CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

"… the dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present.
The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion.
As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew."

Abraham Lincoln (1809 – 1865)

1.1   INTRODUCTION

These words directed by Abraham Lincoln to the Congress of the United States in 1862 can justifiably be applied to the present time in South Africa, a time which is characterised by constant change, development and adjustment. Fundamental changes are being affected in one of the most pivotal activities of the South African community, i.e. the field of education and training. New directions in government policy, the acceptance of the *Bill of Rights* in a new constitutional environment, the desegregation of schools and a general movement away from the outdated system of single medium schools have found their way into education for the **disabled** child as well. This was demonstrated in practice by the publication of Draft White Papers on Education and Training (Departement van Onderwys, 1994:1-63, 1995:1-83), White Paper No. 6 on *Special Needs Education* (Department of Education, 2001:1-56) and more recently by the impact of Curriculum 2000 and the introduction of the system of outcomes-based education (Naicker, 1999:21). Within a short space of time most 'traditionally privileged' schools have become faced with bigger classes, with learners from a variety of cultures and with an extremely diverse learner population, including children with diverse disabilities (Lomofsky, Roberts & Mvambi, 1999:71).

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In the old system of specialised schools, which was initially developed to accommodate learners with specific educational needs[1], it soon became clear that a significant percentage of these learners were confronted by the so-called barriers to learning in these very schools. It therefore became necessary to reconsider the whole issue of special and specialised services to these learners. At the same time it became clear that in the context of modern education provision, the available facilities and finances were simply inadequate to accommodate these learners in a specialist setup and that other means of support would have to be provided in order to reach a greater number of learners (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:318).

The practical situation resulted in a change in the philosophical mindset with regard to education provision. The focus has shifted from emphasis on the child's specific problems arising from his/her disability (the so-called medical model that forms the basis of an approach towards disability) to the child's **potential** (the social model). New strategies regarding classroom management and methodologies, adaptability of the curricula and changes of attitude have evolved. No longer does the learner with specific educational needs have to adapt to the norms of the ordinary classroom; it is rather the 'classroom' and all it encompasses that has to adapt to accommodate all children. "Ordinary schools have to recognize that they must create a welcoming environment for all pupils, recognizing and addressing their diversity and individual abilities" (Hugo, Louw, Engelbrecht, Schoeman, Kachelhoffer & Henning, 1998:4). The placement of learners with specific educational needs in mainstream education and inclusive education has thus become a theoretical possibility: currently no pupil should be denied access to an ordinary classroom on the grounds of any disability anymore. Ballard makes the following remark in this regard: "An inclusive school defines 'differentness' as an ordinary part of human experience, to be valued and organised for. Schools that practice exclusion define differentness as not ordinary, as outside their area of responsibility and, by implication, as not as valuable as 'ordinariness'. Inclusive (organisational) arrangements create disability as an experience to be addressed within a context of diversity. Exclusive arrangements create disability as sickness, personal tragedy and object of charity ('special' needs

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[1] The term learner with specific education needs has developed as an all-inclusive term for children with various forms of disabilities who need to receive specialised teaching and support.

may not be met as of right, but only on application for 'special' help) within a context that privileges some characteristics over others. In such ways do paradigms and the language of paradigms construct and create different kinds of relationships." (Ballard, 1995 in Hugo et al., 1998:3).

The movement towards inclusive education has various potential advantages – not only for the child with specific educational needs, but also for the child without any disability (Graves & Tracy, 1998:220). In the case of the child without a disability, this can lead to positive changes in attitude towards disability. In addition, growing opportunities for social contact with fellow pupils who are not disabled can create tolerance towards diversity and facilitate friendships (Roeyers, 1996 in Byrnes & Sigafoos, 2001:409). Given the fact that higher academic demands are made on individuals, this can result in the disabled child achieving better academic results (Caissie & Wilson, 1995 in Byrnes & Sigafoos, 2001:409). Finally, the contact with non-disabled learners can offer the learner with specific educational needs the opportunity to develop skills for optimal functioning in the community (Gearhart & Weishahn, 1984 in Byrnes & Sigafoos, 2001:409).

