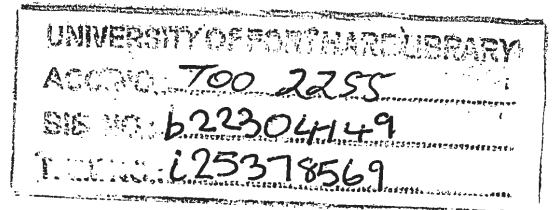


**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INTERMEDIATE
PHASE LEARNERS WITH COGNITIVE LEARNING BARRIERS IN MAINSTREAM
CLASSES: A STUDY OF TWO PILOT SCHOOLS IN THE EASTERN CAPE**

by



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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

University of Fort Hare
MASTER OF EDUCATION
in General Education

at the

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

SUPERVISOR: Dr Greta Galloway

DATE: January 2012

DECLARATION

I, Nomzamo Spondo, declare that this research report is my own work, and that all sources quoted and used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree at any other university.

Date: January 2012

Signature: N. Spondo



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Many people have helped and encouraged me, and made this study a satisfying experience, both professionally and personally. My sincere thanks to :

- The Almighty for granting me life, health, wisdom, strength, divine provision and most of all perseverance to successfully complete this study.
- My supervisor Dr. Greta Galloway for always making me believe I could do this study. For her love, guidance, encouragement, assistance and support throughout both years.
- My two sons for their sense of humour and patience in helping me with the house chores.
- My friends for their encouragement, and making me believe that I could make it happen.



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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, especially my two sons, Simcelile and Milisa and my unborn baby.



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ABSTRACT

This study is investigating the experience of learners with cognitive learning barriers in the mainstream classrooms in the Eastern Cape. The focus was on two primary schools which were piloting inclusive education in Mdantsane. The aim of this study was to offer learners a “voice” based on their learning experience and perspective of a situation, so as to analyze the learners’ situation and to provide insight into the way in which learners with cognitive learning barriers made sense of their context and the learning situation they encountered. The purpose was to give learners a “voice” in order to express and determine their understanding, needs and learning processes of learning in an inclusive classroom.



This study was based on a qualitative approach because it was investigating learning experiences of learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classrooms. As the focus of this study was based on learners’ cognitive learning barriers and their learning experiences, a phenomenological design was the most relevant. The preferred method of gathering information from the subjects was through unstructured interviews with four learners, which allowed the researcher to assist the subject in moving towards non-theoretical descriptions that accurately reflect the experiences of learners with cognitive learning barriers.

The interviews revealed the following:.. They did not enjoy classroom based learning because they felt that their acceptance was based on academic performance and achievement. These learners had a problem with the actual language of learning and teaching, as it was neither their mother tongue nor their home language.

ACRONYMS

SA	SOUTH AFRICA
SASA	SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT
SACA	SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION ACT
DoE	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ECDoE	EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DBST	DISTRICT BASE SUPPORT TEAM
LSEN	LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS
LCLB	LEARNERS WITH COGNITIVE LEARNING BARRIERS
NCSN	NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SPECIAL NEEDS
CESS	COMMISSION ON EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES
UNGA	UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEPA	NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT
UN	UNITED NATIONS
STM	SHORT TERM MEMORY
LTM	LONG TERM MEMORY
UNESCO	UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CULTURAL ORGANISATION



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACRONYMS	v
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2. Background to the study	1
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	6
1.4 Research questions	7
1.5 Purpose of the study	7
1.6. Objectives of the study	8
1.7 The significance of the study.....	8
1.8 Definition of terms	9
1.9. Chapters Outline	10
CHAPTER 2	11
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Laws and policy documents on inclusive education	11-13
2.3 Defining learning barriers.....	13
2.4 Conceptualizing an understanding of cognitive barriers to learning.....	14
2.5 Teaching approaches for teachers to teach learners with cognitive learning barriers	18
2.5.1 Processing approaches	18
2.5.2 Individual programming for learners with barriers to learning	19
2.5.3 Tempo of teaching.....	20



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2.5.4 Learner based activities and support	21
2.6 Learning experiences of learners with a cognitive learning barrier.....	22
2.7 Motivation.....	24
2.8 Memory problems with regard to learners with cognitive barriers to learning	25
2.9 Meta-cognitive skills in learning practices	26
2.10 Exploring the concept of mainstreaming in education	26
2.11 A discussion on inclusion.....	27
2.12 Mainstream classroom model.....	29
2.13 Negative impact of mainstreaming in South African classrooms	31
2.14 Challenges that educators face in mainstream education.....	33
2.15 Large classes	34
2.15.1 Exploring the concept of learning	35
2.16 Experience of learners, parents and teachers in mainstream classes	35
2.16.1 Learners with and without cognitive learning barriers	35
2.16.2 Parents' experiences	38
2.17 Applying developmental and learning theories in mainstream classrooms.....	41
2.17.1 Piaget's theory of intellectual development.....	41
2.17.1.1 Social integration.....	42
2.17.1.2 Piaget's cognitive developmental theory	42
2.17.2 Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory.....	45
2.17.3 Social cognitive theory.....	46
2.17.4 Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems	47
CHAPTER 3	48
METHODOLOGY	48
3.1. Introduction	48
3.2 Research Paradigm - Interpretive Paradigm	48
3.3 Research Approach.....	51



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Together in Excellence

3.4 Research design.....	51
3.4.1 Grounded Theory	51
3.4.2 Case Study	51
3.4.3 Phenomenological design	52
3.5 Analysis of Phenomenology.....	53
3.6 Research instrument.....	54
3.7 Interview process	55
3.7.1 Unstructured interviews	56
3.7.2 Reflective diaries/Journal entries	56
3.8 SAMPLING STRATEGIES	57
3.8.1 Sampling of schools	57
3.8.2 Sampling respondents	57
3.9 Data analysis.....	58
3.10 Ethical Issues.....	60
3.11 Limitations.....	60
3.12 Delimitation.....	60
3.13 Ethical Issues.....	61
3.14 Validity.....	63



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CHAPTER 4 64

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS.....64

4.1 Introduction.....	64
4.2 Interviews.....	65
4.2.1 Interview with learners 1 on the 16 May 2011	65
4.2.2 Interview with learners 2 on the 15 June 2011	66
4.2.3 Interview with learners 3 on the 21 June 2011	68
4.3 Journal entries.....	70
4.3.1 Learners Journal entry 1: 16 May 2011	71

4.3.2 Learners Journal entry 2: 15 June 2011	71
4.3.3 Learners Journal entry 3: 21 June 2011	71
4.4 Data analysis.....	72
4.4.1 Introduction.....	72
4.4.2 Research questions	72
4.5 Profile of the research site and participants.....	73
4.5.1. Profile of the research site	73
4.5.2. Profile of the participants.....	73
4.6 Similarities.....	73
4.7 Differences	74
4.8 Emerging Themes from the interviews and journal entries	74
4.8.1. Sense of belonging	74
4.8.1.1 Relationship with peers	76
4.8.1.2 Comparing the previous schools with the current schools	77
4.8.1.3 Caring family	77
4.8.2 Learners' feeling of low self esteem	78
4.8.2.1 Fear of failure.....	80
4.8.2.2 Punishment	82
4.8.3. Teaching strategies and learning styles for impaired cognitive learners.....	82
4.8.3.1 Teaching approaches.....	84
4.8.3.2 Learning styles.....	85
4.8.3.3 Learning area of concern	86
4.8.3.5 Preferred learning areas	88
4.8.4 Communication between teachers and learners	88



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Together in Excellence

CHAPTER 5 **90**

FINDINGS..... **90**

5.1 Introduction..... **90**

5.2 Sense of belonging90

5.3 Feelings of low self esteem91

5.4 Teaching and learning strategies92

5.5 Lack of communication between teachers and learners with cognitive barriers to learning 93

CHAPTER 694

RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....94

6.1 Introduction.....94

6.2 Suggestions.....94

6.3 Reflection of the study95

6.4 Limitations of this study98

6.5 Conclusion99

6.6 Summary 99-100



REFERENCES10101-109

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

WORKING TITLE

An investigation into learning experiences of Intermediate Phase learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classes: A study of two Pilot schools in the Eastern Cape

1.1 Introduction

This study sought to investigate the experiences of learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classes in the Eastern Cape. It focused specifically on Intermediate phase learners with mild cognitive learning barriers, because intermediate phase learners have the ability to attribute meaning to barriers that affect their learning. They were also able to articulate their experiences, either verbally, or through a written text National Curriculum Statement (NCS).



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These particular learners were identified from ordinary schools, and they have been identified to attend the piloting schools for inclusive education in Mdantsane. These particular learners attended the pilot schools, as they had been placed by the District Base Support Team (DBST). Their learning profiles were identified, monitored and assessed at their previous schools. The DBST further assessed these learners and verified them as learners with cognitive learning barriers.

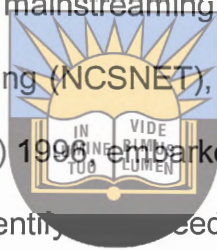
1.2. Background to the study

Mild cognitive learning barrier means learning that presents itself as a learning difficulty in a mainstream classroom. Learners with mild cognitive barriers are learners who can be placed in a mainstream class. There are also learners with severe cognitive learning barriers, who are normally placed in special schools, as

they cannot get the full support they require in the mainstream classroom. The researcher focuses only on learners with mild cognitive barriers in this study.

Learners with mild cognitive barriers are learners who feel unsure and hesitant, and perform poorly, as reflected in their learning profiles. I argue that to meet their full potential in mainstream classes they need an environment where structured experiences are deliberately planned for them, because they cannot spontaneously benefit from normal learning experiences. Teachers need to be well trained to deal with learners who experience cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classes.

When developing an understanding of mainstreaming, the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET), and the National Committee for Education Support Service (NCESS) 1996 embarked on a process of research in the field of special education, to identify and address the need to integrate the system of



education to form a single comprehensive system to meet the needs of learners. This is known as 'mainstreaming'. Mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that they can "fit" into the mainstream system, hence being integrated into the normal classroom routine (White Paper 6, 2001).

White Paper 6, (DoE, 2001) states that by establishing an inclusive education and training system changes will be necessary to mainstream education so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early, and the appropriate support provided. Learners who experience mild to moderate barriers can be adequately accommodated within mainstream education through appropriate support from the district-based support team. The Department of Education White Paper 6 states, "All learners can learn and all children and youth need support" (2001:6).

The South African Schools Act of (SASA, 1996) also supports mainstreaming, in that it acknowledges the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa (1996), whereby

learner diversity and education for all within a system of education is mandatory. However, I argue that the teachers have not been trained in a programme to address learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classrooms, and hence they are not sensitized to the needs of learners with cognitive learning barriers.

Both international and national patterns and trends, regarding disability, have undergone a major shift which, to a large extent, has influenced the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa. These shifts centred mainly on the move from a medical discourse to a human rights discourse. The human rights discourse is a discourse that is committed to existing full citizenship to all people (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1990).



At the 1990 world conference on Education for All held in Jomtein, Thailand, much emphasis was placed on inclusive education. This was the driving force for a resolution that became known as the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policies and Practice in Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1990).

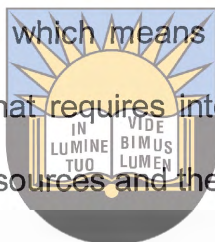
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The emphasis in the Salamanca statement is on the shifting from the “need” of the learners to the “barriers” that the learner may experience in learning and how to remove or decrease these barriers. This is a more positive approach, because, in this case, the focus is on what learners know and can do at classroom level (Du Toit, Landsberg & Levit, 2004).

The resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on the 4th March 1990 with regard to standard rules on the equalization opportunities for learners with learning barriers, states that “education in mainstream schools presupposes the provision of interpreter and other appropriate support services” (UN 1994:p. 15). Therefore, it seems that, while mainstreaming may be a way forward to

access quality education for all, it can be argued that the current South African socio-economic environment does not allow for its successful implementation.

According to (Jace and Terlizzi 2009 vol.129: 491-509), further training of teachers ought to be made available to support teaching and learning for learners with cognitive learning barriers in the mainstream classroom. They propose that certain lessons could be learnt from the Learners with Special Needs (LSEN) schools to facilitate inclusive education in mainstream schools. They suggested that policies, procedures and governance of inclusive education need to be based on South Africa's current socio-economic reality, which means considering access to quality care on a regular basis, for learners that requires intervention, taking into account transport costs and the availability of resources and the cost of these.

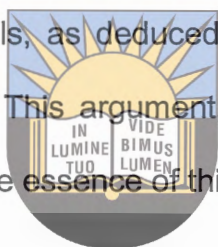


The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) launched a master plan for learner assessment in 2009 whereby it specified that a performance standard for all learners, must be met. To me, the master plan was contradictory to what inclusive education stated. The inclusive education policy was focused on addressing the learning barriers to learning, whereas the master plan has specified pace setters. The pace setters determine the weekly content to be taught, hence setting the teaching and learning pace for all learners.

DoE common examination papers, known as the Annual National Assessment (ANA) tests, were set in June and December for grades 3, 6 and 9, in 2010. However, learners who experienced cognitive barriers had "special needs". This implied that these learners had scholastic needs that were different from mainstream learners. Hence, they could not keep pace with the set weekly pace setters. A study by Barnard 2001; Daris and Fiorian, 2004, state that the process of facilitating the

learning and participation of learners remains a complex and poorly understood area of education.

It appears to be accepted that current practices within mainstream classes may contribute more to exclusion than inclusion, among learners with cognitive barriers. (Corner & Osle, 2002). However, if these pace setters determine the tempo of learning for learners it becomes a “one size fits all”, which is a contradiction of the South African Constitution (1994), SASA (1996) and White Paper 6 (2001). Therefore, I argue that more qualitative research in the field of cognitive learning barriers is necessary for the individuals, as deduced from their own perspectives (Carrington and Graham, 2001: p.47). This argument, with regard to the learners’ experiences and perspectives, forms the essence of this study.



Current research, which focused on teachers’ experiences of inclusive education within a mainstream learning context, states that teachers do not have competencies that enable them to support learners with cognitive barriers, and therefore teachers and learners do not form collaborative relationships in an inclusive learning environment (Magare; Kitching and Roos, undated).

Other literature focused on parents’ experiences of their children as learners with cognitive learning barriers to learning (Engelbrecht, P; Swart, E; Ellof, I and Fortin, C. 2005). The results indicated that inclusion of a child into mainstream education was a challenging and dynamic process that starts with the parents’ decision to place their child in a mainstream setting. In spite of legislation, and the desires of parents, the development of inclusive educational practices in South Africa did not always reflect the value of equality and individual rights. To add to these comments, a study by Pillay, and Terrizzi, (2009), proposed that certain lessons could be learnt from

Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN), in mainstream classes (Pillay & Terriz, 2009).

This research identified a gap, evident in mainstream classes, whereby the “voices” of learners with cognitive learning barriers need to be heard in order to understand their needs. Article 12 of the ‘Child United Nations’ document (1990), asserts that the child has the right to express his or her own opinion in all matters affecting him or herself. Kuncy (1992) in Danida Consortium (2001), states that “It is not enough to give a young person a voice; we must also be prepared to listen and act upon what they say”.



Rediscovering Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1970), Maslow stated that we have to abandon the idea that learning is inherent in all people. Maslow argues that “belonging” is one of the central pillars that has been missing from our education structures for some time. Even though the need to belong is fundamental, schools do not put much emphasis on it; hence I argue that the voices of learners with learning are not being heard, thus ignoring their need to “belong”, within the environmental, and specifically schooling, context. However, the concept of inclusion implies a sense of belonging and acceptance (Volts 2001), but this study argues that learners with mild cognitive barriers do not feel a sense of belonging in a mainstream class and thus experience no feeling of acceptance.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Literature indicated that learners with cognitive barriers experience great difficulty in gaining access to learning, as education support was not always given to learners who experienced cognitive learning barriers (DoE, White Paper 6, 2001). Learners with mild cognitive learning barriers learn differently from ordinary learners in the

mainstream class, so much so that teachers with little experience, or who were not trained for teaching learners with cognitive barriers, suffer frustration. They are often disappointed because so many of their attempts seem fruitless (Burden, A. 2005).

White Paper 6 contradicted what was being practised at classroom level, as the curriculum and the assessment requirements were not adapted to meet the needs of all learners, especially learners with mild cognitive learning barriers. According to the inclusive policy, learners in a diverse classroom were supposed to learn at their own pace, not according to the specified pace, as mentioned earlier. Yet there were no support programmes in the master plan, as all learners had to meet the pace setting target. This leads me to the research questions that shape this study.



