertains to inclusion for the school's academic and social structure and atmosphere are involved.

> *"If learners are allowed to react with unacceptable inclusive behaviour in one class and their behaviour is not acceptable in another, it can have a negative effect on peers."*

Teachers have to set the example and maintain the norm on a consistent basis. Therefore, teachers need to come together to maintain, build on and sustain an inclusive culture and environment.

> *"Discipline cannot just be practised in one class; it must be constantly practiced in all classes to make the teachers' work easier, especially with learners with difficult personalities or because of a physical or learning disability."*

## 4.5 Coaching as a form of support in the school environment: conceptual framework application

It seems clear that a peer support coaching model is to be recommended in order to promote the development and support of teachers. Teachers need to realize authentic inclusion through the implementation and sustainability of inclusion strategies.

Participants mentioned that coaching as a form of peer support with regards to inclusivity was experienced positively as it was *"helping teachers to manage inclusivity in their classrooms to the benefit of learners"* with barriers which hinder inclusion.

### 4.5.1 Definition of peer support coaching

In answer to the question on their understanding of peer coaching, participants mentioned that it is a formal and informal communication platform where teachers of all post levels collaborate with their peers within and across departments to form a *"voluntary partnership"* or *"mentorship"* to *"learn from peer experiences"*, especially with regard to inclusion on a regular basis.

According to the participants a peer coach is an individual who has distinguished knowledge, experience and critical thinking skills and has *"achieved success"* with

managing inclusive instruction. Such an individual can be invaluable to teacher peers who do not possess sufficient background on inclusive teaching and lack expertise or are not familiar with a specific case. *"A peer coach can be any person"* and the position is not only reserved for the most accomplished individual.

> "*…it's not necessarily somebody with a higher qualification, but it is someone just like you.*"
>
> "…*that person will share knowledge, wisdom, and experience with colleagues who are less experienced and less knowledgeable about certain big issues.*"
>
> "*That somebody has experience in a certain thing and it's important for them to share it with other people.*"

Participants mentioned that both novice and mature teachers could be the beneficiaries of inclusive peer coaching and after consultation they should optimally be able to incorporate their acquired knowledge successfully in practice in the classroom. Therefore, with a view to professional development, both the peer coach and the individual(s) receiving coaching could *"potentially benefit from the process."*

The definitions of peer coaching and a peer coach provided by the participants are corroborated by Robbins (1991), Swafford (1998: 54-57), Huston and Weaver (2007: 10-13), Waddell and Dunn (2005: 87), Ladyshewsky, (2010: 81) and Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey (2010: 1-2). They state that bridges need to be built between classrooms, where teachers that predominantly work in isolation can incorporate their efforts to collectively determine inclusive support strategies and work together to achieve desired outcomes.

The process of peer coaching can have an *"undesirable effect"* when coaching is provided, but the corrective feedback is evaluative. The peer who is receiving help might *"not see the criticism as positive"*, despite comments about it *"being fair and true."* The latter can lead to negative perceptions and a situation where teachers will resist coaching. Robbins (1991) and Aguilar (2013) maintain that peer coaching should be non-evaluative and objective feedback must be provided in a non-threatening and supportive way. If the latter is not the case then the coach takes on the role of an evaluator and not a

collaborator of learning (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81). Coaching is not a formal inspection or assessment, but a source of support where individuals commit to achieving a common goal (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 81).

> "…*an individual must not be over sensitive that you think the person is criticizing you.*"
>
> "*Don't take it as criticism and learn from them.*"
>
> "*We are never too old to learn.*"
>
> "*We learn from each other but you have to be able to take it.*"

As with the concepts of inclusivity and mainstreaming, participants are knowledgeable about what coaching is and what the role of the coach entails and their definitions are in line with those found in other research on these topics. Theoretically, participants use their own experiences to define these concepts.

### 4.5.2 The importance of peer coaching

In this regards, three questions were asked:

"How is peer coaching experienced in your school with regards to inclusivity?"

"What kind of support do you get from the school management with regards to peer support and coaching?"

"What is being done by management to create opportunities of in-service training?"

Participants said that their conducts as teachers are *"aimed at learner development"* and the sustainability thereof and *"if teachers' supported their peers, their peers could then better support their learners."* Peer support through coaching is therefore ultimately aimed at the benefit of learners. Peer coaching is important because *"all teachers have different personalities and strengths"* and weaknesses *"and can learn from each other."*

> "*There are so many inclusive learners in our school that need extra support and there is a much bigger need for inclusive information by teachers than we think.*"
>
> "…*many teachers are open to learning about inclusivity.*"

The teaching staff of each of the three schools displayed an advantageous balance between novice and mature teachers that if exploited through successful coaching

structures could result in symbiotic relationships for each of the schools, teachers and learners. *"Mature teachers are open to learning from novice teachers"* because of the modernity and innovation that they bring to the work environment.

*"Grade 8 and 9 learner"* groups, according to *"school and departmental regulation"*, are administratively placed in the *"same register class"*, and attend all their *"academic classes together as a class group"* for the whole year. *"All grade 9 teachers have the same class learners"* for the individual academic subjects which they teach. This provides an opportunity for teachers to become more knowledgeable about *"learner's strengths and weaknesses".* Many occasions arise for teachers to interact through supportive mechanisms within and across curricula.

With regard to the schools' daily staff meetings, teachers at the schools involved are grouped into teaching groups by an administrative arrangement. All the grade 9 teaching staff members, sit together along with the deputy principal and grade tutor in charge of the grade 9 group.

### 4.5.3 Informal and formal coaching within the school environment

Both formal and informal coaching were evident in the schools. Participants mentioned that an *"unofficial mentorship"*, where management or a more senior teacher would help guide and look after novice as well as other teachers, are in place at their schools. These mentors shared their expertise and experiences in what might be called collaborative relationships.

> "*A form of support is experience.*"
>
> "*Through years of experience and from personal experience I had to learn to handle difficult learners in a classroom.*"
>
> "…*to me it is important that I can share my 30 years of experience with younger colleagues…*"
>
> "…*we've got a whole mentor program here at our school.*"
>
> "…*if there is a new teacher there will be a mentor to help the person.*"
>
> "…*peer coaching is to learn from each other by visiting classes*".

"*Colleagues helping each other to improve their teaching methods, especially for inclusive learners*".

#### 4.5.3.1 Informal coaching

According to participants informal coaching took place when an experienced and/or skilled teacher (coach) *"intuitively helped a peer"* in need of consultation by providing support through dialogue. It was informal as the action of mentorship was not *"scheduled in advance."* Informal coaching was not organized by the school.

Teachers knew which individuals they could approach for support regarding a specific need. They knew which persons *"might have encountered a similar situation"* and *"successfully dealt with the matter."*

"…*informal support happens in a teachers own time and discretion.*"

"*Yes, I do think I have peers I can talk to.*"

"*I will also go to different peers, with different situations."*

*"…you know which of your peers can support you in this specific situation*"

"*Someone in my department would come to me and say, ma'am I have difficulty handling this child with HDHD in my class, what would you recommend I do?"*

"*a younger, less experienced teacher will come to you and ask your advice, how do I handle this situation?"*

Participants mentioned that teachers as peers have informal discussions during morning meetings, at break time, and during extra-mural activities, but these discussions were *"rarely focused on inclusive"* learners and corresponding matters. Discussions were mostly about personal matters and casually involved talking about curricular content and extra-mural activities.

