

# DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

**Title:** Factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province

**Full names and surname:** Hellen Rraditlou Malebe

**Submission date:** December 2024

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the master's degree with specialisation in Psychology of Education in the Department of Education Foundations in the faculty of Education at the University of the Free State.

**Supervisor:** Dr. CC Okeke

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr. ICE Ogbonnaya

*Inspiring  
excellence,  
transforming  
lives through  
quality,  
impact, and  
care.*



**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION  
IN MAINSTREAM SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT  
LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

**by**

**HELLEN R MALEBE**

**2018509436**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**in**

**PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

**SUPERVISOR: DR. CC OKEKE**

**CO-SUPERVISOR: DR. ICE OGBONNAYA**

**MARCH 2025**

**I gratefully acknowledge the financial support from the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for this research project. The views, findings, conclusions and recommendations in this research are those of the author and do not reflect the views of the NRF.**

## DECLARATION

I, Hellen R. Malebe, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: *Factors Influencing the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Secondary Schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province*, represents my own work in conception and execution. In addition, sources cited are acknowledged in the text as well as in the list of references.

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: March 2025 \_\_\_\_\_

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my maternal family, who raised me. Most importantly, my sincere gratitude goes to my grandmother, Kukie Malebe - thank you for always believing in me, *Lekgereshi!*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

All thanks to the almighty God for granting me strength and wisdom throughout this academic journey.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals and organisations that played a very significant role in the completion of this study:

- My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisors, Drs Charity Okeke and Ijeoma Ogbonnaya. Thank you for your invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, unwavering patience, and continuous support throughout this research journey. Your expertise and support have been instrumental in shaping this work.
- I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for awarding me a Scholarship through my Supervisor, Dr Charity Okeke.
- I extend my gratitude to the University of the Free State for awarding me the merit bursary.
- My appreciation also goes to the Limpopo Department of Education for permitting me to conduct this study at the selected schools.
- Special thanks to the three participating schools, principals, and teachers for the valuable information they provided and the time they devoted to making this study successful.
- To my family, thank you so much for your unwavering support, love, prayers, and encouragement, which have always been my foundation throughout my academic journey.
- A special thank you to my partner, Mr T. Masemene, for the moral support and for sharing this challenging journey with me.
- Lastly, much appreciation goes to my language editor, Brian Naidoo, for refining the draft dissertation.

***Thank you all!***

## **ABSTRACT**

The advent of inclusive education represents a fundamental change in schooling that aims to provide equitable opportunities for all learners, including those with barriers to learning. Implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in South Africa involves creating an environment where learners with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles can exploit their learning potential to the maximum. Although South Africa adopted an inclusive education policy, its effective implementation remains a challenge. The study followed the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory by Roger to establish factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. The aim was to explore the challenges teachers are confronted with in implementing inclusive education practices and to establish support structures for teachers to fully and successfully implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. This qualitative study adopted a phenomenological research design by applying purposive sampling to select twelve participants from mainstream secondary schools. Qualitative data was gathered through face-to-face semi-structured interviews which were audio-recorded, later transcribed, and then analysed through thematic analysis. The findings from this study established that teachers understand what inclusive education is about, but they struggle with its implementation. This reveals that teachers face several challenges in implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools, which includes lack of training, limited knowledge, inadequate resources, personal stress and burnout, time and curriculum constraints, lack of parental support, and overcrowded classrooms. The study suggested that schools need multifaceted support structures and resources to implement inclusive practices successfully. It is also recommended that teachers need intensive, ongoing professional development and training to enhance inclusive education, while support from parents and social workers would accelerate its success.

**Keywords:** barriers to learning, inclusive education, implementation, mainstream school, secondary school

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.4.1 Specific Objectives</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.5.1 Sub-research Questions</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1.8 KEYWORDS</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1.9 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.9.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.9.2 Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.9.3 Overview of Related Literature</b> .....	<b>10</b>
1. 9.3.1 Concept of inclusive education.....	10
1.9.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in mainstream schools.....	11

1.9.3.3 Challenges teachers face implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools.....	13
1.9.3.4 Support schools need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools .....	15
1.9.3.5 Support teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream schools.....	15
<b>1.9.4 Summary of Preliminary Literature Review.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.10.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.10.2 Research Paradigm.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.10.3 Research Approach.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1.10.4 Research Design.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.10.5 Research Participants and Site.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.10.6 Sampling and Sample Size.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.10.7 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.10.8 Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.10.9 Data Trustworthiness.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1. 11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.12 LAYOUTS OF CHAPTERS.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>10.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.2.1 The Innovation.....</b>	<b>26</b>

2.2.1.1 Relative advantage.....	27
2.2.1.2 Compatibility.....	27
2.2.1.3 Complexity.....	28
2.2.1.4 Trialability.....	28
2.2.1.5 Observability.....	29
<b>2.2.2 Communication Channels.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.2.3 Time.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.2.4 Social Systems.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.2.5 Criticism of DOI Theory.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.2.6 The Importance of the DOI for this Study.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.3 SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.3.1 The Constitution of South Africa.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.3.2 Education White Paper 6.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.3.3 South African Schools Act.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.3.4 The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2.3.5 Policy Framework for the Provision of Quality Education and Support to Children with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS RSA.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.4.1 Inclusive Education .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.4.2 Mainstream Schools .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.5 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2.6 CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>42</b>

<b>2.6.1 Teachers' Attitude.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.6.2 Inflexible Curriculum.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.6.3 Lack of Professional Development.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.6.4 Lack of Parental Involvement.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>2.6.5 Overcrowded Classrooms.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2.6.6 Lack of Resources and Funding.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2.6.7 Time-constraints.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>2.6.8 Inclusive Classroom Facilities.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>2.7 SUPPORT SCHOOLS NEED TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>2.7.1 Educational Support.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>2.7.2 Parental Involvement.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>2.7.3 Collaboration with the Community.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>2.7.4 Funding Allocation.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>2.7.5 Physical Resources Allocation.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>2.8 SUPPORT TEACHERS NEED TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>2.8.1 Professional Development for Teachers.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>2.8.2 Curriculum Differentiation.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>2.8.3 Support-based School Team.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>2.8.4 District-based Support Team.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>2.8.5 Learning Materials.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2.8.6 Collaborative Teaching.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2.8.7 Peer Support.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>2.9 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>63</b>

<b>2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>3.5 STUDY SITE AND PARTICIPATION.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>3.5.1 Study Site.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.5.2 Participants.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.6 SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.7 INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.9 DATA ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>3.10.1 Credibility.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>3.10.2 Dependability.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.10.3 Transferability.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.10.4 Confirmability.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>76</b>

<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>4.2 RESEARCH JOURNEY.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>4.2.1 Ethical approval.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>4.2.2 Meeting the participants for consent and data collection.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4.2.3 Transcription.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4.2.4 Participants' background information.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>4.3.1 Table 4.2: Themes and Sub-themes.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>4.3.2 Theme 1: Teacher's Perception of Inclusive Education.....</b>	<b>81</b>
4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Education for all.....	81
4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Inclusive education in rural schools.....	82
4.2.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Pressure on teachers.....	83
4.2.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Lack of experience.....	84
<b>4.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education.....</b>	<b>86</b>
4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Time and curriculum constraints.....	86
4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Lack of individual attention.....	87
4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Discipline and motivation.....	88
4.3.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Teachers' stress and burnout.....	89
4.3.2.5 Sub-theme 5: Lack of support, monitoring, and evaluation.....	91
4.3.2.6 Sub-theme 6: Lack of parental support and overcrowded classrooms.....	91
<b>4.3.3 Theme 3: Support Schools need to Implement Inclusive education.....</b>	<b>94</b>
4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Educational assistant.....	94

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Specialised teachers.....	94
4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Support from the District.....	95
4.3.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Technological resources.....	97
4.3.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Need for proper infrastructure.....	98
4.3.3.6 Sub-theme 6: Access to free school transportation.....	98
<b>4.3.4 Theme 4: Support Teachers need to Implement Inclusive Education.....</b>	<b>99</b>
4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Professional Development and Training.....	99
4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Short courses in Inclusive Education.....	101
4.3.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Appropriate teaching and learning materials.....	101
4.3.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Curriculum differentiation.....	102
4.3.4.5 Sub-theme 5: Support of social workers.....	104
4.3.4.6 Sub-theme 6: Parental support.....	105
<b>4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>5.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>108</b>
5.2.1 Theme 1: Teacher’s perception of inclusive education.....	108
5.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges of implementing inclusive education.....	110
5.2.3 Theme 3: Support schools need to implement inclusive education.....	113
5.2.4 Theme 4: Support teachers need to implement inclusive education.....	116
<b>5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>120</b>
5.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers’ perception of inclusive education.....	120

<b>5.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges of implementing inclusive education.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>5.3.3 Theme 3: Support schools need to implement inclusive education.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>5.3.4 Theme 4: Support teachers need to implement inclusive education.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>5.4.1 Implication for the Department of Basic Education (DBE).....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>5.4.2 Implications for District-Based Support Team (DBST).....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>5.4.3 Implication for Schools.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>5.4.4 Implication for Teachers.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>5.5.5 Implication for Parents.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>5.7 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>173</b>
Appendix A: UFS Ethical Clearance Letter.....	173
Appendix B: LDoE Permission Letter.....	174
Appendix C: School Permission Letter .....	176
Appendix D: Sample of Participant Consent Form.....	177
Appendix E: Interview Guide.....	179
<b>Appendix F: Sample of a transcribed interview.....</b>	<b>183</b>
Appendix G: Certificate of Language Editing.....	182
Appendix H: Turnitin Report .....	183

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Participants' background information.....	84
Table 4.2: Themes and Sub-themes.....	85

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statements
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DOE	Department of Education
DOI	Diffusion of Innovation
FET	Further Education and Training
IEP	Individualised Education Plan
ILST	Institutional Level Support Team
ISP	Individual Support Plan
LO	Life Orientation
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBST	Support-Based School Team
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support
TA	Thematic Analys

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Inclusive education has been the focus in South Africa's education system since its adoption and implementation in 2001 (Department of Education, 2001). Inclusive education eradicates exclusion in educational institutions by advocating for full participation and equal educational access for all learners (Walton, 2018:31). The Department of Education (RSA, 2001) introduced the Education White Paper 6 in 2001 which stipulated the goals of inclusive education. Inclusion recognises that every child has the opportunity to learn and be accommodated in mainstream schools, communities, and societies (Seedat, 2018:10). The primary objective of inclusive education is to integrate all learners into the mainstream schooling system (Seedat, 2018:10). The DoE (2001:18) points out that teachers are at the centre of promoting inclusive education in the classroom, and therefore they need to improve their skills and knowledge. Implementing inclusive education requires collaborative efforts to deliver an inclusive curriculum with suitable assessment practices (Kefallinou, Symeonidou & Meijer, 2020:141).

Inclusive education involves acknowledging that all children and youths are capable of learning but that they require assistance, acceptance, and respect as all learners are different and thus have different learning needs that must be catered for and valued as part of ubuntu, thus suggesting that education structures, systems, and learning methodologies must transition to meet the needs of all learners (DoE, 2001:16). Saloviita (2020:270) defines inclusive education as teaching all children, including learners with disabilities, in the same classroom with adequate support. Studies by Yada and Savolainen (2017:8) perceive inclusive education as the process of redressing and responding to the diverse needs of all children by ensuring participation in learning, respecting diverse cultures and abilities, and enhancing communities by eliminating exclusionary practices in educational settings.

To achieve inclusivity in education in South Africa, the DoE (2001) provided strategic guidelines that focus on restructuring the education system to accommodate all

learners with barriers while supporting their special needs in education. A few key strategies include a comprehensive redesign of all stages of the education system, the extensive development of learning centres to secure an unhindered access to institutional physical environments, fostering an inclusive and psychologically supportive learning atmosphere, evolving towards a universally accommodating curriculum, upholding the rights and responsibilities of learners (including parents and educators), and assuring effective professional development programmes and adequate human resources (DoE, 2001:6).

Inclusive education is not only intended for learners who have previously been excluded from regular schools due to a disability, but also for all 'abled' children (Corral-Granados, Rapp & Smeplass, 2023:8). The main objective is to remove all kinds of social exclusion caused by attitudes and policies toward diversity in race, class, ethnicity, religion, and gender (DoE, 2001:55). Yeboah, Aloka and Charamba (2023:109) propose that educational institutions should establish conducive learning environments where teachers and learners embrace diversity which should be considered a valuable asset to effective education rather than an obstacle. In an inclusive education system, learners' needs are met by providing them with opportunities to succeed and become responsible citizens (Yeboah et al., 2023:109).

In South Africa, inclusive education is supported by laws and policies such as the *South African Constitution* (1996) which values human dignity, equality, and rights (Heeralal & Jama, 2014:1501). Moreover, the *RSA Constitution Act 108 of 1996 Section 29(1)* promulgated that everyone has the right to education, including adult education (RSA, 1996). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Section 5(1) states that public schools must accept all learners and meet their educational requirements without any kind of unfair discrimination. Section 22 of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 states that ordinary public schools must admit learners with special needs, and provide the required support services and physical facilities (RSA, 1996). Although South Africa has policies that promote inclusive education, the gap remains in are of as access and quality. However, research from the Human Rights Watch (2015) reveals that children with disabilities in five out of South Africa's nine provinces are confronted with physical and attitudinal barriers, with the majority of them still remaining out of school. Brown (2015:2) adds that not all South African children with disabilities have access to education.

The National Department of Education developed the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) to help teachers determine what sort of aid learners with special education needs require, as well as to describe the steps that will be pursued to ensure that all learners are given the required assistance (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019:3). However, research by Ntseto, Kgothule, Ugwuanyi and Okeke (2021:1383) indicates that there still exists challenges related to attitudes, insufficient awareness about inclusivity, lack of support for learners and teachers, and inadequate teacher-training in inclusive education.

The implementation of policies meant to enable educational structures to become accessible to all learners, is still lacking because learners with barriers to learning are hindered by an environment that lacks responsiveness regarding disability according to Majoko and Phasha (2018:16). In this regard, children with severe disabilities are excluded from education, while the majority of learners with disabilities attend special schools (Elphick, SasKropiwnicki & Elphick, 2015:103). Unfortunately, South Africa is failing to achieve its educational objectives to provide appropriate and adequate support to learners experiencing barriers to learning (Skae, Brown & Wilmot, 2020:16). Since teachers are at the centre of implementing educational policy, the school system becomes efficient and effective only if they are well-trained and committed to teach learners with special needs and disabilities (Yeboah, Aloka & Charamba, 2023:113). Therefore, instructional approaches and practices must be tailored to meet learners' diverse needs such that teachers create conducive inclusive spaces and plan 'sensitive' and appropriate learning and teaching activities (Allan, 2019:13).

Additionally, research reveals variations in policy implementation regarding inclusive education across countries; some countries are still struggling while others are making slow progress (Makoelle, 2016:13). In Ghana, for example, Opoku (2022:8) found that secondary school teachers are struggling with the practical implementation of inclusive education, despite having theoretical knowledge. In Zimbabwe, research conducted by Nkoma and Itay (2018:202) indicates that teachers struggle with the implementation of inclusive education, curriculum, pedagogy, and examination systems. Further, a study by Maine (2021:100) concludes that teachers in Lesotho require training in inclusive education in aspects of creating diverse learning materials, initiating parental intervention, and recruiting teacher-assistants. Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018:5) state that the rollout of inclusive education in Africa encounters challenges

such as poverty, limited or lack of human and material resources, large numbers of underqualified or unqualified teachers, discriminatory attitudes, inflexible curricula, lack of clear conceptualisation of inclusion, absence of parental support, and inadequate policy integration. The trajectory towards inclusive education implementation remains a challenge which is rooted within institutional, historical, and cultural influences (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2014:24).

Despite numerous efforts to introduce inclusive education in mainstream classrooms to accommodate learners with barriers to learning, progress is still being hindered by several institutional constraints (Mampane, 2022:1). Although the Department of Education introduced clear guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education (DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, 2020), mainstream schools still struggle to achieve full inclusion. Hence, this study aimed to explore factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province (RSA).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Inclusive education aims to enhance the involvement of all learners in the curricula, cultures, and communities within educational systems (Allan, 2019:1). An emotionally supportive environment is crucial for achieving inclusion among all learners, while appropriately and cordially accommodating them to ensure effective and efficient learning to holistically develop them for responsible citizenship (Allan, 2019:1). The education system is perceived as a key platform to shape members of society; therefore, inclusive education policies are geared to change the mainstream schooling system to provide a broad space for vulnerable and differently-abled learners (Collins, 2014:8). Inclusive education aims to challenge the status of normality of disability, as it values diversity (Ayaya, 2018:7). Furthermore, accepting diversity promotes the quality of learning to promote an inclusive school culture, visionary policies, and flexible curricula that can enhance learners' academic achievement (Ramango, 2021:4). The transition to inclusive education has prompted mainstream teachers to assume responsibility for integrating all learners into their classrooms, despite studies indicating a lack of capacity to do so (Srivastava, De Boer & Pijl, 2015:1).

Furthermore, Nembambula, Ooko and Aluko (2023:4) state that, despite the implementation of several policies, studies in South Africa indicate that the

implementation of inclusive education in schools has not entirely got off the ground due to teething problems. According to Ngoma (2020:16), there are persistent gaps in achieving full inclusivity which necessitate intensive teacher-training and pedagogical development to increase teachers' knowledge and skills for the smooth implementation of inclusive education. Ngubane (2019:1) concurs that "despite the policy framework supporting inclusive education (DoE, 2001), learner-exclusion continues to be a troubling issue in South Africa. Therefore, it is imperative to inculcate a culture of appreciation that promotes diversity for the successful execution of inclusive education (Ngubane, 2019:1).

Additionally, a study by Delubom, Marongwe and Buka, (2020:1511) laments the low standard of infrastructure, lack of funding, and inadequate staff that pose as significant obstacles that stifle the progress of inclusive education in South Africa. Therefore, this study investigated the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province.

## **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

Building a democracy based on social justice is closely linked to inclusive education which specifically aims to eliminate the marginalisation of learners with barriers to learning, especially those who enrol at ordinary public schools (Mugambi, 2017:44). Education policy and programmes for inclusive schools have been aligned with the goals of *Education for All* since the beginning of the democratic transformation in 1994. Therefore, the origins of inclusive education in South Africa are embedded in the justification for incorporating learners with disabilities into mainstream education (Mugambi, 2017:44). Importantly, the possibility of an ideal inclusive education system can reach fruition if we address all cases of exclusion in society (Makuya, 2021:16).

Moreover, while working as a teacher at a secondary school, I realised the need for conducting this study after observing teachers discuss their experiences with the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools. Personally, I have seen learners with disabilities not being accommodated in the secondary school I taught at. Schools tend to dismiss learners with special needs due to time-constraints, lack of facilities, inadequate training, and scant knowledge of inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. Due to the brutal and oppressive disparities instilled by apartheid pre-1994, many 'non-white' children in South Africa were denied access to

equal and adequate educational opportunities (Hutchinson, 2021:48). Children from rural areas were denied essential material and human resources; they were the most marginalised and discriminated against during the days of apartheid (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019:1). Unfortunately, the effects of apartheid have cascaded into the present era, and it will take many years to dissipate. These issues motivated me to embark on this study to search for possible strategies to promote social justice through inclusion in mainstream classrooms in South Africa.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to explore factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province.

##### **1.4.1 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives were to:

- Understand how teachers perceive inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools.
- Explore challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools.
- Determine support schools need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools.
- Establish support teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms.

#### **1.5 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

The main research question that guided this study was: What are the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province?

##### **1.5.1 Sub-research Questions**

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

- How do teachers perceive inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?

- What challenges do teachers face implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do schools need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms?

## **1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study explored factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. However, it was delimited to three mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District. Only three principals and nine teachers selected from three mainstream secondary schools participated in the study.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will benefit stakeholders and policymakers involved in designing South Africa's educational policies by identifying the barriers that prevent the successful implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. It will provide evidence-based recommendations that can inform future policy revisions and improvements. Policymakers may also gain more insights from the study on the challenges preventing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. The policymakers will better understand the current gaps between policy and practical implementation. By highlighting these disparities, the study will provide recommendations that could guide the refinement of inclusive strategies. Additionally, this assessment will reveal whether schools need further guidance, resources or training to ensure that inclusive education is not a theory but a practical reality needed in the classrooms. The study will further inform the Department of Education (DoE) about the factors impeding the smooth implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. It will help the DoE in reviewing the current policies and evaluating whether additional intervention plans, training programmes or resources are needed to equip and strengthen inclusive practices in schools.