1.4 Research questions

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Main question:

How do learners with cognitive learning barriers experience learning in a mainstream classroom?

Sub-questions:

1. How do learners with cognitive barriers cope in a mainstream classroom?
2. What are the implications of the learner's experiences and coping strategies for teacher development policy and implementation in a mainstream classroom?

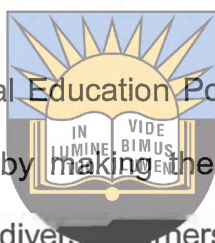
1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore and investigate learners' experiences in the mainstream classroom, focusing on learners with cognitive learning barriers at

Intermediate Phase level. Furthermore, to give these learners a “voice” in order to determine their understanding, needs and learning processes in the classroom of inclusive learning.

1.6. Objectives of the study

- To explore the experiences of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in the main stream classroom.
- To provide a “voice” for learners with cognitive learning barriers in the mainstream classroom.
- To draw attention to the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), in reviewing some of the plans formulated, by making these plans more practical, and achievable to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- To assist with the curriculum and development of continuous assessment requirements and to meet the potential needs of all learners.



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1.7 The significance of the study

This study could hopefully provide a “voice” for learners with cognitive learning barriers in the mainstream class. It could provide new research information regarding the implementation of inclusive education in the mainstream, particularly from the learner’s perspective, at these two pilot schools. It could also assist with the curriculum, and development of continuous assessment requirements, to meet the needs of all the learners in an inclusive teaching and learning environment.

This study could draw attention to the National Educational Policy, White Paper 6 (2001) in reviewing some of the plans (e.g. pace setters) formulated, by making them more practical and achievable to meet the needs of diverse learners. The

government officials, together with schools, should create a remedial, or some didactic aid in the mainstream schools for learners with mild cognitive learning barriers, to meet their full scholastic ability in a mainstream context.

The contribution from this study hopes to inform the DoE officials about the real and relevant issues and challenges that confront learners with mild cognitive learning in mainstream classrooms. Hopefully this study will influence intervention strategies that will support diversity in learners cognitive abilities in learners in mainstream classes.

1.8 Definition of terms



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- *Inclusive education*: is defined as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners (NCSNET and NCESS).
- *Inclusion*: focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs.
- *Mainstreaming*: is about getting learners to fit into a particular kind of system or integrating them into the existing system (DoE, White Paper 6, 2001).
- *Cognitive*: the word “cognitive” is derived from the latin word “cognosco” meaning “to know”. It is therefore a matter of building up knowledge at a specific grade level. (Burden, 2005: p.125)
- *Barriers to learning*: is understood as learning difficulties in reading, writing, mathematics, speech, language and communication. (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006)

In conclusion I maintain that this research would make a significant difference to understanding learners experiencing mild cognitive learning barriers in Intermediate Phase mainstream classes, as there was very little evidence of learners “voices” in

inclusive mainstream classrooms. Their experiences have hence never been heard, explored, or researched, in order to develop and make our system of education more inclusive.

1.9. Chapters Outline

Chapter One: An introduction and background to the study

Chapter Two: Literature reviewed with reference to the topic focusing on Phenomenology and mild cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classes.

Chapter Three: Research methodology, study design and ethical issues with regard to this study

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis of the four learners' experiences as presented through the learner interviews and journal entry

Chapter Five: Summary of the study, recommendation and conclusion



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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of laws and policies concerning learners with learning barrier which leads to a discussion of learners with mild cognitive barriers, and their placement at school level as this will provide the readers with the knowledge of different levels of cognition. The discussion will be followed by the theories of development and learning, concerning mild cognitive barriers to learning. This leads to an understanding of the placement of a learner with cognitive learning barriers in a mainstream class, and how they face these situations, as well as the educators' and parents' views.



2.2 Laws and policy documents on inclusive education

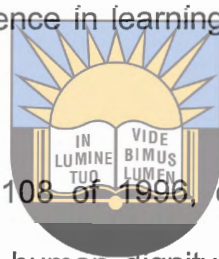
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Both international and national trends regarding learning barriers have undergone a major shift which has, to a large extent, influenced the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa. These shifts centered mainly round the move from a medical discourse to a human rights discourse. A human rights discourse is one that is committed to granting full citizenship to all people (UNESCO 1994 p. 9). A study by Pill (1997) indicated that, at the world conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, emphasis was placed on inclusive education. The driving force for a resolution was mandated at this conference, which became known as the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policies and Practice in Special Needs Education.

The emphasis on the Salamanca Statement indicates that there is a paradigm shift from the “need” of the learners to the “barriers” that the learners may experience in

learning. The question is how to decrease these barriers. This is a more positive approach, because, in this case, the focus is on what learners know and can do at classroom level (Du Toit et al. 2000) The resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on the 4th of March 1994, with regard to standard rules on the equalization opportunities for learners with learning barriers (UN 1994 p.15), states that "Education in mainstream schools presupposes the provision of an interpreter and other appropriate support services. The emphasis on the Salamanca Statement clearly stated that there was a new shift from the "need" of the learners to the "barriers" that learners may experience in learning, and how to decrease these barriers.



The South African Constitution, Act, 108 of 1996, enforces a democratic state, common citizenship, and the value of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom. The South African Schools Act (1996) acknowledges the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa whereby learner diversity and education for all, within a single system of education is recognized. In 1996 the National Commission on Special Education and Support Services (NCSESS) began a process of research into the field of special education, and identified the need to integrate education to form a single comprehensive understanding to meet the needs of all learners. This is known as 'mainstreaming'.

In 1993 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) developed rules pertaining to the education of people with disabilities, and encouraged all countries to adopt these rules. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UN 1990) asserts that the child has a right to express his or her opinion in all matters affecting him or her. In 2001, Education White Paper 6 was gazetted in terms of the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) Act 27 of 1996. This document provides the

framework for equitable education for all South African children. These policy documents present a framework.

2.3 Defining learning barriers

'Learning barriers' is a broad term which refers to learners who have learning difficulties. Learners with learning difficulties do not form a homogeneous group. They have a wide variety of characteristics, ranging from academic difficulties to cognitive, social and emotional problems (Van Kraayenoord and Elkim 1994, p. 244).

Learners who in the past have been referred to as "slow learners", low achievers, or simply 'hard to teach', certainly fall within this category of "learners with learning barriers". Learners with learning barriers are those of at least average intelligence, who, for no obvious reasons, experience great difficulty in learning the basic academic skills (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).



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It is important to realize that learners with general and specific learning difficulties comprise by far the largest group of learners with learning barriers. These learners require some measure of additional support and special consideration if they are to achieve success in a mainstream classroom.

Polloway and Pattern (1993:136) state that "Students with disabilities have been placed or kept in the general programme with little collaboration supporting their instructional needs and services". This results in the learners being "dumped" in the mainstream, without taking into consideration the diversity of these learners. Furthermore, these learners were also not really accepted in the mainstream: it was rather a case of them adapting to the system of education, than the system providing for them.

Some educators deny that there is a form of learning difficulty distinct from the general learning problems which are known to impede the progress of some learners (Franklyn, 1987). Other experts argue strongly that a form of learning barrier does exist, which is qualitatively different from the more general forms of academic failure (Badian 1996). Even after many decades of research, no final consensus has been reached concerning a precise and unambiguous definition of learning barriers (Kaivale, Farness and Lorrbeerch 1991; Shaw et al. 1995). In other words, the researcher is interested in these learners who manifest cognitive learning barriers in a mainstream classroom environment.



2.4 Conceptualizing an understanding of cognitive barriers to learning

Neisser (Lerner 1985, p.181) describes cognition as the human ability “by which sensor impairment is transferred, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered and used”, while for Jacobs (1984, p.213), it concerns man’s unique ways of being involved with, and giving meaning to, information from his environment. Cognitive ability is characterized by various distinguishable but inseparable acts of knowing, such as perception, conceptualization, representation, intelligence, learning, thinking and memory.

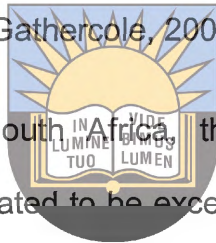
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According to Very cited in (CESA, p. 56), one of the most important developmental tasks of a learner, in the foundation and intermediate phase of schooling, is the mastering of the basic scholastic skills; namely, to learn to read, write, spell and compute well (Ibid). By the end of the primary years, these skills should be automatic functions.

As the learner develops and grows older, so more scholastic functions and abilities are required of him, especially to become an independent, responsible learner and to

master the concepts covered in the different learning areas. If a learner is struggling to master the fundamental concepts, the school achievements will be adversely affected, because learners will be unable to actively participate in the more advanced learning occurrences. Hence, it is understandable that there are implications for learners with cognitive barriers.

School age learners with mild to moderate cognitive barriers tend to function at what Piaget (1963) referred to as the “ Concrete Operational level”. Hence, many learners with a mild to moderate cognitive barrier also have difficulty in storing information in their long term memory (Pickering and Gathercole, 2004).



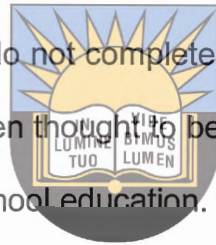
Du Toit (2000) indicates that, in South Africa, the number of learners who experience barriers to learning is estimated to be exceptionally high, because of the social, economic and political history of this country. The INECG (1992) accepted that the number may be between 40 and 50 percent of the school-going population. If learners are not helped timeously, and in an appropriate way, it can lead to serious consequences for the learners themselves, and for the country.

Learners with cognitive learning barriers function below “acceptable” levels of intelligence, but have nothing physically wrong; neither does their physical appearance differ from the rest of society. It is not possible to identify learners with cognitive learning barriers by looking at them. This poses some problems for the educator, in that identification of a learner with mild cognitive learning barriers will take place later in their schooling career, rather than earlier. This could result in an academic backlog. Kapp (1999, p. 61) elucidates upon this fact by saying that the child is deprived of valuable learning experiences. Because each learning

experience serves as a foundation on which new experiences can be built, it means that the learner's experiential deficiency is increased.

Learners with cognitive barriers appear to have difficulty attending to several environmental features at once, with the result that their play can become inflexible and repetitive (Krakow and Kapp, 1983).

Learners who have a cognitive barrier tend to be typically more passive than learners in learning situations, and are more dependent on others (teachers and their peers) for guidance (Whitman, 19991). Most learners in this situation eventually fail one or more years, and consequently do not complete their schooling. Learners who do not complete their schooling are often thought to be illiterate, and more frequently unemployed than those with a good school education. When they do find work it is of the type of work that offers few prospects for the future and generally a low salary (Burden, 2006).



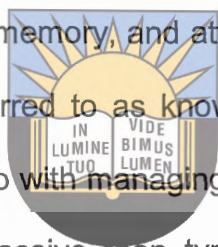
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Unfortunately, the situation indicates that these learners run the risk of becoming part of a growing social group who cannot make a positive contribution to the social and economic prosperity of their country and their community, and eventually become dependent on the health and welfare services that the state is then obliged to provide for the poor (Burden, 2006).

Burden (2006) defines cognitive development, as the concept "cognitive" is derived from the Latin word "cognos" meaning "to know". It is therefore a matter of building up knowledge and information which makes learning achievable. Here the knowledge refers not so much to book knowledge as to knowledge in general - knowledge that equips a person to live like all other people. Cognitive ability depends upon the brain and how it functions. The more effective a person's brain functions

are, the greater is his or her ability to collect, store and recall knowledge. According to Burden (2006) it sometimes happens that children's cognitive development does not correspond to their natural potential, but is lower. In such cases, a gap has arisen between the actual state of their cognitive development and what it ought to be, according to their giftedness.

Lutz and Sternberg (1999) claim that cognitive development entails acquiring understanding about the world in which we live. The process involved in achieving such understanding comprises mental activities, such as conceiving, reasoning, storing and retrieving information from memory, and attending to stimuli (Worley and Wolery 1992). These abilities are referred to as knowledge acquisition and meta-cognitive abilities, the latter having to do with managing one's thinking. Learners with cognitive barriers tend to be more passive than typically developing learners in learning situations, and are more dependent on others for guidance (Whitman, 1991).



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It is evident that learners with cognitive barriers have limited knowledge, presumably because they have difficulties in both storing information and subsequently retrieving information from memory (Umonsky 1998). To explain organization in the memory store, it might help to think of memory as being like an office filing cabinet. Memory deficiency limits one's problem solving capacity, as the learners cannot recall information that is relevant to solving the problem (Ibid).

Learners with cognitive barriers are less aware of how their minds work; have less knowledge about learning to initiate strategies, and although they can be taught strategies, they are less able, efficiently and independently, to initiate, regulate and monitor their use of these strategies (Cole and Chan, 1990, Whitman, 1991). When

assisting learners to learn the strategies, their impaired language skills will find it difficult to use self-instruction to guide their completion of tasks, in which case their receptive and expressive skills would be a more fruitful focus of teaching (Whitman, 1991).

Learners with a cognitive barrier also show acquired language in the same way as normal learners, but more slowly (Litton, 1978: p.120). Layton and Sharif (1978: p.44) found a direct correlation between the role of language acquisition and intelligence.

2.5 Teaching approaches for teachers to teach learners with cognitive learning barriers



2.5.1 Processing approaches

Several educators have addressed the issue of teaching methods by suggesting that a learner centred process approach has most to offer learners with barriers to learning (Goddard 1995; Mc Innis and Hemming, 1995). The process approaches, which often seem to emphasize personal and social development rather than mastery of curriculum content, are thought to be more accommodating of learner differences. However, there is some evidence to suggest that process approaches do not meet the learning needs of all learners, and in particular are not the optimum way of developing the basic academic skills for learners with learning barriers (Harris and Graham, 1996). Care must be taken to ensure that a process approach, as an example of inclusive practice, is not simply a soft option which allows learners with learning barriers to fade into the background, without being unduly challenged, and without really making progress through the curriculum (Harris and Graham, 1996).

Engelbrecht (2001) states that there is a lack of professional training when teachers are required to implement new collaborative practices in order to meet the needs of diverse learners in mainstream classes.

2.5.2 Individual programming for learners with barriers to learning

Teachers are often advised that the solution to special needs in the regular classroom, is individualized programming. When teachers are urged to cater for learners' individual differences, including those learners with learning problems, it should not be taken to mean that each and every learner must be given an individual work programme for most of the school day (Good and Brophy, 1994). A classroom activity is inclusive if it allows every learner to make an attempt, and to achieve some degree of success alongside others. The integration of learners with learning barriers into regular classes must involve inclusive curricula rather than, or in addition to, individual programming (ibid).



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Where individual educational plans (IEP) are required, they should indicate quite clearly, not only what the learner needs to do differently from the rest of the class, but also the areas of the curriculum where he or she can be counted in with the others. Ideally, such inclusion in the mainstream programme will be for most of the school day.

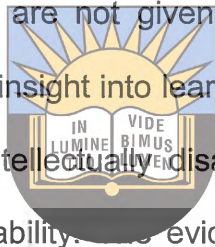
Learners with mild cognitive barriers can, and will, learn if provided with an appropriate instructional programme, adequate support, and teaching methods oriented to their individual needs (Wehmeyer and Agran, 2005).

For some learners with a cognitive learning barrier, where English is an additional language, language- based approaches may not be effective. Therefore, teachers

should think about using basic skills such as pictures, photographs and role play (Golvin, 1999).

2.5.3 Tempo of teaching

Dyer (1991) suggested that learners with learning barriers should be taught slowly, quite the reverse of their actual need. In this context, Brandt (1985) cautioned teachers that allowing learners to progress slowly actually creates an ever-widening gap between the able and the less able learners. Certainly, the evidence is that learners with learning difficulties and learning disabilities fall increasingly behind, and experience learning difficulties if they are not given special consideration. Scott, whose work in the 1970s gave the first insight into learning problems, suggested that many students, regarded as mildly intellectually disabled, or specifically learning disabled, are not lacking in potential ability. This evidence is that learners can be helped to learn (Bechtol & Sorenson, 1993; Butler, 1995).



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The “inefficient learner” perspective presented by Stotly (1992) certainly strengthens and benefits most from explicit teaching of new concepts, skills and strategies. They need to be placed in well managed classrooms, with clear, active teaching, and where students spend productive time on tasks, experiencing successful practice and knowing that they are reaching mastery. These learners require relevant and motivating curricula.