A teacher would provide support, especially inclusive support *"if they were asked."* The kind of support that teachers provided was based on work experience and expertise regarding pedagogical experiences in handling inclusive learners. Participants did not have a supportive mindset in that they would intentionally try to provide inclusive coaching because of limited time available and few opportunities to interact sufficiently during the

course of a normal school day. Participants mentioned that they usually only asked for support whenever a problem or need arose and were not always pro-active with their planning and decision-making.
"*But don't we all wait until there is a problem?*"

A few cases of informal, inclusive peer support and coaching were reported, but these were isolated incidents over the course of their careers and notably, did not happen on a regular basis.

Discussions happened between more experienced teachers who provided support to each other, as well as to novice teachers, but novice teachers also supported both each other as well as more experienced teachers.

#### 4.5.3.2 Formal coaching

According to participants formal coaching took place when peers had *"compulsory scheduled"* and structured coaching sessions that had been diarized and communicated to all relevant stakeholders in advance.

The schools have a *"teacher development plan"* which consists of daily morning meetings, Wednesday in-service training during their morning meetings and grade intervention meetings which are compulsory to attend. These meetings are primarily held to discuss the *"programme of the day"* and to attend to *"urgent educational matters."* The latter refers to all school matters and also information received from the DoE *"as per requirement of a state circular."*

Staff meetings are scheduled every morning before school starts and are *"led by the principal."* On Wednesday mornings, the morning meeting is utilized for in-service training. *"Teachers are provided topics beforehand so that they can prepare"* for these sessions. In-service training is usually led by the *"principal or SMT member."*
The aim of these meetings is peer support, but *"not necessarily inclusive teaching support or coaching."* Discussions held are primarily about curricular, co-curricular and extra-

curricular activities and act as a session for imparting information so that staff are informed and have knowledge of all school events. Opportunities for open forum discussions are provided during which all staff, seated in their grade groups, can provide input.

With regards to inclusivity, these meetings provide the ideal opportunity to inform the whole staff about learners with special educational needs. Participants mentioned that the principal, deputy principal, school psychologist, social worker or disciplinary head would use these daily meetings to address pressing issues on inclusivity and provide useful information about certain learners. The information shared would mainly be about a learner's background and diagnosis.

> "*When the SMT has knowledge that a learner with SEN is attending the school, they will inform the staff about that specific learner.*"
>
> "*Relevant classroom teachers will be approached as a group and a one-on-one basis to discuss the learners.*"

The latter leads to group discussions with teachers who can provide additional detail about the situation.

Participants reported that the top management, in consultation with other members of the SMT meets *"before morning staff meetings" and "at the end of the day to discuss items on the agenda."* As per teacher seating arrangements during morning staff meetings, participants emphasized that the deputy principal and grade tutor seated at their grade table *"provided them with additional information"* that led to informal group discussions. The SMT members then gave feedback and raised the concerns of the grade teachers at SMT meetings. Therefore, these individuals have an important supportive role to fulfil with the teachers of the grade group. Teachers are provided with *"minutes of staff meetings"* after consultations.

Once a term, according to the participants, *"after learner progression reports had been distributed"*, each grade group conducted an intervention meeting where all grade group teachers discussed learners with SEN, reached consensus on learner profiles and

compiled a list of and reported about identified learners who were at risk of underperforming and/or failing. Learner academic performance and behavioural issues were the main topics of discussion. Teachers used *"class lists and academic promotion sheets"* as sources to prepare for these meetings.

> "*Every learner is discussed, whether it is a gifted learner, average learner or a learner that is at risk of failing.*"

Findings of these meetings were *"provided to the SBST."*

These development plan sessions were vital and served as a valuable platform for teachers to come together and experience discussions on inclusion as a group. They were brought to cognition of the inclusive reality facing their school and how each individual could positively influence the phenomena as well as how they could effect on each other's practice.

Participants criticized the effectiveness of these development plan sessions. They mentioned that *"there were no follow-up sessions after the initial intervention meetings." "Information was not provided back to the grade groups",* via the SBST on mediation processes and it was not specifically stipulated what the teacher involvement and roles of teachers would be to help with the identified inclusive issues. Participants mentioned that they had noticed that on many occasions *"the same learners were discussed each term and year"* with the same transgressions and performance levels. This led them to question the success of these interventions. Teachers *"thought that management was not succeeding"* in their efforts to manage and solve inclusive issues and that teachers were left to act inclusively within their own limits and at their own discretion.

From the school's policy on inclusive education, documents of learner intervention and from participant responses there is proof that the schools do have a database of students diagnosed with disabilities or identified as learners with special educational needs and that their SBST regularly and systematically analyses the progress of identified individual learners. But do the SBST strategize with and monitor their classroom teachers who perform the inclusive conduct within classrooms? If this does not take place it is not ideal.

Knochen and Radford (2012: 144-146) and Lim, Wang and Tan (2014: 130) argue that teachers need to be put at the forefront of inclusive actions because they are the ones serving learners with barriers within the classrooms on a daily basis.

> "*Even if there is an inclusive problem and a solution, we do not always hear back from management and you do not know if something is being done.*"

Participants mentioned that school management was *"addressing the wrong"* focal points for in-service training. Participants felt that *"discipline and academic instruction with regard to inclusive learners"* should be at the forefront of their training agenda.

The plenary sessions mentioned above did not constitute coaching. Apart from these, the schools who were part of the study had no formal coaching sessions aimed at the inclusive professional development of teachers. These development plan sessions were supportive and motivational in nature, but provided little practical transferability to the classroom. According to Robbins (1991), Swafford (1998; 54), Huston and Weaver (2007: 10-13) and Ladyshewsky (2010: 81) if development sessions are to qualify as coaching, coaching groups (teachers of all levels) need to have a platform where they can voluntarily and regularly come together and collaboratively determine and define their inclusive needs, find collective solutions to problems through reflection, build new skills through sharing ideas, learn from one another, develop an inclusive curriculum, apply learnt skills practically, provide and receive feedback, evaluate results, solve problems, and stimulate professional relationships, among others. This collaboration should be based on values such as mutual trust, shared commitment, human dignity and respect.

There was no evidence from the interviews conducted or documents collected that supported any formal platform with regards to coaching; nothing to indicate that the schools applied technical coaching, collegial coaching and/or challenge coaching through their SBST and teachers. This is in contrast to the SBST policy at each of these schools that states that one of the roles of the SBST is *"teacher development"* and to provide *"important attention to develop teachers and provide empowerment"* so that teachers can be developed optimally to be able to cope with inclusivity.

Technical coaching refers to a process where teachers attend a development opportunity, learns new inclusive strategies, are paired with experienced teachers or expert teaching professionals, apply learnt strategies practically and are evaluated accordingly after observations and evaluations (Garmston, 1987: 18-19; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). An advisory approach is the key component of technical coaching (Ladyshewsky, 2010: 80).

Collegial coaching refers to a process where an individual teacher who struggles with a specific area as regards inclusivity, strives to receive coaching from a knowledgeable peer and not from an expert professional or from learnt strategies at a development opportunity. The teacher is evaluated by the peer as well as self-evaluates his/her own instructional efforts, in the process of realizing open and honest professional dialogue between teachers (Garmston, 1987: 18-19; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). Through collegial coaching, which is aimed at self-maintained improvements, teachers implement their own action plans (Hershfeld et al., 2012: 14-15; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009: 158; Rosenfeld, 1987).

Challenge coaching refers to a process where small groups of teachers collaborate in an effort to find solutions to continual classroom problems regarding inclusivity. In challenge coaching, classroom teachers are seen as the most insightful individuals when it comes to practical classroom improvements (Garmston, 1987: 18-19; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15). Non-teaching professionals are often consulted (Garmston, 1987: 18-19; Hershfeldt et al., 2012: 14-15).

