The transition of learners to classes for learners with special educational needs from the perspective of the learners, teachers and parents

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The researchers investigate how learners with barriers to learning experience the transition to classes for learners with special educational needs. The research was conducted at a full-service school in Potchefstroom, North West province, South Africa. Interviews were conducted with current and former teachers as well as the parents of selected participants who were learners in special educational needs (LSEN) classes at the school. Focus group interviews were held with each of the groups of learners. The findings of the study could be divided into intrapersonal factors (emotional development; group pressure; self-image and self-confidence; a feeling of loss; a transition that was traumatic, filled with stress and aggression; level of security; and the inability to hold his or her own in situations) and interpersonal factors (low social skills, the loss of friends, the loss of social status and the feeling that the transition was merely a temporary measure). We concluded that, based on the social and psychological effects of the transition between LSEN- and mainstream classes, teachers and parents need to make better informed decisions about the transition of learners.

Keywords: inclusive education; learners with special educational needs; liminality, LSEN classes; transition

Introduction
At some full-service schools, learners with barriers to learning are moved to classes for learners with special educational needs (LSEN classes), depending on the degree of their barriers and subject to specific conditions. These classes serve as a temporary measure until the learners can be returned to mainstream classes. The transition to the LSEN class, although well intended, according to the existing policies in South African schools, has particular social and psychological effects on the learners as well as their parents or caregivers (Department of Education [DoE], South Africa, 2005b:8; Di Terlizzi, 2007:33). Moreover, it is important to reflect on the influence that teachers might have in these circumstances and the role they play in the transition of the learners. The results of this study are also significant for teachers and parents in other countries who are struggling with the correct placement of learners with special educational needs (Carter, Brock & Trainor, 2014; Starr, Martini & Kuo, 2016:115). Findings in a study conducted in Australia indicate that most parents wanted to accept responsibility for the decision, but felt that they were constrained (Mann, Cuskelly & Moni, 2015:1424–1425). Parents experienced more restrictions on their choice, when there was a choice between a public school and a special school. Another problem that parents experience is that pressure from professionals and ways to find reliable information did not always, in the end, reflect their actual school preference. Negative feelings such as sadness, frustration and anger were also found. More studies about parental views are available (Rix & Matthews, 2014; Rogers, 2011). Learners with barriers to learning often have emotional problems as well as poor self-concept when they are in a class with learners who don't have the same barriers to learning as they have (Gross, 1997; Potgieter-Groot, Visser & Lubbe-de Beer, 2012:60).

Problem Statement
According to Engelbrecht, (2006:254) the education system in South Africa during the apartheid era, was based on ethnic discrimination and separation and not functioning as one education department. Since then, profound changes have been made in educational policies in South Africa to make the transition from a divided, discriminating system to an open, inclusive system (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006:121). The basis of inclusive education is the desire to build on the resemblances that exist among learners and do not concentrate on the differences among all learners. In addition, due consideration is constantly given to the fact that all learners need support at some time or another to reap the full benefits of education. South Africa is moving towards a more inclusive education system, whereas learners move between different systems. These systems are the mainstream education system, which is mostly inclusive with regard to low and moderate levels of learner support, and the special education system, which makes provision for higher levels of learner support (DoE, South Africa, 2005b:11); Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2015:8).

Learners with special educational needs sometimes find the mainstream education system to be challenging and then get lost in it. As a way of addressing the needs of these learners, they are often moved from mainstream class to an LSEN class. This transition may be difficult for both the learners and their parents and might have particular effects on the learner that might influence his or her future. It usually seems like only a temporary transition for some learners and their parents and is not easily accepted as a more permanent solution. Learners who are in transition between systems often feel stripped of their social status in the school. They often

also feel that they do not belong and expect to be moved back to the mainstream class soon; when that does not happen, it might have serious effects on them (Cowan & Hetherington, 1991:13; Dee, 2006:8; Fabian, 2000:143).

The questions addressed in the study reported one here were as follows: Which aspects play a role in the transition of learners with special educational needs from a mainstream class to an LSEN class? What was the effect of this transition on the parents and teachers of these learners, with a specific focus on the self-image, self-concept and self-confidence of the learners involved?