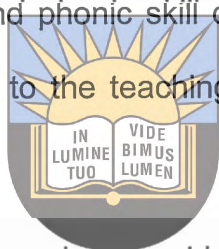
Effective teaching serves as an obvious first step towards creating an inclusive classroom (Barry, 1995).

Information from McCarnic (1979) was presented in support of the view that good, effective teaching not only raises the attainment level of all students, but also reduces very significantly the prevalence of learning failure.

2.5.4 Learner based activities and support

When activities are appropriately geared to their interest, and when the programme combines direct teaching in class with challenging and realistic out of class experiences, it is clear that these learners improve in attitude, behaviour and achievement (Young & Rees 1995)

Reading, writing, spelling and maths skills should be explicitly taught, leaving nothing to chance. These skills must be utilized in a meaningful way, so that reading, writing and arithmetic are used for a real purpose, not merely as drill exercises. More attention must be given to phonetic and phonic skill development than is currently the case in contemporary approaches to the teaching of reading (Young & Rees, 1995).



Self-monitoring strategies, must be used alongside skill-building and practice. Ideally, special tuition must be provided for the child withdrawing a child from the regular class for brief, intensive sessions. Where this is not possible, individual help should be given daily, within the classroom settings. Parents shall make use of tutors who work with learners after school hours (Young and Rees, 1995).

The use of any training programme which claims to improve visual perception has been discredited in recent years. In dealing with learning barriers in mathematics, most of the experts recommend an approach which uses apparatus and visual aids to the full, and demonstrates clearly the steps required in recording and carrying out basic processes (Chinn & Ashcroft 1993; Thomson & Bley, 1994).

2.6 Learning experiences of learners with a cognitive learning barrier

According to Wrinkler (1998) learners do not all learn in the same way. Learners have varied strengths and weaknesses. They differ in their cognitive ability, communication and physical and social development and their sensory abilities differ. They differ in the way they approach learning activities, and in their ability to learn different activities (Schmidt & Harriman, 1998). Norwich and Kelly (2004, p.62) discovered that the majority of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers preferred to have their learning and social experiences in a mainstream school.

Learners with cognitive learning barriers require repeated instructions and prompts. It may not be enough, simply to repeat the original instruction, instead, you will need to augment the learning experience with additional demonstrations, and perhaps manual guidance to ensure that they understand how to go about solving a problem (Ryndres, 1979).



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As has already been alluded to, children with cognitive barriers can be taught learning strategies, but have difficulty in applying these to new situations, and knowing when and how to change strategies (Whitman, 1991). They may need to be assisted to engage in the activities, although this will help their development of symbolic play, only if the chosen activities are very familiar to them.

Learners with cognitive barriers appear to have difficulty attending to many environmental features at once, and if not distracted and disorganized by competing events, focus fixedly on one activity, screening out all competing information in the wider environment, with the result that their play can become inflexible and repetitive (Krakow and Kopp 1983).

Some children find it difficult to move from the concrete level of cognitive functioning to the abstract level (Van Niekerk 1986, p. 215). They remain concretely bound in their thinking, according to Smith (1980, p.35). She says this child needs to see the material he is taught, hear it, touch it, smell it, because these learners are more concretely inclined and therefore have difficulty in mastering abstract concepts. This is why a multisensory approach in the teaching of these learners is so popular and so successful (Gerearheart 1981 p.117-118).

According to Moses (1981, p.13) and Smith (1985, p. 115), learners with learning barriers have problems, both in integrating new information with existing information and in seeing relationships between aspects. The ability to integrate related aspects, and to identify the essentials should be purposefully taught to the learning disabled.



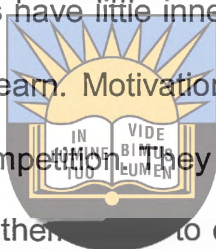
According to Torgensen (1997, p. 28) learners with learning barriers are usually dependent on more specific guidance in the teaching situation. They are mostly passive learners (Jacobs 1984, p. 215) who are unable to work independently and purposefully. They are also often impulsive in their approach to problems and do not understand instructions. Cognitive problems of this nature can only be completely solved if the child is allowed to actively participate in problem situations and their solutions (Jacobs 1984, p. 217).

Odam (2000, p. 21) said children with learning barriers are at a relatively higher risk for peer rejection than typically developing children". As a result, children with learning barriers tend to be isolated (Wilson, 2002). Children with learning barriers generally do not engage in high levels of social interaction with typically developing children, unless they are encouraged and supported in doing so (Odam, 2000; Wolery and Wilbers, 1994).

Although community attitudes towards people with learning barriers are changing, there is still a likelihood that some learners with cognitive barriers will experience difficulty in making friends and gaining acceptance, particularly if they have some irritating or challenging behaviour. In such cases a learner may experience rejection and teasing from others (Norwich and Kelly 2004).

2.7 Motivation

According to Burden (2006), and in my 18 years of experience in teaching, learners with mild to moderate cognitive barriers have little inner motivation, that is, the inner desire to want to or to be moved to learn. Motivation often has to be initiated by external factors such as reward and competition. They find it difficult to pay attention, and show a lack of readiness to direct their attention to one specific thing. They find it difficult to discover the relevant aspects of the matter, that is, to realize the implications of internal as well as external factors that distract them.



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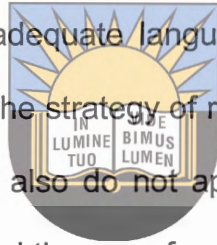
Learners might have problems with the ability to attribute meaning to something, concrete or abstract. To be able to do this, they need to use strategies like grouping, classifying, discriminating, comparing and thinking, and because they depend on help from outside they find these activities difficult to perform. Their thinking is restricted to the concrete, and tends to be rigid, lacking flexibility and being rather stereotyped (Burden, 2006).

Therefore, learners with slower than-average rates of development, predictably do not master content as readily as other learners do. They are frequently viewed as slow learners, or as having learning barriers. Indeed, to submit all learners to the same curriculum with the same expectations is to invite, if not guarantee, failure, and can be viewed as educational neglect (Wadsworth, 1989).

2.8 Memory problems with regard to learners with cognitive barriers to learning

Ellis (1993) showed convincingly that the short-term memory (STM) “of learners with cognitive barriers show a specific defect; and the lower the intelligence, the poorer the individual’s short term memory”. However, the long-term memory of the cognitive barriers show no significant limitations. In other words, the learners with cognitive barriers find it difficult to remember something.

Ellis (1993) in his research says that these learners fail to store information in their short term memory, as a result of inadequate language skills which temper their capacity to rehearse. But it is not only the strategy of rehearsal that they do not use. Various studies have shown that they also do not apply other strategies, such as grouping, chunking, and association, and the use of mediators become essential and necessary



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According to Spitz (1973), another limitation of their STM is its smaller digital span. Instead of the ordinary seven items which the STM of the normal person can handle, the number they can register is far lower.

Many students, who seem to have problems in learning, are students with a relatively slow rate of development. There is evidence that many children who develop slowly during their early years can “catch up” by the age of 12 or so (Kagan 1975; Wadsworth 1978). Gallagher and Reid (1981, p. 171), state that what can be said with reasonable confidence is that all learners with learning barriers, except those with serious learning barriers, follow the same course in developing intellectually, as do normal learners.

2.9 Meta-cognitive skills in learning practices

The second cluster of intellectual abilities learners need for successful learning are the meta-cognitive skills. Meta-cognition refers to our knowledge about our cognitive processes. It involves monitoring and the regulation of our thinking processes (Schraw & Graham 1997). Meta-cognitive skills dictate how children go about achieving success. Style refers to how they feel about learning, and about themselves as learners. The maturational aspect actually makes the greatest contribution to success, because even if learners have the ability to do a task, they will not be successful unless they are motivated to use their skills (Meyer et al. 1989).



The level of learners' engagement reflects the quality of the environment and the level of the educators' support for learners to engage and sustain their participation (Mc Williams and Barley 1995). Glasser (1998) believes that all individuals are motivated to meet their emotional needs and their need to learn and survive. Results of research into a cognitive style, by Riding and Rayner(1998) suggest that everyone has a preferred style of thinking and learning. In broad terms, the practical application of this research points to the necessity for teachers to be aware that learners in their classes will learn in different ways, hence teachers ought to be sensitive and plan according to learner diversity (Riding and Rayner, 1998).

2.10 Exploring the concept of mainstreaming in education

The move towards inclusion of learners with learning barriers in regular classes had a major impact on the role of the regular class teacher, who is now required to cater for the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students (Fuchs and Fuchs 1994;

McCay 1995). Mainstreaming means, placing learners with special needs in regular classes, which is referred to as “inclusion” or “inclusive education”. Inclusion has become one of the more contentious issues in the field of education today (Barnezi and Dailey 1995; Barton 1995; Brucker 1995).

2.11 A discussion on inclusion

The concept of inclusion implies a sense of belonging and acceptance (Voltz et al, 2001). The goal of inclusion is not to erase differences, but to enable all students to belong to an educational community that validates and values their individuality (Stainback et al. 1994: 489).



Furthermore, (Stainback, 1994) alludes to the following goal of inclusion: Inclusion is not to arouse differences, but to enable all students to belong within an educational community (Stainback, 1994, p. 489). White Paper 6 (2001) advocates that the inclusion of learners with learning barriers in mainstream classrooms is not without its critics, with some educators arguing that mainstream placement is not necessarily the least restrictive learning environment for some learners (Smelter, Rosch & Yuderwitz 1994; Putnom, Spiegel & Bruiniks 1995). For this reason it is also argued that the full range of placement options, including special schools and special classes, should be retained, allowing for responsible choices to be made, concerning the most appropriate educational setting for each individual with a disability (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

The practical problems surrounding inclusion are obvious in the case of individuals with severe and multiple barriers to learning, since many of the students require a high degree of physical care and management, over and above their special educational needs. However, it is suggested that, where schools are prepared to

accept the challenges of full inclusion, it is indeed possible to provide appropriate programmes for these learners (Clark 1994; Farlow 1996; Le Roy and Simpson 1996).

In comparison, the inclusion of learners with milder forms of barriers, and with general learning difficulties, in theory at least, presents fewer problems. It is believed that a mainstream class teacher can be helped to adopt teaching approaches and strategies which are more flexible and adoptive to the specific needs of such learners (Andrews and Lupart 1993; Kaap and Minchinton 1995).

On the other hand, some doubt has been expressed that learners with specific learning barriers can benefit from total inclusion (Roberts and Mather 1995). The learners, who have major problems in acquiring basic academic skills, usually need at least one period per day when they are withdrawn from class and taught individually. Within the regular classroom it is virtually impossible to provide remedial instruction of the intensity, frequency and duration required by these learners.

Research is really only just beginning to determine which school and classroom practices result in the most effective inclusion (Hollowood et al. 1995; Giangreco 1996). However, it seems that the following ingredients are certainly required of learners with significant learning or adjustment problems if they are to be successfully included in the regular classroom, with appropriate access to the general curriculum.

Mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that they can “fit in” or be integrated into the “normal” classroom practices (DoE White Paper 6 2001).

According to Clark et al (1997), mainstreaming is related to the concept of



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integration, which both reinterpreted and extended the issue raised by special needs approaches in mainstream classes.

Schools should therefore provide curricula opportunities to suit learners with different abilities and interests (Unesco 1994, p. 22).

2.12 Mainstream classroom model

Mainstream classroom models are designed in such a manner that the children do not lose their identity with their peer group, and so that there is a smaller chance that they will be stigmatized. The unique needs of all students must be the primary focus, when providing education. Therefore, 'Students shall be given the opportunity to attend their community school, with age appropriate peers, and shall be given the support required to achieve access to formal education.' (Pembina Hills Regional School Division 7, 2004 p. 8).



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Carrington, (2000) as cited in Suane and Sonia (2005), states that mainstreaming does not appear to have a negative impact on learners with mild cognitive learning barriers to development. Learners in a mainstream classroom, "construct a relatively confident and hopeful sense of themselves as legitimate participants in the mainstream culture" (Fitch, 2003, p. 237). Learners in mainstream classrooms reported feeling as if they had learned more, made more friends and had higher levels of self-efficiency and self-esteem.

The process of facilitating learners, learning and participation, remain a complex and poorly understood area of education (Barnad, 2001; Davis and Florian, 2004). Carrington and Graham (2001) argue that the research base in this area indicates

that school is a stressful and anxiety-provoking environment for many learners with cognitive barriers, and leads to social isolation, loneliness and bullying.

It appears that current practices within mainstream classes may contribute more to the exclusion of learners with cognitive learning barriers, rather than inclusion (Conner & Osler, 2002). As much as mainstreaming is a global issue and a way forward to “access quality education for all”, it can be argued that the current South African socio-economic environment does not necessarily allow for its successful implementation, as further training of teachers is to be made available to support effective teaching and learning for learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in the mainstream class. For this study, the focus is on learner support, when cognitive learning barriers are evident.

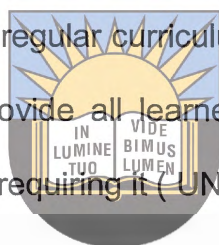


Carrington and Graham (2001: 147) argue that more qualitative research in the field of cognitive learning barriers is necessary to achieve an in-depth exploration of the real-life experiences of these individuals, from their own perspective. This frames and forms the very essence of this study.

From the above statement, one can deduce that this means that mainstreaming practices and their success differ from country to country. Some literature state that developing countries face somewhat different social and educational issues, and do so in a very different cultural context (Kisanji, 1998; Perusuh and Ndowi 1998). A study by Pillay and Terlizzi (2009) states that, while remaining supportive of the policy of inclusive education, it seems that South Africa’s mainstream school environment does not yet provide the necessary structure to equip learners with adequate learning barriers. In mainstream classes they recommend that lessons

could be learnt from learners with special needs (LSEN) schools, to facilitate inclusive education into mainstream schools.

White Paper 6 (2001) states that the establishment of an inclusive education and training system will require changes to mainstream education, so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early, and appropriate support provided. Learners who experience mild to moderate barriers can be adequately accommodated within mainstream education, through appropriate support from district-based support teams. Learners with learning barriers should receive additional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum. The guiding principle should be to provide all learners with the same education, providing additional support to children requiring it (UNESCO 1994 p. 22).



Pillay and Terlizzi (2006) suggest that the policies, procedures and governance of inclusive education need to be based on South Africa's current socio-economic reality, which means considering access to quality on a regular basis for learners who require intervention, taking into account the availability of resources, as well as the cost of these services. The challenge is that they are not trained or adequately prepared for learning with learning barriers in mainstream classrooms.

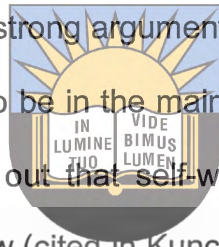
2.13 Negative impact of mainstreaming in South African classrooms

Leslie Madsen Brooks (2007) states that mainstreaming may result in greater prejudice, stereotyping, and rejection of learners with special needs. Placing learners with special needs in a regular classroom, without adequate support may demand so much teacher attention that other students will be neglected. Large class sizes interfere with the ability of regular teaching to meet the needs of all learners in the class. Many teachers are poorly prepared to meet the needs in their classroom.

Brooks (2007) argues that all learners will learn to understand and appreciate each other by attending the same class. Mainstreaming can help learners with special needs, develop self-confidence, new skills, and greater independence. It can help all learners to appreciate individual differences and to be comfortable with each other. Jules (2007) argues that all learners deserve mainstream schooling. The problem is not the learners or whether they are “up to the challenge”, but the inadequate training and support of teachers working with them. He states that learners need to be mainstreamed, not just for themselves, but for the sake of society.

Norman Kuncy (1992) presents a very strong argument against this approach, where the learner has to be “good enough” to be in the mainstream school. He states that Maslow (cited in Kuncy 1992) points out that self-worth can only arise when an individual feels that he belongs. Maslow (cited in Kuncy 1992) argues that belonging is one of the central pillars that has been missing from our educational structures for some time. Even though belonging is fundamental, schools do not place much emphasis on belonging as a construct for human acceptance and personal development. Learners gradually discover that they earn the right to belong in the school by doing what the school requires them to do, to fit into the school system.

Norman Kuncy (1992) maintains that we need to search together for ways of fostering a learner’s sense of belonging in our schools. Inclusive education is a concrete step to ensure that all learners begin to learn that belonging is a right, because the community values diversity. We need to abandon the idea that learners have to become “normal” to contribute to the world. We search for, and nourish, gifts that are inherent in all people. This concurs with the SA constitution where non-discrimination is one of the guiding principles in our country.