There was no evidence, in the schools that participated in the study, of any formal coaching structures in conducting technical, collegial or challenge coaching, where classroom teachers learned from each other or intentionally formed partnerships with other teachers to improve inclusive efforts. The supportive coaching that teachers did receive seemed to be non-transferable and almost never led to action outside of the venue where they attained information. Participants mentioned that they were *“not aware of any individuals providing formal coaching to teachers.”*

The schools do not provide any accredited *"in-service training qualifications*" to teachers to improve inclusivity. If teachers furthered their formal qualifications or conduct coaching it was *"done at their own discretion"* with regards to "*time and financial responsibility"* and was not enforced by the school or DoE.

Participants mentioned that if they did further their studies, they received formal support from their management in that by *"departmental policy"* teachers are granted *"study leave on the day before"* their official test and the *"day that the test"* was to be written. To be granted study leave they as teachers had to provide *"sufficient evidence"* of their student *"registration, dates and modules"* for examination purposes beforehand so that the "*necessary leave and class arrangements*" could be made, according to policy. Participants also mentioned that they were provided with study leave to attend courses that were not part of a tertiary qualification. *"The course was during school hours and the SMT supported a request"* to attend a course after they had explained its significance. They also needed to *"provide the SMT with a catch up plan with their learners for the academic time lost."*

Participants did however mention that their schools have an assistant teacher programme by which assistant teachers are employed by the school. These assistant teachers are part-time students at the University of South Africa (UNISA). They are placed in classrooms with senior teachers to learn how things work in the classroom on a full-time basis, in conjunction with their studies. The programme is very valuable because assistant teachers also learn how to work with learners who have barriers to inclusion. Participants, however confirmed that, the coaching of these individuals happened informally and there was no scheduled in-service training. The individuals are guided and supported on a daily basis by their mentor teacher on all educational aspects as they deal with the day to day interaction of their learners.

> "*Perhaps the reality of inclusion does not come as such a shock to student teachers in contrast to a full time student who have been away at university for four years and then come back as a qualified teacher and they need to align the theory of what they have learnt with the practice they are already in.*"

## 4.6 Factors that contribute or hinder peer support with regards to inclusivity

### 4.6.1 Factors that hinder peers support with regard to inclusivity

According to the participants, in answer to the question about it, the following factors hindered peer support through coaching within the inclusive school environment:

#### 4.6.1.1 Time and workload constraints

During the course of a typical school day, teachers find it really difficult to provide needed support to peers and inclusive learners. This is because teachers have a full academic class schedule with additional co-curricular and administrative duties and demanding extra-mural responsibilities that leaves little time during the course of a school week to attend to matters such as giving support or coaching opportunities.

> *"…grade 9 classes we teach roughly 37 learners, with 37 minutes per period. Within the 37 minutes' teachers teach content, give homework, identify problems but have limited time and opportunity available to address inclusive issues.*"

After the regular academic school day, *"from 07:00 am to 14:00"* has come to an end, *"the extra-mural programme starts at 14:15"*, Monday to Thursday and depending on teachers' sporting, cultural or extra-academic duties that they are a part of, *"can run till past six at night."*

> *"Competition days are usually on Fridays and Saturdays."*

All members of the teaching staff are involved in extra and co-curricular programmes at their schools that range from *"attending academic district meetings, giving extra classes and coaching sport and cultural activities", to parents' evening* and others. They also mentioned that their extra and co-curricular programme starts in *"January and ends in the last term for the year."*

The extra-curricular programme teachers have to keep up with is too demanding and therefore they do not have sufficient time or motivation to attend to matters that will promote inclusion, such as conducting extra classes, attending coaching or training sessions by means of workshops or to further studies, at all.

*"If teachers are not in the classroom or on the sport and cultural field coaching, they are marking and preparing academic work that is finished at home and also takes place after hours."*

According to the participants they *"are expected to attend training and further their professional development"* but where should they find the time? This goes without mentioning finding time to pay additional attention to learners who struggle academically.

Participants claimed that teachers stick to their own rigid teaching structures and schedules according to departmental regulations for their subjects and do not synchronize their administrative efforts, especially when they shared a subject or subject matter which was similar across curricula. This happened in spite of the fact that, as participants mentioned, teachers were meant to collaborate in their efforts, especially when they shared a subject, in order to standardize their efforts.

These constraints place huge barriers on teachers to develop themselves professionally. Schools possess many talented individuals who have remarkable knowledge and experience to contribute but who are not provided sufficient formal and informal opportunities to share their expertise and support one another.

*"Even when you have a free admin period during the course of the school day, you have so many administrative matters to attend to that you can't just use that time solely to communicate with the psychologist, parents or peers, even if the need arises."*

According to the participants, only the management personnel attend formal or informal meetings after school, because of *"lesser extra-mural responsibilities."*

#### 4.6.1.2 Lack of formal management plan for scheduled coaching

The schools do not have a formal strategy or schedule for coaching that focuses solely on inclusion for the development and support of their teachers. The only meetings that have an entirely inclusive focus are those of the SBST, which exclude post level 1 teachers, and compulsory grade group intervention meetings which take place once a term. These scheduled meetings are supportive in nature and do imply coaching. No

formal opportunities for coaching meant to further teacher development in order to cope with inclusion have been reported by participants.

"*There is limited dialogue about how to successfully include these learners."*

#### 4.6.1.3 Lack of interest and passion of some staff members towards inclusivity

According to the participants, there are a number of teachers who resist coaching meant to improve efforts at inclusion due to negativity. These teachers are driven to deal with subject content and they do not share the same passion and enthusiasm shown by many others to make a difference when it comes to inclusion.

"…*we have teachers whose results are good and that have an attitude that they do not need training and also teachers who ignore inclusive barriers and do not try to help individuals even if they identify inclusive barriers.*"

The latter can have big implications for a culture of inclusion and learner development in the long run.

"…*almost every learner in your class has some sort of inclusivity.*"

Besides negative attitudes, teachers have the aspiration to develop themselves but not necessarily the motivation to further their studies or attend additional training, because such activities do not automatically lead to promotion or an increase in salary. Participants mentioned that if promotion or an increase in salary were to be on the cards, more teachers would consider furthering their studies.

"*Then why will you want to study further?"*

According to participants you can work for a certain number of years, gain experience and also be *"promoted to an HOD without furthering your studies and so get an increased salary."*

"*Then why should they take the time out of their already busy professional and personal schedule to study if it is not going to benefit them more?"*

#### 4.6.1.4 Disguising weaknesses at inclusive teaching

Participants mentioned that teachers, especially novice teachers were fearful that if they showed inexperience or weakness by unsuccessfully handling inclusive situations they would be regarded as inferior educators. Boyle et al. (2011: 170) and Goodman and Burton (2010: 224) state that teachers need to have the courage and ease to request support from co-teachers. If that is not the case, then teachers will refrain from accepting support through coaching. If there are no continuous platforms available where all teachers will have the opportunity to collaborate openly and honestly about inclusive barriers that they struggle with, teachers will not combine their efforts and associate through teamwork.

*"I am sometimes afraid of what others will think when a situation gets out of hand…"*

*"I am afraid to ask…"*

#### 4.6.1.5 Teachers' inclusive education

Teachers' background to inclusive education is very important for authentic inclusion, especially if they work with learners with special or additional needs.

Participants mentioned that due to a lack of formal coaching on inclusion, they had a hard time in addressing learners when it came to giving correct and immediate support because they did not have the knowledge and experience. Therefore, the teaching staff as a whole needed to focus on inclusion and for this purpose, support and coaching were very important.