We aim to report on the investigation that was conducted to address the above-mentioned research questions. In order to achieve this aim, the remainder of the article contains five main sections. The next section is devoted to the literature review. The conceptual and theoretical framework, against which the empirical investigation has been done, is discussed after which the following sections outline the methodology of the empirical study and its findings. These are followed by a discussion of the findings in view of the theoretical perspectives that have been developed. The article concludes with some suggestions regarding the treatment of learners finding themselves in this particular situation.

Literature Review
The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996b) lays the foundation for a democratic system in South Africa that is based on freedom, equality and human dignity. The right to basic education is one of the rights enshrined in Article 29 of the Bill of Rights. Furthermore, the principle of equality and specific actions to achieve equality are described in Section 9 of this act. These clauses are of particular importance because they protect all learners, regardless of their barriers or barriers to learning (DoE, 2001:11). In 2001, the DoE in South Africa published *Education White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System*. The White Paper sets out a national strategy to systematically solve and remove barriers to learning. This is done by establishing full-service schools, converting special schools into resource centres, training education managers and teachers and developing institutional and district support structures (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009:106). Other policy documents that have contributed to the establishment of inclusive education as the policy of the South African education system are the following: the *White Paper on Education and Training* (DoE, 1995); the *South African Schools Act* (84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a); the *White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy* (Office of the President, 1997); and the *Quality Education for All Report* of the National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services (DoE, 1997).

In the past few years a large body of literature on inclusive education has been published – in South Africa and internationally. Inclusive education has become a key topic in discussions on the development of education policy and practice.

One problem that South Africa still needs to overcome in order to fully realise the ideal of inclusive education is the cultivation of an understanding of the broad meaning of the concept of "learners with barriers to learning." This concept includes not only physical and intellectual disabilities but also obstacles caused by the economic and emotional imbalance in South Africa, as well as the social exclusion that still exists (Prinsloo, 2001:345). According to Charlton and David (1993:3), the challenge for South African schools is to make a difference and be well prepared for the future to truly reflect on what they are offering their learners, how it is being offered and whether it meets the needs of the learners and the community.

One of the main strategies identified in White Paper 6 is the designation and conversion of about 500 primary schools in South Africa to so-called "full-service schools." Full-service schools, colleges and higher education institutions are mainstream educational institutions that provide quality education to all learners and students by equitably providing in the full spectrum of educational needs. They must strive to provide access, equality, quality and social justice in education (DoE, South Africa, 2005a:7). White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) aims to address discrimination in the pre-1994 education system. The focus of this document is the accountability of the education system, with specific regard to learners with special educational needs and the support services available to them (Nel, Lazarus & Daniels, 2010:S21). White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:6) emphasises the commitment of the Department to provide opportunities to learners who have not shared in the advantages of the previous school system due to the inability thereof to accommodate learners with special educational needs. An inclusive education system aims to enable learners to develop to their full potential so that they can become full members of society (DoE, 2001:5).

According to Engelbrecht (2006:255), a lack of resources and institutional capacity (in terms of both administrative systems and suitably educated teachers) limits the successful implementation of the new education policy, despite the more even distribution of resources at schools. Issues such as quality, efficiency and the morale of teachers in implementing the new education policy, together with the questions of how accountability is made clear and progress is evaluated, are repeatedly raised (Engelbrecht, 2006:255). Pillay and Di

Terlizzi (2009:493) also discuss the growth and development of South Africa in the field of inclusive education and believe that while some have accepted the ideology of inclusive education, the reality is that a developing country is not adequately equipped with the resources and facilities required to meet the needs of inclusive education. A tendency prevails in the country to refer learners to more specialised environments for providing learner support and therapeutic interventions that are not currently provided in the mainstream environment. Policymakers, educators and curriculum developers at training institutions strive to provide quality training through the right materials, continuous training and practical support to both practising teachers and other role players engaged in education (Prinsloo, 2001:346).