Teachers and principals who participated in this study were afforded the opportunity to voice their concerns and experiences about factors that hinder their schools from effectively implementing inclusive education. Their participation in this study allows for a bottom-up approach to policy development, ensuring that the views of teachers who are primary role players in implementing inclusive education are heard and considered in the decision-making process. Their opinion and experiences can lead to the development of more practical, context-specific solutions tailored to the realities faced by South African schools. The study will also ascertain whether the inclusion policies in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) are being fully implemented or whether schools still need support to successfully understand and implement inclusive education in their classrooms. Lastly, the findings from this study will contribute to new knowledge on inclusivity through article publications and conferences. It will serve as a point of reference for future research, policy formulation and practical intervention both within South Africa and in other contexts facing similar challenges in implementing inclusive education.

## **1.8 KEYWORDS**

**Barriers to learning:** Barriers to learning are anything that prevents a learner from learning successfully (De Jager, 2019:11). In this study, barrier to learning means something that hinders or prevents learning from successfully occurring.

**Implementation:** Implementation is described as an established set of planned and intentional efforts aimed at incorporate evidence-based practices into real-world situations (Vaughan & Albers, 2017:1). In this study, implementation involves executing inclusive education practices in mainstream secondary schools.

**Inclusive education:** Hashmi, Khan and Khanum (2017:34) define inclusive education as a maximising response to the diverse needs of children through improving classroom participation and reducing exclusion from education. In this study, inclusive education refers to the need to include learners with various barriers to learning in the mainstream classroom without any discrimination by ensuring that all learners participate equally.

**Mainstream school:** According to the DoE (2001:17), mainstreaming is giving learners extra support so that they can 'fit in' or be integrated into the system as a

whole or into the 'normal' classroom routine. In this study, mainstream school refers to a traditional school that follows the prescribed National Curriculum developed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

**Secondary school:** The secondary school is the educational stage that follows elementary school in South Africa, and normally encompasses Grades 8 to 12 (Harris & Nowland, 2021:50). In this study, secondary school refers to a level of education after primary school.

## **1.9 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.9.1 Introduction**

This section includes a brief explanation of the theoretical frameworks as well as a preliminary literature review which will be discussed in chapter two.

### **1.9.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory which provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors impacting inclusive education implementation in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. This theory is social-science-based that explains how new ideas, policies, products, and practices spread through a population over time (Zhang, Yu, Yan & Ton, 2015:3). According to Wani and Ali (2015:103), the objective of the DOI theory is to comprehend *why* and *how* quickly new ideas and technologies spread within a social system. Diffusion refers to a process used to communicate innovation through various channels among members of a social system (García-Avilés, 2020:1). Inclusive education is an innovation that aims to provide quality education to all learners regardless of their learning ability or disability.

The diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory has four key components: innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems (Ham, 2020:16). Firstly, innovation refers to an idea or practice considered new by an individual for adoption (Serdyukov, 2017:4). In South Africa, innovation refers to the adoption of inclusive education policies and practices. This firstly involves innovative teaching methods and strategies, accessible curriculum materials, assistive technologies, and adequate school infrastructure. Secondly, a communication channel refers to the process of conveying a message from one person to another (Jenkins, 2023:418). Hence, effective communication is essential for the diffusion of information on inclusive education.

Educational stakeholders such as support teams, NGOs, professional training workshops, and community meetings, play a pivotal role in conveying information in raising awareness about inclusive education (Pinho, Franco, & Mendes, 2021). In this regard, the active involvement of parents and school communities can influence the promotion of inclusive education. Thirdly, the spread of information requires time which is the measurement of the length of period required to pass on the innovation (Orlova, 2019:400) as the pace at which inclusive education is adopted can differ among schools (Dearing & Cox, 2018:184). Fourthly, the social system is a group of people collaborating to resolve a problem or achieve a common goal. The social system plays an important role in adopting inclusive education (Jenkins, 2023:418). Teachers, school management, local communities, parents, and learners play a significant role in influencing the adoption of inclusive educational practices (Morris, 2021:57).

Also, the diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory with its emphasis on innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems in the context of this study, will be applied to understand and analyse the challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education, as well as identify the factors that promote the adoption and spread of inclusive education practices in the South African educational system. This theory can also be applied to better comprehend educational changes, policies, teaching strategies, and collaboration among various stakeholders to guide the integration of inclusive education implementation into mainstream classrooms.

### **1.9.3 Overview of Related Literature**

#### **1.9.3.1 Concept of Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is fundamentally linked to human rights that envision an education system where every child, regardless of background, abilities, race, gender, or circumstance, has an equal opportunity to access education within a mainstream school (Singh, 2016:3222). Inclusive education aims to eliminate the inequalities within the educational system by educating learners with barriers in mainstream school settings (Hasan, Halder & Debnath, 2018:605). In support, Suleymanou (2015:4) agrees that inclusion seeks to address and respond to various diverse needs of all children through maximising their participation in learning, cultural activities, community participation to eradicate exclusion within the educational system.

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) urged all countries to ensure that all children, regardless of their different disabilities, learn in the same regular schools, claiming that regular schools delivering inclusive education are the most effective means of promoting *Education for All*. As a fundamental right, inclusion in regular schools is a crucial step in creating an inclusive society (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019:2). The main objective of the educational system is to operate as an integrational component of society; thus, inclusive education is perceived as the only trajectory to achieve this objective (Corral-Granados, Rapp & Smeplass, 2023:4).

In South Africa, some policies guide how to respond to learners' different abilities in the classroom. One of the cornerstones of South Africa's inclusive education policies is the Education White Paper 6 which guides the development of an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001). A subsequent policy, the National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) provides a framework for identifying and addressing barriers to learning (DBE, 2014). It emphasises early intervention, individualised education plans, and collaboration between different stakeholders including parents, teachers and specialised experts (Ayaya, Makoelle & Van der Merwe, 2020:3). This policy demonstrates a holistic approach to inclusive education to meet various needs of all learners.

Inclusive education in South Africa aims to redress historical educational injustices, thus it strives to foster an environment where diversity is valued such that each learner has an equal opportunity to learn (Murungi, 2015:3171). Accordingly, South Africa is actively pursuing the development of an inclusive education system that embodies its core values of equality, social justice, and the rights of all learners (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2020:1).

### **1.9.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in mainstream schools**

Inclusive education involves recognising and accommodating the diverse needs of all learners by fostering participation, and believing that all learners can contribute to the learning environment (Mphongoshe, Mabunda, Klu, Tugli & Matshidze, 2015:66). It is acknowledged that educators are crucial figures in creating warm, inviting educational settings (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018:3), hence teachers are expected to embrace learning diversities in their classrooms because they are responsible for the implementation of inclusive education (Sesay, 2018:34). It is further acknowledged

that their perception of inclusive education, their attitudes towards it, as well as their pedagogical knowledge and skills, have an impact on their classroom practices (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018:3).

Teachers' perception of inclusive education plays a major role in its successful implementation. According to Tshangela (2019:17), South African teachers have a negative perception of inclusive education because they lack adequate training and understanding of inclusive education. Additionally, Mensah and Nantwi (2020:20) note that teachers perceived inclusive education as a 'forced policy' due to various factors such as inadequate knowledge to teach learners with barriers to learning, and that inclusion creates increased workload for them. Research conducted by Legodi-Rakgalakane and Mokhampanyane (2022:259) maintain that educators' perception of inclusive education varies, and the perception they have affects the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom. Additionally, a study conducted by Morelle and Tabane (2019:3) reveals that teachers indicated that they were unfamiliar with the concept of inclusive education, therefore they would like to undergo in-service training that would cover the field of inclusive education and how it should be implemented. According to the research findings, teachers' negative perceptions of inclusive education are driven by inadequate training.

Research conducted by Ngidi (2020:15) which explored teachers' understanding of inclusive education, indicates that teacher-participants understood that inclusion is about learners with barriers to learning, while agreeing that inclusion is a non-discriminatory teaching and learning concept that accepts learners' diversity. However, it has also been found that although teachers understand what inclusion is, they are still struggling to service several learners with barriers to learning because they do not have adequate skills to teach, support, and manage their classrooms to benefit all learners (Tshangela, 2019:19).

Moreover, a study conducted by Malahlela (2017:1) on educators' perception of the implementation of inclusive education in Polokwane mainstream secondary schools, revealed that inclusive education was considered important by teachers; however, teachers mentioned that insufficient training, unconducive school environments, shortage of relevant resources, and an increased number of enrolled learners (among

others) were impediments to inclusive education in mainstream classrooms - all of which leads to the negative perception of inclusive education (Malahlela, 2017:1).

### **1.9.3.3. Challenges teachers face implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools**

Some challenges hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education; for example, poor curriculum delivery, traditional teaching approaches, inadequate training, large classes, lack of parental support, physical infrastructure and collaboration with specialists impede effective teaching in inclusive classrooms. Jali (2014:28) asserts that the South African curriculum is rigid and inflexible, so it does not promote successful learning. Zwane and Malale (2018:2) add that other negatives on curriculum delivery include the lack of relevance of certain subjects, inappropriate learning materials, absence of resources like assistive devices, inflexible teaching styles, and irrelevant techniques of assessing learning-performance. An inflexible curriculum becomes a barrier to meeting the various educational needs of learners (Wium, & Louw 2015:19); therefore, it must be tailored to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom (Adewumi, & Mosito 2019:3). Mainstream education classrooms have standardised curricula requirements that every learner must satisfy, which makes it difficult to include learners with barriers to learning (Jali, 2014:28).

Further, Mncube, Lebopha and Titus (2020:103) mention that the structure and rollout of the curriculum do not cater for learners with barriers to learning. Literature reveals that many South African teachers struggle to complete the curriculum within the given instructional time (Mpu & Adu, 2021, Nembambula, Ooko & Aluko, 2023). Learners with diverse needs require sufficient instructional time coupled with flexible teaching-learning methods (Nembambula, et al, 2023:3). Moreover, Chimhenga, (2016:528) asserts that insufficient time negatively affects learners with diverse needs as it affects the support they need in the classroom.

Additionally, Nseibo, Vergunst, McKenzie, Kelly, Karisa and Watermeyer (2022:1) indicate that despite the necessity for inclusive education in South Africa, many teachers have not received adequate training to facilitate the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning in classrooms. Morelle and Tabane, (2019:2) contend that educators in mainstream schools are not adequately trained to teach learners experiencing barriers together with their able peers. Without proper training and skills

it becomes impossible to implement inclusive education; hence, learners with special needs will be deprived of adequate access to quality education, and thus will not be able to reach their full potential (Nseibo et al., 2022:2).

A study by Makuya and Sedibe (2021:42) points to another challenge that teachers encounter: the lack of financial resources which affects virtually all aspects of inclusive education. Even if teachers are adequately trained pedagogically to deal with inclusive education, the lack of resources for learners with diverse needs debilitates teachers' efforts to successfully deliver inclusive education (Makuya & Sedibe, 2021:42). Since the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:18) acknowledges that teachers are primary role-players in successfully implementing inclusive practices, it is therefore imperative that they receive intensive training to cope with the demands for inclusive education.

The other barrier that affects the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa pertains to large class sizes. Overcrowded classrooms are barriers to learning as they increase teachers' level of stress, workload, and decreases the quality of education learners receive (Singh, 2019:20). Lepheana, Campus, Chisango and Campus (2022:10) mention that in South Africa, schools in township and rural areas have more than 50 learners in a classroom with each having different age gaps. Mphahlele (2019:14) states that accommodating all learners becomes impossible due to limited resources, especially in public schools with overcrowded classrooms. According to a study conducted in South Africa by Maree (2021:3), some teachers find it difficult to attend to all learners in an overcrowded classroom, in addition to finding time to design an inclusive curriculum with materials for learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Additionally, teachers experience the lack of parental support which is exacerbated by illiteracy in communities (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016:8). It affects the child's education by directly contributing to disruptive behaviour and disrespect toward other learners in the classroom (Munje & Mncube, 2018:16). Also, the lack of parental involvement influences the way teachers perceive and interact with learners which leads to teachers being reluctant to support learners with barriers to learning (Singh, 2019:14). The implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools needs a multifaceted support system to be successfully implemented which includes sufficient funding, parent and community collaboration, specialist intervention, sound physical infrastructure, a flexible curriculum, and differentiation in teaching techniques (Walton

& Engelbrecht, 2022:12). Further, parental and community collaboration plays a pivotal role in supporting inclusive education (Walton & Engelbrecht (2022:12). In this regard, schools should engage with various stakeholders such as NGOs, communities, the corporate sector, international donors, the Government, and local businesses (Adams, Harris & Jones, 2018:96). Adams et al. (2018:96) add that schools must promote the active involvement of parents in the education process, and empower them through workshops to fully understand and support inclusive education (Ivala, 2017:64).

Also, the physical infrastructure must be designed to make room for ramps, and accessible to all learners with physical disabilities (Deghaye, 2021:12). In South Africa, this implies that all classrooms must be adapted to accommodate learners with physical limitations (Deghaye, 2021:12). Curriculum differentiation and flexible content delivery are significant aspects that teachers should seriously consider and practise to meet the learning needs of diverse learners (Cotterell, 2015:30). This includes adapting lesson plans, introducing differentiated assessments, and ensuring that learning content is easily accessible and understood by learners with special needs (Suleymanov, 2015:18).

Further, collaboration with specialists' at mainstream schools requires additional support to help learners with barriers to learning which includes active teamworking with educational psychologists, learner-support specialists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists, among others (Fodo, 2020:20); however, there is a shortage of these specialists in South African schools. Specialists are indispensable as they play an important role in assessing learners' needs, developing IEPs, and providing the right support (Genovesi, Jakobsson, Nugent, Hanlon & Hoekstra, 2022:1620).

#### **1.9.3.5 Support teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream schools**

The establishment of a District-based support team (DBST) plays a significant role in supporting inclusive education at school level. Each District is expected to create a DBST and assign it to assist several schools to implement inclusive education effectively (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016:4). The DBST has to support learning and teaching by addressing learners' needs, educators' challenges, and support-based school teams' (Nong, 2020:1264). Both DBST and the support-based school

team (SBST) are expected to provide curriculum differentiation, suitable assessment strategies, and instructional support through illustrative learning programmes, learner-support materials, equipment, and professional support for educators at the school level (Mpanza & Govender, 2022:272). Mabaso (2019:18) cautions that learners will be unable to respond positively to the curriculum if the District fails to support the SBST or teachers.

The teacher plays a central role in implementing inclusive education, therefore proper support is required - a school-based support team is indispensable (Rabi & Zulkefli, 2018:1781). Members of the SBST should prioritise professional growth among teachers to hone their ability to identify learners with barriers to learning, in addition to providing interventions, developing suitable programmes for special needs learners, and promoting a positive and conducive teaching environment (Hlalele, Jiyane & Radebe, 2020:144). The SBST is also responsible for equipping teachers for inclusive education and ensuring consistency of inclusive education at the school level (Fourie, 2017:7).

Moreover, successful inclusive education implementation requires parents' support and involvement in their children's education such that they promote a healthy relationship between the teachers and the school - a collaboration that ensures a support system for learners with barriers to learning (El Shourbagi, 2017:133). According to Skae, Brown and Wilmot (2020:3), parental intervention enhances academic achievement, reduces ill-discipline, and addresses barriers to learning.

#### **1.9.4 Summary of Preliminary Literature Review**

The Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory provides an understanding of innovation-adoption within a specific context; therefore, teachers need to thoroughly comprehend the inclusive education policy to provide equal and flexible education to all learners. This preliminary literature review informed the study on the concept of inclusive education, teachers' perception of inclusive education, challenges teachers face when implementing inclusive education, the support teachers need to fully implement inclusive education, and the support principals need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. Literature indicates that inclusive education is a slow process for it to be efficient and successful in SA; hence, teachers must be thoroughly trained and be provided with sufficient support.

## **1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.10.1 Introduction**

Research methodology plays a crucial role by laying a foundational plan on which the research project is built as it provides detailed information on methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. This research paradigm, research approach, research design, participant and site selection, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the organisation of chapters are outlined in the sections below.

### **1.10.2 Research Paradigm**

This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm which advocates that social reality is subjective and is constructed by an individual through meaning, experiences, perceptions, and language, amongst others (Maree, 2019:66). The interpretive paradigm is influenced by hermeneutics and phenomenology. Hermeneutics refers to the study of meaning and interpretations while phenomenology refers to subjective interpretations that are based on human beings' perceptions of the world (Maree, 2019:66). This approach relies on gathering data about the subject in its social/natural environment; therefore, there is an opportunity to understand the perception they have of their reality (Wilson, 2017:57). To achieve this, the researcher must enter their world and observe it from their perspective (Nickerson, 2022:1).

According to Pham (2018:3), the interpretive paradigm centres on recognising that humans will always have a subjective interpretation of reality, which must be considered when studying various phenomena. Thus, Thanh and Thanh (2015:12) emphasise that Interpretivists adopt a relativist ontology which implies that there can be more than one interpretation for an occurrence which cannot be evaluated by using quantitative measurements. By using interpretivism as a lens through which to view perceptions, virtually all researchers hope to better comprehend phenomena by examining their complexities in specific contexts, rather than seeking broad generalisations about populations (Putnam & Banghart, 2017:19). This research paradigm is suitable for this study because it relies on participants' views, thoughts,

meanings, feelings, intentions, and experiences attached to factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. The objective of the interpretive paradigm is to describe the subjective reasons, meanings, and experiences that are exhibited through the participants' social actions (Gichuru, 2017:2). Therefore, different narratives will be obtained from twelve (12) participants regarding the phenomenon under study.

### **1.10.3 Research Approach**

This study utilised a qualitative research approach to investigate factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. The qualitative research approach refers to the understanding of a phenomenon based on one's perception or experience (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:20). Anas and Ishaq (2022:62) define qualitative research approach as studying people's lives in a real-world environment including what their actions mean to them. To inform researchers' understanding of social or cultural phenomena, qualitative research utilises a systematic scientific approach in building a descriptive narrative that is largely holistic (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015:98).

According to Linake, Maphosa and Kunene (2022:94), qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding meanings of an individual or group associated with a social problem from their lived-experiences (Holloway & Galvin, 2023:3). Therefore, the purpose of the qualitative research approach is to access a broader understanding of the way things are, and why they are (Maree, 2019:80). The qualitative research approach was deemed suitable because the main objective of this research was to explore the experiences of teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Moreover, qualitative research was utilised to obtain information on factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools which enabled me to obtain rich and incisive data from the participants.

Subject matter is approached through a naturalistic, interpretative method in qualitative research (Linake, Maphosa & Kunene, 2022:94). The qualitative research approach allowed me to collect data within the participant's natural settings; that is, in mainstream schools. Since qualitative research is inductive in nature, it formulates theories rather than proving them (Linake, Maphosa & Kunene, 2022:94). This study

is descriptive, explanatory, and inductive in nature, so it only focused on teachers' experiences concerning the implementation of inclusive education.

#### **1.10.4 Research Design**

A phenomenological research design, according to Delve and Limpaecher (2022), is one that aims to investigate and understand the everyday lived-experiences of human beings, while avoiding biased assumptions about the phenomenon. This research design explored lived-experiences to learn more about how people interpret such experiences (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021:914). Additionally, phenomenological research designs seek to comprehend people's viewpoints, perceptions, and understanding of a specific phenomenon (Pathak, 2017:1719). Therefore, the lived-experiences of nine teachers and three principals were evoked by conducting semi-structured interviews with each of them.

#### **1.10.5 Research Participants and Research Sites**

The research participants consisted of teachers and principals in the selected mainstream secondary schools of the Sekhukhune District. Since teachers are the driving force behind the implementation of inclusive education, twelve participants consisting of nine teachers and three principals were selected from three mainstream secondary schools. Each secondary school consisted of four participants (three teachers and one principal). The principal as the manager is responsible for inclusive education implementation at the school level, and was anticipated to provide valuable and in-depth information on the support needed to achieve this. These schools are located in rural areas which were in close proximity to my domicile so I was familiar with staff members who facilitated my access during fieldwork.