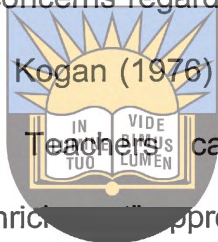
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2.14 Challenges that educators face in mainstream education

Many of the reforms in the 1980's, regarding the placement of learners with learning barriers in regular classrooms, have led to a reported where there is a decline in the morale of teachers, together with a reduced willingness and capacity to cope with the associated additional demands (Leadbetter and Leadbetter, 1993). While the rights of the child move towards inclusive education, it appears that the rights of the regular class child and the rights of educators have not been so clearly defined.

Indeed, educators have raised many concerns regarding such a significant change in educational pedagogy (Fullin, 1998). Kogan (1976) provides evidence that some functional retardation is reversible. Teachers can help facilitate cognitive development, but many argue for an "enrichment" approach (rather than acceleration approach) that permits children to socially and generalize the knowledge they have.



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Educational psychologists feel that one of the most important determinants of teachers' behaviour, with respect to students, is how they conceptualize intelligence as "developed", not fixed. This may be motivated to help the poor performer.

Engelbrecht (2001) states that the advent of inclusion in the South Africa Education System and the many changes associated with it, resulted in educators facing classroom-based pedagogical challenges. One such challenge is that teaching learners with cognitive learning barriers in a mainstream classroom may be regarded as an additional workload.

Dixon (1999, p. 12) indicated that educators who feel overworked, underpaid and under-respected are unable to find the time or resources to deal with a large number of learners who experience barriers to learning in a mainstream class. Kapp (1999,p.

293) states that learners learn things differently and at a different pace. He draws our attention to the needs required for these types of learners.

2.15 Large classes

The problem caused by large classes in South Africa, and all that is associated with this, cannot be overlooked. Naicker (1999, p. 52) suggests that educators and policy makers in South Africa must seek solutions to this challenge.

Dixon (1999, p. 12) contends that when classes are greatly increased, because of an excessive number of learners with cognitive barriers who have been placed in one class, the purpose of providing support is defeated.



In my experience, as an educator, it is not possible to give learners with cognitive barriers the individual attention that they require, because of the diverse abilities within a mainstream class and the large number of learners placed in a mainstream class. The pace setters from the DoE are not catering for the learners with cognitive learning barriers, as they set the pace and tempo for learning. As many educators tend to aim their teaching towards the average learner, the learners with cognitive learning barriers tend to “get lost” in the process. However, it is possible that the “gifted learner” could also become a casualty of the system.

Learners who experience barriers to learning receive a weighting according to the barrier. The weighting is provided by the District Based Support Team (DBST). However, this seems to have little significance when placing learners in a mainstream classroom. This fact increases the negative aspects of large classes, and also increases the demands placed on the educators.

2.15.1 Exploring the concept of learning

Learning is a process that is not confined to formal schooling only, but can occur within any context, and includes the acquisition of behaviour, mannerisms and attitudes (Craig, 1989, p. 28). Learning is the process by which one acquires knowledge that may be applied in different ways. It is the difference between what one did not know and what one now knows.

A person learns more quickly when new information can be integrated with existing knowledge. Learning can be intentional, such as when a learner is presented with new information in a lesson, or it can be unintentional e.g. when a child pricks himself with a pin. This experience will be associated with pain, and the child should learn not to do it again (Eastern Cape NPDE Consortium, 2003, p. 64).



People learn in many different ways, using different strategies. Learning can take place either by observing others, from **Personal Experiences**, interaction with others, thinking, perceiving, or memorization, etc. The learner finds himself or herself in a world of information, and attributes meaning to this information.

The significance the learners attach to the information which is acquired will affect the intensity and degree to which he/she attributes meaning to the new knowledge, thus he will have difficulty in internalizing the information (CESA, 1993, p. 25).

2.16 Experience of learners, parents and teachers in mainstream classes

2.16.1 Learners with and without cognitive learning barriers

Moore (2000), as cited in Suane and Sonia (2005), suggested that regular contact with learners who are experiencing mild cognitive barriers leads to more social acceptance and positive results in establishing and maintaining relationships.

Learning in a mainstream classroom enables learners to develop and build on their empathetic, communication and social awareness skills

Michael Peterson researched the perspective of learners both with and without learning barriers. From the perspective of learners with learning barriers, the major benefits of mainstreaming includes equal access to social and academic opportunities. Learners in mainstream classrooms reported feeling that they learned more, made more friends and had higher levels of self- concept, including self- efficiency and self- esteem.

The impact of inclusive education on learners without exceptionalities is also suggested to be positive, for a variety of reasons.



A study by Cole, (2004) suggests that students with and without learning barriers in mainstream classrooms have a stronger academic performance than those students in non- mainstream classrooms. This idea is supported by Demeris, Child and Jordan (2008) who suggest that mainstreaming does not have a negative impact on the achievement of students without barriers and that there is even a small positive increase in their scores. A particular issue to consider for both types of students is that social and academic constructs are to change over time (Butler and Marinov- Glassman, 1994; Jacobs et al, 2002).

Weeks (2000: p. 400) agrees with Pringle (1986: p.16) that the environment is responsible for nurturing the essentially human characteristics of people. Weeks' (2000) proposed model for teachers is based on a problem approach.

According to Fitch (2003), learners in mainstream classrooms, “constructed knowledge relatively confidently and have hopeful sense of themselves as legitimate

participants in mainstream culture. Learners in inclusive classrooms reported feeling like they learned more, made more friends and had higher levels of self-concept, including self-efficiency and self-esteem (Fitch 2003 p. 237).

Longout (2004) found that students reported that they enjoy school when family and community members are part of the school community as a whole. This greater level of connectedness and interdependence can be mutually beneficial to both schools and the community. Studies suggest that students favour school environments that provide them with opportunities for self-efficiency and social interaction.

The United Nations Organisation (1990) asserts that the child has the right to express his or her opinion in all matters affecting him or her. In 1978, an organization entitled "Who Cares? Scotland" was established to give a voice to young people who were being looked after by local authorities. It stated that children who have special needs, like all young people, also have the right to participate actively in decisions about their education and welfare. SOEID (1999) stated that if we are serious about ensuring young people exercise their right to express themselves in relation to matters that have a significant impact on their lives, we must ensure that this applies to all young people, including those who have learning barriers.

Suane and Sonia (2005) state that the current government policy and educational literature both emphasise the importance of schools establishing and maintaining relationships with parents. With regard to learners with mild cognitive learning barriers, it is fundamental to evaluate their needs effectively, and to subsequently evaluate the learning support, provided that the school liaises with learners' parents.

Swart (2004) indicated that parents experience mainstreaming as a dynamic process that impacts in many ways on families, schools, communities and the children with



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learning barriers. Results indicate that gaining an understanding of how parents are experts about their children, and how this expertise can contribute towards more balanced and effective collaboration and partnerships in inclusive education, is important for the successful implementation of inclusive education in South Africa.

Some researchers' findings state that parents would like their children to be placed in the mainstream schools because they want them to be socially included. Parents are even prepared to compromise by giving academic support at home, and letting their children take extra lessons, to enable them to stay in the mainstream school, because this can facilitate successful inclusion into broader society after learning (Engelbrecht, 2005).



Parents recommend that training for professionals to support them in dealing with a child with cognitive learning barrier, would be welcomed. Previous research in South Africa indicated that a lack of professional training when teachers and other professionals are required to implement new collaborative practices in order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse learner population, is a common source of stress (Engelbrecht, 2001). According to Banning, (2004) a deeper understanding of the perspectives of family members and professionals, based on the classroom-based meaning of factors, such as mutual respect and trust, could lead to better guidelines in practice

2.16.2 Parents' experiences

Giving learners and parents a voice is perhaps the single most effective way of developing as an inclusive school (Cheninai, 2004). Parents are the primary caregivers of the child (Donald et al, 2005) and therefore need to play an important

role in the support of the learners who experience barriers to learning because of their limited proficiency in English.

A study by Engelbrecht (2005), on parents' experiences stated that parents identify the attitude of schools towards inclusive education and learners with learning barriers as a critical factor in successfully including learners in mainstream classrooms. This is in agreement with the findings of Bennet, (1997), cited in Wong (2002), that the attitude of teachers is one of the hinges of the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Some findings indicate that some professionals do change their attitude once they become more familiar with the learner, and better informed about the learner's barrier. This correlates with the conclusions made by Balboni and Pedrabissi (2000) that mainstream teachers and other professionals with direct experience of inclusive education are more favourable towards learners with learning barriers than those without this experience.



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However, the study of experiences of families, by (Ruth, 2007 p. 43), indicated that families face a range of obstacles, including educational segregation, inappropriate curricula, lack of appropriate support and services, and social rejection.

However, teaching and learning strategies (Burden, 2000 p. 37; Hall, 2002 p. 36) confirm the need for appropriate teacher training for inclusive education in this country. Literature from England (Ainscow, 2000 p. 77 and Booth, Ainscow and Dyson, 1998 p. 220) and the USA (Giangreco, 1997 p. 199) mention the role of the teacher aid who assists the teacher by working with learners who are categorized as learners with learning barriers. Other support provided for teachers in mainstream schools is reduced class sizes (Hunt & Goetz, 1997 p. 11; O'Shea, 1999: p. 179) and

manageable teaching loads (Salend, 1998 p.131). In other words, globally this is a problem.

The study by Prinsloo (2001), states that, in spite of all laudable policies, the operationalisation of inclusive education is hampered by many problems. Some of the most important problems which arose and were debated and questioned, are as follows:

a) Inclusive policies have not been able to adequately protect individual rights.

b) Marginalized and excluded voices are not heard.

c) The manner in which people with barriers experience inclusion and exclusion in education has not been satisfactory.



Many parents in Europe and South Africa believe that English is the best choice of language for learning and teaching (LOLT) for their children (Mboweni, 2003; Nkabinde, 1997; Bosman & Van der Merwe, 2000; Radebe, 2004), albeit their second or third language. A result of this choice is that many English Second Language (ESL) learners experience barriers to learning, because of limited English proficiency (NCSNET & NCESS, 1997; Nel, 2005; De Vries, 2006).

Heigh (as quoted by De Vries, 2006) affirms that most ESL learners are not skilled enough to study other learning areas in their second language. Lamentably, many educators lack the training, knowledge, tools and/or time to support ESL learners with a limited English proficiency, in attaining their full potential (Snyder Olita & Nakaone, 2004; Prinsloo, 2005).

Croll and Moses (2003, p. 744) suggest that, for the overwhelming majority of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in mainstream schools, teachers felt

that regular classrooms were the right place for the child. In nine out of ten cases, the teacher said that the child should be in the regular classroom.

Suane and Sonia (2005) state that teachers' attitudes towards mainstreaming have become more positive since 1993; however, their experiences continue to highlight a perceived need for more support and resources. Yet, research suggests that most Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) feel unprepared to meet the needs of their learners with mild cognitive learning barriers (Marshall et al., 2002)

2.17 Applying developmental and learning theories in mainstream classrooms



There are many developmental and learning theories that are relevant to this study, however, this study will concentrate on those learners who are directly affected by mild cognitive learning barriers. Learning and development theories enable the reader to understand the foundation of learning disabilities and bring form, coherence and meaning to what is observed in the classroom (Lerner, 1993, p. 181).

The following theories will be discussed.

2.17.1 Piaget's theory of intellectual development

Piaget's theory as cited in Wehmeyer and Ogran (2005) is a perspective from which one can evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of what you can do as an educator, whether as a teacher or in curriculum or administration.

The most important and most revolutionary implication of Piaget's theory is that children construct knowledge from their actions in the environment. The construction of social knowledge is dependent on the child's action on, and interaction with, other people. If the objective of education is to enhance learners' acquisition of knowledge, educational methods need to be consistent with how learners acquire knowledge.

This becomes most significant in this study, in terms of supporting learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream education.

2.17.1.1 Social integration

Peer interaction becomes particularly important for cognitive development, when a child becomes able to assimilate the viewpoints of others when they are different from his or her own. Peer interactions are of cognitive importance from the time the child enters school. Learners learn to evaluate their egocentric thoughts by comparing them to the thoughts of others (Giangreco, 1997 p. 194; Morgan & Demchak 1998 p. 26).



One peer activity of great value that is frequently overlooked by teachers, is children tutoring other children. Gallagher and Reid (1981) point out that benefits accrue to both tutor and tutee when students attempt to communicate their points of view. Tutors learn to clarify their thinking and learners experience cognitive conflict from being exposed to the views of peer tutors.

However, the above statement by Giangreco, 1997 p.194; Morgan & Demchak 1998 p.26) agrees with one of the principles of inclusive education that asserts that learners who experience barriers to learning should attend their neighbourhood schools and be taught alongside their peers in the mainstream classroom, which supports Piaget's social constructivist theory.

2.17.1.2 Piaget's cognitive developmental theory

Consider Jean Piaget's theory on cognitive development and the implications of the stages of development on learners with cognitive learning barriers: It focuses on the importance of the learner's conscious thought. Piaget proposes that humans are actively engaged in an ongoing process of adaptation when confronted with new

information from their environment (Kriel, 1999, p. 2). He set out a system of learning and suggested that this happens through three continuously interacting processes, namely:

- Assimilation, which is identifying and building upon concepts, using prior knowledge.
- Accommodation, which focuses on restructuring existing knowledge so that the new information can be accommodated.
- Equilibrium, referring to the above concepts which constantly interact, and progressive growth in the complexity of mental structures which takes place.

These have to be organized and kept in dynamic balance (Krech, Crutchfield, Livson, Wilson, Parducci, 1982, p. 291).



Piaget's theory has profound implications for learners with cognitive learning barriers, as their cognitive development will be slower than that of their peers and will show maturation lag. Educators must take note of this fact, and not force learners with cognitive learning barriers to perform at a higher level than they are actually capable of doing.

Learning experiences must be structured so that they enhance maturational developmental growth. Certain concepts may be too difficult to learn, and certain teaching techniques may be unsuitable for all children in a particular grade, despite their very similar ages (Krech, 1982, p. 298).

Curriculum sequences should be designed with children's changing cognitive statuses in mind. If the curriculum does not take into account learners' levels of conceptual development, learning without comprehension will be ineffective.

Learners cannot learn if they do not have the prerequisite cognitive skills to comprehend and interpret why they have learnt various learning applications.

Experience is another variable in childhood cognitive development. Differences in prior-experiences can contribute to “individual differences” in cognitive development. As learners have different histories of general experiences, so do they have different histories of social experiences in mainstream classroom settings (Krech, 1982).

Many learners who seem to have problems in learning, are learners with a relatively slow rate of age-appropriate thinking skills development. Grouping by ages makes school learning very difficult for learners who manifest cognitive learning barriers. Learners are certainly different in terms of thinking, reasoning and the comprehension that they bring to their academic scholastic work, and in what they can be expected to learn and comprehend; particularly in teaching methods.

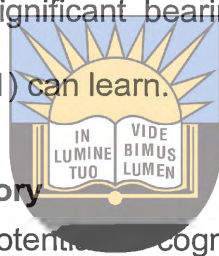


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Piaget recommended that schools foster active mutual respect between children, much in the way John Dewey (1963) described in the early 1900s. John Dewey stated that authoritarian teachers need to discover ways to modify their authoritarian roles so that a major portion of their interaction with children can be as collaborators and “equals”. Write (1982 p. 216) says: “The heart of moral development can be defined as the prolonged and continuing experience of mutually respected relationships.”

Piaget’s theory suggests that teaching methods and materials should be consistent with children’s levels of conceptual development. Piagetians believe that teachers can help facilitate cognitive development, but most argue for an “enrichment” approach that permits learners to solidify and generalize the knowledge they have (Write, 1982 p. 216).

Piaget's interest was, however, in understanding how knowledge develops, working with normal children, and not in individual differences. Barber Inhelder, a student and co-worker of Piaget, studied the development of reason in learners with barriers, and her work was a major contribution to the field (Inhelder,1968). The limited research that has been done to relate Piaget's theory to special populations is summarized by Gallagher and Reid (198, p. 171), who state that what can be said with reasonable confidence is that all children with learning problems, except possibly for the seriously emotionally disturbed, follow the same course in developing intellectually, as do normal learners. This has a significant bearing on this study as learners according to Gallagher and Reids (1981) can learn.



2.17.2 Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory

Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential cognitive development is limited to a "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). This ZPD is the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Bruner, 1999). When assessing the learners with cognitive learning barriers the assessment methods must take into account the zone of proximal development. What learners can do on their own is their level of actual development, and what they can do with help is their level of potential development.