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework
The theoretical frameworks of the transition theory and the liminality theory were used to investigate the transition of learners from one system to another. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2019:para. 2) describes transition as "to cause to undergo a transition; to bring from one state or place to another." The transition theory can be used to describe the transition of learners from school to a workplace, especially learners with barriers to learning. Polloway, Patton, Smith and Roderique (1991:143) state that the transition theory involves both vertical and horizontal transitions. Vertical transitions are developmental transitions that are usually associated with important elements in the life of a person, for example when a child goes to school for the first time, or when a child leaves school. Vertical transition is the more familiar and popular concept and relates to major life events, such as beginning school, leaving school and becoming a parent (Polloway et al., 1991:144). Most of the available literature on the transition theory deals with vertical transitions.

Horizontal transition refers to movement from one situation to another, such as the transition from an independent institution to a more restricted, more inclusive institution, for example from a mainstream class to an LSEN class, or from a mainstream school to a special school (Di Terlizzi, 2007:32; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009:13). A horizontal transition is a more equal movement, because the new situation does not have a higher or lower status as is the case in vertical transition. Horizontal transition usually does not go hand in hand with great expectations and excitement but could rather result in uncertainty and stress (Dee, 2006:6). Dee (2006:8) emphasises the fact that learners with barriers to learning do not always have control over the transitions in their lives. Most transitions imply change and uncertainty, with feelings of anxiety, loss of control, excitement and challenges.

Transitions can also be linked to the liminality theory. The liminality theory is also known as the "threshold theory." The *Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Buchanan, 2014:22) describes liminality as "a ritual space or phase of transition in which a person is no longer what they were, but is not yet what they will be." The concept "liminal" was first published in 1884 in the field of psychology, but Arnold van Gennep introduced the liminality theory in the field of anthropology in 1909. Van Gennep was an anthropologist who described transition rituals (rites of passages), such as coming of age and initiation ceremonies. These rituals are "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (Turner, 1967:94). According to Van Gennep (1960:11), this theory has a threefold structure: separation, liminality and re-assimilation. The person who undergoes the initiation is firstly stripped of the social status he or she had before the ritual. Then the person is inductively brought into the stage of liminality before he or she gets a new social status and is re-assimilated into the community.

The terms "liminal" and "liminality" became popular in the last part of the 20th century through the writings of Victor Turner. Turner used Van Gennep's concept of liminality and expanded it to fields other than anthropology. Turner (1967:89–93) used the phrase "betwixt and between" to explain the core of his liminality theory. This phrase was often used to explain the framework he developed in the 1960s to analyse the transition rituals of tribes and socio-cultural systems (Cook-Sather, 2006:110).

South Africa is moving towards a more inclusive education system and, with this transition, learners are also moving between different systems (Di Terlizzi, 2007:32), namely the special school system and the inclusive education system. In the process, South Africans are found in a transitional phase between the systems. White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:16) describes inclusive education and training as "acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support." White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:16–17) further states that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs that are equally valued as an ordinary part of the human experience. Education structures, systems and learning methodologies should be enabled to meet the needs of all learners.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:71) describes, in his ecological theory, different contexts and levels of institutions, that have an influence on a child's development. He considered transition as an event that does not happen to the child only but also affects the persons who have relations with the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:210). These factors have interrelations among the persons concerned, as well as a significant influence on the success or

failure of the transition. The transition from a child's adjustment to a school environment is usually determined by the relationships that exist between the child, the family, teachers, the peer group and the community. It is important to realise that a child does not make a transition alone, seeing that transition not only affects the child, but also affects the adults who support him or her to make this transition easy and successful (Phatudi, 2007:9).

Key outcomes of the successful transition to a school include the social, emotional and academic adjustment of the child and positive attitudes towards the school of both child and parents (Logue & Love, 1992; Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1999).

Transition can sometimes be viewed as a "temporary boundary crossing", where learners take their loyalties and cultural and organisational meanings from their existing institution with them to the new institution. This can only be done when the two systems have the same primary or fundamental task (Billington & Pomerantz, 2004:23).

An empirical investigation was done with the transition theory and liminality theory as the point of departure for the purpose of testing these two theories. The next section contains a report on this investigation.

Methodology
Aim of the Investigation
The aim of the investigation was to determine which aspects played a role in the lives of the learners in the transition from a mainstream class to an LSEN class and what the effect of this transition was on the parents as well as the teachers of these learners. Furthermore, the research aimed to investigate the effect of the transitions on the self-image, self-concept and self-confidence of the learners involved.