In recognition of the above, this chapter aims to state the problem and rationale for the study by focusing on education reform in a democratic South Africa (in respect of inclusive education) in general and on children with a hearing loss in particular. A brief outline of the chapters and clarification of terminology used in the study will be provided, and a proposed solution to the problem will be offered.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

In view of the theoretical advantages of inclusion, an increasing number of children with specific educational needs have been placed in inclusive environments (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000:4). This is particularly relevant in the instance of a **learner with a hearing loss** for whom the principle of inclusive teaching is based in particular on the availability of the so-called least restrictive environment. This implies that all children with hearing loss have a right to the most effective teaching **within the least restrictive learning environment** (Stoefen-Fisher & Balk,

1992:25). In the USA this resulted in 83% of the learning population with hearing disabilities finding themselves in some form of inclusive teaching system (Luckner & Muir, 2001:435). According to Luckner and Muir (2001:435-436) this tendency is likely to increase, specifically when the following facts are taken into consideration:

• The positive results of early intervention that allow pupils with hearing disabilities to be identified at birth and thus receive early intervention. Should early intervention begin before the age of 6 months, there is a strong possibility that the child will exhibit speech and language development within normal limits (Yoshinaga-Itano, 1999:317) and will eventually function successfully in the contexts of education and career.

• The phenomenal growth in technology, particularly with regard to improved sound enhancement systems and hearing aids that contribute towards the optimal use of residual hearing and hearing in group situations like the classroom.

• The successful implementation of cochlear implant programmes that now provides the previously deaf child with effective access to the hearing world. Recent studies indicate that the sooner the implant, the stronger the possibility that the child will be able to master language skills appropriate to his/her age group (Hammes, Novak, Rotz, Willis, Edmondson & Thomas, 2002:74) and thus cope with the reality of inclusive education.

Although the above-mentioned facts support the inclusion of children with hearing loss, the practical reality in South Africa is not so positive. It has become increasingly clear that the successful outcome of placing a child with a hearing loss in an inclusive teaching environment is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. The question must be asked whether there really is a place for children with hearing loss in inclusive education in South Africa. The complexity of the situation is clearly indicated in Figure 1.1, which shows a number of the variants that can determine the success of the inclusion of a child with a hearing loss.
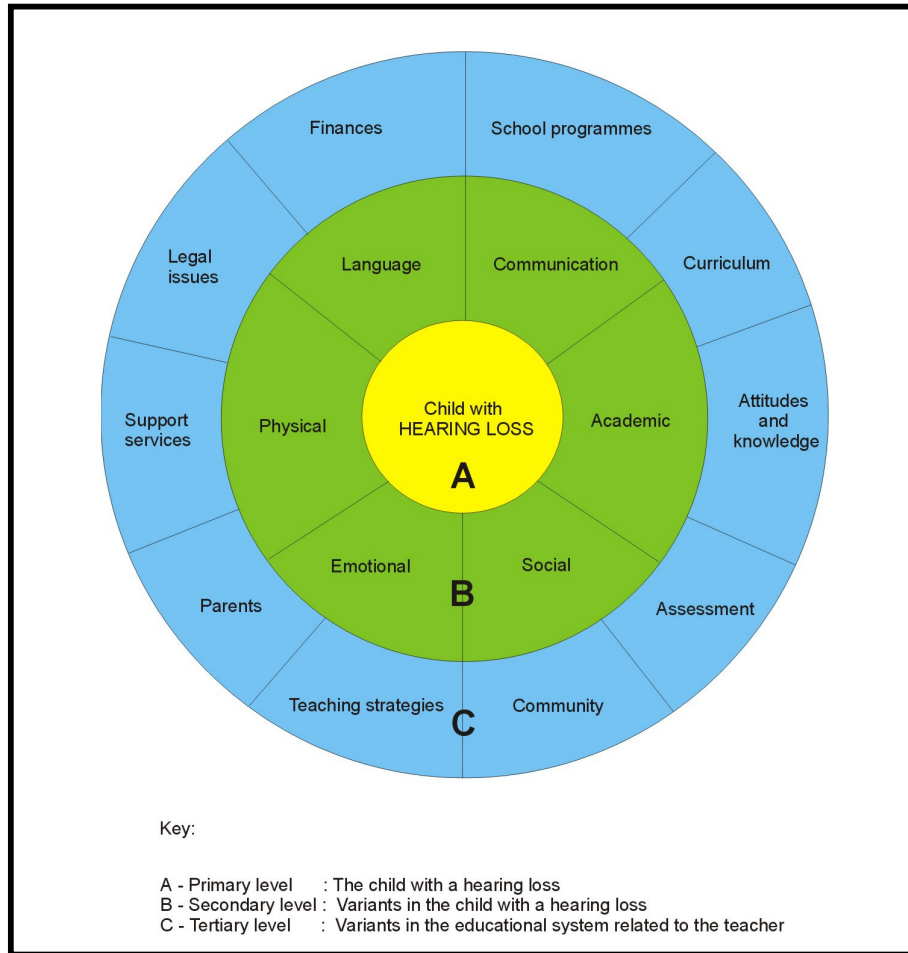
Key:

A - Primary level   : The child with a hearing loss
B - Secondary level : Variants in the child with a hearing loss
C - Tertiary level   : Variants in the educational system related to the teacher

Figure 1.1 The child with a hearing loss: variants that could determine success in the inclusive system

This figure indicates three types of variants organised in three concentric circles – the innermost circle (A) citing the child with a hearing loss, the next circle (B) the primary variants related to the child with the hearing loss and the outer circle (C) the variants in the education system that could determine success in the inclusive system.

Firstly (with reference to circle A), it is a known fact that hearing loss constitutes a so-called barrier to learning (Department of Education, 1997:18). On a physical level, it causes a distortion or weakening of sounds and thus limits the child's ability to effectively implement acoustic clues in understanding speech and language. The

nature and degree of hearing loss, which can vary from minimal hearing loss to total hearing loss, significantly influence the specific educational needs of the child, which in turn determine the intervention, placement of and aid to the child (Anderson & Matkin, 1991:1).

Secondly (circle B), the child's problem is not always primarily confined to a hearing loss but can extend to unique problems in the learning process as a result of limitations that derive from the hearing loss. "Without being seen, hearing loss robs children of academic achievements that otherwise they may have possessed the potential for. It robs them of language and educational levels they may have otherwise gained, and vocational, social, and personal achievements that may have accompanied them" (Hull, 1984:3). The development of language, speech, reading and listening skills, as well as complex cognitive functions, are largely dependent on the ability to listen (Flexer, 1993:176; Flexer, Wray & Ireland, 1989:12). The classroom in particular, being an acoustic-verbal environment in which the child is normally expected to spend 45% of the day on listening activities (Flexer et al., 1989:12), underlines the fact that hearing is crucial to academic achievement. The ability to hear is therefore the cornerstone of any teaching system. English (1995:153) further emphasise these facts when she indicates that high noise levels and reflection of sound, as well as weak lighting and visual distraction – phenomena typical of the ordinary classroom – can also be detrimental to academic development. The correct functioning, use and maintenance of the child's hearing aids, as well as the adaptation of the listening and acoustic environment, are all important when creating an optimal learning environment.

Further aspects, which can be seen as variants influencing inclusive education, are the social and emotional development of the child with hearing loss. According to the literature (Alpiner, Kaufman & Hanavan, 1993:10; Shevlin & O'Moore, 2000:23), these children often have trouble in fitting into their surroundings socially. A low or even negative self-image often results from not being accepted by their normal-hearing peer group and the community because of social inabilities. Although inclusion in this population provides valuable opportunities for interaction between them and the peer group, it is no guarantee of their successful socialising or social integration (Cambra, 2002:38).