Therefore, I argue that teachers need to be well trained in dealing with learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, to be able to provide the learners with "scaffolding" to support the evolving understanding of their knowledge domain or development of complex skills. Scaffolding, is the mediation of tasks by means of temporary structuring and support, a term coined by Bruner (1999).

Bruner (1999) claims that scaffolding will help learners with cognitive barriers, as they need extra support and resources in the mainstream classroom. This thinking by Bruner requires teachers to continually adjust the level of their teaching methods in response to the learners' levels of performance. Since learners learn much through interaction, curricula should be designed to emphasize interaction between learners and the learning tasks through the guidance, assistance and support of the teachers. Bruner's thinking and Vygotsky's thinking complement each other.

Vygotsky followed the trend of mainstreaming whereby learners with learning barriers need to be included in mainstream schools because he believed that the major role of schools is to create social contexts for mastery and conscious awareness, as a cultural tool. He considered formal schooling important in a child's cognitive development (Bruner 1999).



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The Vygotskian theory further supported ideas that apprenticeship and learning alongside a more knowledgeable peer or adult, is required. According to Bruner (1986), a specific social setting to learning, and a process by which learners grow into the intellectual life of those around them, is essential.

2.17.3 Social cognitive theory

Inclusion asserts that learners who experience barriers to learning should attend their neighborhood schools and be taught alongside their peers, in the mainstream classroom (CSIE, 2000, p. 12; Giangreco, 1997 p. 194; Morgan and Demchak 1998: p.26), as alluded to in chapter one. According to the Department of Education (DoE) one of its objectives is to provide quality education for all learners, in order to enable them to realize their full potential, and thereby meaningfully contributing to, and participating in, society (SASA,).

Engelbrecht et al (2000) argue that the most obvious motivation parents have for including a child with a cognitive learning barrier in mainstream education, is the fact that they want their child to be socially included. The placement of a learner is more important socially than academically, to some parents. Parents are even prepared to compromise by giving academic support at home, and letting their children take extra lessons to enable them to stay in the mainstream school, because this can facilitate successful inclusion into society after leaving school.

2.17.4 Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems states that, "An individual exists within layers of social relationships: the family, friendship network (micro-system), organizational, neighborhood (meso-system), culture and society(macro-system)".

Each system has an impact on other systems in an inter-independent way (Visser in Duncan et al., 2007:p.106). The fundamental assumption of this theory is that

"Behaviour is the result of an interaction between individuals and the contexts that they are exposed to " (Ibid, p.103). Bronfenbrenner's theory contributes significantly to my study, in that learners who are experiencing cognitive learning barriers behave differently to other learners, because their self esteem is low, and they cannot articulate or verbalize their thoughts in a coherent and logical way. Learners with cognitive special needs require lots of interventions and support from different stakeholders in the field of education, and in other professional expectations in their social life.



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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology of the study. The research paradigm shaping this study is an interpretive paradigm. The research approach is a qualitative approach, although the researcher will briefly discuss other approaches. The research design is a phenomenological design as it aligns to the voices and experiences of learners.

3.2 Research Paradigm - Interpretive Paradigm



Stanage (1987) traced “paradigm” back to its Greek origin “paradeigma” and Latin origin “paradigm” meaning model or example. A paradigm is the patterning of the thinking of a person. It is a principal example among examples, and an example or model to follow according to which design actions are taken in a study of this nature. Differently stated, a paradigm is the action of submitting to a view or perspective of a phenomenon (Stanage, 1987)

This view is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 157) who define a research paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”, dealing with the researcher’s worldviews.

Therefore, this research is shaped by an interpretive paradigm. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 123) an interpretive paradigm attempts to describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences. The researcher will therefore interpret the experiences of learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classrooms. This paradigm facilitates understanding and hence makes meaning of

the situation that the learner finds him/herself in, in a classroom-based context. The interpretive paradigm will develop understanding in context and therefore the researcher will be able to develop an understanding of the learners experiences and the meaning of the context and situation that they find themselves in, namely a classroom-based context

An interpretive paradigm requires the learner, and allows the researcher, to gain insight into the challenges that learners with learning barriers face as a consequence of mainstreaming (Terreblanche and Durrheim, 1999). By exploring the richness, depth and complexity of the learners phenomenon I could then begin to develop a sense of understanding of their meaning imparted by the learners to their phenomenon, and their social context. Through unstructured interviews and journal entries, the researcher would gain insight and understanding, and could improve the understanding of the learner's experiences as a learner with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream education.



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The aim of the research is to offer a learner's perspective of a situation, and to analyze the learner's situation so as to provide insight into the way in which learners with cognitive learning barriers make sense of their learning context, and the situations they encounter. The purpose of conducting a research of this nature is to gain knowledge and develop a critical theory emancipates and allows the freedom to express their experiences of learning in the mainstream classroom. Furthermore, it is to give these learners a "voice" in order to express and determine their needs, learning processes and understanding of learning in an inclusive classroom. This led me into a discussion about the approach that will be used for this study. The learners "voice" will therefore be interpreted in relation to critical theory which is emancipatory and allows the learners the freedom to express themselves

3.3 Research approach

There are broad methodologies which have dominated the scene in recent social research: The qualitative participatory action and quantitative approach. Each of these approaches has been linked to one of the meta-theoretical traditions. I shall briefly explain each research approach.

A quantitative approach in social science emphasizes the quantification constructs. The quantitative researcher believes that the best way of measuring the properties of phenomena is through quantitative measurement, i.e. assigning numbers to the perceived quality of things.

The qualitative participatory action research is about democratizing the knowledge-making process (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2002).



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This study is investigating learning experiences of learners with cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classrooms, hence a qualitative approach would be suitable to this study. According to Babbie and Mouton (1998) a qualitative approach is a research approach used in social research, according to which research takes its departure point as the insider's perspective on social action.

Many designs are included under the broad umbrella of a qualitative approach such as ethnographic design, case studies; life history and phenomenology. In this study the researcher design is phenomenology so that the learners became an intergral part of the learning environment because the aim of this research was to explore and understand learners' experiences in mainstream classrooms. The researcher would view human behaviour as a product of how learners with cognitive learning barriers interpret their life world and learning world, within the context of the mainstream

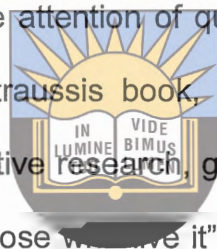
education system. To validate the learners responses a journal will inform the study as well as unstructured interviews.

3.4 Research design

The researcher will briefly discuss three different types of research designs, namely grounded grounded theory, case study and phenomenology . However, this study will focus on only one research design, a phenomenological research design.

3.4.1 Grounded Theory

The Grounded theory first came to the attention of qualitative researchers with the publication in 1967 of Glaser and Strauss book, "The Discovery of Grounded Theory". As with other forms of qualitative research, grounded theory is " The study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it" (Charmaz; 2000 p. 522). The investigator is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and the mode of enquiry is inductive. A theory is "inductively derived from the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data pertaining to that phenomenon. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study, and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23). The interest is in theory generation rather than theory testing, and the potential usefulness of substantive theory for practice can be found across many professional and applied fields (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522). In most grounded theory studies, data comes from interviews and observations.



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3.4.2 Case Study

Some define case study research in terms of the process of doing a case study (Yin, 1994), or in terms of the end product. Other scholars define the case in terms of the

unit of analysis. As Stake (2000, p. 435) suggests, case study is less of a methodological choice, and more of “ a choice of what is to be studied”.

In a case study the selection is done purposefully, not randomly; that is, a particular person, site, programme, process, community, or other bounded system is selected because it exhibits characteristics of interest to the researcher.

3.4.3 Phenomenological design

As the focus in this study is based on learners with cognitive learning barriers and their learning experiences, a phenomenological approach would be the most relevant to this study. The aim is to gather data regarding the perspectives of research participants (learners) about their experiences based on learning in the mainstream classroom. At the root of phenomenology, "The intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms, to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the learners" (Cresswell and Shapiro, 1998 p.96). Therefore, it became imperative to listen intently to the voices of the particular learners selected for this study.

Phenomenology is associated with Husserl (1970), and is a type of qualitative research. With its roots in philosophy and psychology, phenomenology focuses on the subjective experience of the individual. This approach rejects the notion of a dichotomy between subject and object; that is “The reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual (Cresswell,1998, p. 53). The researcher’s task is to enter that dialogue, and eavesdrop, as it were; to listen in, and capture the essence of what is perceived by the subject” (Van der Mescht, 1999, p. 3), which is applicable to this study. In other words, the researcher



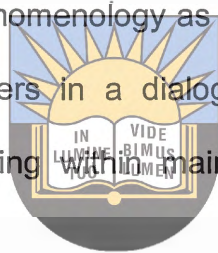
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will listen attentively to the learners as they share their experiences of learning in a classroom based environment.

3.5 Definition of Phenomenology

In the literature, there continues to be much disagreement about the meaning of phenomenology, possibly because the term has been used so widely. For instance, phenomenology has been conceptualized as a philosophy, a research method, and an overarching perspective from which all qualitative research is sourced. In this study the researcher will focus on phenomenology as a research method to engage learners with cognitive learning barriers in a dialogue to determine how these learners perceive teaching and learning within mainstream classes (Maykit and Marchouse,1994).



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Hein and Austin (2000 p.2) refer to the *Togewertha Excellence* as one way to carry out phenomenological research, since “The specific method used depends on the purpose of the researcher, his or her specific skill and the nature of the research question and data collected”. Thus: the importance of this study is for the researcher to attentively listen to the learners voices and experiences of learning in learning an inclusive teaching and learning context.

The researcher will use phenomenological psychology, which is defined by Giorgi (1971) as the method which produced descriptions of learners human experience. The researcher will utilize descriptions provided by learners (obtained through interviews or through written texts.)

Phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists, believe that the researcher cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions, and that the researcher should not

pretend otherwise (Hammersley, 2000). In this regard, Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 12) state that individual researchers “hold explicit beliefs”.

The emphasis on this study is interpretive rather than descriptive, as Giorgi (1992, p.121-122) explains: Description is the use of language to articulate the intentional objects of experience within the constraints of intuitive or presentation evidence. The key point here is that “a descriptive method describes itself precisely as it presents itself” neither adding nor subtracting from it. This method is viewed as an empirical research method because it follows strict data collection and analysis processes (Hin and Austin, 2001).



Phenomenological research aims to elicit life experiences and their meaning through peoples' perceptions and interpretations of their lives (Barber, 2004; Depoe and Gittin, 1998; Law, 1998; Stamford University, 2003). Edmund Husserl developed phenomenology as a method which allows us to contact phenomena “as we actually live out and experience them”.

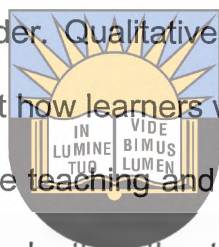
3.6 Research instrument

Although documents could be a source of data, the primary method of data collection is the interview, wherein one attempts to uncover the essence, the invariant structure, of the meaning of the experience.

The interview is one of the most frequently used methods of data gathering within the qualitative approach. According to Herbert and Irene Rubin (1995, p.43), qualitative interviewing design is characterized by being “flexible, iterative, and continuous”, rather prepared in advance and cast in stone.

Before interviewing participants, researchers usually explore their own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of their own prejudices. Assumptions are then bracketed, or set aside, so as not to influence the process, (Ashworth 1999). In addition to bracketing, when conducting a phenomenological reduction, horizontalization and imaginative variation are dimensions to be considered.

A qualitative interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in a particular order. Qualitative research interviewing in this study enables the researcher to find out how learners with cognitive learning barriers are experiencing learning in an inclusive teaching and learning environment. Probes are a useful way to get answers in more depth, without biasing a later answer.



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3.7 Interview process

The interview was conducted by the researcher, in person. The participants were interviewed three times, because the researcher wanted to: a) Develop a relationship of trust with learners, b) Gain their confidence and allow them the opportunity to speak freely with the researcher, c) Deepen the relationship, trust and understanding of their experiences. Each participant was asked to read and sign the informed consent form before the interviews. A research question was formulated to guide the interview. Adequate time was allowed, so that interviews would not be constrained by imposing a time limit. The interview time was 15-20 minutes in length. Each interview was recorded using a tape recorder to avoid losing data.

The participants were asked to clarify and elaborate phrases and words the researcher did not understand. The researcher would attempt to maintain a focus on

understanding the experience as it was related by the participants. Examples of the interview's prompts for clarification would include:

1. Can you describe what you felt like?
2. Can you recall what it was like for you when you could not answer the question?

3.7.1 Unstructured interviews

The preferred method of gathering information from the subjects was through unstructured interviews, which allowed the researcher to assist the subject in moving towards non-theoretical descriptions that accurately reflected the experience. The phenomenological interview, conceived as a "conversation" or an interpersonal engagement, in which the participants are encouraged to share with a researcher the details of their experience (Polkinghane, 1980, 40) will therefore be coming out of the relationship the researcher will have with the selected participants.



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The interview was flexible and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and set in stone. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the interviewer had a general plan of enquiry but not a specific set of questions that had to be asked. The focus of the interview, in keeping with the aim of phenomenological research, was on the experience of the interviewee, and was theme-orientated rather than person-orientated. The interview sought to describe and understand the meaning of the central themes of the experience.

3.7.2 Reflective diaries/Journal entries

Diaries were useful, and provided access to information that was otherwise difficult to obtain. They will demonstrate how events develop prospectively in real time (Willing, 2001). They could facilitate access to personal and intimate information that may not emerge in an unstructured interview context. The researcher issued consent

forms to the parents, to keep the learners' diaries of their everyday experiences in school for a time the researcher is busy with them. A specially formatted diary was presented to each with prompts to facilitate the learner's focus e.g. " Do you like reading maths and why? Which is your best subject? Which is the subject you like the least?"

3.8 SAMPLING STRATEGIES

3.8.1 Sampling of schools

Sampling of schools was done, using purposive sampling (Mugo in Kasenga, 2007, p.29). This was used in a special situation where the researcher had a specific purpose in mind, as the researcher was investigating experiences of learners with cognitive learning barriers in the mainstream classroom. These learners had to be identified accordingly.



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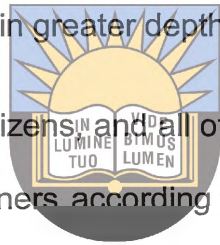
Two schools were selected from the ~~schools in the area~~ ^{schools in the area} piloting inclusive education in the Mdantsane area in Eastern Cape as relevant cases. Both schools were Senior Primary Schools (GET band). They use English as the medium of instruction and isiXhosa as their home language. The researcher selected two classes from the intermediate phase, that is grades five and six at each respective school. The researcher selected the two classes from the intermediate phase. Each school was assigned alphabetical letters to ensure confidentiality, rather than the use of the school's name.

3.8.2 Sampling respondents

Purposive sampling was suitable for this study as the researcher selected the sample based on the learners' profiles from the two pilot mainstream schools for the purpose of the research. According to Welman and Kruger (1999) purposive

sampling is the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify the primary participants.

The sample size was four intermediate phase learners with identified cognitive learning barriers. Two learners from each pilot school selected from grade 5 and grade 6 respectively. The age of learners is between 11 and 13 years. Two boys and two girls form the basis for this study. The choice of four learners is representative because for a phenomenological approach the researcher has to dig deeply into the learners experiences and therefore four learners allow the researcher the ability to uncover their experiences in greater depth.



All four learners were South African Citizens and all of them speak isiXhosa as their mother tongue. I selected all four learners according to their poor performances in Maths and both Languages (namely English and isiXhosa), using the examination reports and formative assessment portfolios.

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3.9 Data analysis

Data analysis is an eclectic process (Tesch 1990) which occurs simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation and report writing (Cresswell, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1984). It is based on data reduction and interpretation (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Tesch 1990).

Data analysis represents information in matrix displays of information; spatial format that presents information systematically to readers (Miles and Huberman, 1984). It identifies the coding procedure to be used to reduce information to themes/ categories (Tesch, 1990, pp.142-145).

The data was analyzed, using an interpretive phenomenological framework. The “mechanics” of such an analysis were similar to that found in many types of research, i.e. descriptive coding of data leading to the eventual organization of analytical themes. However, in the interpretive phenomenological analysis the emphasis always remained on participants, based on their personal and social worlds (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Themes generated from the literature were reviewed. They were embedded in instrument questions and in research questions. The researcher used the various identification themes to develop overall descriptions of the phenomena as the learners experienced them (Chamaz, 2003; Vos, 2002).