Parents, teachers and learners' peers form part of learners' microsystems and have an influence on their social and emotional development. It was, therefore, necessary to involve parents and teachers in the research and to ask questions about the learners' relationships with their peers and the other learners in the class.

Research Design
A twofold approach was adopted in the research. On the one hand, it was social-constructivist, as we wished to focus on the world of the individual and to investigate how the participants in the research gave meaning to their experience in the LSEN class. On the other hand, since we worked specifically with participants in LSEN classes who experienced a transition from mainstream classes to LSEN classes, we followed a qualitative approach.

Research Strategy
In the empirical investigation we conducted in-depth interviews with the three teachers of the participants in the LSEN classes, the parents of the nine participants and the nine participants' former teachers in the mainstream classes. We also conducted three focus group interviews with the participants – one with each class group, namely the junior class, the middle class and the senior class.

Instrument
Semi-structured individual interviews were used in the research. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with the parents of the participating learners and the current teachers as well as the previous teachers of these learners. After the individual interviews had been conducted, a semi-structured focus group interview was held with each group of learners. The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, although Afrikaans was not the home language of all of the participants.

Sampling
There were nine participants – three in each class. The focus was on nine learners with special educational needs. The parents of five of the participants were married, and the parents of three were divorced, while one participant was in foster care. Five boys and four girls participated. Their ages ranged between 10 and 13 years. One of the participants had been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.

The participants were selected by an advisory panel which consisted of the researchers, the head of department of the full-service school and the three teachers of the LSEN classes. Specific criteria were used to select the participants:
- They had to be in one of the three LSEN classes.
- They should have been in a mainstream class before being transferred to the LSEN class.
- Information on their former schools and teachers had to be available.
- The learners should have been in class with their teachers for least a year in order for the teacher to be able to provide informed information about them.
- The participants had to be able to talk to the researchers in a focus group interview.

Nine participants – three in each LSEN class – were selected according to the criteria.

Ethical aspects
We obtained ethical clearance from the North-West University, followed by permission to conduct the study from the DoE and the principal of the school. The next step was to obtain the informed consent from all of the participants, namely the parents of the learners involved as well as the learners' current and former teachers.

Trustworthiness aspects
We used the same interview schedule for all individual interviews and used member checking by asking the participants to read through the transcribed interviews to ensure that they have been correctly quoted.

Data collection procedures
The procedure was divided into four phases.

Phase 1
After having obtained written permission from the parents of the participants, we conducted interviews with the teachers of the LSEN classes about each participant. The questions were provided to the teachers beforehand so that they could contemplate these and prepare for the interviews.

Phase 2
After the interviews with the teachers of the LSEN classes, we contacted the participants' parents to make appointments with them. Interviews were conducted with one or both parents of each participant. We deliberately used the same questionnaire to ensure that the parents and teachers agreed on the influence that the transition had had on the learners, both emotionally as well as on their behaviour. Only one question was added to the parents' questionnaire about their view and experience of the LSEN class. The same questionnaire was also used for both parents and teachers to ensure triangulation of the data.

Phase 3
After having interviewed the parents, we contacted all the learners' former teachers. It was quite difficult to convince them to talk to us about the learners. Eventually, most of them were helpful, but one teacher refused to talk about the learner. Her reason was that she could not remember the learner and did not have any information on the learner. Contact was made with the learner's Grade 1 teacher, but she did not want to participate in the research either.

Phase 4
Focus group interviews were held with the learners of each class. The teacher of each class accompanied the learners so that they would feel safe. Their questionnaire consisted of a limited number of questions.

Data processing or analysis procedures
Deductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data after the interviews had been transcribed. When the literature study on the transition theory and the liminality theory had been done, particular themes came to the fore, and those themes were used in the formulation of the questions contained in the questionnaire.

Results Empirical Investigation
The results were grouped into two main themes, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal themes. Each theme was divided into subthemes.

Intrapersonal Results
Emotional development
All nine of the participants experienced emotional problems in their mainstream classes. All of them showed emotional progress in the LSEN classes, except for one participant with a serious barrier to learning, who still had many emotional problems.