In addition, it seems that the philosophy underlying inclusion cannot be applied without exception to all children with a hearing loss, because of the resultant communication problems. They can have difficulties in communicating messages due to their speech and/or language characteristics (Most, 2002:113). As listeners, they may have difficulties in perceiving the spoken language signal, and have to rely on visual clues such as speech reading in order to prevent communication failure. Due to these communication problems, a given classroom can place limits on the child's potential. For example, a child who is able to rely on his residual hearing (using his hearing aids) and has appropriate language and speech skills to cope with the curriculum, would be restricted by an environment that does not exploit these capabilities (Ross, Brackett & Maxon, 1991:69). Particularly children with hearing loss who use Sign Language as a medium of communication have to be considered in this regard. Just as normal-hearing children can communicate directly with their teachers and fellow learners, so this child has the right to successful communication with teachers and fellow learners (Innes, 1994:155). However, classrooms in ordinary schools could well place further restrictions on this child because of the fact that the medium of teaching is not Sign Language (DEAFSA, 1997). Misapprehensions regarding the morphological, syntactic, pragmatic and semantic structures of Sign Language, which is in its own right a complex language similar to spoken language, result in the learner with a hearing disability having to learn by means of the spoken language or the so-called 'signed spoken languages' (Department of Education, 1997:17). The Deaf Federation of South Africa (1997) concurs with this by indicating that inclusion is indeed an option, provided that the specific system is able to address the needs of the learner, especially with regard to Sign Language. In their opinion it is essential that there should be enough qualified interpreters and/or teachers who are fluent in Sign Language (DEAFSA, 1998b). However, this ideal situation has practical problems, particularly considering that there are presently only four qualified interpreters in South Africa and only a few teachers in inclusive teaching who can use Sign Language (DEAFSA, 1997). Furthermore, the mere provision of interpreters in the inclusive system is no guarantee that the system will be truly 'inclusive', even if only on the grounds of the dynamics and limitations involved in the use of interpreters that lead to an 'inherently unequal situation' (Innes, 1994:155). Using an interpreter often means one-way communication (Hawkins, Harvey & Cohen, 1994:166) and cannot compensate for

the loss of communication between teacher and learner. Further limitations are placed on communication between the child and fellow learners when the interpreter cannot always be present.

For the teaching situation to be optimal in terms of communication and the facilitation of speech and language development, it is important that the teacher and fellow learners use the same means of communication (Sign Language). Considering that Sign Language is a language in its own right, and has to be learned like any other language, this is an almost impossible demand in the South African context. Thus, the question of the language of the child with hearing loss clearly proves to be a limiting factor with regard to inclusion.

Thirdly (refer to circle C), the large number of external variants that play a role in the education of learners with hearing loss emphasises the multilevel nature of the problem and implies that simple solutions are not always possible. Children with hearing loss must be guided to realise their potential within the context of variants such as legal factors, finances, nature of educational services, types of educational programmes, support services, knowledge and attitudes of teaching staff involved, and school activities (each with sub-divisions). Parents/Families and communities can also exert influences that will determine the success or failure of the entire educational process of children with hearing loss (DeConde Johnson, 1987:261). In the South African context there are unique variants which, as barriers to learning (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:311-312; Department of Education, 2002:131-141; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:324-325), could play a role in the success or failure of the inclusion of the child with hearing loss. Some of these are:

- Poverty and under-development, which are mostly the result of unemployment, and which mean limited access to basic services. Communities in underprivileged areas often suffer from limited teaching facilities, big classes with high learner/teacher ratios, under-trained staff and inadequate learning and teaching materials. Consequently, an optimal teaching environment in terms of intervention and rehabilitation for the child with hearing loss is non-existent.

- Negative attitudes towards disability in communities, which mean that people with disabilities are 'marked' and consequently placed in special learning contexts.