*"I do not know how to identify a learner that is inclusive."*

*"I do not have enough experience working with a learner with a disability."*

*"…as a teacher in this specific school I am not geared to handle inclusive learners correctly."*

Teachers should not only focus on the results of the best learners, but have to acknowledge that learners with special needs are the ones who need them the most.

*"…it is very important to get the best out of every individual learner."*

*"…for me it is even more important to see a learner who is failing, pass a subject."*
*"Learners who get distinctions will get it without good teachers, they will get them anyway."*

#### 4.7.1.6 Cost of teacher development

The opportunities for teachers to professionally develop themselves for the purpose of inclusion are limitless and are continuously available. However, *"teachers do not always have the financial capability or information to attend"* such courses and are negatively influenced by evaluating the financial and personal benefits of pursuing these opportunities.

If teachers want to attend a course or further their professional studies, they themselves have to pay for the courses.

*"Paying for your own additional professional development is a big problem for teachers."*

If a *"school budgets and pays for their development"*, participants said it would be more likely that they would attend courses. Schools have limited budgets from which to support teachers who wish to attend. The school's funds have to be democratically allocated according to the school's needs with regards to curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

Participants mentioned that *"inclusive teacher training was not a priority of the school and was not budgeted for."* However, if teachers went to management in advance and provided sufficient information about a professional development opportunity and the importance thereof for the benefit of teachers and the school, *"management would consider budgeting and paying for the course."* They would then send the organiser to go and attend the course upon which that person would *"cascade the information and knowledge learnt to the rest."*

*"It is very difficult to attend a workshop during the course of a school day, because schools do not have substitute teachers at their disposal to take care of those specific teachers' classes for the day, which also complicates things."*

The schools also do not have the means to pay for additional teachers on a regular basis to stand in for teachers who are away on training.

#### 4.6.1.7 Department of Basic Education district meetings or courses

Participants mentioned that they, as individual teachers, *"get no notifications, directly from the DOE about any coaching opportunities"* for formal training. Information about courses or subject orientated meetings that gets to teachers in time is usually about meetings that cover subject content and that are not inclusive in nature.

> "*…the DoE hammers on subject content and subject content is not the problem.*"

The DoE sends all information about support or coaching aspects by way of a circular, to the principal and the principal then circulates it to the necessary individuals. The principal shares the information with the deputy principals and/or heads of department who then provides the relevant information to the teachers in the department. Regular district cluster meetings are about content and no satisfactory training is provided for teachers on how to support one another or the learners.

Participants had never attended a specific course on inclusion or received any information of courses about the same from the DoE or from their management on behalf of the DoE.

> "*We have to be taught about inclusive learners.*"

Participants regarded, out of their experience, courses from the DoE to be of lesser quality than university courses and not as good as those presented by expert professionals. They claimed that the sessions and the facilitators were "*not up to scratch*".

> "…*when you attend another meeting from the department that is not worthwhile then you don't want to attend a meeting at all.*"
>
> "…*the presenters are not professional enough and many times you can just read through the course material yourself and be of just as good.*"

Should the DoE courses be worthwhile and presented professionally, teachers would attend follow-up sessions or courses.

"…*that that hasn't happened with departmental courses but has happened with union courses*".

"*Many of the DoE courses are usually in vacation time and the quality is not always good. Am I willing to give up my vacation time for a course that is not going to be worthwhile?"*

"…*we do not know what courses we can go to, we don't know where to go (information), we don't know where to find out and whose paying for it, how are we going to get there, how long is it going to be, what type of course must I do.*"

Participants mentioned that they received more notices of continuous professional development, directly from their unions than from the DoE, especially with regards to inclusive education.

"*Again these sessions are done at your own discretion and funds*"

### 4.6.2 Factors that contribute to peer support with regards to inclusivity

According to the participants the following factors, as mentioned below, contributed to peer support through coaching within the inclusive school environment.

#### 4.6.2.1 Positive attitudes towards inclusivity

According to the participants, the DoE and schools expect teachers to see to their own professional development. Teachers who struggled with inclusion were *"desperate to include difficult inclusive learners successfully.*" Therefore, teachers were eager to attend any form of coaching if it could positively influence their teaching conduct.

"…*inclusivity is present and a reality in our schools, it is not a fairy tale and you deal with it daily, so if you can do something to make your daily school life better you have to develop yourself.*"

Many teachers are challenging barriers and attending training and furthering their studies in their own time and at their own discretion. According to participants, teachers, especially young teachers, experiences a professional development need with regards to continuous professional development. The latter is in line with the findings of Rakap and

Kaczmaker (2010: 63). Some teachers furthered their studies for *"potential career progression"* and sought to gain expert knowledge in their field to empower themselves. Older individual teachers, close to retirement, who did not have much to gain professionally, would be more hesitant to receive any form of coaching. If a teacher felt the need, passion and drive to solve a problem with inclusion *"they will do it, despite time and financial constraints."*

Younger teachers understood inclusive environments much better because *"they grew up in inclusive schools and environments"* and their tertiary qualification included compulsory learning about inclusion and exposure to it.

> *"Knowledge is power, but nothing can surpass experience."*

If a teacher has received coaching, collaborates with staff by cascading down learnt knowledge and leads by example, *"others will also be intrigued and also want to receive coaching because it adds value"* to their day to day conduct.

> "*If you have a good communication system even if it is with a few good friends that you made on the staff, you get informal coaching going on all the time.*"
>
> "*We do talk about our classes and you hear what works for them and what does not work and how they handle things in their classes.*"

Some of the participants had furthered their studies in the form of honours degrees in education leadership, law and management and by certificates in human resource management that improved their initial training. They mentioned that these added qualifications made huge contributions to their knowledge and to experience gained in their professional conduct. There is a monetary reward for furthering your studies.

> "*If you are a departmental employee you are provided with a once off departmental study bonus when completing any degree after your initial degree, for instance, honors, masters or a doctoral degree.*"

Participants did not however, mention any effect that furthering their studies had on their day-to-day inclusive conduct and support of their peers and learners.

#### 4.6.2.2 School Management Teams' support for teachers

Participants mentioned that their SMT have an attitude and ethos of care.

> "…*part of a teachers work description is to care about your learners.*"

The schools' SGB and SMT support inclusion and have a positive outlook of care, acceptance and support that is provided through maintaining a positive culture of inclusion from the top management and governance structures down to all relevant stakeholders. Their schools want to accept learners, wherever they come from and will support and care for them so that they can reach their optimum potential.

#### 4.6.2.3 Professional support from family members

Participants have family members with the necessary inclusion skills, which they themselves do not possess, that they can refer certain cases to. A participant mentioned that her mother is a grades 1-3 teacher who has a qualification in educational learner support, a field that she herself did not have expert knowledge in. The participant took a learner exam script to her mother to show her a specific learner's bad hand writing and she could provide assistance to the participant about possible remedial exercises to potentially improve the learners' hand-writing. The mother could not understand how the system had not picked up that the learner was in need of remedial intervention and that no action had been taken by teachers.

> "*I do not have the skillset to identify such things*".
>
> "*Such a learner needs to be reported as early as possible. Primary schools have a very important job to do in recognising inclusive problems with learners. It makes it very difficult to sort out these inclusive problems when they get to high school, especially with our content-based curriculum with CAPS*".

#### 4.6.2.4 Support from unions

Teacher Unions provide invaluable support with regards to professional development opportunities and fill a gap that the DoE is unable to fill, according to participants. Information about professional development opportunities are communicated to all teachers personally on a regular basis via email. Teachers on all levels, *"are at least being informed about training*" even if they cannot attend.