#### **1.10.6 Sampling and Sample Size**

This study employed purposive sampling to purposefully choose participants for data collection as they possessed specific attributes such as experience, knowledge of inclusive education, convenient location, and interest in the topic, among other reasons (Subedi, 2021:5). Purposive sampling allowed me to gather the relevant information in line with the research aim, objectives, and the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2019:111). Purposive sampling is subjective in nature rather than objective because it relies on criteria for selection, as defined by the researcher (Nwaigwe, 2022:121). Purposive sampling also helps the researcher exclude

irrelevant responses and to determine the saturation point of accessing any more new information on the topic (Obilor, 2023:87). The purposive sampling was selected because it aligns with the aim of this study by investigating the experiences of teachers and principals, creating meaning from it and obtaining relevant information for the study.

Teachers and principals with five years and above teaching experience were selected for the purpose of the study. The sample included nine teachers and three principals who come from different age, gender and backgrounds. These participants were deemed suitable because they were in a position to provide relevant information needed to dissect the phenomenon under investigation.

### **1.10.7 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

I collected data through conducting semi-structured interviews which is defined as an explanatory interview between two people in a face-to-face setting leading to patterns discovery of new information (Ruslin, 2022:10). Additionally, Adams (2015:493) defines a semi-structured interview as a conversational one-on-one interview with one participant at a time. Moreover, semi-structured interviews combine closed and open-ended questions followed by probing, elaborations, and clarifications.

This study conducted semi-structured interviews as a primary data collection instrument to gather in-depth information from the selected teachers and principals about factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education. An audio-recorder was used to record participant's responses (with permission) while field notes were penned to record non-verbal data .

### **1.10.8 Data Analysis**

This study applied Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis approach to analyse the collected data. Dawadi (2020:62) defines thematic analysis as a qualitative research method that researchers employ to carefully collect and examine complex datasets. Additionally, thematic analysis entails identifying persistent patterns that researchers present as overall statements or themes (Lochmiller, 2021:2029). In this study, thematic analysis was used to categorise the verbatim transcribed data into themes. Further, thematic analysis assisted in noting the similarities and differences in the transcribed data. The research questions guided me in conducting the analysis. Each interview question was used as coding and categorising guides. To analyse the

data collected through semi-structured interviews, I followed Braun and Clarke's six steps for thematic analysis (2021:78):

*Step 1: Be familiar with the data.* The researcher must be familiar with the data collected before progressing (e.g. all responses from the interviews).

*Step 2: Generation of initial codes:* The researcher should arrange the data systematically and in a meaningful manner. Data was reduced into small chunks of meaning through coding.

*Step 3: Generating themes:* By examining the codes, the researcher can conclude that certain ones fall under a single theme. The codes were structured into overarching themes that conveyed significant information to answer the research questions.

*Step 4: Review themes:* This step requires that the researcher analyses, alters, and creates the initial themes that were identified.

*Step 5: Refine, define and name themes:* Identify each theme, and know and understand what it was about.

*Step 6: Writing up:* The final step is to write a comprehensive report about the findings that emerged from the data collected.

#### **1.10.9 Data Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research approach means that the findings collected truly reflect personal experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Anney, 2015:3). Trustworthiness in this study was determined via credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability processes.

*Credibility* refers to findings being accurate, believable, and trustworthy (Stewart, Gapp & Harwood, 2017:17). This also indicates that research has been conducted thoroughly to be a valid and accurate representation of what participants articulated (Connelly, 2016:16). In this study, I ensured credibility via triangulation, explicitly describing data collection methods, and inviting member-checking. Triangulation was reinforced by using a wide range of sources to access expansive and rich information to identify patterns or themes (Stahl & King, 2020:45).

During data collection, I developed a trusting relationship with participants by cordially engaging with them. After establishing a sound rapport, semi-structured interview

questions were asked regarding factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. To ensure credibility I also conducted member-checking by sharing verbatim transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the data; and if necessary make changes to the information to rectify inconsistencies.

*Dependability* refers to reliability in qualitative research (Anney, 2015:13). It refers to measurement pertaining to how well a different researcher can duplicate the research study to reveal comparable outcomes (Amankwaa, 2016:45). To obtain accurate results during the research process, the research must be executed thoroughly (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017:34). This includes using a detailed discussion guide or set of respondent tasks for targeted data collection purposes, while also using open-ended questions that encourage unbiased and authentic answers (Gorard, 2015:23). Additionally, all findings should be recorded digitally. It is crucial to have comprehensive notes and conduct thorough transcript analysis (Stenfors, Kajamaa, & Bennett, 2020:70). The next step involves presenting clear research findings that describe and interpret the results to answer the research objectives. A rigorous study ensures high replicability and dependability (Stenfors et al., 2020:70). To ensure dependability in this study, I maintained consistency in the data collection method and data analysis. Additionally, I requested the participants to check the recorded data and findings to confirm the accuracy of the collected information.

*Conformability* refers to the collected data truly reflecting the participants' viewpoints without the influence of the researcher's bias or interpretations which would skew the findings (Hadi & José Closs, 2016:3). The researcher was objective during the interpretation of data (Gorard, 2015:24) and the findings by submitting the collected data for member-checking and peer-reading.

*Transferability* refers to the ability to apply the findings to another context (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021:2). The findings on factors affecting inclusive education implementation in the mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District could possibly be transferred to a wider population of teachers working with learners with barriers to learning in mainstream secondary schools.

## **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Prior to the commencement of the study, permission was obtained from the University of the Free State Ethics Committee and the Limpopo Department of Basic Education. Furthermore, permission from the principals to conduct the research at their schools was also sought. Moreover, principals (and teachers) were provided with informed consent forms to sign (if in agreement) while acknowledging all the finer details such as voluntary participation. Informed consent is defined as permitting participation with the full understanding of what it entails, including risks (Manti & Licari, 2018:37). Informed consent ensured that a study takes place in an ethical manner.

Additionally, I verbally explained the purpose of the study to the participants before data collection. I ensured that the participant's information remained confidential. Bos and Bos (2020:104) define confidentiality as protecting any information or identity of a person involved in research without divulging such information to any other person without permission. To protect participants' identities and information, I allocated codes/pseudonyms to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The exit clause was explained to participants. Also, the interviews were conducted during non-teaching time at a quiet venue, away from disturbances. Participants were also protected from any physical and/or psychological harm that may arise during the study. The audio-recordings of the interviews were destroyed after verbatim transcriptions were checked for accuracy.

## **1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter discussed the background of the study, problem statement, rationale for the study, aims of the study, specific objectives, main research questions, sub-research questions, delimitation of the study, the significance of the study and definitions of the keywords.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter provided the literature review which included the theoretical framework, it discussed the Department of Education's inclusive education policy for mainstream secondary schools, explored challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools, it determined the support principals need

to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools, and established support teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter presented the research methodology which included the following: the research paradigm, research approach, research design, research participants and research sites, sampling and sample size, data instruments and procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

### **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings**

This chapter described the data analysis processes which gave rise to the findings which were interpreted and discussed in detail.

### **Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter summarised the findings, drew conclusions, and suggested recommendations.

## **1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided the orientation to the study, statement of the problem, main and sub-research questions, aim and objectives of the study, significance of the study, rationale of the study, an overview of the theoretical framework, limitation and delimitations, and definitions of terms. It further outlined the preliminary literature review. This chapter also outlined the research methodology, the qualitative research approach, research paradigm, research design, data collection instrument and procedures, participants and sites, data analysis and trustworthiness. Lastly, this chapter outlined the ethical considerations and presented the layout of the chapters. The next chapter (2) presents the literature review of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter (1) presented the introduction to this study, including the problem statement, aim and objectives, preliminary literature review, and a summary of the research methodology. This chapter (2) reviewed the existing literature on the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools. The chapter provided a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the study. Thereafter, it reviewed relevant literature by aligning it to the research objectives, while exploring challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. Moreover, it determined the support principals need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools, and established support teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms.

#### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was underpinned by the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory developed by Rogers in 1962. The theory entails explaining how, why, and the rate at which a product, service, idea, or process spreads through a population or social system. It also explains how social transformation occurs in a social system (Schleien & Miller, 2010:95), thus it falls within the social sciences that explains how and why new practices and ideas are accepted, including why new ideas might spread over an extended period (Ismail, 2023:518). In support, Singhal and Quinlan (2019:27) confirm that diffusion is the process by which an innovation spreads over time among the people in a social system through specific channels. Moreover, diffusion is considered a unique kind of communication in which individuals communicate information between one another to come to an agreeable understanding (García-Avilés, 2020:1). However, Rogers (1983) noted that the innovation does not have to be new; individuals may have known about it for some time but have not formed a positive or negative attitude towards its adoption or rejection. The DOI theory has four components: innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system (Halton, 2023). Employing this theory to this study promotes understanding in the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the

Sekhukhune District. This entails investigating how innovations in inclusive education are adopted and implemented. Furthermore, by applying the DOI theory, I explored how its components interact to influence the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools.

### **2.2.1 The Innovation**

According to the DOI theory, innovation is referred to as an idea, practice or concept that is considered novel (Vargo, Akaka & Wieland, 2020:527). The innovation in the South African context involves curriculum design, teaching methods, and infrastructure to accommodate various learning needs and styles in mainstream classrooms.

Inclusive education is viewed as an innovation involving mainstream schools being at the centre of implementing inclusive education (Genovesi, Jakobsson, Nugent, Hanlon & Hoekstra, 2022:1613). Rogers (1983) noted that individuals' perspectives in applying innovative principles have revealed much user-acceptance. However, research by Guillemot, Lacroix and Nocus (2022:2) indicate that South African teachers have a negative attitude towards implementing inclusive education in the classroom due to various challenges. Hove and Grobbelaar (2020:56) expose that the lack of infrastructure, funding, knowledge, and training affects most mainstream public schools. In addition, literature reveals that innovation may be hindered if teachers and other staff members lack the proper skills, attitude, and knowledge to adopt innovative strategies (Hove & Grobbelaar, 2020:56).

According to Rogers (1983) the concept of re-invention occurs when a user modifies an innovation during the adoption process. Inclusive education is not a one-size-fits-all model; innovation requires using different approaches such as technology and curriculum differentiation (among others) to ensure that all learners are accommodated. Re-invention also implies an ongoing cycle of introspection, review, and improvement (Gleckler, 2021:24). In this study, the concept of re-invention is critical to understand the implementation of inclusive education in South African mainstream secondary schools to cater equally for all learners, irrespective of disability (Alzahrani, 2020:5). Re-invention should also be evident in the pedagogical techniques used by teachers who are required to modify their teaching methods to

meet the unique learning needs of learners with various disabilities, learning styles, or cultural backgrounds. In other words, modifying lesson plans, implementing differentiated instructional strategies, or introducing assistive technologies ensure that all learners can fully engage in productive learning. This re-invention process is critical for the successful and sustainable implementation of inclusive education because it allows flexibility and encourages responsiveness to South Africa's diverse educational landscape. Furthermore, Innovation has five characteristics: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability that influence how rapidly an innovation is adopted (Pinho, Franco & Mendes, 2021:423). Regarding the innovation of inclusive education, these characteristics contribute to the acceptance and implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

#### 2.2.1.1 Relative advantage

Relative advantage refers to the extent to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the existing one that it replaces (Pinho et al., 2021:423). Ogbonnaya (2020:4) states that people are more prone to adopt an innovation that is a *relative advantage*, which is considered better than the one in current practice as people adopt an innovation that has more benefits. In inclusive education, *relative advantage* refers to the benefits of implementing inclusion in mainstream schools. In this study, the focus is on the teacher and his/her perception of the advantages of the innovation in inclusive spaces (Raman, Vachharajani & Nedungadi, 2021:7345). Additionally, mainstream teachers need to understand that the implementation of inclusive education has various benefits such as the promotion of social interactions, community building, unconditional acceptance, setting goals based on an individual's abilities and needs, motivation through peer connections, parent involvement, and promoting a sense of respect and belonging (Hutchinson & Specht, 2020; Volker, Gupta & Brown, 2022). Therefore, in the context of this study, *relative advantage* plays a crucial role in replacing traditional teaching methods which do not benefit learners with barriers to learning. In sum, the *relative advantage* of inclusive education is that it fosters social cohesiveness and decreases the stigma associated with barriers to learning, while preparing learners for the realities of a diverse world.

### 2.2.1.2 Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the rate at which an innovation is considered more suitable or consistent with current ideas, values, cultural norms, beliefs, and policies (Das, 2022:101). The implementation of inclusive education has been aligned with the country's broader political, social, educational, and cultural developments since 1994 (Engelbrecht, 2020:219). In the context of this study, compatibility refers to how inclusive education aligns with educational policies and constitutional rights. In South Africa, inclusive education is consistent with the country's goals of fairness and social justice, as outlined in the *SA Constitution* and other relevant educational policies. Integrating inclusive practices in the delivery of lessons allows teachers to uphold the *SA Constitution* while complying with the goals outlined in educational policies such as White Paper 6. Teachers are encouraged to create learning environments that accommodate varied learning styles and abilities by employing inclusive teaching practices, thus ensuring that every learner has an equal opportunity to thrive academically and socially.

### 2.2.1.3 Complexity

Complexity indicates that people are unlikely to adopt an innovation that is perceived as challenging and abstract; if innovation is accessible, it is more likely to be adopted (Genné-Bacon, Wilks & Bascom-Slack, 2020:3). Also, innovations that require the acquisition of new skills and knowledge are not quickly adopted (Genné-Bacon et al., 2020:3). In other words, complexity is the perceived difficulty of implementing inclusive education. Spandagou, Little, Evans, Bonati and Spandagou (2020) contend that inclusive education has its complexities in policy interpretation and practice. In this study, complexity refers to the difficulties associated with implementing inclusive practices in mainstream secondary schools. Complexities include adjusting curriculum materials and modifying and supporting learners' diverse learning needs. However, providing schools and teachers with training, resources, and support can decrease the complexity of the implementation of inclusive education by ensuring that teachers develop confidence and competence in implementing inclusive education practices in mainstream classrooms.

#### 2.2.1.4 Trialability

Trialability indicates the degree to which people are more likely to accept and embrace an innovative idea that can be tested for a short period before adoption. It refers to the ability to conduct limited scale experiments in the field of inclusive education before full-scale adoption (Silva, Braz, Cavalcante & Alves, 2022:5). In the context of inclusive education, allowing teachers and schools to experiment with inclusive education techniques can be beneficial. In South Africa, schools should implement small-scale efforts like inclusive lesson plans or specific support programmes before committing to larger-scale implementation. This method enables teachers to notice the first-hand benefits to make appropriate adjustments, and gain confidence in creating an inclusive classroom.

#### 2.2.1.5 Observability

Observability refers to the extent to which a new idea is more likely to be adopted if people see others adopting it successfully or has observable outcomes because exposure encourages adoption (Silva et al., 2022:5). Additionally, observability refers to visible outcomes (Jawahir, 2021:6). In inclusive education implementation, observability refers to the deep visibility of outcomes such as improved grades, increased social integration, and eradication of stigma. Improvement in observability ensures that inclusive education outcomes are visible, allowing informed decision-making and continuous improvement. It sheds light on the efficacy of knowledge in bridging the gap between policy and practice (Mendoza & Heymann, 2022:300). In the context of this study, inclusive education produces observable results such as increased learner-achievement, lower dropout rates among marginalised groups, and greater social inclusion, which are more likely to be observed and acknowledged by teachers, policymakers, and community members. Moreover, for inclusive education, it is critical to showcase results that are tangible to teachers, parents, learners, and the larger society, thus promoting wider adoption.

### **2.2.2 Communication Channels**

Communication channels are tools that transmit innovation messages from the source to the destination (Wibowo & Prihatin, 2020:2017). According to Rogers (1983:7),

“communication is the process by which participants create and share information with one another to reach mutual understanding or to initiate a process in which the people involved create and share information with one another to achieve a common goal. According to the DOI theory, a communication channel disseminates information about an innovation. Communication is known as a flow across routes that link sources and recipients, while a channel is a process in which messages pass from the sender to the receiver (Franceschinis, Thiene, Scarpa, Rose, Moretto & Cavalli, 2017:5). Various channels of communication are effective at different times in the adoption process. These channels are mass media, newspapers, television, and radio. Mass media are used to spread and increase general knowledge and raise awareness of the adoption, while interpersonal communication channels involve face-to-face interaction with two or more people, including word-of-mouth, professional workshops, conferences, and public campaigns, amongst others (Scott & McGuire, 2017:121). Scott and McGuire (2017:121) mention that when persuading individual adopters to accept the innovation, face-to-face communication works better.

In South Africa, information on inclusive education policies was dispersed by the national education system to the provincial level, where selected personnel from the province were trained in inclusive education (Ntombela, 2019:55). The information acquired was to be disseminated by these trained individuals to District officials, circuit managers, and schools. This was accomplished through direct communication, documents, workshops, social media, and books which were published and distributed to educational institutions (Ntombela, 2019:56).

According to Rogers, Singhal and Quinlan (2019:1), mass media platforms are more effective in spreading knowledge regarding innovations. In this study, communication campaigns to raise awareness about the significance and benefits of inclusive education in broader communities were critical in promoting inclusive education. Okaka and Nagasha (2017:3) confirm that community media play an important role in promoting inclusive education and community empowerment; community media engages traditional or indigenous knowledge information systems as well as news media including television, radio, posters, newspapers, drama, noticeboards and social media. Community media, coordinated by community radio channels, are effective tools for social inclusion and quality education for all. However, communities lack the knowledge, capacity, awareness, partnership, motivation, and knowledge

about inclusive education (Okaka & Nagasha, 2017:3). Research conducted in South Arabia by Abualrish and Khasawneh (2024:79) highlighted that parents and local communities support the use of mass media, such as social networks to promote inclusive education. They elaborated that social media communication is one of the current approaches that aims to bridge the gap between schools, communities, and families in order to form an effective partnership to achieve educational goals, particularly for special needs learners (Abualrish & Khasawneh, 2024:79).

Further, Tristani, Tomasone, Fraser-Thomas and Bassett-Gunter (2020:389) assert that communication channels are important in disseminating and adopting inclusive education policies and acquiring relevant training resources as interschool communication channels are important to enhance the exchange of knowledge and resources among teachers. Interpersonal channels are more effective in informing and changing attitudes towards innovative ideas (Rogers et al., 2019:1). Hence, workshops are pivotal in successfully equipping teachers to implement inclusive education. Jama and Buka (2020:118) noted that through workshops, teachers can share experiences and techniques, learn from each other, and develop a network of support for inclusive education. In addition, workshops can help teachers understand policies such as EWP6 with other educational policies which will ensure that their inclusive education practices adhere to legal requirements. Jama and Buka (2020:118) suggest that the DBE collaborate with school-based stakeholders to effectively implement inclusive education in schools. Furthermore, workshops for mainstream teachers should focus on addressing the marginalisation and exclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning (Patel, Moz-Ruiz, Garcia, Chatterjee, Morreale & Burnett, 2024:1036).

Importantly, diffusion is exchanging important information between parents and teachers which increases collaboration, harmony, and communication between them, thus supporting the implementation of inclusive education (Kefallinou, Symeonidou & Meijer, 2020:145). Chen (2019:197) contends that teacher-parent communication can foster family involvement in school, while teacher-learner communication can promote inclusive education. Research conducted by Wack (2021:16) indicates that parents and teachers identified parent-school communication as critical in promoting learners' academic progress. Therefore, in South Africa, developing a healthy relationship between parents and schools is important as it would assist teachers with the

information needed for IEPs or any other forms of assessment, address challenges faced by learners, and support those who experience barriers to learning. The communication channel is pivotal in this study as it promotes the diffusion of innovation in inclusive education practices which creates awareness, understanding, and adoption of inclusive education.

### **2.2.3 Time**

Time refers to the number of innovations members adopt over a specific period of time (Garcia-Aviles, 2020:2). The effective implementation of the Education White Paper 6 requires sufficient time in South African mainstream schools, especially inclusion practices which are ongoing in nature. Mwelil (2023:15) reports that since 2001, South Africa has been developing an inclusive education system based on the Education White Paper 6 that only outlines policy objectives, therefore its implementation is moving at a slow pace. Numerous studies have indicated that this results from various challenges such as poor infrastructure, lack of facilities, inadequate funding, insufficient learning materials, and the absence of professional development and training for teachers (Hernandez-Torrano, Somerton & Helmer 2022; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021).

For the adoption of inclusive education policy and guidelines to be fully realised in South Africa, sufficient time is required. Time is needed for the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to provide mainstream schools with sufficient resources, proper physical infrastructure, and better learning resources. The physical infrastructure in mainstream schools was not built to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs; therefore, it might take South Africa time to upgrade physical infrastructure to accommodate learners with learning disabilities. Time is also needed for teachers to obtain adequate training and knowledge to implement inclusive practices in the mainstream classroom through professional development. Fodo (2020:35) urges Districts and relevant stakeholders to provide teachers with ongoing professional development, curriculum differentiation, and physical resources to successfully implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms.