- A rigid curriculum in which the diverse needs of the learners are not addressed and fixed teaching strategies that have a negative effect on 'learning'.

- Limited parental involvement because of the absence of the parents, or the fact that the role of the parents as primary caregivers is not acknowledged. Negative attitudes towards parental involvement and limited resources to facilitate involvement and empower parents, play an added role.

- Lack of appropriate training of teachers to enable them to deal with diversity in the classroom.

- Limited support structures for teachers. In the case of the learner with hearing loss in particular, the teacher needs the assistance of an educational audiologist. Unfortunately, few such posts exist and there are no funds for itinerant services. Long distances between schools and bad, even impassable roads in many service areas are realities that further complicate the situation.

The above-mentioned issues pose the question as to the feasibility of successful inclusion of the child with hearing loss. The possibility arises that children with hearing loss will be regarded as learners with specific educational needs for whom other 'special' alternatives, with all the disadvantages of alienation, segregation, high financial costs and potentially inadequate teaching standards, unfortunately always have to be created.

However, a positive aspect is that a number of basic solutions for some of these barriers to learning have already been addressed (theoretically) in a recent draft document (Department of Education, 2002:15-166):

- The development of some ordinary schools to 'full-service schools' that provide quality teaching to any pupil on the grounds that the specific educational needs of the learners can be fully addressed there.

- The development of special schools into so-called resource centres which, in cooperation with district-based support groups, can provide support to 'full-service schools' and ordinary schools.

- The establishment of district-based support groups that can facilitate the development of effective learning and teaching in the schools by identifying and dealing with the so-called barriers to learning.

The adaptation of curricula, assessment and teaching strategies to satisfy the diverse needs of the learner population

It is clear that the development of an inclusive system is more complicated than merely teaching **all** learners in their nearest regular school.

The focal point in this process is the person who is primarily responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the inclusive philosophy, namely **the teacher.** The needs of this vital role player are often underestimated or negated. *"An analysis of relevant policy and other documents in South Africa regarding support services reveals that although a systemic approach is emphasized, there is currently a conspicuous absence of specific support strategies that will address the needs of teachers in order to ensure successful implementation of inclusive education"* (Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff & Swart, 2001:82). Clearly, the demands and challenges that face teachers in the performance of their professional role and responsibilities must be addressed. This is supported by the fact that successful inclusion is linked by a number of authors (Marshall, Ralph & Palmer, 2002:212; Opdall, Wormnaes & Habayeb, 2001:143; Graves & Tracy, 1998:222) to the attitude, knowledge and skills of the teacher. This not only implies a better knowledge and understanding of various disabilities and children who have these disabilities, but also the expertise to make appropriate adaptations to curricula and teaching strategies (D'Isa Turner,

2001:2; Voltz, Brazil & Ford, 2001:4). Teachers are thus expected to accept new responsibilities and to extend their roles as facilitators to new, perhaps even personally threatening areas (Mc Leskey & Waldron, 2002:4).

In addition to the demands of extending knowledge and developing skills, the inclusion programme in schools also requires a certain **attitude** from the teacher, which could play a deciding role in the process. A variety of elements has been identified, which have direct relevance to the attitude of teachers. A few of these are described below.

Firstly it seems that the **nature and degree of the disability** influence the attitudes. The worse the disability, the less positive the teacher (Forlin, Douglas & Hattie, 1996:19). Regarding children with hearing loss, it seems that most teachers have an ambivalent attitude towards having these children in their classrooms (Chorost, 1988:9; Luckner, 1991:302).

Secondly, the teachers' **previous experience** also stands in direct relationship to their attitude. Positive contact and interaction with individuals who have a disability encourage teachers' support of inclusion (Leyser, Kapperman & Keller, 1994:2). According to Luckner (1991:303) and Bunch (1987:250), most teachers have never before encountered a child with hearing loss, nor have they had any applicable experience with regard to the teaching of the individual with hearing loss.