"*It is up to you if you are going to read the newsletters and follow up on it.*"

#### 4.6.2.5 Reality of learners with special needs

Participants mentioned that *"inclusive learners are on the school's doorstep*" and they have to handle, accommodate and support these learners. Teachers are confronted with learners with barriers and the challenges that they bring to the classroom on a daily basis. There is no avoiding this fact which *"pushes teachers forward to start doing something about it"* towards the success of learners. It influences teachers' conduct in class and their work satisfaction. Exposure to a classroom situation where everybody is included provides learners and teachers without SEN with the opportunity to acknowledge, learn about and learn to respect differences.

"*If we help the learner, you know the learners, the progress and the pass rate will be better and it will also be an advantage for the school.*"

There are many identified factors that contribute and hinder peer support through coaching. All educational stakeholders should acknowledge and discuss these factors in depth and see the complete institutional effect that they exert on the professional development of teachers when it is about inclusion. Support can be given towards a more inclusive classroom through coaching which will impact on the pedagogical ability of the teachers and on the culture of peer support.

## 4.7 Classroom pedagogy and external professional support within the school environment

### 4.7.1 Classroom pedagogical support

Participants mentioned that as a teaching collective, teachers recognise that inclusive learners are in their schools, "*they know about them, they care about them so that they can feel more comfortable and appreciated.*" *"Learners are also informed about inclusive learners in their classes or school",* to potentially put an observant halt to teasing and bullying through the positive promotion of inclusivity. This line of action is supported by Williams (1995: 74) and Segall and Campbell (2010: 1158). The deputy principal or classroom teacher will usually go to the class and inform learners of the learner with

barriers. In the experiences of the participants', the result of such a meeting was a provision of *"positive support and a better understanding of those individuals by their learner peers."* The latter is in line with what Makoelle (2012: 93-97) advocates, namely that teachers need to be involved in orientating learners about inclusivity, as ambassadors for inclusivity, so that they become aware of other learners' differences and learn to respect and tolerate one another. Therefore, teachers and learners are the greatest assets in promoting inclusive practices within their classrooms and their inclusive behaviour should positively influence their peers (Miles, 2000).

Opperti and Brady (2011: 463), Blanco (2009) and Makoelle (2012: 93-97) state that an inclusive curriculum ensures legitimate learning opportunities and content that contains, reflects and strengthens real-life diversity which is a product of shared commitment from all educational stakeholders to the benefit of all learners. With the latter in mind a question was asked about teachers' pedagogical inclusive classroom efforts at inclusion. "Have you done anything to change pedagogy to accommodate learners with special educational needs?"

Participants mentioned that in their classrooms they predominantly used a variety of methods of teaching by including resources involving modern technology in the form of computers, overhead data projectors, Wi-Fi internet, Power Points, video's and pictures, among others. With these they intentionally and unintentionally, because of the nature of their subjects, *"made learning more fun, interactive"* and more accessible. Especially the visual part of teaching provides endless opportunities for educating their learners. *"These interactive lessons reached, many more types of learners"* in a short space of time than older traditional methods of teaching. Processing and retention of knowledge were enhanced by the use of digital presentation. Audio-visual lessons using a theoretical outline *"to teach in a way that all learners could see and hear the teacher"* helped learners to apply the work practically and then do the work themselves.

According to participants, a good strategy for successful classroom teaching was to use a standard method of teaching through the use of Power Point slides, explain the work,

ask questions and get the answers from the learners before going on to a new section. In addition, there had to be discussions so that learners could benefit from other learners' knowledge. Learners had to be motivated to take notes and ask questions, homework control needed to be strict, learner performance targets had to be set by the learners themselves, tests had to be assessed and interventions provided as needed.

All of this is in line with the research conducted by Dahle (2003: 66), Fisher, Frey and Thousand (2003: 44), Segall and Campbell (2012: 1158), Forlin and Sin (2010: 17-19) and Ylonen and Norwich (2012: 308). Teaching is successful where teachers apply various teaching practice options to make learning easier, where a learner-centred approach to learning is applied through developing a more flexible range of teaching methods and where all types of assessments are used so that learners can take ownership of their own learning.

Participants did, however, indicate that they did not specifically change curriculum content intentionally to accommodate learners with barriers. The reason for this was that "*the big amount of learners in classrooms that made it difficult to provide individual attention to the most deserving learners*". Teachers struggle to complete their syllabus or aspects of the syllabus within a specified timeframe according to their annual teaching plan (ATP), which they are obliged to follow strictly. The combination of high expectations about learner performance and what the *"DoE expects from them to do content wise*" makes "*inclusive aspects fall through the cracks."* The latter is also reflected by the heavy burden of extra murals and the limited time during a normal school day to address inclusive issues.

> "*Sometimes I will discuss a lesson and realise that the curriculum in itself is too difficult for some of the learners. It is not that you change the pedagogy so much as you perhaps rephrase it to make the work more understandable through dialogue and go a few steps back to put the work in perspective, because there will be learners who understand the work just the way it is but for some learners you need to explain the work more.*"

"*You have to try to include all learners and cannot go on to a new section and leave learners behind, but sometimes you have no choice because of time constraints.*"

Teacher did not provide any information regarding teachers collaborating in developing inclusive curricula for inclusive learners. Teachers need to adapt, learn and grow to accommodate inclusive learners through inclusive pedagogical techniques.

### 4.7.2 External professional support for teachers

In answer to the question how they could benefit from professional support in supporting their peers and an inclusive school environment, participants mentioned that they "*are in need of external support by expert professionals."* They are very fortunate to have expert professionals on their staff in the form of an educational psychologist, social worker and disciplinary official. They could however *"definitely benefit from external professional support on how to handle, cope with and manage inclusivity"* which could also enable them to support their peers.

Chhabara et al. (2010: 221) and Boyle et al. (2011: 170) maintain that schools need to exploit the expert skills of their non-teaching support staff and incorporate them within a coaching programme. These experts hold higher levels of training, knowledge and experience of working with learners with barriers compared to any teacher. Teachers want to help individuals with special educational needs, but they lack the knowledge and confidence and if they have the right skillset, they will do the right things at the right time to help these learners. The knowledge and skills gained can then be used to provide support and coaching to other staff members.

If a course was to be "*facilitated or presented by an expert professional such as a doctor, professor or professional"* in their respective fields, participants would definitely want to attend such a session about inclusion because they would then know that the *"source was knowledgeable and that expert opinions"* and knowledge would be shared and that *"such a session was more likely to be worthwhile."* These experts are individuals who have theoretical and well-resourced knowledge which can be used to provide insightful, practical suggestions to teachers.

Participants mentioned that they believed the DoE, as the employer of teachers, has a great responsibility to help teachers in the quest for professional development, especially when it comes to inclusivity. They further mentioned that the district offices have the leverage to approach, for instance the "*universities to say to them"* that they could use their help *"in the training of teachers on all levels"* as they have the experts*.* According to the participants *"professional development of teachers should be the main priority of the DoE and schools"* and they should do much more than they were doing *"to act as a vehicle for teacher empowerment*" especially when it came to development and training of teachers regarding inclusivity. The latter is in line with research conducted by Nel et al. (2014: 908), Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001: 310) and Donohue and Bornman (2014: 643), according to which partnerships between teachers and inclusion professionals, especially at district levels should be formed.