Without sufficient time, training and preparation, teachers struggle with implementing inclusive practices in the classroom. Limited time will hinder especially learners who experience barriers to learning from receiving equal education, thus limiting their

potential in the future to contribute to the South African economy (Nseibo, Vergunst, McKenzie, Kelly, Karisa & Watermeyer, 2022:02). The Minister of Basic Education acknowledged that South Africa has made progress towards adhering to the guidelines in the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) since its adoption in 2001; however, there is still much room for improvement to ensure the smooth run of inclusive education, adding that the number of learners enrolled in special schools increased from 64, 000 to 137, 332 in 2022, while 121 461 learners were enrolled in mainstream schools in 2022 compared to 77, 000 learners in 2002 (SAnews, 2021). This clearly indicates that implementing inclusive education in South Africa is a gradual process that progresses over time.

#### **2.2.4 Social Systems**

social systems are defined as interconnected units that work together to solve problems and achieve common goals (Silva, Braz, Cavalcante & Alves, 2022:8). Additionally, social systems are defined as a coherent unit of interconnected members working together towards a common goal. These systems have a structure that includes norms and leadership dynamics (Frei-Landau, Muchnik-Rozanov, & Avidov-Ungar, 2022:12813). In the DOI theory, the social structure of individuals shares a common goal. Moreover, the level of adoption is measured based on the number of members who adopt the innovation system within a specific timeframe (Dibra, 2015:6). This system comprises individuals, professionals, and informal groups or subgroups. Social structures within the system that influence diffusion are formal such as the bureaucratic hierarchy of a Government agency, and informal such as the interpersonal relationship among system members (Schuster & Kolleck, 2020:3). The implementation and diffusion of innovation are social processes accepted and developed and spread within social networks (Schuster & Kolleck, 2020:3).

In this study, the social system consists of various stakeholders such as teachers, District-based support teams (DBSTs), school-based support teams (SBSTs), administrators, learners, parents, and school communities, among others. Establishing collaboration among these stakeholders is critical for improving the implementation of inclusive practices. One of the key social systems is the DBST which monitors and manages the implementation of inclusive education (Hlalele & Makoelle, 2023:150). The DoE (2001) states that it has committed itself to improving

education support services through the DBST to provide coordinated professional developmental support services. The DBST consists of departmental experts who promote inclusive education by providing training, curriculum delivery strategies, resource distribution, and identifying and addressing barriers to learning (Doyi, 2023:24).

Furthermore, social systems such as local communities, NGOs, and relevant experts can train teachers to identify and address learning barriers, while local businesses can assist the school with the required resources. Such support can enable schools to grow and develop inclusion successfully (Jawahir, 2021:7). Additionally, parental support can assist teachers by providing relevant information to compile a proper intervention plan (Smith, Hoal & Thompson, 2020:21), in addition to promoting learner academic achievement through effective communication with the school (Smith et al., 2020:21). Collaboration among teachers is one of the important factors for implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools as literature indicates that collaboration between teachers helps meet the learning needs of learners by teamworking to create lesson plans that accommodate the diverse learning needs of all learners (Paju, Kajamaa, Pirttimaa & Kontu, 2022; Kumar & Singh, 2021). Lamentably, although the DoE established different social systems, South African teachers feel unsupported in implementing inclusive education (Fodo, 2020:35).

### **2.2.5 Criticism of the DOI Theory**

The DOI theory provides deep insights into how innovations spread; however, its application to inclusive education in South Africa has limitations. Hidayat and Mukminin (2022:105) note that DOI concentrates only on innovations, and is limited by its lack of consideration of the cultural, economic, and historical background, which are factors that play a critical role regarding how innovation is adopted into society. The DOI theory only pays attention to the adoption of an innovation, thus ignoring systemic barriers that negatively affect the implementation of inclusive education practices. Moreover, the theory assumes that once the benefits of adopting the innovation are known to the key role-players, then adoption will occur, thus overlooking the lack of resources at many schools in South Africa. Lastly, the DOI theory does not consider the significance of relevant policies in fostering the adoption of innovation.

### **2.2.6 The Importance of DOI for this Study**

The significance of the DOI theory in framing this study lies in understanding factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. First and foremost, the innovation component refers to inclusive education practices which integrate learners with barriers to learning into mainstream classrooms through personalised education and the use of assistive technologies and support services. Adopting innovation depends on relative advantages, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability which means that teachers and administrators must recognise inclusive education as being more valuable and effective than the previous segregated system. Furthermore, sound communication channels are essential for distributing information about inclusive education practices. Effective channels include workshops, conferences, and social media, among others. Communication channels emphasise the need for effective messaging methods to disseminate knowledge and promote acceptance of inclusive practices among teachers, learners, parents, and community members. Moreover, time in this study refers to adopting inclusive education practices in South Africa, which requires sufficient time. However, the timeframe can vary greatly depending on factors such as school resources, teacher's readiness, among others. Social systems in South African schools include teachers, learners, parents, DBSTs, community members, and other stakeholders who play a critical role in the diffusion of inclusive education to foster acceptance and implementation of inclusive education.

In sum, the DOI theory offers a blueprint for analysing and improving the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa's mainstream secondary schools. It facilitated innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems, which provided valuable insights into how key stakeholders may proactively address challenges and build a more inclusive educational environment. Lastly, this theory emphasises the importance of collective efforts which South African mainstream schools can benefit from by collaborating with various stakeholders.

### **2.3 SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

South Africa has established policies and legislative frameworks that promote an inclusive education system. The *South African Constitution* (1996), the South African Schools Act, Education White Paper 6, the SIAS, and Policy Framework for the

Provision of Quality Education and Support to Children with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability compel role-players to adopt measures to ensure that all learners have equal access to education regardless of their race, disability, and background (Graham, 2020:4).

### **2.3.1 The Constitution of South Africa (1996)**

The South African *Constitution* was promulgated in 1996, a crucial document promoting democracy, equality, and human rights. Act 108 of 1996 Section 29(1) of the *Constitution* stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education irrespective of their gender, disability, race or language (RSA, 1996). Moreover, in Inclusive education, the *Constitution* is an overarching instrument that guarantees equitable access to quality education to all South African citizens regardless of individual background, race, abilities, disabilities, and ethnicity. The *Constitution* serves as the cornerstone of the land; therefore, it stipulates recognising, accepting and accommodating diverse learning needs, including learners with disabilities or socio-economic disadvantages.

### **2.3.2 Education White Paper 6**

The Education White Paper 6 laid the framework for implementing inclusive education in South African schools (DoE, 2001) by outlining the Government's objective to provide quality education for all learners, including those with barriers to learning in mainstream schools. It outlined the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and the right to education for all children, including those with disabilities (DoE, 2001:11). Furthermore, this policy mandates the education system to accommodate the different abilities of learners through inclusive education practices, curriculum modification, and support services (DoE, 2001:20). This policy highlighted the significance of collaborating with various stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and communities in implementing inclusive education and promoting positive attitudes towards diversity and disability (DoE, 2001:26).

### **2.3.3 South African Schools Act**

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) is a policy that governs the provision of education in South Africa which highlights the principles of inclusivity, equity, and diversity (RSA, 1996). It states that public schools must accept all learners and meet

their educational requirements without any kind of unfair discrimination (RSA,1996). This policy enforced the establishment of democratic and inclusive school governing bodies comprising of parents, teachers, learners, and community members to ensure active participation in decision-making and accountability within schools.

#### **2.3.4 National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)**

The DBE implemented the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy mandating teachers to screen, identify and support their learners (DBE, 2014). This policy promotes collaboration among stakeholders, including teachers, health professionals and parents to ensure a holistic understanding of learners' needs (DBE, 2014:28). It calls for forming multi-disciplinary school support teams to coordinate services and prepare an Individual Support Plan (ISP) for learners (DBE, 2014:37), while promoting efforts to inclusive education and the holistic development of all South African learners.

#### **2.3.5 Policy Framework for the Provision of Quality Education and Support to Children with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability**

This policy provides guidelines for inclusive, quality, and developmental education of children with severe-to-profound intellectual challenges performing at the lowest levels of development who attend special or ordinary schools (DBE,2016). This policy framework emphasises a person-centred approach by prioritising the development and well-being of learners with intellectual disabilities (DBE, 2016:15). It promotes the value of teamwork among teachers, therapists, caregivers, and community members in assisting learners with intellectual impairments (DBE, 2016:60). It emphasises the importance of inclusive methods that encourage the active involvement and interaction of learners with disabilities in school and community settings which contributes to achieving the broader goals of inclusive and social inclusion (DBE, 2016:58).

South African policies and legislation mandate inclusive education practices within classrooms which compel teachers to accept and embrace them (Andrews, Walton & Osman, 2021:5). Although South African policies regulate inclusive education, there is still a disconnect between the goals of policy and their implementation which is caused by a lack of understanding about inclusive education which is still perceived

as being restricted to only special needs schools rather than teachers considering the inclusion of diversity as an advantage (Moosa & Bekker, 2021:55).

## **2.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN RSA**

### **2.4.1 Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is described as school system in which all learners, including those with barriers to learning, are entirely accepted and included both educationally and socially (Mpu & Edu, 2021:225). Additionally, Besic (2020:112) states that inclusive education involves addressing and catering to the diverse needs of all learners by maximising their participation in learning, multicultural immersion, and community development thus decreasing exclusion within educational institutions. Furthermore, the Education White Paper 6 (2001) defines inclusive education as recognising that all children and youth can learn, and that they require assistance. Inclusive education fosters acceptance and appreciation of the notion that all learners are unique in some way and have various learning needs, which are equally valued and form an everyday part of our human experience. It further recognises and respects learners' diversity regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, impairment, or HIV status (DoE, 2001:16).

Additionally, inclusive education is recognised as an essential component of global educational reform efforts to promote equitable opportunities to all learners, regardless of background or ability (Ainscow, 2020:7). In South Africa, inclusive education is profoundly affected by apartheid's cascading influence on current education dynamics which still present discriminatory practices in accessing equal education (Sibise, 2021:21). The post-apartheid era has tried to deliver on its commitment to creating an inclusive education system that meets the needs of all learners, regardless of their background (Walton, & Engelbrecht, 2022:8). Mainstream schools are at the heart of this vision, serving as critical institutions for implementing inclusive practices and cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusion.

As noted by Engelbrecht and Muthukrishna (2019:108) inclusive education has developed into a human rights and social justice mission to challenge discriminatory policies and practices in the educational system. The principle of inclusive education may be found in the *Republic of South Africa's Constitution* (Act 108 of 1996), under the Bill of Rights, which states that everyone has the right to equal education. The

South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) embodies this principle by mandating public schools to be accessible to all learners, including those with learning disabilities, and to provide such learners with the necessary support services (Engelbrecht & Muthukrishna (2019:108). To overcome the disparities in education enforced during the brutal apartheid era, EWP6 advocated that the entire education system be transformed into an inclusive system so that all learners can attend education and training institutions regardless of any special needs or disabilities (Rajendran, Athira & Elavarasi, 2020:160). Furthermore, inclusive education focuses on removing barriers and difficulties while fulfilling the needs of all learners through differentiation, adaptation, and support (Besic, 2020:112). In addition, Rapp and Corral-Granados (2021:4) report that the main objective of inclusive education is to ensure that the education system functions as an integrational component of society, rather than being exclusionary. Moreover, the main aim is to eliminate social exclusion of negative attitudes and practices about diversity including race, class, ethnicity, religion, ability, and gender (Yeboah, Aloka & Charamba, 2023:109).

#### **2.4.2 Mainstream Schools**

Mainstream schools in South Africa are public schools where many learners receive their education, but are partially equipped or resourced to offer supportive services and programmes to those learners with disabilities, physical or intellectual. In the South African educational system, these schools are usually referred to as regular schools, and they are distinguished from full-services and special needs schools (RSA, clause 12:3, 1996). Additionally, Patel (2023:22) defines mainstream schools as ordinary learning environments where learners with or without special needs or impairments learn together. These mainstream classes are usually found in ordinary public or private schools that do not place emphasis on special education needs. Teachers in mainstream schools use general teaching methods and curricula tailored to meet mainly abled learner's needs (Patel, 2023:22).

Moreover, mainstream schools are known as public schools that admit all learners with or without barriers to learning and development. They aim to provide learners with additional support with appropriate accommodations and low-intensive degrees of assistance (DBE, 2015). These include adjusting instructions to accommodate various learning styles and providing learners access to counselling services through the

DBST. Although they can obtain resources from special schools' resource centres and District offices, these schools lack specialised staff and adequate resources such as assistive devices. Based on the DBE (2015:19) report, these schools are unable to provide each learner they admit with the appropriate level of support.

Furthermore, DoE (2001:17) explained that mainstreaming is about getting learners to "fit into" a specific system or integrating them into an existing system. In other words, mainstreaming should be about providing additional support to help learners with special needs to adapt to general classroom settings. Learners are evaluated by experts who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions such as the placement of learners in programmes. Mainstream schools focus on changes that need to occur in learners so that they can "fit in" (DoE, 2001:17).

## **2.5 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

Several studies have demonstrated that teacher's' understanding of implementing inclusion determines the effectiveness of inclusion in the classroom (Jia, Tan & Santi, 2022; Alcosero, Carcueva, Abasolo, Arranchado & Cabanilla, 2023; Hodkinson, 2019:30). Teachers from different countries comprehend inclusive education differently; for instance, a study by Ngulani (2020:19) reveals that teachers from Ireland understand inclusive education from a social model point of view instead of a medical one which aims to meet the educational needs of diverse learners, while a study by Yan and Deng (2019:385) document that in Italy teachers regard inclusive education as integrating learners with special needs or disabilities into mainstream schools. Moreover, in Ghana, teachers view inclusive education as a way to support all learners in actively participating in the learning process without neglecting any learner who has barriers to learning (Kuyini, Desai & Sharma, 2020:1521). This indicates that teachers understand inclusive education as allowing all learners, with or without barriers to learning, to be accommodated in the mainstream classroom.

In South Africa, the implementation of inclusive education has led to more demands being placed on teachers to provide for the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2020:1). Teachers' understanding, beliefs, and attitudes toward inclusive education are among the most critical aspects of implementing inclusivity, and must thus be checked and evaluated.

The outcome of inclusive education may result in discomfort rather than success if teachers do not believe in or understand inclusive education to be ready and prepared to accommodate learners with impairments (Yan & Deng, 2019:385).

Further, secondary school teachers are expected to enact the responsibility of ensuring that the implementation of inclusive education is effective in schools. However, to attain this goal, teachers must understand what inclusive education is all about in order to modify teaching-learning practices for learners with diverse learning needs (Deghaye, 2021:9). Moreover, fostering an inclusive classroom education environment requires a positive attitude toward differently abled learners (Legodi-Rakgalakane & Mokhampanyane, 2022:255). The White Paper 6 has acknowledged that teachers play a crucial role in achieving success in inclusive education spaces; therefore, teachers should improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new pedagogical strategies (DoE, 2001:18). Mwarari (2020:2) mentions that teachers' understanding, competencies, and positive attitude towards inclusive education have been identified as indicators of readiness for inclusive practice. Additionally, their understanding influences their attitudes and beliefs about inclusive practices. The effective implementation of inclusive practices requires teachers to be knowledgeable and skilled in inclusive education methodologies to enhance learner-outcomes (Lishuai, Tan & Santi, 2023:2).

Similarly, Adewumi and Mosito (2019:4) confirm that one of the main barriers to implementing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms is the attitude of teachers who have various understandings of implementing inclusive education. In support, Sheethenis' (2021:31) research found that some teachers have a negative attitude toward inclusive education, believing that learners who experience barriers to learning cannot benefit from what is taught to learners without special learning needs. This prevents teachers from implementing inclusive education policies. Fortunately, it has been noted that teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusive education are excited and ready to implement it in their classrooms (Dignath, Rimm-Kaufman, Van Ewijk & Kunter, 2022:2612). Also, research conducted by Woodcock, Gibbs, Hitches, and Regan, (2023:7) indicated that teachers who believe that inclusive education is an effective pedagogical method for all learners, regardless of their learning abilities are more confident in their ability to build a classroom management system such that learners adhere to classroom rules to mitigate possible disruptive behaviour.

Importantly, they strongly believed in their ability to teach learners by using different innovative teaching styles as well as to provide alternative explanations, while encouraging questions from learners and adapting assessment techniques (Woodcock et al., 2023:7).

According to Alcosero et al., (2023:265), if teachers are uncomfortable educating learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms, the responsibility of teaching them will fall back on the special needs teachers, possibly leading to segregated sections in mainstream school. Therefore, it is critical for teachers to regularly update their understanding of inclusive education. (2023:113). Similarly, research conducted by Namanyane and Shaoan (2021:361) revealed that the foundation of a positive, equitable, and inclusive attitude towards education of learners with barriers to learning is heavily reliant on preservice teacher-training in inclusive education. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers acquire comprehensive knowledge and skills on all facets of inclusive education as they are essential in implementing inclusive practices (Yeboah, Aloka & Charamba, 2023:113). In support, Dally, Dempsey, Ralston, Foggett, Duncan, Strnadova, Chambers, Paterson and Sharma (2019:68) agree that to implement inclusive education successfully, teachers need not only the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitude but also the passion and ability to support and cater to the learning needs of all learners, regardless of their differences.

## **2.6 CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

In South Africa, teachers are the driving force for implementing inclusive education. The White Paper 6 mandates teachers to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. However, teachers face various challenges when implementing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms. The challenges faced by teachers when implementing inclusive education are as follows:

### **2.6.1 Teachers' Attitude**

Teachers' attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education are still heavily influenced by a medical model that determines and categorises learners' shortcomings as being clinical so that they are transferred to remedial schools (Mabokachaba, 2022:37). Since teachers lack the resources and support to accommodate learners with learning difficulties, their negative attitude towards learners with learning difficulties is

understandable but not acceptable. Therefore, teachers should agitate that South African schools and other educational institutions acquire resources to run an inclusive education system as per DoE policies (Mathebula, 2021:62). Moreover, many teachers still believe that they are not equipped to teach learners with barriers, and that this job should be left to specialists (Boitumelo, Kuyini & Major, 2020:7).

Additionally, teachers perceive inclusive education as an enforced policy. There are several reasons for this; among them is the concern that they lack the skills or expertise to effectively teach learners with learning barriers, and that it increases their workload. These factors can lead to a negative attitude towards inclusion (Yilmaz & Yeganeh, 2021:409). Research has revealed that mainstream teachers lack the confidence to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning (Boitumelo et al., 2020:7). This could be caused by inadequate skills to adapt their curriculum and methodologies to meet the learning needs of learners with barriers to learning.

### **2.6.2 Inflexible Curriculum**

A curriculum is defined as a blueprint that outlines the subject that learners will study (Qassimi & Wade, 2021:2). Additionally, the South African curriculum is a set of rules and learning objectives that teachers adhere to when teaching learners in from Grade R to Further Education and Training (FET) levels (Adirika & Okolie, 2020:324). The curriculum has been developed and implemented with the understanding that every learner in the general education class must comprehend a set of standardised knowledge and abilities in order to pass the grade (Adirika & Okolie, 2020:324). As indicated in White Paper 6, the curriculum must be flexible, and include flexible and creative processes of learning and teaching to accommodate the various needs of learners with learning barriers; therefore, to ensure that all learners' learning needs are accommodated, the curriculum must be made flexible or adapted across every stage of learning (DoE, 2001:20). Although the Education White Paper 6 acknowledged the importance of curriculum flexibility, this does not yet apply to the mainstream schools which have learners with learning disabilities. Sijuola and Davidova (2022:45) assert that teachers in mainstream schools believe that they are compelled to deliver a standardised curriculum that does not cater for learners who experience barriers to learning who thus end up being excluded from day-to-day classroom activities, resulting in high dropout rates.

Alarming, research conducted by Masana and Kgothule (2022:368) indicates that teachers from mainstream schools use curriculum resources intended for average and above-average learners. This demonstrates that teachers employ materials that do not consider the everyday learning needs of learners with learning barriers (Mensah & Nantwi, 2020:30). Due to this, teachers believe that learners with barriers to learning must be placed in special schools separate from mainstream schools. These learners require specialised materials, curriculum modifications, and alternative and creative methods of teaching and assessments in order to support their learning needs (Charles, 2020). However, teachers find this problematic because the curriculum they are supposed to implement fails to accommodate learner-diversity and may hinder their ability to teach prescribed content (Cele, 2023:11). The curriculum's rigid and inflexible structure which does not accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning may cause learning difficulties (Cele, 2023:11). Research conducted by Van Staden-Payne and Nel (2023:05) contend that the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (DoE, CAPS, 2012) constrains them because it does not afford them time to make modifications for learners who experience barriers to learning.