Finally, the presence of a child with hearing loss in the classroom demands **skills** and **knowledge** that can influence the attitude of the teacher (Luckner, 1991:302). "These teachers are well-prepared to fulfill the role of teacher for hearing students but may feel ill-prepared to meet the needs of hearing-impaired children" (Conway, 1990:131). Indeed, staff development is regarded as one of the key elements in the success of inclusion and also in the facilitating of positive attitudes towards inclusion (Leyser et al., 1994:2). An important study in this regard that was conducted in six countries, including South Africa, showed that the training of the teachers can be seen in direct relation to their attitude towards learner diversity. What is more, training was identified as one of the key elements in the success of the development of inclusive teaching (Marchesi, 1998:116).

However, a positive attitude, well-developed skills and extensive knowledge is not enough to ensure the successful inclusion of children with hearing loss. The teacher does not function in a vacuum, but in a working environment, which can also affect the success or failure of the inclusion.

Aspects that exert an influence on teachers' **working conditions** also play an important role in their attitude, it seems (Opdal et al., 2001:145). Not only are collaboration and consultation with fellow teachers and support personnel important, but adequate support services for the child and the teacher in the classroom are also essential. Research has shown that teachers feel they are not sufficiently well prepared for or capable of guiding a child with hearing loss. They would prefer teaching such children in their classes with the help of specific support services, for instance assisted by a qualified teacher or audiologist, or supported by systems of available in-service training (Martin, Bernstein, Daly & Cody, 1988:88).

What makes the situation worse for the teacher in the South African context in comparison with other inclusive systems worldwide, is the fact that these teachers have an added responsibility with regard to the specific educational needs of the child. This is due to the fact that teachers do not necessarily have day-to-day support services such as educational audiologists at their disposal and thus have to depend on their own knowledge and insight in order to provide the best education possible for the child with hearing loss. Further complicating issues that increase the onus on the teacher are the geographical environment of schools and limited parental involvement (Engelbrecht et al., 2001:82).

Teachers consequently find themselves in a predicament. While they are held responsible for the teaching of the child, they are confined by the deficiencies/ shortcomings in their circumstances so that they cannot effectively address their learners' needs (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001:370). In the light of this particular reality, it seems logical that many teachers in the South African context cannot regard inclusion with anything but negative feelings and even suspicion.

This negative attitude displayed by teachers is often described as 'unfounded' opposition to change. Such an approach is however contra-productive, as the negative attitudes and uncertainties experienced by the teachers are labelled as an 'attitude problem' rather than as a natural reaction to professional change – change that is always accompanied by anxiety, frustration and uncertainty (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002:8). "Blaming 'resistance' for the slow pace of reform also keeps us from understanding that individuals and groups faced with something new need to assess the change for its genuine possibilities and for how it bears on their self-interest" (Fullan & Milles in Mc Leskey & Waldron, 2002:8).

Against this background, and in order to understand and acknowledge the role of the teacher of the child with hearing loss, the following research question may be posed: **What challenges, unique to the South African context, are posed to the teacher of a child with hearing loss in inclusive education?**

1.3   PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

Research into the environment and context of children with hearing loss in the education system constitutes the necessary first step towards a solution – not only in order to obtain a comprehensive idea of the knowledge and attitudes of teachers, but also to develop an understanding of the aspects that have to be addressed in the process of inclusion (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002:8).

The redefinition of the demands that are made on the teachers of children with hearing loss is of vital importance, as this can serve as a basis for further professional development (Moltzen & Mitchell, 2000:13). Such development may include aspects like formal training and in-service training.

Within the framework of the above discussion, the question can be asked why the researcher who is an audiologist (thus a non-teacher) has a specific interest in the challenges facing the teacher who is involved with the child with hearing loss in the inclusive classroom. Three facts explain the rationale of the audiologist's involvement in this regard:

- Audiology is the science of which the essential field of study is normal and abnormal hearing; the functioning of the hearing and non-hearing, and the role of this within communication and for the communicating individual.