Peer pressure
Most of the participants experienced some form of peer pressure in the mainstream classes. Some of the participants had leadership qualities and developed these qualities in the LSEN classes. They became the leaders of the group, and then applied peer pressure in the group.

Self-image and self-confidence
In the mainstream classes, all nine participants had problems with poor self-image and self-confidence, mainly because they could not handle the volume of work. As they adjusted to the LSEN classes, the self-image and self-confidence of eight of the nine participants improved. The support they were given by the teachers in the LSEN classes contributed to their progress.

Feeling of loss
Five of the nine participants did not really experience a feeling of loss because of the transition to an LSEN class. One participant with Asperger Syndrome could not really understand the concept of loss. According to the teacher of one of the LSEN classes, most learners did not realise they were in an LSEN class, as they were still in the same school as their friends, even though they were in different classes.

Traumatic experience
Six of the nine participants' current teachers in the LSEN classes, as well as their parents, felt that the transition had been, to some extent, traumatic, nerve-racking and confusing for the learners. Participant 8's teacher stated that the transition to the LSEN class had not truly been traumatic for the learner, but the learner really wanted to go back to her old school and the mainstream class. In the focus group interview, the learner confirmed that she was sad to be away from her previous school and friends.

Stress and anxiety
According to the participants' parents and former teachers, all of them experienced stress and anxiety in the mainstream classes. In the beginning, just after the transition to the LSEN classes, there had still been a lot of stress and anxiety. However, they

relaxed more and more as time went by.

Aggression
Aggression was a slight problem for the participants. The teachers in the LSEN classes experienced some aggression, like the former teachers had also experienced aggression, especially when the learners could not master the work in the class. Sometimes, the learners in the LSEN classes were aggressive because they did not want to be there. The participants' parents did not experience any aggressive behaviour from the participants at home.

Level of security
All nine participants' parents and teachers in the LSEN classes stated that the learners felt safer in the LSEN classes than in the mainstream classes. Most of the parents and teachers agreed that the smaller classes contributed to the increased level of security the learners experienced in the LSEN classes. The learners were also more willing to take risks because they felt safe in the class. The smaller volume of work they did in the LSEN classes contributed to their feeling of safety and security.

Could hold their own in a difficult situation
The teachers in the LSEN classes felt that most of the participants could hold their own in difficult situations, except for Participants 7 and 9. Participant 7 was too shy to fight for herself. She always involved her parents to fight her battles for her. Participant 9, according to his mother and his teacher, did not have the self-confidence to take a stand. However, when the participants were in mainstream classes, they had much less self-confidence. In the LSEN classes, some of them developed strong leadership qualities, which helped them to take a stand when necessary. As opposed to the teachers, the parents of most of the learners felt that their children did not have the self-confidence to hold their own in difficult situations.

Results of an Interpersonal Nature
Social skills
Most of the participants had problems with social skills in the mainstream classes, except Participant 8, who was popular with her peers. Most of the participants found it difficult to make friends. Their peers often teased them because they struggled with their schoolwork.

In the LSEN classes, the participants formed part of the group of learners in the class as they did not stand out from the rest of the learners; this helped them make friends. Only Participant 9 still had no friends and struggled with his social skills.

Loss of friends
Only one participant felt that she had lost friends when she was transferred to the LSEN class. This ties in with the previous finding that the participants found it difficult to make friends in the mainstream classes.

Social status
The social status of the participants changed considerably with the transition to an LSEN class. Five of them did not really experience a loss of social status, while the other four realised that there was a difference between them and the learners in the mainstream classes. The parents of some of the participants stated that the participants did not actually realise that they were in an LSEN class, and therefore they did not experience a loss of social status. On the other hand, some of the participants realised that they were different from their peers and the learners in the mainstream classes. Moreover, some of the other learners teased them because they were in an LSEN class.

Feeling that the LSEN class was a temporary situation
The participants experienced the idea of being in a temporary class before going back to a mainstream class very differently. Most of the participants indicated that they wanted to return to the mainstream classes, and their parents felt the same way. Some of the participants did not realise what the difference was between a mainstream class and an LSEN class. The parents of two of the participants indicated that their children did not want to go back to the mainstream class and were happy in the LSEN class.