In concurrence, Nel (2018:13) agrees that CAPS is rigid, and that teachers and principals complained that they could not accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning because the curriculum is inflexible. In order to effect adaptations, they have to seek permission at District level to use differentiation in teaching and assessments (Nel, 2018:13). Walton and Engelbrecht (2022:2) maintain that CAPS is criticised for its fast-paced, rigid, and content-heavy demands. This poses a severe challenge to teachers who are expected to adhere to policies to accommodate learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms, which is exacerbated by the lack of resources to cater for such learners.

### **2.6.3 Lack of Professional Development**

When changes are introduced at the school level, teachers are expected to adapt quickly; when the implementation fails, they are solely blamed. Teachers are regarded as change agents, and so they are expected to advocate for inclusion in mainstream classrooms. However, the lack of skills and knowledge prevents the successful implementation of inclusive education (Mpu, 2021:229). Literature exposes that teachers' inadequate knowledge resulted in them having a negative attitude towards

the implementation of inclusive practices (Lepheana, Campus, Chisango & Campus, 2022; Mwarari, 2020; & Okech, Yuwono & Abdu, 2021). Agaveyan, Aubakirova, Zhomartova and Burdina (2020:16) assert that implementing inclusive practices is always hampered by teachers who do not believe they possess the knowledge and abilities to teach diverse learners in the same classrooms. Moreover, most teachers in mainstream schools are not equipped enough and have minimum experience in inclusive education practice (Candeias, Galindo, Calisto, Borralho & Reschke 2021:63; Lepheana et al., 2022:254). As a result, they only have a limited understanding of learners who face learning challenges, which they learn about through formal studies undertaken during pre-service and in-service training.

In order to be an effective teacher in an inclusive environment, one must acquire a particular set of abilities, qualities, and knowledge. Since the objective of inclusive education is to identify and reduce learning barriers, professional development for teachers is imperative (Beaton, 2021:2). The policy document on inclusive education in South Africa overlooks the issue of teacher empowerment (Beaton, 2021:2). Teachers must undergo continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities to discuss, debate, and study new developments in the field of inclusion if they are expected to successfully implement inclusivity in their mainstream classrooms (Somma & Bennett, 2020:285). However, the primary barrier to implementing inclusive techniques in their classrooms is the lack of experience in teaching learners with learning difficulties which will be gained with ongoing workshops on inclusive practices and the passing of time.

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) is a professional body responsible for improving the status of the teaching profession, enhancing teacher-development, and increasing professionalism. It was formulated in terms of the SACE Act 2000 (Act 31 of 2000). Sayed, Sadeck, Singh and Williams (2022:3) confirm that SACE manages teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD), while acknowledging important teacher-development activities to enhance quality and professionalism. Since CPD facilitates learning opportunities for professionals to develop and improve their knowledge and skills, it includes workshops, conferences, consultations, coaching, peer collaborations, and networking (Sayed et al., 2022:3) which is managed by the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system through SACE (Bernadine, 2019:4).

Regarding inclusive education, SACE emphasises the importance of ongoing support for teachers in implementing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms. It should be supported through school-based and District-based professional learning communities (Bernadine, 2019:4). Donath, Lüke, Graf, Tran and Götz (2023:6) emphasise that CPD is crucial since it improves teachers' knowledge and skills about inclusive education, enhances the skills of in-service teachers, and upgrades learners' academic performance and behaviour. Additionally, teacher professional development is crucial for teachers to adjust to new assessments techniques and innovative teaching methods to implement inclusive education practices effectively (Donath et al., 2023:6). However, Sayed, Salmon and Balie (2020:27) assert that in South Africa, inclusive education workshops and programmes are fragmented, short-term, poor presentation by non-experts with a lack of depth in content knowledge. Sayed et al. (2020:27) add that this fragmentation can be seen in CPTD programmes, where most teachers believe their needs and conditions are unfulfilled. In support, several South African studies concur that the failure to implement inclusive education is due to a lack of teacher professional development opportunities (Hooijer, Van der Merwe, & Fourie, 2021; Ntlhare & Mukuna, 2022; Seeko & Mathebula, 2023).

#### **2.6.4 Lack of Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is significant in creating a more inclusive educational system. The concepts of inclusive education and education for all include the potential for parents to positively influence their children's education. The South African School Act (SASA) stipulates that parents are free to choose the school for their children to attend, and their acceptance at school may only be denied under extreme circumstances (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021:362). Therefore, teachers must teamwork with parents to obtain valuable information about their children. Also, parents must be actively involved in the inclusion process because they have a unique relationship with their children: they are aware of their needs, and they are always willing to provide personal support when necessary (Alzahrani, 2020:10). Significantly, effective learning and development depend on parent's active participation in the teaching and learning process; however, teachers' attitude towards parents' involvement discourages parents from actively participating in their children's education. As demonstrated by Woltran (2023:12), teachers are unaware of the positions in which they might involve parents, which is exacerbated by parents' reluctance to participate in the educational

system caused also by the lack of empowerment processes and resources to support involvement. Additionally, the language used at school to engage with parents causes a barrier, since many schools only use English for correspondence letters, parents meetings, messaging, and school events such that they cannot engage in their children's school activities due to language barriers (Friedman, 2020).

### **2.6.5 Overcrowded Classrooms**

According to Sarpong (2019:25), overcrowded classrooms impede implementing inclusive education successfully. In their study, Lepheana, Campus, Chisango and Campus (2022:252) and Skae, Brown and Wilmot (2020:3) indicate that overcrowded classrooms present challenges when implementing inclusive practices. Consequently, learner-centred teaching strategies like groupwork were difficult to roll-out (Lepheana et al., 2022:252). Teachers believed that small and manageable class sizes with sufficient resources were the only ways to achieve inclusion. Meier (2020:3) and Meier and West (2020:3) maintain that overcrowded classrooms are caused by several factors, such as a shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient furniture, and few classrooms. Materechera (2020:10) and Matsepe, Maluleke and Cross (2019:92) assert that it is challenging for teachers to provide each learner in the classroom with individualised attention when the classroom is overcrowded. Chow, De Bruin and Sharma (2023:13) concur that it is impossible for teachers to provide learners with individual attention in a classroom of over 40 learners. In support, Mncube, Lebopha and Titus (2020:107) and Osai, Amponsah, Ampadu and Commey (2021:74) claim that overcrowded classrooms increase the workload for mainstream teachers which intensify concerns that not every learner will have sufficient time, space, and individual attention.

### **2.6.6 Lack of Resources and Funding**

Limited resources hinder teachers from implementing inclusive education successfully (Van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023:7). Chinangure and Chindanya (2019:198) agree that effective teaching and learning suffer the most when schools lack basic facilities for inclusion. In an inclusive classroom, the lack of resources such as physical facilities, teaching aids, and appropriate learning materials can increase teacher-workload to cause stress for both teachers and learners (Van Staden-Payne & Nel, 2023:7). Engelbrecht (2020:224) adds that insufficient human, technical, and intracultural

resources hinder the implementation of inclusive practices and learning support, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, the lack of textbooks, trained teachers, finances, desks, and modern technology in mainstream schools hinders the practical implementation of inclusive education (Hollings, 2021:37). Similarly, Maffea (2020:2) confirms that the lack of adequate resources impacts learners negatively by not allowing for the developing of independent learning and problem-solving skills which hinders them from achieving their full potential. This suggests that the lack of adequate resources in mainstream schools prevents the implementation of inclusive education.

Building or renovating accessible learning environments requires sufficient funding. Funding is needed for in-service teacher-training and continuous professional development (Mensah & Nantwi, 2020:22). Funds must be available for resources, tools, and another form of assistance to meet the learning needs of all learners (Sharma & Vlcek, 2021:54). This indicates that mainstream schools with learners with learning disabilities require sufficient funding to address each learner's unique learning needs (Mensah & Nantwi, 2020:22). Funding is linked to quality implementation of inclusive education. In congruence, Sari (2020:196) claims that for the proper implementation of inclusive education, separate funding must be allocated that can be used for diverse learners' activities, curriculum development and creation, professional development, and the process of teaching and learning.

### **2.6.7 Time-constraints**

A study by Boitumelo, Kuyini and Major (2020) reveals that teachers find inclusive education demanding and stressful due to time-constraints. It has been found that teachers' stress was caused by the fact that they had to find time to develop special assignments and class activities for learners with barriers to learning, while also assigning regular activities to learners without learning barriers. In Materechera's (2020:12) study, teachers mentioned that their concern about inclusive education pointed to time for preparation of lessons, providing learners with timeous feedback, and affording individual learner support for all learners who experience barriers to learning. Teachers also expressed that time was essential when supporting learners with learning barriers in the mainstream classroom (Materechera, 2020:12). Teachers were already frustrated because of insufficient time devoted to their current workload

since it negatively affects their effectiveness and efficiency. As a result, teachers may find inclusive education a burden due to the additional workload it presents.

### **2.6.8 Inclusive Classrooms: Facilities**

An inaccessible, ill-equipped, and unsafe learning environment is one debilitating factor that negatively influences the successful implementation of inclusive education. The physical classroom environment, including furniture placement, style and layout, significantly influences an active learning approach (Asian Development Bank, 2022:13). A classroom's physical layout may hamper active learning if classrooms are not well-maintained and resourced for the teaching-learning processes to be efficient. Learners feel more at ease and focused when their surroundings are well maintained and hygienic (Umar, Sadiqi, Hussai & Qahar, 2023:67). Thus, factors such as the learners' placement in the classroom, spacing, impact of the surroundings' noise, and the state of the infrastructure significantly influence inclusion in the classroom. Furthermore, the Asian Development Bank (2022:13) mentions that some schools have inaccessible infrastructure within and around schools; for instance, learners with physical limitations often struggle to access classrooms, and hygienic facilities.

## **2.7 SUPPORT SCHOOLS NEED TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

School leaders, particularly principals, play a critical role in shaping school culture and implementing required changes. School culture which includes values, beliefs, attitudes, customs, and rituals, is a critical factor in promoting the effectiveness of inclusive practices (Boyle, Anderson & Allen, 2020:19). According to Oen and Krumsvik (2022:11), principals play an important role in designing and implementing an inclusive school while communicating the requirements of an inclusive ethos, adding that principals must foster an inclusive environment while appropriately supporting school staff, training, and collaboration. Moreover, DeMatthews Serafini and Watson (2021:10) contend that principals play a vital role in establishing inclusive schools because developing a thriving, inclusive school environment is initiated and promoted under their leadership. Furthermore, because of their position, principals may provide a distinctive perspective on the present state of inclusive education implementation within mainstream schools (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019:786).

Research conducted in Germany by Gorel and Hellmich (2022:134), indicate that principals pointed out that resources, collaboration with different stakeholders, funding, physical infrastructure, as well as materials for teaching and learning are key requirements for the successful implementation of inclusive education at the school level. However, literature on the support principals need in South African mainstream schools on the implementation of inclusive education is still limited, and there seems to be a gap in literature on principals' opinions on the support schools need to implement inclusive education successfully. Therefore, it is critical to further investigate the support schools need to successfully implement inclusive education in mainstream schools. This requires a strong support structure to ensure all learners have access to equal education. Here are some forms of critical support that schools require:

### **2.7.1 Educational Support**

In this study, educational support refers to services provided to teachers and parents to develop appropriate intervention plans to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning. This educational support refers to different groups of professionals offering guidance and skills to aid inclusion and encourage learners to overcome barriers to learning during their learning journey (Van der Merwe, Fourie & Yoro, 2020:3). Learners can perform better when there is close collaboration between schools and services such as those provided by educational psychologists, school counsellors, speech and language therapists, learner-support specialists, specialised teachers and mental health services (Hove & Phasha 2020; Kefallinou, Symeonidou & Meijer, 2020:20; Van Rensburg, Thobane, Kader, Aphane, Mpuru, Mokotong, Ngoveni, Ratiba and Tredoux 2024; Opoku 2022). Enhancing support services accessibility may involve providing specialised services to assist learners, especially those who are at risk of failing or experiencing learning difficulties (Kefallinou et al., 2020; Kwari 2021; Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2023). Asamoah, Tam and Cudjoe (2023:37) indicate that services of social workers within the school context is paramount as it offers crisis intervention, case management, counselling, grief support, violence prevention, and supporting learners academically. Pretorius (2020:147) adds that social workers can collaborate with other stakeholders such as teachers, support teams, psychologists, parents, and learners to ensure the success of inclusion. The White Paper 6 has stated that more educational support services will be availed in an inclusive education

and training system, which will align with the needs of learners with disabilities (DoE, 2001:15).

The SIAS has emphasised the importance of specialist support at the Circuit and District levels. However, the supply of services that are sourced from outside the Department or the school's network of stakeholders is not available to the school or within the District (DBE 2014:27). It further mentioned that these services are needed at least once a month for a short period (1 year) and every quarter as part of the schools' in-house and outreach support programme. These initiatives can be implemented in schools, but they would need to be funded as part of the inclusive education system (DBE 2014:27). Therefore, educational support plays a significant role in supporting and promoting the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools. Educational support offers services of experts in different fields to address the multifaceted needs of learners which ensure that inclusive practices are effectively enacted in mainstream schools.

### **2.7.2 Parental Involvement**

Parents and the community remain key stakeholders who can support the implementation of inclusive education. When babies are born, their parents are the first people they interact with, followed by the community, and then they enroll for formal education (McKenzie, Shanda & Aldersey, 2021:27). Therefore, it is essential that schools build partnerships with parents and communities. Further, parents/caregivers must form a meaningful partnership with schoolteachers to ensure that the support as per the Individual Support Plan (ISP) is successfully implemented (DBE, 2014:41). Mabaso (2019:39) contends that parents should be included in the assessment process because they are the best sources of information for teachers to determine the precise nature of a child's barrier to learning, being informed about additional support that may be needed.

Further, Ainscow (2020:129) states that parents play a significant role in their children's education, and that without their support children may not have the opportunity to pursue higher education or training. Through collaboration, parents may effectively advocate for better standards and provisioning. Schmid and Garrels (2021:458) and Munje and Mncube (2018:81) claim that parental involvement in education is multifaceted and includes a range of parental responsibilities and

activities concerning their children's education and learning processes. Parents have the power to decide whether to enrol their children who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools. This is because, generally, parents are essential collaborators in creating a more inclusive system in which they share accountability for decisions and outcomes (Schmid & Garrels, 2021:458). Namanyane and Shaoan (2021:362) state that the results of 50 studies revealed a beneficial correlation between learner achievement and parental involvement, which fosters academic performance, communicates expectations for involvement, and advocates techniques that learners can effectively use. However, helping with and monitoring homework were the only parental involvement activities not consistently associated with academic success (Namanyane & Shaoan, 2021:362). Additionally, Segoe and Bisschoff (2019:167) highlighted the advantages of involving parents in schools: enhanced learner attitudes, cordial parent-school relationships, motivation, harmonious cooperation amongst all parties, as well as stimulating parents' interest in their children's academic progress. Lastly, Cabanero (2023:20) maintains that collaboration with parents enhances an inclusive school culture, a sense of belonging, and respect.

### **2.7.3 Collaboration with the Community**

According to Mahoney, Weissberg, Greenberg, Dusenbury, Jagers, Niemi, Schlinger, Schlund, Shriver, VanAusdal and Yoder (2021:10), a community encompasses both individuals and organisations in close proximity to the school that have formed relationships with the whole community including the youth. Malatji, Mavuso and Malatji (2019:74) mention that school-community collaboration is based on the teamworking to solve challenges that occur in the school and the community. A partnership between school and community members is critical to ensure all learners succeed through their full participation to create a thriving and democratic society (Mahoney et al., 2021:10). Kudarinova, Autaeva, Paylozyan and Rymkhanova, (2023:153) confirm that the implementation of inclusive education is not a smooth journey, given the many obstacles which require the involvement of stakeholders such as communities, families, paraprofessionals, and schools. Roche and Strobach (2019:1) note that community collaboration may enhance existing school-based service delivery frameworks by providing resources and filling in service gaps based on the school's needs. Additionally, community collaboration ensures that every child has access to education, safeguard against early school dropout, reduction of

unacceptable behaviour, enhancement of learner-engagement, and a decrease in the percentage of learners with disabilities who are not enrolled in schools (Mabaso, 2019:40).

#### **2.7.4 Funding Allocation**

The provision of adequate funding to educate differently abled learners in mainstream schools is crucial. However, understanding how funding is located and where funding is required are important aspects of reforming funding systems that have historically disadvantaged certain people. Sharma and Vlcek (2021:14) point out that to accomplish the aims of inclusive education, funding schemes that seek to address the needs of all learners, regardless of impairment or learning barriers, enable schools to adopt suitable practices that promote teaching-learning competence. Goldan, Loreman and Lambrecht (2020:2) contend that effective funding structures should be based on regulatory frameworks that oversee accountability and improvement at classroom level by focusing on enhancing teachers' capacity, guaranteeing a flexible learning environment, and addressing all learner-needs. Moreover, McKenzie, Shanda and Aldersey (2021:11) maintain that funding is crucial for infrastructure, training teachers, and purchasing important materials and equipment, among others.

The DoE (2001:40) informs that for the first five years, the National Government has suggested new conditional grants for non-personal funding for two purposes: firstly, it will be used in special and full-service schools to supply the infrastructure and additional materials required to increase access for those who were excluded; secondly, it will be used to supply some of the non-educational resources such as medication, assistive resources like wheelchairs, hearing aids, guide dogs, interpreters, voice-activated computers, and social workers that will be necessary to guarantee access to the curriculum (DoE, 2001:40). However, the Equal Education Law Centre (2021:8) noted that one of the main challenges in implementing inclusive education is persistent underfunding of mainstream schools; there is currently no funding designated set aside specifically for inclusive education. It is imperative to develop a funding system for inclusive education that is appropriate for all schools in South Africa. Further, budget transparency should be evident in all provinces, explicitly state funds allocated for the development of inclusive education that are separate from those for special schools. Lastly, for inclusive education to succeed, there must be

sufficient accountability through oversight of budgeting, spending, and auditing (Mendoza & Heymann, 2022:14).

### **2.7.5 Physical Resources Allocation**

In this study, physical resources refer to the physical facilities of the school that are important to enhance a learning environment which include buildings, grounds, furniture, and equipment (Kohli, 2019:2). Providing suitable and adjusted physical resources is vital for learning institutions to remove barriers that make it difficult for learners with physical disabilities to move from one location to another (Ileri, King'endo & Thurairara, 2019:1052). Physical accessibility to school buildings for learners experiencing learning barriers is important, for example wheelchair ramps and vehicle drop-off spaces. Therefore, to implement inclusivity, learners with disabilities must have physical access to school buildings (Mensah, Gyamfi & Agbezudor, 2022:197). However, when a school has inadequate infrastructure such as lifts, ramps, paved walkways, cloakrooms for the disabled, or other accessibility features that make it difficult for learners, then inclusivity is stifled (Francisco, Hartman & Wang, 2020:8). Lordye and Jato (2023:56) explain that poor school infrastructure can negatively affect learners' progress. Adequate physical resources enable learners to move around school independently and promote full participation in the classroom as well as extra-curriculum activities (Sandoval, Muñoz & Márquez, 2021:35). Furthermore, accessing the right equipment for each learner such as walking frames and modified mobility devices ensure that all learners have equal access to education throughout the school system (Sandoval et al., 2021:35), but this depends on the availability of resources.

Moreover, physical resources become obsolete if the physical environment is inaccessible to learners with physical challenges. Al-Samarrai, Cerdan-Infantes and Lehe (2019:36) note that schools with inadequate infrastructure such as buildings without ramps, narrow entrances, and inaccessible facilities can limit learners with disabilities and prevent them from fully participating in educational activities. Consideration should be given to the design and development of entrances and passages, ramps, furnishings, and fittings to create an accommodating, comfortable, accessible, and participatory learning environment for all learners (Ileri et al., 2019:1053). In South Africa mainstream schools' buildings and their surroundings were not designed to accommodate learners with barriers to learning (Ferreira &

Manis, 2022:144); therefore, schools must have access to an adequate and modified physical environment to remove barriers that make it difficult for learners with physical limitations to move around. The establishment and availability of physical resources are important for successfully integrating learners with physical limitations (Irer et al., 2019:1053).