- Audiologists are currently the only professional group in South Africa who has formal qualifications in the evaluation and rehabilitation of people with hearing loss. Part of their training includes the child with hearing loss, as well as a recent development in the field of audiology namely Educational Audiology – the practice of audiology in the school environment.

- The specific educational needs of the child with hearing loss stem from his/her lack of hearing.

It is logical that the audiologist can play an important role in the teaching situation and in related research in this field. Close cooperation/linking between educators and audiologists is essential in order to satisfy the needs of the child with hearing loss. On the grounds of their primary involvement with the child with hearing loss, audiologists can provide valuable inputs in the teaching situation and in this way bridge the gap between the sciences of education and audiology (Pottas, 1998:33). With this background in view, the planned study can be positioned as follows:
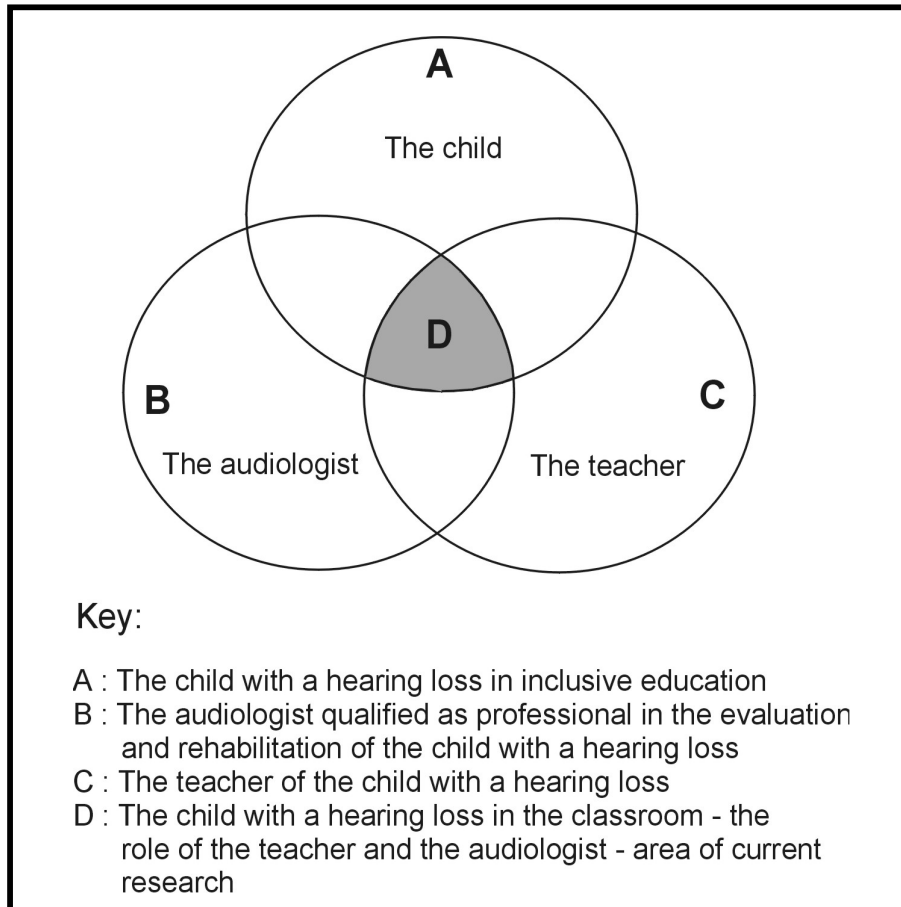
Key:

A : The child with a hearing loss in inclusive education
B : The audiologist qualified as professional in the evaluation
     and rehabilitation of the child with a hearing loss
C : The teacher of the child with a hearing loss
D : The child with a hearing loss in the classroom - the
     role of the teacher and the audiologist - area of current
     research

Figure 1.2 Positioning of the study

1.4   BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The primary focus of this study is to determine the demands posed to the teacher of the child with a hearing loss in inclusive education in South Africa.