When coding data, the researcher had to read all the given information carefully, e.g. Pick one document: “What was its underlying meaning?” Write thoughts and themes in the margin (Chamaz, 2003 and Vos, 2002). The researcher clustered together similar topics, then arranged topics into major topics, revisited under the thematic data topics. Abbreviated the topics as codes; re-analyzed, the topics then developed major topics into themes and then reduced the number of themes by grouping similar themes together.

This was an inductive process as the researcher began with raw data consisting of multiple sources of data, e.g. the learners’ class work books; learners’ reports and learners’ portfolios. The final research outcome determined the learning experiences of these learners in mainstream classrooms. The researcher kept in mind the research questions that guided the study, refer to page 7, of chapter one, to which answers were required, as well as the aims of this study to provide a significant study, focusing on learners’ experiences.

3.10 Ethical issues

The researcher issued the consent forms to all stake holders (DoE; Principal and the SMT of the schools; Educators; and the parents of the learners). The researcher ensured the participants that they had the choice of whether to participate in the research or not; it was voluntary. The researcher intended not to expose the participants to any form of danger or harm.

Total confidentiality was applied. Pseudo names were used for the sake of confidentiality, and a right to privacy of the participants. The researcher avoided disruption to the normal working patterns or organisation of schools and learners. Data was collected at suitable times, that were allocated by the school for this study.



3.11 Limitations

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The following issues were to be considered:

- School organisation structure.
- The amount of time spent with the learners was important .
- Financial implications for this study e.g. transport to the schools.
- The reluctance of learners to talk or engage in freedom of expression.

3.12 Delimitation

The following matters were considered:

- The researcher must remain flexible to the organisation of the two schools where the research was undertaken.
- The researcher must remain relaxed to gain the learner's confidence before the sessions started.
- The researcher must discuss suitable times for interview visits with the

principal or SMT of the schools.

3.13 Ethical Issues

Qualitative research inevitably involved contact with human subjects in the “field”, and ethical problems were not usually far away. Lincon (1995), always aligns ethical considerations with the researcher’s relationship with the research participants and considers validity to be an ethical question. She suggested seven “standards for validity” such as the extent to which the researcher allowed all voices to be heard, and the extent of reciprocity in the research relationship .

There were a number of general principles that most researchers would agree on e.g.:



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- Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw
- Protection of research participants
- Assessment of potential benefits and risks to participants
- Obtaining informed consent and
- Not doing harm

The participants were fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research. Furthermore, it was clearly explained what their participation in the research entailed, and the risks, if any, that were involved. The researcher’s professionalism with regard to the ethical issues, sensitivity and conscientiousness was considered throughout the study. The sensitivity, conscientiousness had a direct impact on the trustworthiness of the researcher’s entire study.

There were strategies that researchers could employ to enhance the trustworthiness of their research, such as triangulation, member checks, and the use of rich, thick descriptions. Triangulation: The use of multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings.

In the case of this research, since it involved children as a vulnerable group, every effort was made to secure their informed consent and confidentiality. In the case of research on children, the researcher could not expect parents alone to provide disinterested approval on their children's behalf. Every effort was made to deal with consent, through dialogue with both children and their parents.

The confidentiality of information supplied by the research subjects and the anonymity of respondents was respected and non-negotiable. The researcher used pseudonyms for the names of participants throughout the research to preserve anonymity and to safeguard confidentiality from both a researcher and professional ethical position.

The research participants participated in a voluntary way, free from coercion. The researchers informed the participants of their rights to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the investigation whenever and for whatever reason they wish. Consent was freely obtained in order to be valid. Any harm to the research participants was avoided at all costs. The research was conducted in such a way that it minimized harm or risk to the individuals. Participants' interest or wellbeing fully considered as a result of their participation in the research. However, this study intended to strengthen their "voices" in verbalizing their experiences.

The independence and impartiality of the research was clear, and any conflict of interest or partiality was dealt with. The research was conducted so as to ensure the



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professional integrity of its design, the generation and analysis of data, and the publication of results, while the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, and collaboration with others was acknowledged (Research Ethics Framework, ESRC, July 2005, p. 23-25). All these ethical issues have been sensitively applied to this study.

3.14 Validity

In a qualitative study, the understanding of reality is really the researcher's interpretation of participants, and the interpretation or understanding of the phenomenon of interest, namely how they present learning and teaching in an inclusive environment. In qualitative research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved, uncover the complexity of human behaviour in context, and present a holistic interpretation of what is taking place.



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There are a number of strategies that qualitative researchers could employ to validate a study. Probably, the most well known is triangulation. Triangulation means the use of multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings, as this study collected data using unstructured interviews, journal entries and observation to validate the study. Foreman (1948) stated that, it is recommended that the researcher be submerged or engaged in the data collection phase over a period long enough to ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The best rule of thumb was that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated: That means that the researcher began to see or hear the same thing over and over again, and how information surfaced as the researcher collected more data for the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

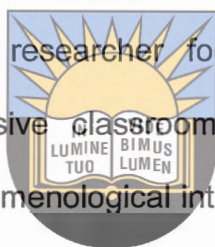
4.1 Introduction

Data was collected through unstructured interviews and journal entries. According to Herbert and Irene (1995, p. 43), qualitative interviewing design is characterized by being “flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and cast in stone.”

The specific “phenomena” that the researcher focused on are the learners’ experiences of learning in an inclusive classroom at school. The researcher conducted unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews with the learners. The questions were directed at the participants’ experiences, feelings, and beliefs. The focus was on what goes on within the participants, and this got the participants to “describe the lived experience” in a language they were free to communicate in.

The researcher wrote a letter to the district office requesting for permission to engage these two schools where the interviews were conducted. The researcher made an appointment and also visited the two schools, asking for the permission from the school management team, to conduct the interviews. The researcher explained to them the aim and purpose of the interviews.

In order to ensure and adhere to ethics in research, the researcher made use of informed consent forms. The researcher developed a specific informed consent “agreement”, in order to gain informed consent from participants. The informed consent agreement form was explained to subjects at the beginning of the interviews



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The purpose of collecting the data from three different informants was a form of “data triangulation” to contrast the data and “validate” the data if it yielded similar findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bloor, 1997; Holloway, 1997).

Data-collection interviews continued until the topic was exhausted or saturated, that is, when the interviews introduced no new learners perspective on the topic according to the method of phenomenology.

4.2 Interviews

The interviews have been transcribed from isiXhosa into English for the purpose of this research study. The researcher transcribed the tape recordings into English. There were three interview sessions: indicated in May and two in June. Approximate time per interview session was 15- 20 minutes



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4.2.1 Interview 1 with learners on the 16 May 2011

Question: What is your understanding of a mainstream school?

L1: *“School is a place where I study so that I can be something in life. I learn many things at school, even how to respect other people”.*

L2: *“School is a place where I get knowledge about life, I learn many things, and I even play with other learners. I learn at school so that I can get work at the end of schooling”.*

L3: *“School is a place where I learn so that I can be what I want to be in life. It is a nice place because when I am at school I feel freer than at home. At school I share things with other learners, but at home I cannot study well because the parents ask me to do house chores and I am not able to do my school work”.*

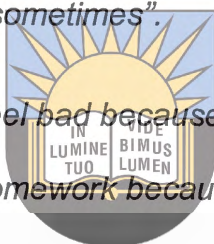
L4: *“At school I enjoy playing with other learners, sharing ideas and chatting with friends. I get a lot of things like knowledge, respect”.*

Question: How do you feel about learning?

L1: *“I feel angry sometimes when I am incorrect, and happy when I am correct. I do not like when teachers hit me and shout at me”.*

L2: *“I feel happy though it is painful when I do not know the correct answer in the class. I like learning. I want to get things correct, I want to work at municipality department. Other learners are bullies sometimes”.*

L3: *“I feel happy, though sometimes I feel bad because when I miss doing homework teachers are hitting me. I miss doing homework because at home I am busy with the house chores. I feel bad when I fail a test because teachers are shouting at me when I do not understand things”.*



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L4: *I feel bad because when I am incorrect the teachers are asking “why”? And I do not know. I want to respond right like other learners, but I do not know what is happening. Sometimes I do not do homework because I do not know how to do it or it was not explained well. I feel happy when I am correct. This school is better than my previous school.*

4.2.2 Interview 2 with learners on the 15 June 2011

Question: How do you feel about school?

L1: *“I feel bad because other learners are teasing me. It is good at this school because I attend the special programme class. When I do not understand I ask the teacher to explain further to me”.*

L2: *"I feel okay at school, but not at all times. Sometimes, when we do group activities, other learners are not listening to my ideas, they also accuse me of not contributing to the activity. Sometimes I feel like crying because I do not know why they act like that to me"*.

L3: *"I feel happy because I play with other learners. Sometimes I feel bad, because teachers are too serious when they teach. They make me feel scared of them. There is a lot of tension. I want teachers to pass jokes sometimes"*.

L4: *"I feel bad because I do not understand most of the learning areas, especially English. I think I did not get the correct foundation because I was schooling in the rural areas and I was on and off school. It is better now because I am staying with my mom"*.



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Question 2: How do you feel about learning?

L1: *"I do not understand English and almost all the learning areas are taught in English. Sometimes learners are teasing me and laughing at me when I got a naught"*.

L2: *"I feel bad because I do not understand English. I pay attention when teachers are teaching, but when it comes to writing or responding to the question, I forget the correct answer or I do not understand the question. Sometimes teachers explain many things at the same time and I forget what I think I grasped"*.

L3: *"There is a lot of tension in the class. Teachers are scaring me, they do not pass jokes. I feel angry when I fail"*.

L4: *"I feel bad when I do not know the correct answer or I fail a test. I want to learn but I do not know how to get things correct"*.

Question 3: Which learning area do you like most?

L1: *"I like Maths because it is about numbers and we use counters and other things when we learn"*

L2: *"I like isiXhosa because it is my mother tongue, and I also like maths because it is easy to write numbers than words".*

L3: *"I like Maths the teacher is friendly to us"*

L4: *"I like Maths because I sometimes get it correct, because we are using counters most of the times".*



Question 4: Which learning area do you like the least?

L1: *"I do not like English"*

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L3: *"I do not like both languages"* *Together in Excellence*

L2: *"I do not like English"*

L4: *"I do not like English"*

4.2.3 Interview 3 with learners on the 21 June 2011

Question: How do you feel about school?

L1: *"It is nice at school because I am playing with other learners. I also feel happy when I pass a test but when I fail a test I feel like crying because other learners are teasing me. Other teachers hit me when I do not understand, I want them to make me understand well".*

L2: *"I feel good at school but when I do not know the correct answer I feel embarrassed for not remembering. I do not know what is happening, other learners are also disturbing me when I am trying to concentrate, then I forget".*

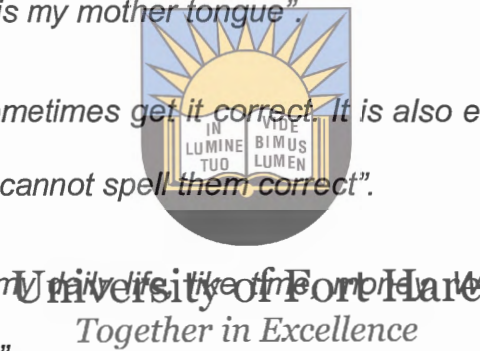
L4: *"I feel happy when I am doing well in my studies. When I fail I feel bad because I want to be like other learners who can answer well. Other learners are also laughing at me when I fail, I feel bad in so much that sometimes I want to cry".*

Question: Which learning area do you like most?

L1: *"I like Isixhosa because it is my mother tongue".*

L2: *"I like maths because I sometimes get it correct. It is also easy to write numbers than words. In writing words I cannot spell them correct".*

L3: *"I like maths, it is about my daily life like time and money. We also use counters. The teacher is teaching it well".*



L4: *"I like Isixhosa because it is my mother tongue".*

Question: Which learning area do you like the least?

L1: *"I do not like English because it is not my home language".*

L2: *"I do not like English because I cannot spell it correctly. Even other learning areas are the problem to me because they are taught in English".*

L3: *"Isixhosa is a problem to me, I cannot spell it correctly".*

L4: *"I do not like English because I do not understand it well".*

Question: How do you feel about me in all the visits?

L1: *"I like you because you are nice to me . You even share your things with me, your cell number for me to call you when I want to talk. My learning now is even better that I shared my feelings with you".*

L2: *"It is nice to talk with you. I feel at ease because I think you are going to help me in solving the problems I have at school".*

L3: *"I feel good about the interviews because I think they are going to come with the solution in my problem. I like the interviews, I want you to continue with the interviews"*

L4: *"I feel good about you because I am able to say things to you. I think by sharing something with you, you will find a way of helping me and other learners".*



4.3 Journal entries

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As part of constructing the data sets or texts, participants were asked to complete three journal entries, which included a preparatory exercise, a learning timeline and a particular incident report.

Journal entries were used to assist participants in reflecting on their learning experiences related to the mainstream school. These exercises were utilized in combination with probing questions during interviews to encourage deeper exploration of participants learning experiences.

These exercise consisted of open-ended questions that participants were asked to answer in writing. Journal entries were very similar to the interviews undertaken with the four learners:

4.3.1 Learners journal entry 1: 16 May 2011

Extracts from the journal entries made on the 16 May 2011

Entry 1 L1: *"I like my school, though other learners are hitting me and I fight back".*

L2: *"I feel okay at school but sometimes I feel like crying".*

L3: *"I am happy at school because I feel free. I want to be successful".*

L4: *"I like this school but my problem is English. Even other learning areas are taught in English. I feel happy at school because I am playing rugby. I become angry when other learners are teasing me, and I hit them".*



4.3.2 Learners journal entry 2: 15 June 2011

Extracts from the journal entries made on the 15 June 2011

L1: *"I cry when other learners hit me. I like this school because now I can read".*

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L2: *"I feel bad in the classroom because I do not understand English. Teachers explain many things at once".*

L3: *"I feel good at school. I like Maths. Learners sometimes make me angry because they say bad things about me".*

L4: *"I am happy at this school because I am learning better now than the previous school. I want to learn English more".*

4.3.3 Learners journal entry 3: 21 June 2011

Extracts from the journal entries made on the 21 June 2011

L1: *"I am doing better at this school than the previous one. If other learners are hitting me I fight back".*

L2: *"I like Math and I do not like English".*

L3: *“I feel happy at school than home because I am with other learners. At home people are shouting at me”.*

L4: *“I was lazy to go to school when I was in rural area, but at this school thing have changed. I am happy because I am staying with my mother”.*

4.4 Data analysis

4.4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present analysis findings that were collected through unstructured interviews and journal entries. The data is presented in order to explore the experiences of learners. With reference to the previous chapter, I shall extract relevant data aligned to the research questions. Throughout the interviews the data presented and analyzed relevant determined themes that arose from the learners responses. This is discussed in detail in this chapter.



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In this chapter, emerging themes will be discussed in the light of the literature reviewed in chapter 2.

4.4.2 Research questions

Main Question

How do learners with cognitive learning barriers experience learning in a mainstream classroom?

Sub- Questions

1. How do learners with cognitive learning barriers cope in a mainstream classroom?
2. What are the implications of the learner experience, and coping strategies for teacher education and policy development?

4.5 Profile of the research site and participants

4.5.1. Profile of the research site

Place	Type of school	Circuit	Phase
Mdantsane	Full service	8	Intermediate
Mdantsane	Full service	9	Intermediate

4.5.2. Profile of the participants

Learner	Gender	Nationality	Race	Language	Lolt	Grade	School
1	Girl	S.A	Black	Isixhosa	English	5	A
2	Boy	S.A	Black	Isixhosa	English	5	B
3	Girl	S.A	Black	Isixhosa	English	6	A
4	Boy	S.A	Black	Isixhosa	English	6	B

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4.6 Similarities

All the participants are attending schools in Mdantsane, at schools which piloting Inclusive Education in the Eastern Cape. These schools are now called Full Service Schools, known as Senior Primary Schools. For this study I selected Intermediate Phase grades in the Senior Primary Schools.

All the participants are citizens of South Africa. They are all black South Africans, and they all speak isiXhosa as their home language. At school they use English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). The participants are all verified as learners with mildly cognitive barriers. Mild cognitive barriers means they are able to learn but show inconsistency in their learning behavior.

4.7 Differences

I have selected participants from grade 5 and grade 6. From school A I have chosen a girl from grade 5 and a boy from grade 6, and from school B I have chosen a boy from grade 5 and a girl from grade 6.