In addition to physical resources, learners in rural schools face challenges pertaining to free school transportation. Accessibility and affordability to school transport are main challenges impacting learners' safety and attendance. Kuthalingam, Shanjuvigasini, Swarnakumari and Hollis (2023:371) cite that most children stay in rural areas such that public transport was not always available and cheap, and not all parents could afford it due to economic problems. Hence, learners are left with no choice but to walk long distances to school, which compromises their safety and health (Kuthalingam et al., 2023:371).

## **2.8 SUPPORT TEACHERS NEED TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

In South Africa, teachers should receive sufficient support from relevant stakeholders to implement inclusive education successfully. Providing teachers with adequate and sufficient support is essential in developing an educational system that promotes diversity, inclusion and equal learning opportunities for all learners to learn and succeed. Below are some of the support mechanisms teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms.

### **2.8.1 Professional Development for Teachers**

Teachers' professional development is referred as an ongoing process of reflection, learning, and action to improve knowledge and skills, to enhance teaching practices that benefit learners' learning (Owhondah & Nwosu, 2022:1). Donath, Lüke, Graf, Tran and Götz (2023:3) contend that inclusive education's effectiveness depends on various factors, one of which is ongoing teacher professional development. The quality and ongoing nature of teachers' professional development has the substantial ability to improve the management of learners in inclusive classrooms (Donath et al., 2023:3). It equips teachers to implement inclusive classroom practices (Sancar, Atal & Deryakulu, 2021:8) which are critical because it provides teachers with knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes, and beliefs required to cater for the different needs of all

children (Sancar et al., 2021:8). Inclusive practices require teachers to modify their instructional methodologies, classroom management, and assessment procedures to ensure that learners of all abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles can access and benefit from the curriculum (Ahmad Zaky El Islami, Anantanukulwong & Faikhamta, 2022:2). Through continuous professional development (CPD), teachers gain insights into best practice for differentiation, collaborative teaching approaches, and the use of assistive technology (Yıldız, Köse & Akın, 2022:1).

Research conducted by Makhalemele and Tlale (2021:155) and Granger, Sutherland, Conroy, Dear, and Morse (2023:2) state that CPD should incorporate training in different contexts, including inclusivity. Since most teachers are not equipped to meet the diverse needs of learners with barriers to learning due to a lack of knowledge and skills. Professional development workshops are indispensable (Hooijer, Van der Merwe & Fourie, 2021:132). Ferriday and Cantali (2020:157) add that teachers also need practical training in teaching strategies, curriculum adaptation skills, instruction flexibility, and tracking progress techniques to implement inclusion successfully. Rabi, Ghazali and Piragasam (2018:1849) contend that teachers' willingness to teach learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms can be strengthened through CPD courses. Hooijer et al. (2021:132) note that teachers in mainstream schools lack theoretical knowledge about inclusive teaching methodologies, and encouraging and developing new ways of interpreting and perceiving disability. Teacher professional development for inclusive education should provide opportunities to engage with new material, put their skills into practice, receive feedback from colleagues and trainers over an extended period, and detect areas for improvement (Candeias et al., 2021:64; Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021:829).

Moreover, in-service training for various teaching and learning needs is highly recommended as it improves teachers' and administrators' attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs regarding inclusivity. Nembambula, Ooko and Aluko (2022:43) assert that professional development is critical; however, it should be tailored to address teachers' classroom challenges. Also, literature indicates that teachers need diverse knowledge and skills to implement inclusive classroom practices (Majoko 2019; Ecoben 2019; Rusznyak & Walton 2022; Weiss, Muckenthaler, Heimlich, Kuechler & Kiel 2021). In a study by Mahlo (2017:6), the participants mentioned that for them to implement

inclusive classroom practices successfully, intensive training in inclusive education is required to equip them to support them to meet the diverse needs of learners in the classroom. Furthermore, Mwila, Namuchana, Lufungulo, Chinemerem, Mudenda, Mangwatu, Nangandu and Hikaambo (2022:109) note that teacher-competencies in the classroom were enhanced through CPD evidenced in classroom practices that enable learners to improve their academic performance. Ogba, Ugodulunwa and Igu (2020:76) concur that teachers need intensive training because they serve as the delivery vehicle for implementing best practice.

Additionally, teachers are willing to support and teach learners with learning barriers; however, insufficient skills and knowledge hinder them from adopting inclusive education best practices. Therefore, ongoing in-depth training is urgently needed so that teachers can feel competent in teaching learners with barriers to learning. Similarly, Adigun (2021:4) indicates that intensive training for teachers is necessary to guarantee that they stay committed to providing authentic and quality learning experiences to every learner. Lastly, CPD is critical for implementing inclusive education principles to enhance the quality of educational service delivery to all learners (Donath et al., 2023:3).

### **2.8.2 Curriculum Differentiation**

Curriculum differentiation is defined as a teaching method that allows teachers to use several teaching styles in the same classroom to suit individual learners' diverse learning abilities, needs, personalities, and experiences (Van Geel, Keuning & Safar, 2022:1). Additionally, differentiation allows teachers to tailor lessons to meet various learners' interests, thus leading to increased learner-engagement and academic achievement (Asian Development Bank, 2022:9). However, research conducted by Oswald (2019:245) revealed that the concept of differentiated teaching posed challenges to teachers as they never heard of or witnessed differentiated teaching despite widespread discussion in educational literature on how to support diversity in the classroom. Eikeland and Ohna, (2022:166) claim that curriculum differentiation is not effectively implemented in mainstream classrooms as findings reveal that teachers failed to integrate techniques learnt at CPD workshops into their daily classroom practice.

Further, Onyishi and Sefotho (2020:137) point out that in mainstream schools, many teachers approach learners as a homogenous group, so they teach learners the same curriculum content using the same approach and style, and thus expect all learners to express what they have learned the same way. Lamentably, most teachers do not consider learners' diverse interests, abilities, limitations, and learning styles. A 'one-size-fits-all' policy leaves too many learners behind, rather than moving them forward (Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020:137). Bennett (2023:10) contends that inadequate differentiation during lessons affects academic progress for learners who experience barriers to learning by limiting access to the curriculum. According to Shigetomi (2023:136), different factors contribute to teachers' inability to differentiate the curriculum, such as lack of knowledge, time, resources, training, and support from DBST. Therefore, teachers must be provided with training to address the diverse needs of learners in mainstream classrooms. Strogilos, Lim and Mohamed-Buhari (2023:85) suggest that to completely employ differentiated lessons in mainstream classrooms, teachers require professional development on what differentiation means, how to implement it, and how to understand their learners better by observing other teachers employ differentiated methods. To adapt curriculum differentiation to the different learning needs of diverse learners, teachers must frequently possess both updated practical and technical skills (Alsamiri, Hussain, Aljohani & Alsawalem, 2023:5).

### **2.8.3 Support-Based School Team (SBST)**

The SIAS policy (DBE, 2014:8) states that the role and responsibilities of the SBST involves assisting teachers with Individual Education Plans (IEPs); especially for learners experiencing barriers to learning. The DoE (2001:48) explains that the SBST's main responsibility is to establish appropriately coordinated learner and teacher support services that enhance teaching-learning processes by identifying and addressing the needs of learners, teachers, and schools. In support, Mabokachaba (2022:57) confirms that the primary function of SBSTs is to (re)arrange the school's curriculum, provide teacher and learner support, identify the needs of the school to address school, learner, and teacher challenges by fostering peer and parent support to access extra resources both inside and outside the school.

The SBST is one of the most significant bodies within the educational system when regarding the provision of support and appropriate modification for learners with diverse learning needs (Nong, 2020:1246). Furthermore, SBSTs play a pivotal role in supporting teachers and learners in decision-making processes about case management, classroom strategies, referrals, and resources to identify and address learning barriers (Algulhas, 2021:32). Moreover, Tebid (2019:108) affirms that the SBST was formulated in mainstream public schools in South Africa to address the barriers teachers face in implementing inclusive education. However, Brown and Buthelezi (2020:473) note that some of the challenges SBSTs face in schools can be attributed to teachers' negative perceptions towards implementing inclusive education in schools because most are not trained for this role.

#### **2.8.4 District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs)**

The DBSTs' responsibility is to promote inclusive practices that provide teachers with adequate support and training to equip them to implement inclusive education best practice (Ngcezulla 2018:50). They must support teachers to develop a supportive learning environment for all learners to feel comfortable to realise their full potential, in addition to providing teachers with adequate teaching and learning materials to help learners with barriers to learning (Ngcezulla 2018:50). The DoE (2001:29) affirms that the objective of the DBST is to improve the knowledge and skills of everyone involved in the education system by providing quality in-service training. Furthermore, the DoE (2005:9) indicated that one of the key roles of the DBST is to offer classroom-based support to teachers and learners such as flexible learning for learners with special education needs, ongoing professional development for teachers to help them meet the learning needs of learners, curriculum development to ensure all of its components are responsive to learners' needs, and supplying teaching and learning resources and materials to support learning for all learners (DoE, 2005:9).

Moreover, the DoE (2010:20) stipulates that DBSTs are responsible for providing all teachers with guidelines to help them with curriculum differentiation, modification, adaptation, planning, and management to accommodate diversity. Tibid (2019:112) maintains that the DBST plays a critical role in establishing effective teaching and learning practices, and developing a flexible curriculum that addresses barriers to learning to foster learner-participation. Therefore, the DBST needs to collaborate with

teachers and schools to provide adequate support that is responsive to learners' needs.

### **2.8.5 Learning Materials**

Learning materials are the resources teachers use to impart knowledge in the classroom regarding the delivery of subject content to learners (Kapur, 2020:1). Similarly, Lewis (2019) refers to learning materials as educational learning resources that teachers utilise in the classroom to support the learning objectives set out in the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs). Examples of learning materials include assistive technology devices like visual and auditory aids, slide projectors, textbooks, and handouts, among others (Kapur, 2020:6). These learning materials are important in facilitating teaching and learning processes. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be able to accommodate learners in classrooms with sufficient resources to help teachers create individualised learning strategies and equip teachers to adjust their teaching approaches and materials to meet learners' diverse learning needs and preferences (Cerna, Mezzanotte, Rutigliano, Brussino, Santiago, Borgonovi & Guthrie, 2021:38). Additionally, appropriate teaching and learning materials enable teachers to make the lesson more enjoyable, simple, understandable, and thought-provoking (Mulovhedzi & Luhalima, 2023:307). Additionally, teachers must have teaching materials available in various formats to include diverse classroom learning activities that enable learners to showcase their knowledge in multiple ways (Education Links, 2020).

In this regard, classrooms that are equipped with whiteboards, projectors, and digital learning platforms assist teachers to create innovative teaching strategies that are in sync with the different learning styles of learners (Akbarovna, 2022:249). Furthermore, the accessibility of tactile materials and adaptive learning aids promotes learner-centred learning by encouraging active engagement and simplifying comprehension of content for learners with diverse learning needs (Cerna et al., 2021:38). In sum, it is imperative for schools to be provided with sufficient and relevant learning materials so that teachers accommodate learners with barriers to learning without them feeling excluded from lessons.

### **2.8.6 Collaborative Teaching**

Collaborative teaching refers to two or more teachers collaborating to prepare, implement, and assess a lesson (Paires & Mandal, 2023:23). Similarly, Crispel and

Kasperski (2021:4) refer to collaboration as an interactive process where several people with specific expertise are teamwork as equals to generate an appropriate programme or find solutions to problems. Since, collaboration is fundamental in teaching learners with barriers to learning (Ghedin & Aquario, 2020:7), the Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools encourage teachers to network, stating that “there needs to be an effective team approach towards learning support and curriculum planning” (DoE, 2010:17). Collaborative teaching requires interdisciplinary cooperation and shared accountability among mainstream schoolteachers to cater for learners who experience barriers to learning (Paires & Mandal, 2023:23). Through collaborative teaching, teachers can teamwork by offering pedagogical advice and empowerment opportunities that inspire each other to overcome challenges of teaching learners with barriers to learning to enhance the quality of inclusion (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021:4).

Collaborative teaching is pivotal in developing an individual education plan (IEP) to implement it in practice. Razalli, Hashim, Mamat and Ariffin (2020:1057) state that collaborative teaching in the implementation of IEPs is a critical to guarantee that the education transition for every learner is successful. Razalli et al. (2020:1057) affirm that collaboration is critical in inclusive education because it encourages teachers to work with specialists to share meaningful experiences to assist all learners within the mainstream classroom (Lehane & Senior, 2020:304). Also, for teachers to support adequate development and academic progress for diverse learners, inter-professional collaboration is essential (Huang & Huang, 2021:203).

Moreover, collaborative teaching has several benefits as observed by Ní Bhroin (2020:44) who recommended that teachers share their knowledge and experience through various platforms to present learners with a more thorough and productive learning experience. Teachers can improve their teaching-learning strategies, approaches, structuring of lesson plans, sharing ideas and resources, and learning from one another (Ní Bhroin, 2020:44). Through collaboration, teachers can broaden their knowledge-base to acquire fresh insights and ideas. Teachers can manage their classes more efficiently by sharing techniques and tasks (Mofield, 2020:20). Collaborative teaching can foster a helpful and encouraging learning atmosphere that will increase learners’ motivation and engagement. Moreover, teachers can share the workload through team-teaching (Ogegbo, Gaigher & Salagaram, 2019:1).

In this regard, Chisango and Lepheana (2022:255) recommend that co-teaching strengthens the adoption and quality of inclusive education. Co-teaching, also known as team-teaching, can meet the learning needs of various learners in a single classroom. Research conducted by Nembambula (2022:45) indicates that although teachers feel diffident to support learners with barriers to learning, some teachers adopted co-teaching to support inclusive learning. This approach incorporates instructional strategies where teachers co-design lessons and co-teach in the same classroom to accommodate diverse learning needs (Nembambula, 2022:45). This helps teachers share skills that are in the best interest of the learners with diverse learning needs as the main goal is to improve the delivery of curriculum content for all learners, not just those with special needs.

Although most teachers reported that it helped improve support for learners with diverse needs, co-teaching has limits such as the lack of resources and expertise to roll it out. On the positive side, a study by Themane and Thobejane (2019:379) found that some teachers are willing to modify their pedagogy to accommodate inclusive practices because they are willing to assume the role of change agents by accommodating various learning needs by teamworking in planning, presenting, and assessing, while those who work in isolation accomplish less (Themane & Thobejane, 2019:379).

### **2.8.7 Peer Support**

Peer support involves two or more peers helping their classmates with barriers to learn and progress academically and socially. Ziegler, Matthews, Mayberry, Owen-DeSchryver and Carter (2020:427) assert that peer support is an intervention to encourage reciprocal participation in different learning and social activities in an inclusive mainstream school. Educational teams designate and prepare one or more classmates without barriers to learning to serve as social and academic support agents to assist a classmate with learning difficulties (Ziegler et al., 2020:427). The Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools encourages peer support and different approaches, such as and cooperative learning to foster a school culture that promotes learners to learn in pairs rather than in isolation (DoE, 2010:17) which promotes the main objective of inclusive education to provide all learners with equal opportunities to participate in the classroom. One of the fundamental principles of inclusive education

is to provide a supportive and inclusive community within the classroom (Inclusive Education South Africa, 2019:35).

Further, peer support is crucial as it allows learners to support one another to create a sense of belonging and acceptance regardless of an individual's learning abilities. It also decreases the stigma of discrimination regarding impairments (Ziegler et al., 2020:427). When learners with barriers to learning are included in the classroom, it conveys a strong message of acceptance and inclusion in the entire school community. This strategy challenges negative attitudes and misconceptions regarding disability, consequently it promotes an inclusive school environment where all learners are appreciated and respected for who they are (Carter, 2018:57). Peer support helps remove the barriers between learners with or without learning challenges by working together as pairs, groups or teams such that learners appreciate each other's similarities and differences (Brock, Carter & Biggs, 2020:387). Peer support promotes academic engagement, increases social contacts, and provides learners with learning difficulties to access a more extensive range of social support (Travers & Carter, 2022:79).

Peer support provides learners with barriers to learning to access the curriculum more effectively. Learners who teamwork in pairs can support one another in understanding concepts, completing assignments, and overcoming obstacles (Travers & Carter, 2022:79). Through peer support in accessing knowledge and skills, this interactive learning strategy enables learners with learning difficulties to participate fully in classroom activities to succeed academically (Kleinert, 2020:27). Research has found that the introduction of peer support results in significant increases in the quantity and quality of peer interactions during the class lesson, thus promoting sustainable friendships while accessing a broader range of support mechanisms (Kleinert, 2020:27).

## **2.9 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Based on the above discussion, DOI theory models facilitate innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems. The innovation in this study involves inclusive education practices such as curriculum design, teaching methods, and infrastructure to accommodate diverse learning needs. Communication channels explore the importance of different messaging platforms and how information about

inclusive education is disseminated among teachers, learners, parents, and the entire community. Time in this study refers to the adoption of inclusive practices over a specific period of time, while social systems involve individuals who promote inclusive education practices such as teachers, DBSTs, SBSTs, administrators, learners, parents, and community members. The DOI theory provides a comprehensive framework to understand and improve the adoption of inclusive education. However, it has been exposed that teachers have negative attitudes toward inclusive education caused by the lack of knowledge, inadequate training, difficulties in modifying curriculum, lack of support, funding, and overwhelming workloads – all of which hinders implementation. Therefore, their beliefs and understandings of inclusive education should be addressed urgently to implement inclusive practices effectively without bias. Furthermore, it is critical for teachers to receive ongoing teacher professional development to implement inclusive practices successfully in the classroom. Lastly, the importance of support and the provision of resources will lead to the realisation of the objective of inclusive education in South Africa.

## **2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory that underpinned the study. It facilitated the four main principles of this theory: innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems. Understanding these principles helps identify challenges in the implementation of inclusive education while suggesting effective strategies for successfully implementing inclusive practices in South Africa. Regarding teachers' professional development, literature reveals that intensive training in inclusive education is required to equip them to support diverse needs of learners. However, it must be noted that it is not only the lack of teacher-professional development programmes that affect the implementation of inclusive education, but other challenges such as the lack of parental involvement, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient funding, time-constraints, inadequate physical learning environment and lack of resources present hindrances. Therefore, adequate intervention plans are needed to pave the way for developing a more inclusive education system. The next chapter (3) discusses the research methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter (3) presented the research methodology to investigate factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. It discussed the research paradigm, research approach, and research design. Additionally, it outlined the study site and participant-selection that informed the study. The data collection methods involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews which were recorded to capture participants' lived-experiences. Moreover, data analysis was presented to understand participants' lived-experiences influencing their implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. Lastly, this chapter outlined the trustworthiness of the collected data, as well as ethical considerations that align to this study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This study employed the interpretive research paradigm which sought to understand human behaviour's complex and dynamic nature, acknowledging that individuals and groups make-meaning of their experiences in different and context-dependent ways (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019:7). Alternatively, the interpretive paradigm acknowledges the different points of view of human experiences (Bush, Singh & Kooienga, 2019:4). This paradigm maintains that people and individuals create various subjective realities as they navigate and make-sense of their social environment (Cuthbertson, Robb & Blair, 2020:97). As such, the interpretive paradigm seeks to comprehend and explore the world in which they live (Rahi, et al., 2019:1161) because reality is socially constructed and more subjective than objective (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022:12). Interpretivism also rejects the idea that a single reality exists apart from our senses. The main aim of interpretivism is to understand social phenomena through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher (Kekeya, 2019:25).

The interpretive paradigm affirms that truth and knowledge are subjective (Rahi, Alnaser & Abd Ghani, 2019:1161). In this study, I focused on the subjective experiences of teachers and principals about the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. I prioritised

knowing how teachers perceive inclusive education, the challenges they face, support for principals, and teachers' needs to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. Further, Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick and Lavoie-Tremblay, (2020:4) affirm that the interpretive paradigm is used to understand people's experiences in their natural environment; hence, conducted the interviews at the participants' schools because they are the natural settings where teachers and principals implement inclusive education. Since the interpretive paradigm is suitable for qualitative research because it emphasises understanding participants' subjective beliefs within the local environment, I adopted this approach to gain an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the experiences of teachers and principals on factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This research adopted the qualitative research approach which interrogates social actions that demonstrate how people perceive, interpret, and make-sense of their experiences to comprehend their social reality (Pearse, 2021:95). It utilises interviews, diaries, journals, observation, and open-ended questionnaires to obtain, analyse, and interpret data (Aspers & Corte, 2019:142). Similarly, Nassaji (2020:428) defines the qualitative research approach as a social inquiry that seeks to understand the social world by learning about people's circumstances, experiences, perspectives, and stories. In other words, this approach aims to understand human behaviour and the meaning people attach to their experiences (Moroi, 2021:129). It is exploratory and seeks to explain how and why a particular social phenomenon works in a particular environment (Moroi, 2021:129). It helps people to understand the social world, and why things are the way they are (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020:141).