> *"There are so many expert professionals at the district offices and they should use cluster meetings as empowerment sessions on academic and inclusive instruction."*

## 4.8 Conclusion

The data analysis provides a basis from which to reach the findings as set out in chapter five. The focus of chapter 4 is on data analysis using background information on the schools involved in the study, including the state of peer teacher support within the prevailing inclusive school culture, how coaching as a support mechanism is experienced with regard to formal and informal coaching structures, what the pedagogical reality within the classroom setting is and what the expert professional status quo of the schools is. The data analysis is a representation of results as interpreted by the researcher, using the participants, representing teachers at their schools, that constituted a case and is supported by interview data obtained and documents collected. The reliability of the findings is confirmed through triangulation. In chapter 5, research results are discussed and recommendations for future research are made. Teachers need to be empowered through support and coaching so that they, as inclusive classroom leaders, can become the expert professionals who empower others.

# Chapter 5

# Summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter describes the collection of data through interviews with Grade 9 teachers that include post level 1 teachers, head of departments and deputy principals as participants. The following documents have also been collected from the schools: policies on teaching, facilitating and learning, admission policies, SBST policies, learner intervention and support forms, the Department of Education policy documents (guidelines for the establishment of a SBST; referral procedures); documents on learners who experience SEN (learner progression schedules and minutes of meetings), teacher training programmes and schedules with regards to peer support, formal and informal grade group meetings, minutes of those meetings, amongst others. This is followed by data analysis in which participants' responses are transcribed, interview responses are summarized and collected documents are taken into account. Reflective notes have been used and emerging themes have been categorized. Key concepts emanating from the conceptual framework are discussed. This chapter will provide a summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study. A determination will also be made whether research questions have been responded to.

## 5.2 Summary of the findings

Based on the interview findings from the previous chapter under the following themes, the researcher intends to provide a brief summary of what has been found to be major. At a later stage, these findings will be linked to the research questions.

### 5.2.1 Summary of findings emanating from interview conducted at schools

- **Peer teacher support and the prevailing inclusive school culture**

  Key finding: The SBST is in charge of managing the inclusive school programme. However, the majority of teachers, as post level one teachers, are not made part of the SBST which hampers their professional development.

- **Coaching as a form of support in the school environment**
  Key finding: The schools have no formal coaching sessions aimed exclusively at the professional development of teachers to further inclusivity.

- **Factors that contribute or hinder peer support within the school**
  Key finding: The professional burdens of teachers with regard to academic and extra-curricular activities are overwhelming and cause an environment where inclusive conduct is not high on the priority list of teachers

- **Classroom pedagogy and external professional support within the school.**
  Key finding: A learner-centred approach to teaching is used to conduct lessons but teachers do not adjust their curriculum content to accommodate individual learner needs. Given time pressure, teachers lack creativity, enthusiasm and institutional support to adjust and develop the prescribed teaching content. Non-teaching inclusive professionals employed at the school provide inclusive support to classroom teachers but do not provide coaching.

### 5.2.2 Summary of findings emanating from documents collected at the schools

The responsibility of register and classroom teachers with regard to inclusive conduct and its management is expressed in the schools' SBST policies. Despite forming the frontline in implementing inclusivity, post level 1 teachers are not made part of the SBST meetings where inclusive policy and strategies are discussed and planned. This leads to a situation where teachers refer most cases where there are problems with inclusion to the SBST and do not handle them on their own. The latter is due to a lack of teacher confidence. They are not empowered by training and hands-on strategies when it comes to inclusion. From the policy for inclusive education and documents of learner intervention as used by the schools, there is proof that the SBST has a data-base of learners with SEN but there is no evidence that they strategize for or monitor the inclusive conduct of teachers.

The schools have not provided documents containing information regarding formal coaching or support platforms that they conduct at their schools through the SBST and

teachers do not apply technical coaching, collegial coaching and/or challenge coaching. The latter is in contrast to the SBST policy that states that the SBST has the responsibility to develop and empower teachers with regard to inclusivity. The development plan sessions do not constitute coaching but serve a supportive aim.

### 5.2.3 Summary of findings from literature

The SBST is ideally and excellently placed to lead and manage the inclusive programme of the school by supporting teachers through a cascading approach and an efficient reporting structure. According to research conducted by Irvine et al. (2010: 74), Knochen and Radford (2012: 144-146), Clement and Vanderberghe (2001: 44), Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013: 169) an actively involved SBST will promote and empower teachers through professional development opportunities and by providing support materials.

It is important that groups of individuals, involved at all levels of the school, collaborate and communicate openly and transparently to influence future decisions about inclusion. The latter is supported by Tod et al. (2011: 46) who stress team-initiated problem-solving and decision-making. Excluding teachers from the SBST meetings is in opposition to the findings by Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013: 169), Castello and Boyle (2013: 130) and Boyle et al. (2011: 170) who state that if teachers are to fully support inclusion policies and practices, they must be involved in all matters regarding inclusion. For the SBST to be successful, they desperately need a better representation of teachers. These teachers should have a positive attitude toward inclusion, be more skilled, experienced and motivated at handling and solving issues regarding learners with special educational needs than others. This is in line with the findings of Engelbrecht et al. (1999: 128-130) who maintain that teachers need to be professionally developed because they are expected to take charge of additional roles such as parent, nurse, social worker, occupational therapist and psychologist, amongst others which they are not formally qualified for. If teachers are provided with an opportunity to be a part of the SBST it can lead to a professional development support and coaching opportunity.

### 5.2.4 Synthesis of findings, document analysis and research questions

**How is peer support and coaching managed in an inclusive school?**

The SBST provides inclusive leadership and support through a cascading approach to learners, parents, teachers' and other relevant stakeholders of the school and creates platforms for communication, physical and professional support through networking with parents and discussing and providing support to teachers with regard to cases of learners with special educational needs. However, post level 1 teachers do not form part of the SBST.

**How is peer support and coaching experienced in an inclusive school?**

There is a need by classroom teachers to be empowered when it comes to inclusion and they are dependent on the SBST for the provision of a physical and administrative coaching platform where teachers can be supported and developed to transfer and apply newly acquired knowledge and strategies within their own, unique classroom environments. There need to be a better clarification by the SBST of how teachers should conduct themselves to promote inclusion.

The schools have no formal coaching sessions aimed exclusively at the professional development of teachers for improved inclusion of learners with special educational needs. The development sessions that the schools conduct, which participants regard as coaching, are supportive and motivational in nature and do not provide teachers with any help in coping with barriers to inclusion within classrooms. Informal teacher support has been reported which also does not constitute coaching.

**Which factors contribute or hinder peer support and coaching in an inclusive environment?**

Despite positive attitudes toward inclusion and support experienced, teachers' professional burden with regard to academic and extra-curricular activities is overwhelming and that creates an environment where teachers do not have the time, motivation or scheduled influences to regularly provide support, further their own

professional development or to allow themselves to be developed to improve their inclusive practices by their school or district offices.

**How do teachers engage with their peers to enable support in an inclusive learning environment?**

If peer support is provided in an inclusive learning environment, it is mainly done on an informal discussion basis. Teachers engage in informal support discussions during morning meetings, Wednesday in-service training and intervention meetings. This happens even though these meetings are formally scheduled and are not meant for informal discussion. Informal support is also provided whenever a need arises to discuss a matter regarding difficult learners. Discussions also take place at break time, between academic class periods and during extra-mural activities but inclusion is rarely the topic of discussion. Teachers do not intentionally have the mindset to provide peer support regarding inclusion.