The participants from school B were referred to the school by the District Base Support Team, and they also made the verifications whilst in their school. Participants from school B were identified by the school teachers, and the District Base Support Team verified them as learners with mildly cognitive barriers.



4.8 Emerging Themes from the learners interviews and learners journal entries

When analyzing the data, the researcher started with quotations from the literature reviewed so as to draw relevance to the theory and empirical data formulating it into a coherent document. The data was then analyzed, using the key words and the phrases which were summarized at the end of each theme presented in the study.

4.8.1. Sense of belonging

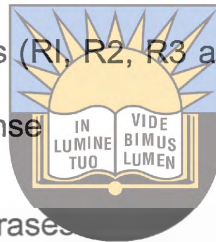
According to the inversion of Maslow's hierarchy: earning the right to belong, all people have a right to belong. Belonging is something that is earned through academic or physical achievement, personal appearance or something else valued by society.

The concept of inclusion implies a sense of belonging and acceptance (Voltz et al, 2001). It has been said that, " the goal of inclusion is not to erase differences, but to enable all students to belong with an educational community that validates and values their individuality" (Stainback et al. 1994: 489).

Longout (2004) found that students reported that they enjoyed school when family and community members were part of the school community as a whole.

Leslie Madsen (2007) argues that learners with barriers, and learners without barriers, will learn to understand and appreciate each other by attending the same class. Pembina Hills Regional School Division, (2004) describes mainstream classroom models as the classroom which is designed in such a way that the learners do not lose their peer group, so that there is less chance that they will be stigmatized.

Learner Responses from the interviews (R1, R2, R3 and R4). The R symbolizes the particular learner participants for response



Learner

Key Phrases

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R 1 *"I can be something in life. Respect others' knowledge"*

R 2 *"School is a place where I get knowledge. Play with others".*

R 3 *"School is a place where I learn so that I can get what I want in life. I share things with other learners".*

R 4 *"I enjoy playing with other learners, sharing ideas".*

Summary

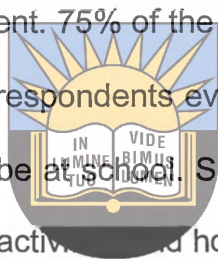
All the learners understand that at school they are given knowledge which will assist them in their lives. They also look forward to the next progressive level of education.

Learners' sense of belonging seem very important because four of the respondents want to belong, not only at present, but also in their future, because they said they want to be successful in life; they want to work when they get to that level of working.

These learners want to be part of the society in an environment that accepts them, because all four respondents said they are enjoying playing with others and sharing ideas with them. One of the respondents is happy now that he/she is staying with the mother, meaning that this learner was not happy when not staying with the mother, in so much that it affected his/her studies. This tells us that, to belong to a warm and caring home is very important to the child's sense of belonging.

4.8.1.1 Relationship with peers

Learners with cognitive learning barriers enjoyed having good relationships with other learners in the learning environment. 75% of the respondents were assisted by other learners in the class, one of the respondents even mentioned that she cannot do homework at home, she prefers to be at school. She claimed that other learners were assisting her at school with class activities and homework. Learners in inclusive classrooms reported feeling like they learned more, made more friends and hence had a higher level of self-concept, including self-efficiency and self-esteem (Fitch, 2003: p. 237).



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Longout (2004) confirms that students favour school environments that provide them with opportunities for self-efficiency and social interaction. One of the respondents even mentioned that at the current school he even plays rugby. His social life with other learners at school is good.

The negative part is that, in the classroom these learners are being ridiculed and laughed at by other learners, when their performance is bad in class activities. It seems as if acceptance is based on achievement, because when they fail they are laughed at, which means they are rejected. Although at school, generally, when they are outside the classroom, in the playgrounds, they enjoy playing freely with others.

4.8.1.2 Comparing the previous schools with the current schools

Now that they are referred to the mainstream schools, which are known as full service schools (the schools which were piloting Inclusive Education in 2001), they enjoy school more than before. Two of the respondents from school A, mentioned that they even attend special programme classes where they are assisted in their work. Volts (2001) stated that the concept of inclusion implies a sense of belonging and acceptance. Engelbricht (2005) stated that parents let their children take extra lessons to enable them to stay in the mainstream school, because this can facilitate successful inclusion into broader society after schooling.



Though two of the respondents did not mention any special programme class, they mentioned that they were being assisted by other learners at school. All of the respondents mentioned that it is better in their current schools than their previous schools. Weeks (2000: p.400) agrees with Pingle (1986 : p.16) that the environment is responsible for nurturing the essential human characteristics of people.

4.8.1.3 Caring family

Learners with cognitive learning barriers need a caring and loving family. One of the respondents is happy now he is staying with his parent. He said his mother prepares everything for him. That is another reason for him to be happy in this school. Longout (2004) stated that learners enjoy school when family and community members are part of the school community, as a whole.

On the other hand I found that parents are not playing their role in the education of their children. One of the respondents mentioned that she chose to be at school rather than at home because at home she cannot do her homework well, and there was no one to assist her with her school work. She said most of the time at home she was busy with house chores, but at school she was assisted by other learners.

4.8.2 Learners’ feeling of low self esteem

Although communication with learners with special educational needs are changing, there is still a likelihood that some learners with cognitive learning barriers will experience difficulty in gaining acceptance and making friends, particularly if they have some irritating behaviour. In such cases, a learner may experience rejection and teasing from others (Norwich and Kelly 2004). This was mentioned and commented on by one of the learners.

According to Alerby (2003), relationships between friends are very important, and can have a positive or negative influence on childhood development.

Fordham and Stevenson- Hindle (1999) indicate that friendships increase a person’s self-worth. In mainstream education, the focus is often on the academic performance, and meeting the expected level of performance of the grade, as opposed to the learner’s individual needs. This is contrary to the policy documents on inclusive education in South Africa.



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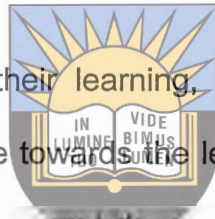
Full Service School (2005b: p.45) and Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (2005c: p.89) indicate that educators should develop lesson plans based on learners’ previous successes, to ensure that they reach their potential at their own pace.

Learners’ Responses, based on their feelings about school.

Learners	Key Phrases
R 1	<i>“Teasing me, Hit and shout at me. Feel angry and crying sometimes.”</i>
R 2	<i>“Feel embarrassed, when I do not know the correct answer. Other learners are bullies, and I become angry and feel like crying”.</i>
R 3	<i>“Teachers are hitting and shouting at me. I become scared of them”.</i>

Summary

As the key phrases suggest, these learners with cognitive learning barriers feel negative towards learning in the learning environment, because their self-esteem is low, and therefore it hinders their learning development. They say they feel rejected when they fail, and acceptance is conditional, based on getting their work correct, and passing their work. Their feelings are coupled to their peers' academic performance.



Low self-esteem has an impact on their learning, and also on their behaviour. Teachers also have a negative attitude towards the learners with cognitive learning barriers. These learners find that they cannot do some things which other learners do easily, and they therefore lose confidence. As a result, this loss of confidence leads to deliberate avoidance of the type of activities associated with failure. Reference, is made to failure in English, particularly.

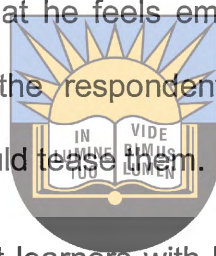
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It seems that if learners feel that they cannot do something adequately which other learners do easily, there is a loss of confidence. This loss of confidence leads to deliberate avoidance of the type of activity associated with the failure, and sometimes even avoidance of any new challenging situation. Avoidance leads to lack of practice. Lack of practice ensures that the individual does not gain in proficiency or confidence, while other learners forge ahead. Constant failure results in poor self-esteem and lowered motivation.

4.8.2.1 Fear of failure

The American Psychologist Association (1994) suggested that learners with cognitive learning barriers require some measures of additional support and special consideration if they are to achieve success in a mainstream classroom. All four respondents in this study felt, and verbalized that they were not free in the classroom, even to respond to the questions posed, because they are afraid of the reaction of other learners if they did not respond correctly to the question. Peer pressure is a significant contribution to fear of failure.

One of the respondents mentioned that he feels embarrassed when he responds incorrectly to a question. Three of the respondents chose to be quiet in the classroom, because other learners would tease them.



Palloway and Pattern (1993) state that learners with learning barriers are not really accepted in the mainstream. It was rather a case of them adapting to the system, than the system providing for them.

Umonsky (1998) states that it is evident that learners with cognitive learning barriers have limited knowledge, presumably because they have difficulties in storing information and subsequently retrieving information from the memory.

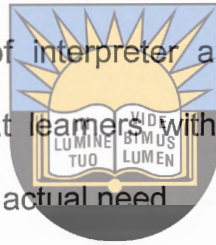
Cole and Chan (1990) state that learners with cognitive learning barriers are less aware of how their mind works, less knowledge about learning to initiate strategies, and are less able, efficiently and independently, to initiate, regulate and monitor their use of these strategies for cognitive processing

Krakov and Kapp (1983) state that learners with cognitive learning barriers appear to have difficulty in attending to many activities at once. If not focused on one

activity, screening out all competing information in the wider environment, their play can become inflexible and repetitive.

Young and Roos (1995) suggested that reading, writing, spelling and math skills should be explicitly taught, leaving nothing to chance. The skill must be utilized in meaningful ways so that reading, writing and arithmetic are used for a real purpose.

The resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on the 4th of March 1994, with regard to standard rules on the equalization opportunities for learners with learning barriers (UN 1994 p 15), states that “ Education in mainstream schools presupposes the provision of interpreter and other appropriate support services.” Dyer (1994) suggested that learners with cognitive barriers should be taught slowly, quite the reverse of their actual need



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In conclusion it becomes evident that the literature and the researchers' findings concur, hence the analysis of the data is aligned to theoretical constructs of learning and the fear of failure.

Respondences

Learner	Key Phrases
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R1:	<i>"I do not understand the activity. English is a problem, I become angry when I do not understand"</i> .
-----	--

R2:	<i>"I feel bad because other learners are teasing me and laughing at me. English is a problem"</i>
-----	--

R3:	<i>"I like learning. I want to get things right. I cannot spell correctly. Teachers are giving us lot of homework. I feel bad"</i> .
-----	--

R4: "I do not understand English. I do not do homework because I do not understand it. I feel bad sometimes".

Summary

All four respondents stated that they want to learn but they fear failure in the class. It seems as if they are aware of their problem. They all mentioned that they have a problem with English as a language of teaching and learning. One of the learner respondents commented on the fact that he/she does not like being given many exercises at the same time.

4.8.2.2 Punishment

All four respondents mentioned the fact that they are punished by the teachers when they fail to do their homework; two of them being hit by the teachers, and shouted at. Even if they do not understand the concept, the teachers get angry and shout at them. Many times these learners are reserved in the classroom so as not to be punished by the teacher.

4.8.3. Teaching strategies and learning styles for impaired cognitive learners

Engelbrecht (2001) states that there is a lack of professional training when teachers are required to implement new collaborative practices in order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population, and this becomes a particular source of stress. The Department of Education White Paper 6 (2001) states, "All children can learn and all children and youth need support." Effective teaching also serves as an obvious first step towards creating an inclusive classroom (Barry, 1995). The process of facilitating the learning and participation remains a complex and poorly understood area of education (Berry, 2000; Davis and Florira, 2004). Mc Cornick (1979) supports the view that clear, effective teaching not only raises the attainment



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level of all students but also reduces very significantly the prevalence of learning failure.

Learners' responses on feelings about learning

Respondents

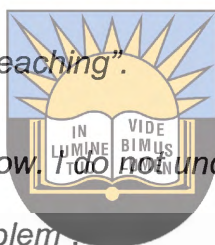
Key Phrases

R1: *"Easily distracted. Attending special programme. English is a problem"*.

R2: *"Teachers explain many things at the same time. Learners not listening to my ideas. English is a problem"*.

R3: *"Teachers are too serious when teaching"*.

R4: *"Want to learn but I do not know how. I do not understand instructions. Activities are not explained well. English is a problem"*.



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Summary

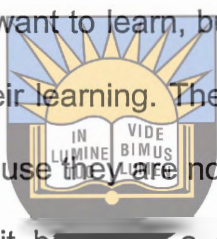
The above data collection and analysis therefore informs us that the teaching approach is not adaptable for learners with cognitive learning barriers to enable them to fit into the mainstream classroom, based on the teachers' style of teaching and the expectations the teacher expects from learners. These learners require greater support and consistent interventions. It is the responsibility of the school and staff to provide support to learners where necessary and, in turn, this added teaching and learning support allows learners to learn and reach their potential. The individual programming will require teachers to teach effectively and to personalize their approach to suit the individual needs of diverse learners in the class.

Four of the respondents were not "feeling good" in the classroom environment. They had bad feelings because they felt they were not like other learners when it came to

classroom activities. Though they want to learn, they do not know how to learn. It seems as if teachers are not able to cope with these learners, as they are not trained to teach learners manifesting learning barriers. One of the respondents mentioned that teachers shout at him when he does not understand the activity. This data analysis once again supports the theoretical constructs for punishing and highlighted in this section.

4.8.3.1 Teaching approaches

Seemingly the teachers' approach is not in favor of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers. All four respondents want to learn, but they do not know how; they want the teachers to assist them in their learning. The teachers, on the other hand, want to assist these learners, but, because they are not trained to deal with learners with mild cognitive learning barriers, it becomes a challenging situation for both teacher and learners.



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One respondent mentions that the teachers create a lot of tension when they are teaching. They are not friendly, and this makes the learners afraid of their own teachers, and that alone hinders their learning. The teachers' attitude prevents them from performing well in the classroom.

One of the respondents said he wanted to do his homework, but sometimes he does not know how to do it because it was not explained well to him, and when he failed to do it he got punished by the teacher. Another respondent mentioned that teachers explain many things at the same time. This shows that learners with mild cognitive learning barriers cannot grasp many things at once; their memory cannot retain too much knowledge at the same time.

It seems as if inclusive education has a major impact on the role of the mainstream class teacher, who is now required to cater for the needs of an increasingly diverse group of learners.

Palloway and Patten (1993: p.36) state that learners with learning barriers were not readily accepted into the mainstream; it was rather a case of them adapting to the system, than the system providing for them. It is believed that mainstream class teachers can be helped to adapt their teaching approaches, which could be more flexible and adaptable to the specific needs of such learners (Andrews and Lupart 1993, Kaap and Minchiton 1995). This literature once again supports the analysis of data as commented on by the peer learner respondents.



4.8.3.2 Learning styles

As much as the learners with cognitive learning barriers should be “taught slowly”, as all four respondents said, teachers **do not explain many things** at once. Brandt (1985) cautioned teachers that allowing students to progress slowly actually creates an ever widening gap between the able and the less able learners.

All four respondents lost confidence in class activities, as they failed to respond correctly, most of the time, and hence they developed avoidance strategies which further reduced the opportunities to learn.

Stolt, (1970) gave the first insight into these learners problems, and suggested that many learners, regarded as learners with mild cognitive learning barriers, were not lacking in potential ability. He considered that their poor approach to learning prevented them from attending to, or working at anything, for very long. They need to “ learn how to learn” (Stott 1978; Stott, Green & Francis 1983).

A perspective presented by Stott (1970) certainly strengthens the argument that students with learning barriers benefit most from explicit teaching of new concepts, skills and strategies. They need to be placed in well managed classrooms, with clear, active teaching, where learners spend productive time on tasks, experiencing successful practice and knowing that they are reaching their full potential.

It seems as if these learners also require a more relevant and motivating curriculum. When activities are appropriately geared to their interests, and when the programmes combine direct teaching in class with challenging and realistic out-of-class experiences, it is clear that these learners improve in attitude, behaviour and achievement (Young and Rees 1995).



4.8.3.3 Learning area of concern

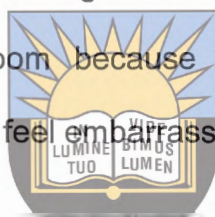
Many parents or caregivers believe that English is the best choice of 'Language of Learning and Teaching' (LOLT) for their children (Mhweni M, 2003; Nkabinde, 1997; Bosman & Van der Merwe, 2000; Radebe, 2004), albeit their second or third language. A result of this choice is that many English Second Language (ESL) learners experience barriers to learning, because of limited English proficiency (NCSNET & NCESS 1997; Nel, 2005; De Vries, 2006).