Additionally, the qualitative research approach focuses on people's beliefs, experiences, and meanings elicited from the perspectives of the people. This approach does not use statistical analysis and empirical calculations (Frost, 2021:8) but relies on the researcher to interpret study participants' responses regarding their behaviour, events, and objects. The qualitative design is quite useful for evaluating thoughts, opinions, and viewpoints to convey information collectively (Alamri, 2019:63).

The qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it prioritises participants' experiences, allowing them to share their perspectives and insights on the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. The richness and depth of qualitative data will provide a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, in order to understand the factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools, I will select participants who can provide in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study applied a qualitative phenomenological research design that aimed to dissect the phenomenon from an individual's perspective (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019:91). This approach focused on the lived-experiences of individuals or groups of people (Ugwuanyi, 2022:103) to obtain information regarding their perceptions, experiences, and understanding of the specific phenomenon (Larsen & Adu, 2021:27). In qualitative research, the researcher collects rich and incisive data strictly from an individual's point of view it acknowledges the significance of human subjectivity (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021:914). As such, a phenomenological research design is significant in qualitative research as it permits researchers to uncover richer and more insights into various ways individuals make-sense of their worlds (Stanghellini, Broome, Raballo, Fernandez, Fusar-Poli & Rosfort, 2019:206).

The primary objective of a phenomenology study is to capture and assess participants' experiences to better understand the meanings they assign to an event (Gill, 2020:2). This phenomenological research design was suitable for this study because it facilitated the interpretation of the experiences of teachers and principals regarding factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools (Stanghellini et al., 2019:206). Therefore, in this study, I described, understood, and interpreted the meanings that participants attached to their experiences. Through in-depth interviews, teachers and principals described their experiences, meanings, and understanding of factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools.

## **3.5 STUDY SITE AND PARTICIPANT-SELECTION**

### **3.5.1 Study Site**

This study was conducted at three secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District of the Limpopo Province. These schools are in a rural area known as Kgautswane which is a settlement located in Sekhukhune District Municipality. The village has a high unemployment rate with poor infrastructure. Furthermore, these schools fall under the quintile 1 ranking, each with an average enrolment of 200 learners annually from Grades 8 to 12. According to Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez (2020:1), qualitative researchers generally gather data in the field or a natural setting where participants encounter the phenomenon being studied. Yildiz (2020:18) emphasises the need to conduct research in the natural environment where the participants live, or work. Therefore, I selected these three schools as research sites for the study based on their diversity, and the fact that the study will occur in their natural surroundings. Lastly, these three schools were chosen as appropriate sites to provide relevant, authentic, and adequate results in line with the research aim, objectives, and research questions.

### **3.5.2 Participants**

The research participants of this study comprised teachers and principals in the three selected mainstream secondary schools. Teachers are advocates of inclusive education in their schools, classrooms, and education systems so they play a significant role in this study to provide relevant data to answer the research questions. Twelve participants, consisting of nine teachers and three principals were selected from the three mainstream secondary schools. Four participants, including three teachers and one principal, were selected from each secondary school. The school principal holds the main responsibility for successfully implementing inclusive education at the school level, and therefore, he/she was part of the study to gain a complete understanding of the phenomenon.

## **3.6 SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE**

This study also employed the purposive sampling method to select participants comprising of nine teachers and three principals from three mainstream secondary schools. Obilor (2023:4) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling

technique where the researcher selects only those who meet the study's objective (Douglas, 2022). Purposive sampling is used to strengthen the study's rigour and the trustworthiness of the findings (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020:653). In addition, purposive sampling was deemed suitable for this study as teachers and principals are the ideal and capable participants to respond to research questions on factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. Through purposeful sampling, participants were selected based on their ability to provide detailed information concerning their personal experiences and perspectives (Nwaigwe, 2022:121).

Teachers and principals with five years teaching experience and above were selected for the purpose of this study as they were expected to have accumulated knowledge to answer the research questions (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019:31). Importantly, the study sites and participants were sampled; the research sites for providing physical evidence of progress or challenges, and the teachers for their experience in the implementation of inclusive education.

### **3.7 INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION.**

Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. An interview is defined as an interaction between two persons on a specific topic, one serving as an interviewer, and the other as an interviewee (Bearman, 2019:4). It is an exchange of ideas between two people discussing a theme or subject of mutual interest (Mashuri, Sarib, Rasak, Alhabsyi & Syam, 2022:2). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019:1) define semi-structured interviews as a method involving a discussion between the researcher and the participant, guided by a flexible interview schedule and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments. This method enables researchers to collect open-ended data, elicit participant thoughts, feelings, and opinions about a topic, and delve deeply into personal and often sensitive matters (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020:3).

Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021:2) posit that semi-structured interviews are employed when the researcher wants to understand the participants' unique experiences rather than a broad comprehension of a phenomenon. This method may be described as an organised conversation directed by new information gathered

during the interactive discussion (Mahat-Shamir, Neimeyer & Picho-Prelorentzos, 2021:33). Semi-structured interviews are both organised and flexible since they contain a predetermined number of questions that will be asked of all participants, with the possibility for further in-depth inquiry into issues raised during a researcher-participant exchange (Alamri, 2019:65). During data collection, the interview can be recorded through fieldnotes or audio-recording (with permission). Moreover, a researcher can elicit 'hidden' information from verbal and non-verbal nuances including hunches, laughter, body movements, and silences which can help in supplementing data collection (Kakilla, 2021:1).

In this study, data was collected by conducting face-to-face interviews to elicit participants' in-depth knowledge on factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. Given that qualitative interviews are effective for capturing people's experiences and perspectives (Taherdoost, 2022:40), I employed semi-structured interviews with pre-planned interview guides to pose questions and probe (where necessary) to collect additional relevant information to answer the research questions. McMullin (2023:141) asserts that audio-recording is crucial because the researcher can validate fieldnotes and transcripts by listening to the recorded interviews. With this, the likelihood of biased interpretations and manipulations are virtually non-existent.

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The data collection procedure for this research involved interviewing nine teachers and three principals. Interviews enabled me to gather descriptive and rich data from participants' social realities and lived-experiences (Knott, Rao, Summers & Teeger, 2022:1). The interview schedule and guidelines were prepared prior to the semi-structured interviews to answer the study's research questions. I was willing to change the order of the questions and probe for additional responses based on the circumstances of the research setting and the quality of the participant's responses (Masha & Eze, 2022:123). The interviews were conducted at the selected schools after hours so that teaching and learning were not interrupted. Before conducting the interviews, permission was obtained from the University of the Free State, the Limpopo Department of Education, and the selected schools. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and its finer details via meetings and information in the

consent form. The participants were interviewed by the interviewer (myself) in the allocated school venue after school hours. The interview took approximately 30 to 60 minutes to complete, and it was audio-recorded to capture every piece of information (for later verbatim transcription) while penning a few notes down. The interviews were voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without being penalised in any way. All ethical protocols were observed, and informed consent (signed) was obtained before the interviews.

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), Thematic Analysis (TA) is a technique for identifying, examining, and interpreting the meaning of patterns in qualitative data. Additionally, Costa (2019:8) refers to thematic analysis as a process of finding themes or patterns to generate meaning within raw data. Thematic analysis is critical, descriptive, and explanatory in nature (Lochmiller, 2021:2031). Thematic analysis aims to comprehend what participants think, feel, and do. It can also be used to find patterns within and across datasets related to participants' lived-experiences, perspectives, behaviour, and practices (Lochmiller, 2021:2031). Thematic analysis offers ways to develop clear and organised codes and themes emanating from qualitative data. Codes are known as the smallest analytical units that aim to capture significant aspects of the data relevant to the research questions; or building blocks for themes, patterns, and meanings guided by a common concept (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022:77). Themes outline the framework for arranging and summarising the researcher's analytic observations (Thompson, 2022:1410). The objective of TA is not to provide a summary of the dataset, but to find and interpret key elements of the data in line with the research questions (Thompson, 2022:1410). In this study, the thematic analysis will be used to code the interview data into themes to identify similarities and differences before presentation and interpretation.

I adopted Braun and Clarke's (2021:78) six TA analysis steps for analysing the data:

#### **Step 1: Be familiar with the data**

The researcher must be familiar with the data collected before progressing. This can assist in figuring out the type of themes that emanate from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021:78). This stage is important as it guides steps that the researcher has to follow to analyse the data in a trustworthy manner (Dawadi, 2021:64). I commenced by

reviewing the collected data collected to become familiar with the content. Additionally, I transcribed the audio-recording into a Word format and thereafter repetitively read all verbatim transcriptions and then arranged the data systematically. For authenticity, I compared the audio-recording to the written verbatim transcriptions.

### **Step 2: Generate initial codes**

During this stage, the researcher commenced with the meaningful and methodical arranging of collected data. Since coding reduced much of the data into discrete, meaningful parts (Braun & Clarke, 2021:78), I selected the coding approach that aligned with the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3355). I commenced the coding process by identifying data segments that were relevant to the research questions and objectives, after which I grouped the data segments according to their similarity to one relevant group.

### **Step 3: Generate themes**

This stage consists of a list of codes that were extracted across the dataset. The aim of this stage was to identify patterns and relationships between whole datasets (Braun & Clarke 2021:78). It was important to analyse the codes and understand how various codes could have emerged to create an overall theme. The primary goal in this step was to concentrate on themes, not on codes (Dawadi, 2021:65). I assigned codes to data drawn from transcripts to classify them according to categories and themes. I then aligned emerging categories and themes with the sub-research questions.

### **Step 4: Review themes**

At this stage, all themes were identified, grouped, and presented systematically. Themes must be examined for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Dawadi, 2021:67). I studied and reviewed the selected themes to verify that they appropriately represent the data, and that I fully comprehended the participants' overall experiences according to the sub-research questions for coding purposes. Themes can be adjusted, integrated, or separated to best represent the data.

### **Step 5: Refine, define, and name themes**

This stage involved defining and describing each theme by explaining its significance to the research question. During this stage, I evaluated the names of the themes

covered in the final report to ensure accuracy (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:7). I then defined each theme and assigned a descriptive name to it that captured its content relevancy. Additionally, I ensured that the themes were meaningful and related to the research questions.

### **Stage 6: Writing up**

The final stage of the analysis was to write down the findings. This stage should go beyond merely summarising themes. The report must explain in a clear, succinct, and logical manner, not just how the researcher analyses the data, but also why the themes and interpretations chosen were significant and valid (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:7). I presented the findings coherently by also using data from the reviewed literature to support and discuss the findings.

### **3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness relates to the level of believability in the data, interpretation, and methods employed to ensure the authenticity of the study's results (Alexander, 2019:4). Trustworthiness assesses a study's overall quality and value, and how well the findings align with the study's aim and objectives as well as the validity of participants' collected information (Alexander, 2019:4). Qualitative research employs techniques like credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to confirm that the research is reliable and ethical according to the data trustworthiness criteria as discussed below (Akbari, Dehghan & Tirgari, 2022:3):

#### **3.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to the degree to which data and interpretations are accurate and believable. To attain credibility, researchers may use strategies like triangulation, member-checking, and ongoing comparison of emerging patterns and data (Nguyen, Ahn, Belgrave, Lee, Cawelti, Kim, Prado, Santagata & Villavicencio, 2021:49). This study applied member-checking to verify the accuracy of collected data from the verbatim transcriptions. During data collection, I engaged with the participants to build trust to ensure honest responses. This helped me develop a sense of cordiality and rapport with the participants. Additionally, to ensure credibility during data collection, I informed the participants that they will have access to their responses via member-checking the final interview (verbatim) transcripts. Member-checking entailed

discussing the findings with the participants to confirm the interpretations, accuracy, and validity. By soliciting participant feedback, researchers can confirm the congruence between their interpretations and the participant's experiences, thus increasing the study's credibility (Niewwenhuis, 2019:144). Lastly, to maintain credibility, I gathered in-depth information during the interview about factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools, relying solely on the participant's responses to avoid personal bias.

### **3.10.2 Dependability**

Dependability in qualitative research is related to reliability, and measures the degree to which a research study may be replicated by another researcher to yield similar results (Janis,2022: 241). Additionally, dependability refers to data consistency throughout time and under numerous conditions (Kyngas, Kaariainen & Elo, 2020:4). To attain dependability, I maintained consistency in the data collection method and data analysis processes. This was to ensure that if the study is conducted again, it will yield the same results. Additionally, I will present the report generated for this study for external inspection, and the audit trail to ensure the reliability and consistency of all process leading to the final report.

### **3.10.3 Transferability**

Transferability is defined as the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to different contexts and settings (Lemon & Hayes, 2020:605). In other words, transferability refers to the extent to which a study's findings and interpretations are transferable and relevant to settings other than the current research context (Niewwenhuis, 2019:144). Transferability is important in qualitative research because it helps researchers broaden their results' applicability and significance beyond the specific research environment (Munthe-Kaas, Nøkleby, Lewin & Glenton, 2020:13) and, at the same time, increases the study's robustness and usefulness, allowing researchers to make important contributions to knowledge and practice (Maxwell, 2021:112). During the interview, I collected sufficient and detailed information about factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools to ensure that the reader understands the context and nature of the schools.

### **3.10.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is defined as the extent to which the findings of the study can be confirmed by other researchers (McGill, McCloskey, Smith & Veitch, 2023:8). It ensures that a researcher's interpretations and findings are accurately drawn from the data, requiring demonstration of how conclusions and interpretations were obtained (Ahmed, 2024:2). Furthermore, confirmability is primarily concerned with objectivity and demonstrating how the researcher's interpretation of data did not rely on imagination, personal perceptions and experiences of the researcher, and accurately portrays the information provided by participants (Haq, Rasheed, Rashid & Akhter, 2023:159). This entailed ensuring that researcher bias did not distort the understanding of what research participants articulated or manipulated to fit the specific narrative.

To establish confirmability, qualitative researchers must produce an audit trail that illustrates each data analysis step, and provides a rationale for the conclusion (Haq et al., 2023:159). This ensures that the research study's conclusions appropriately align to the participants' responses. Confirmability is established after credibility, transferability, and dependability are all met (Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020:598). To accomplish confirmability in this study, I ensured that data collection and interpretation processes were clearly represented. Lastly, I sent transcribed data to participants for confirmation (and possible correction) to avoid misrepresentation of facts.

### **3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Mager and Galandini (2020:2), research ethics refers to a set of standards and regulations that regulate the design, conduct, management, use, and dissemination of any research content involving sentient beings (such as humans and animals) that enable researchers to conduct research responsibly and respectfully (Taquette & Borges, 2022:1). For this study, and prior to gathering data, permission was obtained from the University of the Free State, the Limpopo Department of Basic Education, and the school principals. Additionally, I requested (and received) permission from the principals to conduct research at their schools. The principals and teachers signed informed consent forms which permitted me to proceed with data collection. Informed consent is the process of informing potential research participants

about the major components of a study and what their involvement would entail (Klykken, 2022:796). Furthermore, their informed consent (signed) allowed selected participants to voluntarily engaging in the research process. I also explained verbally (meetings) and in writing (consent forms) the purpose and the finer details of the study to selected participants before data collection. Thereafter, the selected participants, after signing (and voluntarily agreeing to the conditions) handed in the consent forms to be securely stored (under lock and key) in the cabinet of the researcher's office. Participants were also informed that they have the right to withdraw from participating at any stage of the research process if they wish to do so, without being penalised in any way.

Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality refers to all information concealed from everyone, except the primary research team. Anonymity is keeping participants' identities private (Bos, 2020:156). To ensure confidentiality, participants were assured that their names and information were protected by allocating codes/pseudonyms. Moreover, the interview venue was located away from the busy activities of the school in a quiet, comfortable, private room. Participants were also protected from risk, physical and/or psychological, that may arise from the study. The participants' permission to be audiotaped during the interviews was obtained. The audio-recordings of the participants were stored in a password-protected e-file in the researcher's computer, while transcripts were safely stored and will be kept for five years to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, after which they will be deleted permanently from the computer.

### **3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter explained the research methodology used to investigate factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. It discussed the research design, paradigm, and approach. Furthermore, it described the data collection method and analysis processes. It also provided details of the study site, participant selection, and sampling methods. Moreover, data collection instruments and procedures were discussed. Lastly, data trustworthiness and ethical considerations were outlined. The next chapter (4) presents the data analysis and findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter (4) discussed the data analysis and interpretation of the findings on factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. The data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with twelve participants. The data, which was audio-recorded, was transcribed and analysed by using the thematic analysis approach which is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within datasets. For this study, the data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step approach. The following sub-research questions will guide the data analysis:

- How do teachers perceive inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What challenges do teachers face when implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do schools need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms?

#### 4.2 RESEARCH JOURNEY

My research journey commenced by obtaining ethical approval and permission from official bodies and selected participants to proceed with this research. I then arranged a meeting with the participants to discuss the details contained in the consent forms such as data collection, audio-recording, transcription of the interviews, and noting participants' background information. The following processes were followed that resulted in the findings of the study.

##### 4.2.1 Ethical Approval

I applied for ethics approval from the University of the Free State, Faculty of Education through RIMS (Research Information Management System). I received the approval letter, reference number **UFS-HSD2023/2016**. Furthermore, I approached the

Department of Education, Limpopo Province, for permission to conduct my research in the Sekhukhune District of Limpopo. Upon approval from both departments, I proceeded with fieldwork by approaching three school principals for permission to access school sites and selected participants. After thoroughly explaining the nature of my study and data collection procedure, these three schools permitted me to proceed with data collection. I then approached the four selected participants from each school to explain further arrangements to collect data.

#### **4.2.2 Meeting the Participants for Consent and Data Collection**

After obtaining permission from the principals to proceed with the study, I arranged meetings with the teachers (and principals) from the three schools on different dates. I visited the schools with copies of the informed consent form which contained all the information about the study. The meetings were convened in unoccupied classrooms. I started by thanking the teachers for showing interest in my study, and for providing their background information. I told teachers and principals about the nature of my study including the main objectives. After that, I distributed copies of the informed consent forms which included the research questions. I gave them 30 minutes to read, ask questions, and sign the forms if they chose to participate. Teachers and principals with more than five years of experience agreed to participate. I had to negotiate dates that were convenient for them, in addition to requesting principals to arrange quiet and private classrooms to avoid any disturbance during interviews. I exchanged contact numbers with the participants in case they wanted to reschedule appointments. The participants chose different time slots; some chose the morning slot as they had 'non-teaching' periods, others chose breaktime, and the majority opted for after-school hours. Two schools provided vacant classrooms while one school allocated the bookstore for the interviews. The interviews which were audio-recorded by using a cell phone with a backup facility for 30-60 minutes. Interviews were conducted for a period of a month - 18<sup>th</sup> July to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

#### **4.2.3 Transcription**

To transcribe the collected data, twelve interview recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber (Fundisa, Gauteng). I assigned a code to each participant to protect their identity.

#### **4.2.4 Participants' Background Information**

This study was conducted in three different rural secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District of the Limpopo Province. Nine teachers and three principals participated in this study: eight males and four females. The teachers' years of experience ranged from six to thirty-five. Their qualifications varied: Bachelor of Education (BEd), Bachelor of Arts (BA), Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma (SPTD), and Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD). Table 4.1 below summarised the demographics of the participants:

**Table 4.1: Participants' background information**

<i><b>Participants Codes</b></i>	<i><b>Gender</b></i>	<i><b>Qualification</b></i>	<i><b>Teaching Grade</b></i>	<i><b>Years of Teaching Experience</b></i>
P1	M	SPTD	12	19
P2	M	BEd	10	09
P3	F	BA	12	12
P4	F	SPTD	8	17
P5	M	SPTD	8	19
P6	M	BEd	8	9
P7	M	BA	11	35
P8	M	PGCE	11	6
P9	F	STD	9	10
P10	M	BA (HONS)	10	31
P11	F	STD	9	32
P12	M	BEd	10	18

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

This section provided the data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the findings emanating from the interviews. As highlighted in chapter one, the aim of this study was to explore factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. Braun and Clark's (2021) thematic analysis approach was applied to analyse interview transcripts. The analysis of this study was also guided by the objectives and research questions. Themes were developed through an in-depth analysis of the interview transcripts, with

subthemes emerging to further clarify and elaborate on specific aspects of participants' experiences. Each theme was supported by participant verbatim responses (excerpts) as well as from the literature review which offered an incisive understanding of the challenges and perspectives associated with inclusive education. The data interpretation was guided by Roger's (1962) Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory to elicit findings that led to determining factors that influence the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. The themes and sub-themes in table 4.2 below emerged from the interview transcripts.