## 5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the above-mentioned aspects:

### 5.3.1 Recommendations about teacher support and coaching

- **By management:** Plan, schedule and incorporate compulsory formal coaching opportunities and diarize them in the school year programme. The SGB and SBST should introduce, promote and influence coaching on inclusivity to teachers and lead by example. The benefits of the coaching process should be communicated to all teachers and they must be informed of the importance and possible successes of such a coaching programme. Borrowed policies need to personalised according to the unique environment and needs of the school. Teachers need to focus, as a staff collective on the things that have worked in the past, but also realise that they must leave and make room for new things.

- **By outside agencies:** Expert professionals can be incorporated for these sessions at a fee. Expert professionals on the staff must also be incorporated. The SMT should

acknowledge individual skills and use these to the advantage of the whole staff.

- **By school-based mechanisms:** Schools do have a professional development policy for teachers, but do not have a formal policy regarding training for coping with inclusivity. Group discussions need to take place where teachers can reach a consensus of what inclusivity is in their school situation. These discussions need to address topics of peer support, peer coaching, learners and their readiness for inclusion, parent involvement, expert professional and community resources and a policy on inclusion in consultation with all school stakeholders has to be developed.

### 5.3.2 Recommendation 2: recommendations based on challenges/hindrances experienced in inclusive environments

- Teacher class periods and extra-mural loads need to be lessened so that more time can be spent on marking and planning their academic structures during the course of the school day so that less of that has to be done at home. Teachers will have more time available to attend coaching sessions; the latter will also provide teachers with more time to attend to supportive activities to promote inclusivity such as conducting extra classes, attending support and coaching sessions by means of workshops or furthering their studies.

- Schools need to budget for professional development opportunities and ensure that teachers are empowered to cope with inclusivity. Make information available to teachers about all kinds of training about inclusivity and motivate them to attend. If schools provide financial support, chances are that teachers will be more likely to attend these sessions. If teachers have a specific need, as regards a specific case or cases, report it to management. Management should do everything possible to allow the teacher to attend training and then possibly cascade the learned knowledge down to other teachers as an empowerment opportunity.

- Teachers who share subjects or have similar curriculum content across departments need to standardize their teaching efforts and collaborate within and across grade

and curriculum groups and break through their rigid approach of keeping to their own teaching structures and schedules.

- The DoE and union support platforms for enabling inclusion must be explored and used to all educational stakeholders' advantage. These institutions are at the forefront of educational developments in South Africa and provide professional development opportunities.

### 5.3.3 Recommendation 3: recommendations based on how to improve inclusive schools

The following are strategies prescribed for a successful and sustainable coaching programme to be incorporated in schools:

- The SGB and SBST should introduce, promote and influence coaching on inclusion to teachers and lead by example. The benefits of the coaching process should be communicated to all teachers and they must be informed about the importance and possible successes of such a coaching programme.

- Post level one teachers need to form part of the SBST. Teachers are responsible to implement inclusivity in their classrooms, therefore, to fully support inclusion policies and strategies, post level one teachers must be part of SBST meetings. They need to be empowered by being made part of the planning and implementation of strategies for inclusion. The latter can lead to teachers having a professional development support and coaching opportunity and might result in more motivated and skilled teachers, who have gained valuable insight with regard to learners with special education needs which can then be transferred to the classroom and their peers. Teachers' roles need to be defined as to what is expected of them when it comes to inclusivity. Teachers' inclusive conduct is not just limited to the classroom and they should also focus on their roles during sport and cultural activities.

- Peer coaching needs to take place in grade meetings monthly and on a scheduled basis and nothing but inclusivity must be on the agenda. There should be a communication platform where the different phases, senior phase teachers and FET (further education and training) phase teachers as subject teachers, can constantly communicate with each other, for support. Sessions can be attended by the teaching staff, psychologist, social worker, disciplinary head, learners and their parents, among others. Session topics should be carefully considered according to the needs of the school, teachers, learners, their parents and the community where inclusion is concerned.

- Coaching sessions can be led by any member of staff that is well-respected within the school community. The individual(s) should receive the necessary authority and have the same standing as the principal with regard to professional development and this should be communicated to the rest of the staff. That individual(s) would have the responsibility and task to coach, provide passion and influence teachers and has to earn and keep the respect of all individuals involved in the programme. All heads of departments need to be active in promoting the coaching programme within their departments to obtain the support and influence of their departmental teachers so that coaching can become part of the identifiable school culture. Coaching must be institutionalized and it must be as common as staff meetings in the mornings. Relevant instruction material must be produced or attained in line with well-resourced and accredited sources. Teachers should be provided with a practical book or websites that they can visit so that they can also study at their own time using their own discretion.

- Teachers should be monitored to see if they are implementing learnt strategies. If the relevant polices are in place, coaching opportunities to promote inclusion should be compulsory and attendance controlled.

- The coaching platform should be made an integral part of the yearly IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System) performance appraisal process with sufficient feedback

discussions taking place based on inclusion. Additional teacher training support should be provided to teachers who struggle with certain inclusive strategies and they should be coached by a senior member of staff, preferably their HOD.

- The workload of teachers conducting additional coaching responsibilities should be lessened because of additional co-curricular burdens.

- Feedback and reflection sessions should take place to provide staff with information about what the coaching programme has accomplished and the effect that coaching has had on improved learner and teacher performance. Teachers need to be provided with concrete evidence to retain their buy-inn and support.

## 5.4 Conclusions

The aspects of peer support and coaching cannot be underestimated. Teachers have to work collaboratively to enhance their responsibility in supporting learners with special educational needs. The majority of a learner's school day is spent in the presence of classroom teachers and teachers on all levels within an institution are tasked with achieving excellence at inclusion. Teaching implies more than just academic interaction with learners and peers and support opportunities are plenty. Teachers have to intentionally take up a supportive and coaching role and attitude to break through barriers to inclusive education and strengthen their relationship with peers, the SMT, the SBST, the SGB, district officials, learners, parents and expert professionals. They need to practice inclusion in their classrooms as well as during sport and cultural activities. The creation of a network between the school and parents is of the upmost importance if learners are to be successfully accommodated, because parents are in the best position to give an authentic voice to their needs and concerns regarding inclusion. Teachers are not equipped for, qualified for or experienced at attending to the needs of learners with all kinds of special educational needs. Fortunately, the trial and error approach in new and unique cases often leads to successful accommodation of learners and contributes to staff experience by which they are professionally empowered and developed. School inclusion contributes to an environment where teachers make a real difference in the lives

of learners who would previously not have been provided with the opportunity to attend a mainstream school and experience mainstream academic success. To be empowered to practice inclusivity can lead teachers to an experience of increased work satisfaction. It can make them feel part of a team, aid them in achieving results with learners who experience barriers, and even help them gain qualifications for professional development. It can lead to increased job opportunities, growing responsibility in the workplace, higher learner enrolment and lower staff turnover, amongst others. Teaching is a passion and a true calling!

## 5.5 Conclusion

Peer support and the coaching of teachers within a mainstream school environment are critical if authentic inclusion is to be institutionalized and sustained. There should be a coaching platform available where teachers can communicate and engage with each other and from which they can equip themselves with the necessary skills to the benefit of learners and peers. Even though teachers are aware of the types of inclusion syndromes, disorders, defects and conditions learners have in their classrooms and school, they need to be knowledgeable about the characteristics of learners with special educational needs and what practices they can apply through special educational strategies to successfully include them. For authentic inclusion to take place, schools must make all the necessary arrangements to accommodate the learner who experience barriers, despite logistical and financial implications. Schools must do everything within their power to ensure the development of all learners, of differing needs, to ensure quality education for all.