All four respondents are complaining and battling with English, hence it is a problematic learning area. All the respondents complain about spelling and writing. One of the respondents even mentioned that it might happen that he did not get the correct basic skill of learning this language as it is not his mother tongue. He said he even struggled with other learning areas, because English is the language of teaching and learning and almost all the learning areas are taught in English.

Heugh (as quoted by De Vries, 2006) affirms that most ESL learners are not skilled enough to learn other learning areas in their second language.

Educators lack the training, knowledge, tools and/or time to support ESL learners with a limited English proficiency, in attaining their full potential (Snyder O & nakaone, 2004; Prinsloo, 2005).

Two of the respondents mentioned that they cannot do their homework well at home. One of the problems is that they do not understand the instructions well, or even the questions, because they are written in English. These participants are afraid to respond to questions in the classroom because they cannot understand the questions well, and they do not want to feel embarrassed in front of their friends.



Many learners learn in their mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and are then only exposed to LoLT in grade 4 (Rademeyer, 2005; Pancred, 2006). Learners need to have mastered their mother tongue to be able to learn in a second language.

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Since learners' cognitive ability is determined by their mother tongue, the learning of a second language depends on the maturity of the first language as the fundamental foundation for learning (Vermeulen, 2001; Roodt, 2002). Many ESL learners have not mastered their mother tongue before entering the formal school setting, and are likely to have difficulties with language across the curriculum (Lerumer, 1995; Gauteng Department of Education, 2001).

4.8.3.5 Preferred learning areas

Two of the respondents preferred isiXhosa and Maths. These respondents were both from school A. Two of the respondents from school B preferred IsiXhosa. Four of the respondents said they liked isiXhosa because it is their mother tongue. They speak isiXhosa most of the time. They speak isiXhosa at home and even on the play grounds when playing with their friends.

Two of the respondents from school A prefer Maths. They said it is easier to write numbers than words. They also said Maths is all about their daily lives, and they use counters and other learning materials. They also like the teacher who is teaching Maths, which shows that a teacher plays an important role in making the learning environment acceptable and conducive to learning.



4.8.4 Communication between teachers and learners

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Communication refers to the act of exchanging information, ideas, needs and desires. While speech and language are only part of the larger process of communication, they do provide the most important and efficient means of communication by human beings (Owens 2001).

Communication plays a central role in human development and behaviour throughout life. It allows us to express our needs and desires, to exchange information and ideas, to learn about the world, and to become social beings (Casby, 1989). It is this role of human development and behaviour that has a significant impact on young learners.

Learners’ responses to their relationship with the teacher in the class

Respondent	Key Phrases
R 1	<i>“Teachers hit and shout ”.</i>

- R 2 *“Cannot respond well to the question”.*
- R 3 *“Teachers are too scary. Teachers hit and shout at me”.*
- R 4 *“Scared to ask questions. Teachers do not explain well”.*

Summary

Teachers do not relate well to learners, according to the above learner comments of the four respondents. This shows that there is a lack of communication between teachers and learners. These learners are afraid to open up to the teachers. Sometimes they are shy to ask questions or express themselves, because two of the respondents said that the teachers shout at them.



They are also afraid of being embarrassed in the class, and when they did not answer well they were afraid of being rejected by other learners because other learners tease and laugh at them. When the researcher asked them about their feelings about the interviews, all of them were positive about the researcher. They felt good about the interviews because they were able to open up and express their feeling and thoughts, without being judged.

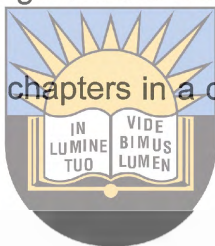
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter data was presented which analyzed and described how learners gave meaning to mainstream classrooms, and the experiences of learners within mainstream classrooms. In this chapter, emerging themes will be discussed in the light of the literature reviewed in chapter two. The literature reviewed serves as a frame of reference to which results arising from the interviews may be connected.

The outcome of the findings link all the chapters in a coherent manner, which I shall discuss under four headings.



5.2 Sense of belonging

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All four respondents state that school is a place where they get knowledge for a better future. They mentioned that they want to be successful in life. In other words, these learners with cognitive learning barriers see schooling as vital in their lives; hence the necessity to be educated.

School is also a place where they make friends, as three respondents mentioned. They enjoy being at school because they play with other learners. One of them even mentioned that friends also help her to do her homework, as she said she is not able to do her homework at home because no one helps her. Instead, the parents give her work to do at home. One learner respondent made reference to parental support.

As much as they enjoy being at school, two of the learner respondents from school A, said that other learners laugh at them when they are not correct. One of them

even said he feels embarrassed when he cannot answer well in class. The other one said they even tease her when she fails a test. This clearly shows that the acceptance by other learners is limited, and based on their academic performance. They even mentioned that they feel like crying. Therefore, the impact of failure and rejection affects the sense of belonging and self esteem.

Learners are reserved in the classroom because they have a fear of making mistakes, because they want to be accepted in the class. Their confidence is hampered when they respond incorrectly so they reserve their responses for fear of failure.



Their fear is based on the teacher's attitude and approach towards them because one of the respondents said that teachers are scary. There is a lot of tension when they are in the class. This means that when she is out of the classroom situation she is happy with other learners. One of them said that when he does not understand, the teacher would ask him why, and he does not know why.

This also prevents them from being free to engage in the classroom debates and activities. They know that school is where they belong in order for them to be successful in life. They want to be like other learners and accepted by other learners.

Maslow (1990), as alluded to in chapter two, pointed out that belonging is an essential and prerequisite to human needs. It must be met before we can achieve a sense of self-worth.

5.3 Feelings of low self esteem

The four respondents showed feelings of low self esteem. One of them said that other learners do not listen to his ideas. Acceptance is based on achievement, so he

It seems as if teaching methods do not motivate these learners, and teachers do not have the skills to accommodate learners with mild cognitive learning barriers. One of the respondents mentioned that he wants to learn but does not know how to, and he wants the teachers to make him understand well, like other learners.

Learners are not given clear instructions, demonstrations, explanations, practices and corrective feedback for each new step in learning. As one of the respondents stated, sometimes he does not do homework because he does not know how to do it. Sometimes it was not explained well. This learner's learning is being affected because he is always behind in the classroom activities.

5.5 Lack of communication between teachers and learners with cognitive barriers to learning



All four learner respondents felt good about the interviews. They enjoyed being free to talk to someone who is impartial towards them. They even commented that talking to someone can assist them with their learning problems in the classroom. It clearly shows that a communication breakdown has a negative impact on their cognitive learning difficulties as claimed by these four respondents.

However, Cosby (1989) states that communication disorder represents one of the most prevalent barriers in learners, and is the single most common reason for special education referral.

cannot participate well in the class activities, because he is not confident enough with his answers. Two of the respondents said that learners tease them and laugh at them. Their lack of confidence leads them to deliberate avoidance of activities in the classroom. All four respondents have a problem with English. Learners with impaired language are shy and passive and make little attempt to initiate conversations.

Even in written activities, they make lots of spelling errors and grammatical mistakes. Sometimes they do not even attempt to do the activities, or they do not give the teacher their work to be marked. This manifested itself in their activity books when the researcher was studying the document analysis.

5.4 Teaching and learning strategies



Teaching strategies and learning styles are a very important part in education, because effective learning depends upon the teaching approach, or methods and strategies the teacher implements in the lessons.

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One learner respondent stated that teachers create a lot of tension in the classroom, and this tension made her feel not free to participate in the classroom activities. All four learner respondents want to learn, but the teaching approaches seem as if they are not good for them, and the teaching method and curriculum is not adaptive to their level of learning and understanding.

Teachers teach according to the pace setters specified by the Department of Education, and the learners with cognitive barriers seem to be left behind. One of the learner respondents stated that teachers explain many things at the same time. These learners need strategies that create focus on learning areas at a given time, from inception to conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the research process and research findings in this study. The purpose of this study was to explore and investigate learners' experiences in mainstream classrooms, focusing on identified learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in the Intermediate Phase.

6.2 Suggestions



The Department of Education should take into consideration the fact that learners with mild cognitive barriers have different levels of knowledge and learning from other learners. Their learning pace is slower so the curriculum needs to be adapted to their level of understanding, competence and achievement.

Learners in mainstream classes need to be educated about the importance of respecting each other, and accepting each other, as they come from a diverse backgrounds.

Teachers should be more sensitive in effectively accommodating learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in their teaching approaches. Their lesson plans need to be inclusive to accommodate mild cognitive learning barriers, and to strengthen relationships towards each other socially and scholastically.

Learners with mild cognitive learning barriers need a person to confide in (adult). They want to open up and express their feelings and thoughts, without being judged.

This is a significant point in this study

Peer tutoring needs to be established in schools, as the learners mentioned that friends help them with their class activities. There is also a need for teacher assistance in class, so that when a teacher is busy with normal work the other (teacher assistant) is assisting those who need support, and visa versa.

6.3 Reflection of the study

This study enabled the researcher to examine the learning context of the learners, with the intention of gaining a better understanding of how inclusion is practised in mainstream classes, with reference to learners with mild cognitive learning barriers. Further to this, the study enabled the researcher to determine whether mainstreaming is an appropriate or practical approach for learners with mild cognitive barriers to learning.



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As the researcher remains supportive of the policy of inclusive education, it seems that South Africa's mainstream school environment does not provide the necessary structure and support to adequately address the needs of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers.

The policies, procedures and governance for mainstreaming education needs to be based on South Africa's current socio-economic reality, which means considering access to quality care (which includes resources that provide learner support to facilitate progress such as learning support material, adaptations to the curriculum and professional support) on a regular basis for learners that require learning intervention programmes.

Learners with mild cognitive learning barriers cannot be treated and expected to learn in the same manner. They require a "voice" to express their needs, feelings

and learning abilities and or inabilities, according to their tempo of learning and understanding.

Teachers need to be sensitively trained for mainstream schools, so that they can improve their teaching and learning styles to accommodate diverse learners such as learners with mild cognitive barriers to learning in mainstream classes. Their sensitivity towards teaching needs to be improved to help learners overcome their repeated errors and fears. Teachers need to invite these learners into their space in order for them to understand these learners and to adapt their teaching and learning strategies accordingly.



Teachers need to be developed, to equip them with the skills to identify learners with learning barriers and furthermore how to address these barriers; as well as the skill to identify learning barriers and the skill to grade tasks to provide for mastery and achievement of the learners, regardless of their level of learning ability. This teacher training could be to assist teachers based onto their classroom management, performance and training expertise.

The outcome of this study reveals that teachers need to listen to the voices of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classes so that they conceptualize and have a deeper understanding of how such learners experience learning.

Teachers require training in order to meet the needs of these particular learners. The Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (2005 c) propose that teachers use multi-level teaching strategies, and accommodate multiple intelligences and various learning styles in their teaching. This is most essential for developing intervention

programs for learners who have been identified and manifest mild cognitive barriers in learning.

Teachers approaches should use a variety of learning strategies and methods to meet the learning needs of learners. These strategies and methods should be tailored to positively reinforce the learner's ability to learn in a classroom environment.

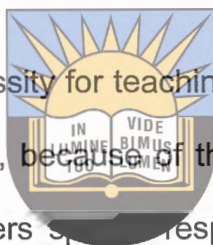
There should be a shift from punishment for poor behaviour to rewards for good behaviour, that will motivate the learners and prevent poor behaviour.

In addition, this study shows the necessity for teaching assistance (or teacher aids) in the mainstream school environment, because of the class sizes for mainstream teaching. Teachers should give learners some responsibilities in the classroom.

This may include allocating duties to learners, or providing them with the opportunity to engage in different tasks in order to learn responsibility and build on their strengths.

It is also important to establish a sense of community in the classroom so that all learners feel accepted in a mainstream classroom. Learners should be made to feel that they belong. It is also necessary for learners with mild cognitive learning barriers to have confidence to express their feelings and viewpoints with the teacher in an open and non- threatening environment, as was shared with the researcher.

English as a subject and language of learning and teaching (LOLT) clearly presents itself as a challenge subject for learners with mild cognitive learning barriers. So the curriculum for primary school education ought to be sensitive to these particular learners, and adapt teaching approaches accordingly, developing a more personable



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approach to teaching and learning in English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) From grade 4 onwards a language which is not the mother tongue (namely English) is a deficit, as mentioned by all four respondents. Hence, if the language of expression is hampered it will impact negatively on communication, understanding and learning in general. This was emphatically stated by all four respondents.

It is clear in this study that there is no cohesion or contact between home and school. There ought to be regular meetings with parents or caregivers to determine the progress of these particular learners. Parents and teachers working together can produce more effective and positive changes in a learner's academic behavior. When grappling with the problem alone, where there is little or no parental involvement, the researcher suggests that extra classes be made available to these learners, so that they are guided in a program where school facilities are made available for homework supervision, and additional support for language development is given.



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6.4 Limitations of this study

As this was a most interesting study for the researcher the limitations need to be addressed. The researcher did not interview teachers or have parental discussions because this study focused on the voices of learners. This I argue limited my knowledge about these particular learners.

There were no possible programs as interventions to develop these four learners' learning potentials. This study reveals that there is a mismatch in mainstream classes; as they are too big in numbers and furthermore there is no diagnostic

support once these learners had been identified as learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in mainstream classes.

6.5 Conclusion

This research showed us that the experience of learners with mild cognitive barriers at school is twofold; it has both a positive and a negative impact. On a positive side, these learners are socializing and making friends at school, and they appreciate the support they get from their friends and some of the teachers.

These four particular learners generally had a feeling of low self esteem, due to their poor academic performance. They are not achieving scholastically in the class activities as, their level of learning is slower than other learners, while at the same time the curriculum is the same for all learners.



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6.6 Summary

This research study has informed us significantly of the experiences of the respondents based on their personal feelings, through having their “ voices” heard and listened to, by the researcher. Furthermore, the ability to confide in the researcher was a clear sense of relief for these four learners. These particular learners could openly share their feelings, understanding and learning abilities and inabilities with the researcher who supported them, both as a teacher and a researcher. In other words, these learners with mild cognitive learning barriers are crying out for help, but clearly need an outside intervention (confidante) who they feel comfortable to talk to about their learning ability or inability.

The empirical implications and sensitivity of the study were adhered to throughout the interviews and journal entries, and hence confidentiality and the anonymity of the

respondents will remain protected, as this information is used only for the purpose of understanding the experiences of learners with mild cognitive learning barriers in mainstream education. This unique study, I argue, has opened up endless possibilities in terms of understanding learners with mild cognitive learning barriers to learning in mainstream classes, for the better. This study furthermore contributes significantly to the unknown feelings and experiences of these particular learners.



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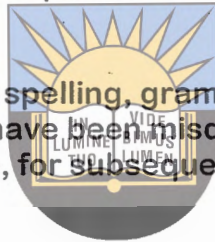
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509 The Valley,
70 Jarvis Road,
Berea
East London
31 January 2012

This is to certify that I edited the following thesis of
Nomzamo Spando:

“An investigation into learning experiences of
intermediate phase learners with cognitive learning barriers in
mainstream classes: A study of two pilot schools in the Eastern Cape.”

This student had a good grasp of spelling, grammar and punctuation.
Where a statement appeared to have been misquoted, or something
omitted, I drew attention to these, for subsequent amendment.



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2011/03/25

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

MS NONZAMO SPONDO is a registered Masters of Education (MEd) student at the University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Education, Student number: 201013153

This letter serves to confirm that the above mentioned student is pursuing her studies under the supervision of Dr G. Galloway, Faculty of Education, East London Campus.

The title for Ms Spondo's study is:

AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INTERMEDIATE PHASE LEARNERS WITH COGNITIVE LEARNING BARRIERS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSES: A STUDY OF TWO PILOT SCHOOLS IN THE EASTERN CAPE

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Ms Spondo's proposal has been accepted by the Faculty Research and Higher Degree Committee (FRHDC) in 2010, and subsequently she has also completed the first three chapters for this thesis. She is now embarking on collecting data which requires conducting interviews with school principals, classroom-based educators and learners, identified by the school principal in collaboration with the educators and parents of learners.

I would be grateful if you could allow her to collect data from your ECDOE pilot schools through interviews and consultations with the learners on a fortnightly basis. I would like to assure you that any information collected will remain confidential and only used for purposes of this study under ethical conditions as required by the university.

The student will ensure that she does not disrupt school activities or make unnecessary demands on the various participants in any way during the period that she will be collecting data for this study.

I thank you most sincerely for your assistance and the valued contribution that your school will be making to this study and education in general.

Yours sincerely

Dr Greta Galloway
MEd and PhD Supervisor
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School for Initial Teacher Education, East London Campus
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