Chapter 1 provides the background against which this study was developed. It describes the development of the inclusive philosophy and focuses specifically on reform in education in a democratic South Africa. The statement of the problem, rationale for the study and proposed solution to the problem were placed against this background. A section dealing with terminology concludes the chapter.

Chapter 2 places the child with his/her hearing loss and specific educational needs within the unique context of inclusive teaching in South Africa. The worldwide tendency towards inclusive teaching is the first topic of discussion with specific emphasis on changes in South Africa. New legislation and the practical application of such legislation with regard to the child with hearing loss are examined.

The unique situation of the teacher of the child with hearing loss is closely examined in Chapter 3. The larger body of research on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion is discussed in order to elucidate some of the factors that might impact on the forming of these attitudes. A specific focus on the teacher of the child with a hearing loss in inclusive education, includes a discussion of teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards this unique population. The essential competencies necessary to teach these children are defined, followed by a discussion of the unique context in South Africa that has a decisive influence on the professional role and responsibility of the teacher.

Chapter 4 contains a discussion of the methodology used in this study in order to determine the demands made on the teacher of the child with a hearing loss in inclusive education. The objectives for achieving these aims are also specified. Detailed descriptions of the two research phases are provided in terms of the subject selection and material. The research procedures contain a detailed description of the development of the two questionnaires, the discussion guide, as well as the pilot studies for both. Finally, procedures relating to the collection, recoding and analysis of the data are discussed.

Chapter 5 organises, analyses and discusses the results according to the main aim and objectives of the study. This section commences with an overview of the general trends of the results and is followed by a detailed analysis and discussion of the teacher's and student's knowledge and attitudes regarding inclusive education and the child with a hearing loss.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions that have been derived from the results and that have served as the basis for formulating the implications of the current research. It also

introduces the recommendations made for future research. In conclusion, an evaluation of the study is provided**.**

1.5   CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

It is necessary to clarify the following terms that are used frequently throughout the study:

- **'Mainstream / integration'**

Placement of the learner with specific educational needs in a particular kind of system or integrating him/her into the existing system. The learner is provided with extra support if necessary in order to 'fit in' or be integrated into the 'normal' classroom routine. This system focuses on the learner in terms of the changes that should take place in the learner in order to 'fit in' (Department of Education, 2001:17). This term will only be used if used by other authors and if it is important for the general comprehension of the content under discussion.

- **'Inclusion'**

*"*Inclusion is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities*"* (Department of Education, 2001:17). This system acknowledges and respects differences in learners: differences in age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status. All learners, educators and the system as a whole are supported in inclusive education so that a full range of learning needs can be met. The participation of all the learners are maximised by changes in attitude, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all the learners and to overcome barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001:17).

- **'Barriers to learning'**

'Barriers to learning and development' are those factors that lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, that lead to learning breakdown or that prevent learners from accessing education provision. These factors can be located within the learner, the centre of learning, the education system or in the broader social, economic and political context (Department of Education, 2002:131).

- **'Child with hearing loss'**

A child with a disorder of the hearing sense, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's ability to learn language and achieve academically. This term encompasses children with mild hearing losses as well as those with the most severe losses. *"*Various diagnostic labels have a way of determining treatment and placement, and it is vital that a child's management be based on his or her characteristics and not on categorizing labels*"* (Ross, Brackett & Maxon, 1991:2). In this study, the term 'child with hearing loss' is viewed as a general, all-inclusive, generic term for a specific child/group of children and not as a description of a child's auditory functioning or capacities. Terminology that has been used in the past regarding the child with a hearing loss (i.e. hard of hearing, deaf, etc.) will only be used if used by other authors and if it is important for the general comprehension of the content under discussion.

1.6   SUMMARY

This chapter serves as an introduction and gives the necessary information regarding the motivation for and background to this study. It finds its focus in the statement of the research problem based on a motivated rationale. An outline is provided of the chapters of the thesis, as well as a clarification of terms as they are applied in the study.