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**Annexures**

**Annexure 1: Request to conduct research**

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**NEL G UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA STUDENT NUMBER: 29373434**

[Date]

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AT [ ] High School**

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Gabré Nel, hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct research in the Tshwane North District at [ ] High School. I am studying for a Master's degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria. My research topic is: **"Teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment."**

This research will be qualitative in nature, using semi-structured interviews and document analysis as data collection tools. Face-to-face interviews with teachers, HODs and deputy principals teaching the Grade 9 learner group, will be of value. The interviews are scheduled for a month and will take place after school hours as to not interrupt the day-to-day functioning of the school. Interview discussions will last approximately 45 to 90 minutes. All the participants to be interviewed will be informed of their right to privacy and be given assurance that their identity will be protected through anonymity and confidentiality. During this period, I would like to go through all inclusion policies and other related documents that are used in the management of inclusion in your school. The information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be used solely for this research purposes only.

It is my presumption that the research findings will make a creditable contribution to enable teachers to realise how they are experiencing support and coaching by their peers to implement inclusion strategies, manage their classroom practice accordingly and maintain an acceptable learning environment for all. It is very important that both an internal and external platform should be created where teachers can be supported and developed to successfully implement inclusion practices

Yours sincerely

Mr. G. Nel

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If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Under no circumstances will the identity of interview participants or school be made known to any parties/organisations that may be involved in the research process.

Participants' signature ……
Date: …….
Researcher's signature……
Date: ……..

Supervisor: DR M.A.U. Mohlakwana
Institution: University of Pretoria: Faculty of Education – Cnr Leyds and George Storrar Street, Pretoria
Contact number: 012 420 5752 (W)

**Annexure 2: Letter of invitation and consent to participate in research**

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**NEL G UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA STUDENT NUMBER: 29373434**

Dear Colleagues

I would like to thank you sincerely for volunteering your kind assistance with research being undertaken at your school.
My research project will involve teachers teaching the grade nine groups and will include post level 1 to 3 teachers. My research topic is **"Teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment.**"

This study will involve interviewing teachers in respect of their experiences in supporting and coaching their peers in an attempt to implement and maintain inclusive practices to include learning for all. Interviews will take place in the form of focus group and individual interviews with teachers. The interviews will be semi-structured and will take place after school hours as to not interrupt the day-to-day functioning of the school. *The interviews (focus group and individual) are scheduled for a month and the duration of interviews will be 45 minutes (individual) and an hour and a half (focus group) in duration. During this period, I would also like to go through all documents relating to policies on the topic of inclusion, learners who experience special educational needs, teacher training and coaching programmes and schedules with regards to peer support, formal and informal grade group meetings, minutes of those meetings, among others. The information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be used solely for this research purposes only.*

Before commencing with any data collection exercise I will first come to the school and explain what each participant's role will be. I will explain relevant and adequate information on the purpose of the research, the contributions that each participant can make if involved in the study, the procedures of the interviews to be followed, the credibility of myself as the researcher and how the results will be used.
*All of the participants to be interviewed will be informed of their right to privacy and be given assurance that their identity will be protected through anonymity and confidentiality. I will explain the context of the interview to them and let them know that participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw if they feel uncomfortable.* Permission letter form the Gauteng Education Department to interview the participants and to collect data will be given to selected schools and access will be negotiated with the participants.

I would like to thank you in assisting me in this research. It is my presumption that the research findings will make a creditable contribution and benefit you towards effective and efficient teacher support, coaching and inclusion practices for future educational success within your school.

Yours sincerely

Mr. G, Nel

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If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Under no circumstances will the identity of interview participants or school be made known to any parties/organizations that may be involved in the research process.

Participants' signature ……

Date: …….

Researcher's signature……

Date: ……..

**Supervisor: DR M.A.U. Mohlakwana**

**Institution: University of Pretoria: Faculty of Education – Cnr Leyds and George Storrar Street, Pretoria**

**Contact number: 012 420 5752 (W)**

**Annexure 3A: Interview schedule A (1)**


**NEL G UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA STUDENT NUMBER: 29373434**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE A (1)**

The purpose of this schedule is to elicit information from teachers of their experiences of supporting and coaching their peers towards an inclusive learning environment. Also to find out what are the policy provisions and implementation of policies on the topic of inclusion, learners who experience special educational needs, teachers training and coaching programmes and schedules with regards to peer support, among others.

**INTERVIEW GUIDE: PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS (post level 1 and 2 (HODs))**

1. How long have you been teaching in an inclusive school? Do you enjoy working here?
2. Is your school an inclusive school and why?
3. How important is peer support for the support culture of the school and why?
4. What do you understand by learners with special educational needs?
5. What do you understand by learner inclusivity within your mainstream school setting?
6. Do you have difficult inclusive learners at your school?
7. How do you handle a difficult inclusive learner during class lessons?
8. Do you receive any support from your peers with regards to handling difficult inclusive learners at this school?
9. Have you done anything to change pedagogy to accommodate learners with special educational needs?
10. Why do you think it is necessary to support your colleagues within your grade group with regards to inclusive learners?

11. How do you support your colleagues across different departments and curricula focus with regards to inclusive learners?
12. What is your understanding of peer coaching?
13. How is peer coaching experienced in your school with regards to inclusivity?
14. Which factors contribute or hinder peer support through coaching with regards to inclusivity?
15. How can you benefit from external professional support to support your peers and inclusive learners?
16. How can peer coaching be successfully introduced and maintained within your school environment?
17. What kind of support do you get from the school management with regards to peer support and coaching on a formal and informal level?
18. What is being done by management to create opportunities of in-service training?

**Annexure 3B: Interview schedule A (2)**


**NEL G UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA STUDENT NUMBER: 29373434**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE A (2)**

The purpose of this schedule is to elicit information from teachers of their experiences of supporting and coaching their peers towards an inclusive learning environment. Also to find out what are the policy provisions and implementation of policies on the topic of inclusion, learners who experience special educational needs, teachers training and coaching programmes and schedules with regards to peer support, among others.

**INTERVIEW GUIDE: PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS (DEPUTY PRINCIPALS)**

1. Is your school an inclusive school and why?
2. How important is peer support for the support culture of the school and why?
3. What do you understand by learner inclusivity within your mainstream school setting?
4. Why do you think it is necessary to support your colleagues within your grade group with regards to inclusive learners?
5. What is your understanding of peer coaching?
6. How is peer coaching experienced in your school with regards to inclusivity?
7. What kind of support does the school management provide with regards to peer support and coaching on a formal and informal level?
8. Which factors contribute or hinder peer support through coaching with regards to inclusivity?
9. How can peer coaching be successfully introduced and maintained within your school environment?
10. What is being done by management to create opportunities of in-service training?

## Annexure 4: Gauteng Department of Education research approval letter

**GAUTENG PROVINCE**
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

# GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date:** | **24 January 2017** |
| **Validity of Research Approval:** | **06 February 2017– 29 September 2017**<br>**M2017/381** |
| **Name of Researcher:** | **Nel G** |
| **Address of Researcher:** | **P O BOX 32365** |
| | **Totiusdal** |
| | **0134** |
| **Telephone Number:** | **012 332 2838 071 890 9791** |
| **Email address:** | **nel.gabre@gmail.com** |
| **Research Topic:** | **Experiences of teachers regarding peer support and coaching towards an inclusive learning environment** |
| **Number and type of schools:** | **Three Secondary Schools** |
| **District/s/HO** | **Tshwane North** |

***Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research***

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

29/03/2017

**The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:**





**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Ms Faith Tshabalala
CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 29/03/2017





**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
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