Future of learners
The parents were very worried about the future of their children and felt that limited choices were available to them in terms of high schools and work opportunities.

Parents' view of the LSEN class
The parents were positive about the LSEN class and felt that it was good for their children to be in a smaller class without the pressure of the large volume of work that had to be done in mainstream classes.

Discussion
Horizontal transition takes place when a learner moves from one situation, institution or level of education to another, for example from a mainstream class to an LSEN class (Di Terlizzi, 2007:32; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009:13). When the transition theory was studied, particular themes emerged. Learners with complex barriers to teaching and learning have little control over the transitions that are taking place in their lives, as most decisions are made by their parents. Anxiety, uncertainty and stress are often the result of such transitions. To become part of a new school culture, for example an LSEN class, a learner must face emotional and social adaptations, which demand

the reorganisation of internal and external behaviour. Transition involves successes, failures, the loss of friends and the loss of interests. Also, new friends are made, and new interests can be found during such a transition (Ramey & Ramey, 1999:217). During such a transition, there is almost always emotional conflict and confusion, which can manifest as aggression (Cowan & Hetherington, 1991:13). When learners who experience barriers to learning stay in an environment with less support, for example a mainstream class, they could experience a negative self-image, poor social skills, anxiety and stress, while, in an environment with more support, such as an LSEN class, they could expect a more positive experience. The result could be a better self-image, more friends and less anxiety and stress. On the other hand, learners could also experience a sense of loss – loss of familiar places, friends and routine – when a transition is made.

In an LSEN class, learners are often found in a liminal period – "betwixt and between." They are not in a mainstream class but, on the other hand, they are not in a special school either. They are on the threshold and may not know where to go from there. Most of the time, they feel that they are stripped of the social status they had in the mainstream class and experience emotions such as stress and anxiety about the transition.

It emerged from the research that particular aspects, such as resistance to learning, aggression and a feeling of security, improved in the LSEN class. Aspects such as the loss of friends, the loss of social status and the feeling that the LSEN class was a temporary situation brought about mixed reactions. Learners with severe barriers to learning, who struggled considerably in the mainstream class, were more willing to stay in the LSEN class.

A cause for concern about the teachers in the LSEN classes was their lack of experience. Most of these teachers were young and had just started teaching. None of the teachers had training in special education. It is imperative for teachers in LSEN classes to be trained and for the district support teams to provide more support to them.

Better cooperation and communication between mainstream schools and special needs schools would assist LSEN class teachers in obtaining more information about learners with barriers to learning. If the study had involved more learners in more schools, the results would have had more credibility and there would have been more data to compare. It would also be interesting to compare the functionality of the LSEN classes of different schools. The parents found some concepts and terms difficult to understand. It would have been very helpful to have had the services of an interpreter with sound knowledge of education during the interviews.

Conclusion

In a country where all learners have to be treated equitably, it is clearly of the utmost importance to make the transition for learners with special education needs as smooth and as pleasurable as possible to avoid any negative impact on them and their lives. It is, therefore, necessary to attend to the training of pre-service and practising teachers to assist them in making decisions about their learners that would be in the best interest of the learners. Special education is extremely important to the researchers, and they experience the problems and worries of parents about their children on a daily basis. It is very difficult for parents to realise and accept the fact that their child has a barrier to learning and that they have to make choices about their child's future. That is why it is so important for parents to have all the facts about LSEN classes and special schools so that they are able to make informed decisions on behalf of their children. We believe that this study will help them when they have to make these decisions.

Although this study was conducted in South-Africa, it is also relevant for any country with questions about the correct placing of learners with special educational needs. Although most countries have an inclusive educational approach to learners with barriers to learning, this study not only emphasises how the learners experience the transition to a special needs class, but also discusses the learner's experience in a mainstream class with other learners who don't have barriers to learning.

Authors' Contributions

HL, a post-graduate student at the time, wrote the manuscript with the assistance of JR. HL provided data and conducted all the interviews. Data analysis was jointly done by HL and JR. Both authors reviewed the final manuscript.

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