**Table 4.2: Themes and subthemes**

Themes	Subthemes
1. Teachers' perception of inclusive education	1. Education for all 2. Inclusive education in rural areas 3. Pressure on teachers 4. Lack of experience
2. Challenges of implementing inclusive education	1. Time and curriculum constraints 2. Lack of individualised education 3. Discipline and motivation 4. Teachers' stress and burnout 5. Lack of support, monitoring, and evaluation at District level. 6. Lack of parental support, and overcrowded classrooms
3. Support schools need to implement inclusive education	1. Educational assistant 2. Specialised teachers 3. Support from the District 4. Technological resources 5. Need for proper Infrastructure 6. Access to free school transportation
4. Support teachers need to implement inclusive education	1. Professional Development and Training

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Short courses in inclusive education</li> <li>3. Appropriate teaching and learning materials</li> <li>4. Curriculum differentiation</li> <li>5. Support of social workers</li> <li>6. Parental support</li> </ol>
--	---

#### **4.2.1: Theme 1 - Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education**

This first theme emerged from the participants' varied perceptions of inclusive education, particularly in rural schools. The analysis revealed the following key subthemes:

##### **Subtheme 1: Education for all**

Education has been recognised as a human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Additionally, the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 Section 29(1) states that everyone has the right to education, including adult education (RSA, 1996). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Section 5(1) states that public schools must accept all learners and meet their educational requirements without any kind of unfair discrimination (RSA, 1996). Section 22 of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 states that ordinary public schools must admit learners with special needs, and provide the required support services and adequate physical facilities (RSA, 1996). Although we have policies promulgated that ensure that inclusive education is implemented at the school level, participants in this study expressed the following differing views:

**P4:** *“Inclusive education advocates for equality and states that all children must be taught in the same classroom despite their differences. But here, we are still failing to implement inclusive education in our classrooms because we were never trained on how to go about it. So, most learners are still suffering, but we are trying by offering extra classes in the afternoon and weekends”.*

**P2:** *“Inclusive education is a policy that was introduced way back, which is good in black and white, but we never implemented it. It compels us to teach all learners with or without special needs in the same classroom. I do not think we can do that without training, but we are compelled to implement it because they want all learners to be accommodated”.*

**P8:** *“My understanding of inclusive education is that it refers to educating all learners in the same classroom regardless of their backgrounds or learning disabilities but we do not have the necessary skills to implement it in our school.”*

**P12:** *“My understanding of inclusive education is that it refers to including all learners in the same classroom regardless of their differences. Inclusive means to include”.*

The participants in this study acknowledge inclusive education and understand what it entails. However, they expressed their concern about the need for training to implement it successfully. These participants revealed that they struggle to implement inclusive practices in their schools due to the lack of training. The responses of participants concur with the views of Mpu (2021:229) who agrees that the lack of skills and knowledge is one factor that prevents the successful implementation of inclusive education. In support, Ngoma (2020:16) adds there are persisting gaps in achieving full inclusivity, thus necessitating intensive teacher- training and pedagogical development to upgrade their knowledge and skills for the effective implementation of inclusive education.

## **Subtheme 2: Inclusive Education in Rural Schools**

This subtheme was identified through participants’ comments regarding the role of inclusive education in areas lacking specialised instruction. Many participants exposed the challenges of teaching in rural schools where identifying and supporting learners with special needs pose as problems for teachers. The following responses provide evidence of this:

**P1:** *“Inclusive education in the mainstream school is needed... all learners need to know one another’s problems and appreciate each other’s differences”*

**P2:** *“I’m not happy with the fact that not all learners are included in the classroom as instructed by the White policy, and that is because the DBE expects us to implement it without training.”*

**P4:** *“Inclusive education is important in helping learners with special needs, and as teachers, we are forced to identify those kinds of learners because most of their parents are not knowledgeable enough to spot their learning needs, and some do not want to acknowledge that their children have special needs”.*

**P6:** *“Yes, inclusive education is important because it is not okay to sideline learners with barriers to learning, but our rural schools are not given the necessary help and resources to teach learners with barriers to learning”.*

**P10:** *“I think it helps, especially for schools that are in rural areas, because we don't have these special schools, but it is not implemented in our schools. We are still using the same old method of teaching our learners because we do not know how to teach these kinds of learners with special needs.”*

The above evidence reveals that inclusive education is beneficial in rural areas where specialised institutions are scarce. Teachers often identify learners with special needs because parents may not recognise such ‘deficits’. Importantly, teachers emphasise that all learners must understand and appreciate each other’s differences and capabilities. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived simplicity of inclusive education which may be viewed as not being robust enough to address the complexities of inclusive teaching. Similarly, Malahlela (2017:41) indicates that while teachers acknowledge the importance of inclusive education, the lack of special needs institutions, poor training, and inadequate resources, particularly in rural areas, create challenges. This leads to teachers feeling unsupported and ill-equipped to meet the diverse needs of their learners, which aligns with participants’ views on the benefits and limitations of inclusive education in rural schools.

### **Subtheme 3: Pressure on teachers**

This subtheme surfaced when participants frequently spoke about the amount of pressure they face in delivering inclusive education. Teachers expressed concern about the need to balance curriculum goals with those of addressing diverse learners’ needs. This subtheme arose by coding frequent references to workload stress, curriculum demands, and the struggle to provide individual attention in overcrowded classrooms.

**P3:** *“Forcing us to accommodate learners with special needs is just putting too much pressure on us. We are teaching multiple grades, and on top of that, we are not trained to teach such learners at all”.*

**P6:** *“The amount of work we are supposed to cover is way too much, and there is limited time, especially because we are teaching lots of grades. Inclusive education is good, yes, I agree, but it places too much pressure on us teachers because now I have to develop different strategies to use in the same classroom with both normal learners and learners with learning disabilities. It was going to be better to have specific teachers that focus on teaching specifically learners with learning disabilities”.*

**P7:** *“Teachers also have a lot to learn because you might find that they are challenged in certain areas.”*

**P11:** *“It puts us teachers under pressure...we have to teach at a certain pace and follow the ATP (Annual Teaching Plan) as provided. Failure to do that we must account so this leaves us with no choice but to leave behind learners who are academically challenged”.*

The responses unearthed that teachers in inclusive education settings experience immense pressure to meet curriculum demands while catering to diverse learners' needs. Large class sizes lead to limited individualised learner support that increases strain which disables the balance between completing the syllabus and addressing individual learning differences. Further, the principals pointed out that teachers are often unprepared to meet the diverse needs of learners due to insufficient training. Research by Mensah and Nantwi (2020:20) found that teachers often view inclusive education as a 'forced' policy which increases their workload due to the extra need for differentiated instruction and planning. Participants echoed these concerns, noting that balancing the curriculum with meeting the diverse needs of learners significantly strained teachers.

#### **Subtheme 4: Lack of experience**

This subtheme emerged when participants consistently highlighted relevant experience in implementing inclusive education. Teachers expressed concern about not having experience to teach learners with barriers to learning. Most of them frequently mentioned that the DoE must workshop teachers to offer them practical

solutions on how to service learners with barriers to learning, both in and outside the classroom.

**P3:** *“Our school has plenty of learners with barriers to learning; some do not know how to read, and the worst part is they are in grade 12. The department expects great performance from our schools each year, but they did not equip us with the necessary experience to teach such learners. Are they expecting us to perform miracles?”*

**P5:** *“I have heard about the White Paper 6 policy before, but I do not have knowledge and experience in teaching learners with special needs and what pains me is that our school has lots of learners who need special teachers”.*

**P9:** *“Inclusive education is good because it advocates for the rights of all learners regardless of their differences, but it is good in black and white, not in reality. Look at our school. Do you think it is in good shape to cater to such learners? Do you think we have the skills and experience to teach learners with writing problems and other problems? So Inclusive education is like any other policy we know about it, but we are still failing to implement it”.*

**P10:** *“Us, old teachers who have been in this teaching industry for more than 20 years, we do not know what inclusive education is, and we do not have experience of how to teach learners with special needs we were never workshopped”.*

**P11:** *“Inclusive education is important because most learners end up dropping out of school because they feel and see that their learning needs are not met. We have learners who are way too old to be here, and we want to help them, but we do not know how to help them; we were never offered any workshops or given practical examples on how to help learners with special needs. This school has learners with such kinds of needs, but we do not have relevant experience. So, I teach them the normal way”.*

Data collected through interviews revealed that teachers lacked adequate experience to successfully implement inclusive education, especially without support. Although teachers are willing to implement inclusive education by accommodating learners with barriers to learning, they do not have the relevant experience and training to do so. This is supported by Lepheana, Campus, Chisango and Campus, (2022:254) who confirm that most teachers, especially those who have minimal experience in

mainstream schools, are not sufficiently equipped to roll-out the inclusive education policy.

#### **4.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education**

This theme emerged when interviewing the principals and teachers about the challenges their schools face in terms of implementing inclusive education. Participants mentioned numerous structural and practical difficulties which were categorised into the following subthemes:

##### **Subtheme 1: Time and curriculum constraints**

This subtheme emerged from participants discussing the challenges of completing the curriculum while accommodating learners with barriers to learning. Teachers indicated that the limited time available made it difficult to provide personalised attention - a sentiment consistently expressed across multiple interviews.

**P3:** *“As a grade 12 teacher, I have too much workload to cover, time is not on my side, and I am not only teaching grade 12, I also teach from grade 8-12, but grade 12 is my main focus. With that said, I don’t have time to give special attention to those learners who are struggling. I have ATP to follow, and I normally focus on those learners who will definitely give me better results by the end of the year”.*

**P6:** *“There is no time for special attention...we must finish the syllabus at the given time.”*

**P9:** *“Teaching multiple grades puts us under too much pressure, and it becomes difficult to manage due to limited time. I have a timetable, and there is a specific allocated time for which I must ensure that I cover everything before the lesson ends. So, I do not have enough time to give learners with barriers to learning special attention. We offer extra classes in the afternoon to cover areas they find difficult but still time is not enough”.*

**P12:** *“Teachers are overloaded with work and don’t have time to give special attention to learners with disabilities.”*

During data collection the participants unanimously complained about issues of time-constraints and work-overload. They claimed that they did not have sufficient time to complete the syllabus because they were compelled to cover the curriculum in a short

period of time. This forced them to rush through the prescribed curriculum, without considering other factors such as not all learners can learn at the same pace while some had different learning styles. However, with the current overloaded and rigid curriculum, teachers were always hurrying to complete it; but some learners fall behind without mastering the content. Since inclusive education advances the teaching of all learners regardless of their different learning needs, the time dedicated to teach them should be flexible to cater for both the teacher and the learner.

Other principals reiterated that teachers were burdened by overwhelming workloads, thus preventing them from providing individualised attention to learners with special needs which is a significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive education. The evidence also shows that one of the primary challenges faced by teachers was the lack of time to offer individual attention to learners with barriers to learning. They are required to complete the syllabus in accordance with set deadlines which does not allow for flexible pacing. Nembambula, Ooko and Aluko (2023:4) maintain that learners with diverse needs require more instructional time, and to be taught through creative and multi-teaching methods; in contrast, South African teachers struggle to complete the curriculum within the allocated time. Mpu and Adu (2021:37) elaborate that time-constraints often forces teachers to select only major sections of the syllabus for delivery to balance the provision of individualised attention needed for learners with special needs. Similarly, Chimhenga (2019:59) notes that insufficient time negatively affects learners with barriers to learning, as they are unable to receive the necessary support in the classroom.

### **Subtheme 2: Lack of individualised attention**

This subtheme emanated from participants who frequently mentioned their inability to cater to the specific needs of each learner by not having the relevant facilities to support them. They shared their frustrations about having to give the same work to all learners, even though some required specialised learning support. The following comments by participants supported the above assertion:

**P1:** *“I don’t think ordinary teachers like us must teach these learners with barriers to learning because they require too much individual attention, which we fail to give them because of time”.*

**P2:** *“Normally, I give struggling learners extra work instead of individual attention. Teaching other grades while teaching grade 12 makes it impossible to give a learner individual attention because I have too much work to cover. I have main classes and extra classes, which are conducted during the week and weekend, including Sunday. So, giving a learner individual attention becomes impossible”.*

**P5:** *“We give them the same work...but they need special attention.”*

**P7:** *“I have never given a struggling learner special attention because there are a lot of them, and I don’t know how to help them. I think such learners must be taught by specialised teachers that would help us a lot by focusing mainly on those who are performing better”.*

The participants articulated that it was difficult to provide learners with individual attention, and some thought of engaging special teachers who would take the weight off their shoulders. This would avoid prescribing the same classroom tasks to all learners even some needed more tailored tasks. This clearly indicated that teachers were still using the traditional approach to teaching learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms – a one-size-fits-all approach that is no longer relevant in modern pedagogics.

### **Subtheme 3: Discipline and motivation**

This subtheme emerged from participant reflections on the difficulties of managing discipline in classrooms with diverse learners. Participants described how traditional disciplinary methods were not effective for all learners, particularly those with special needs.

**P5:** *“I, for one, am not coping in managing the classroom. I am trying, but it's difficult, especially because our classrooms are overcrowded”*

**P7:** *“Our classes also have learners with behavioural problems; some do not write their work and do not submit their classwork books when we need them for marking and evaluation”.*

**P9:** *“We face challenges with learners that feel excluded during the classroom, they become bored then start interrupting the class by making noise or disturbing other learners by talking to them or poking them”.*

**P11:** *"I usually threaten my learners by telling them 'If you don't finish in time, I punish you'...but that's not effective for everyone. We have learners that are naturally slow and it takes them hours to copy classwork from the chalkboard".*

Managing a classroom with diverse learners leads to disciplinary challenges. Traditional methods of managing classroom behaviour such as punishment, are not effective for learners with special needs, thus there is need for more adaptable strategies. Woodcock, Gibbs, Hitches and Regan, (2023:7) indicate that teachers who believe that inclusive education is an effective pedagogical method for all learners regardless of their learning abilities are more confident in their ability to build a classroom management system for learners to adhere to classroom rules which reduces disruptive behaviour. However, participants in this study were still struggling with the complexities of implementing inclusive education; hence, they experienced behavioural problems during class activities because differently abled learners felt left behind.

The above evidence revealed that managing a classroom with diverse learners leads to disciplinary challenges. The challenge of managing behaviour in inclusive classrooms is echoed in the literature, where teachers express frustration with traditional methods not being suitable for all learners, especially those with learning barriers (Boitumelo, Kuyini & Major, 2020:7). This can lead to disruptive behaviour which sometimes can be unmanageable due to the lack of motivation among learners with special needs who feel isolated

#### **Subtheme 4: Teachers' stress and burnout**

This subtheme was unearthed by analysing participants' articulations on the emotional toll that emanates from managing an inclusive classroom. Teachers frequently complained about feeling overwhelmed, thus emphasising the correlation between teaching in an inclusive education classroom and increased levels of teacher-stress.

**P1:** *"Managing a classroom of learners with both and without barriers to learning is quite challenging. Sometimes I become helpless and clueless. One thing I love about our kids is that they are not violent at all; they are still respectful, but they are too noisy when excluded from the class. I try by engaging them as well by giving them the platform to answer questions other than that, I give them extra work to do to keep them busy".*

**P2:** *"To be honest, I am not managing at all. I give my learners from grade 8 up to grade 12 the same work. I do not differentiate because I do not know how to".*

**P4:** *"I was teaching in a different school before this one; I have never encountered so many learners with barriers to learning in one school and classroom. This causes too much stress on me, and I feel like a failure when I leave other learners behind, but... well to support learners with barriers to learning, one needs knowledge and experience. What do you do as a teacher when it's like that?"*

**P5:** *"I feel like I need to adjust to every learner, but I don't have enough time and that causes stress as we leave behind some learners."*

**P10:** *"I give my learners the same work and monitor if they have written or not. That is how I manage my classes. Learners with difficulties sometimes are found without work done, and I sometimes avoid questioning them because I already know the problem. When we call parents so that we can come up with a plan together, they do not respond, which causes too much frustration, especially with grade 12 learners. They expect a lot from us and that puts too much strain on us".*

These excerpts indicated that managing an inclusive classroom can lead to teacher-stress because teachers struggle to meet the diverse needs of learners without adequate support. Also, teachers experience stress and burnout because they feel overwhelmed by the need to accommodate each learner's pace and learning style with the requirements of the syllabus, especially when there is the lack of adequate support from the DoE.

The evidence indicates that the stress associated with managing inclusive classrooms leads to teacher burnout. Participants frequently mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the need to meet the diverse requirements of their learners without sufficient resources or support. This emotional strain was exacerbated by the pressure to meet curriculum goals. In congruence, research supports the notion that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education are influenced by various factors, including the lack of resources and skills necessary to teach learners with barriers to learning. According to Mabokachaba (2022:57), many teachers still adhere to a medical model that categorises learners' shortcomings as belonging to remedial schools rather than mainstream classrooms. This belief is compounded by the fact that teachers feel ill-equipped to manage learners with special needs, a sentiment echoed by Mathebula

(2021:62), who claims that the lack of resources in South African schools stifles the implementing of inclusive education.

### **Subtheme 5: Lack of support, monitoring, and evaluation**

**P7:** *“As a teacher, I only rely on my colleagues for help; in this case, the blinds are guiding the blind”.*

**P8:** *“District officials hardly come to our school to evaluate or monitor implementation of inclusive education. They only visit our school for other things, not for the purpose of monitoring teachers if they are coping with the implementation of inclusive education or if they need assistance. They are aware of our problems, and they keep on giving us false hopes”.*

**P11:** *“I never received a single help from the district officials. In fact, I even doubt they know how to implement inclusive education themselves”.*

**P12:** *“I think it is the duty of our district officials to offer us workshops and training about inclusive education, right? But our teachers never received any single workshop or training, I do not remember, honestly. They must offer us continuous training about inclusion and evaluate our teachers by providing them with solid feedback. Hence, I say it must not be a once-off training. They must monitor us, otherwise we cannot expect our teacher to be the jack of all trade”.*

A report by Mncube, Lebopha and Titus (2020:104) maintains that the Department of Basic Education, through its District officials, must provide teachers with sufficient relevant support to effectively implement inclusive education. Unfortunately, the participants in this study bemoaned the fact that they never received any support from the District regarding the implementation of inclusive education. The principals also reported that they required continuous professional development (CPD) support from the District to become better informed about how to successfully implement inclusive education at their schools.

### **Subtheme 6: Lack of parental support, and overcrowded classrooms**

This subtheme emerged from participants discussing the critical role parents play in supporting inclusive education, particularly in rural areas. Many participants claimed that the lack of parental involvement hindered the successful implementation of inclusive strategies, which was exacerbated by overcrowded classrooms. Teachers

felt that parents were not adequately supporting their children's education, while overcrowded classrooms made it difficult to implement new trends in inclusive strategies.

**P3:** *“Another biggest challenge we are facing is overcrowded classrooms and lack of parental intervention. Our classes do not have enough space because they are full. Almost all grades that I am teaching have over 60 learners. Another challenge is that We don’t get support from parents in this rural area. The only time we see a parent here is when they want to complain about a teacher, but when they are invited to discuss their children’s education, they do not come”.*

**P5:** *“Managing a classroom of more than 50 learners is quite challenging. They are disruptive during lessons, and monitoring them is another challenge. I sometimes spend more than 10 minutes trying to calm them so that I can start with the lesson. Another issue that is demotivating is that since I started teaching in this school, I have met only two parents, and it was not about discussing the academic challenges of their children. It was about a school trip. We cannot support their children alone. It must be a teamwork”.*

**P8:** *“We are dealing with too many learners in one classroom. Some of them are even disruptive, which makes it difficult for us to teach. we do not have space to walk around during the lesson to monitor learners. Sometimes, it's also difficult to spot learners who require extra support”.*

**P9:** *“I honestly do not think these kids' parents care about their children’s education. They always have excuses when they are supposed to come for parent’s meetings.*

**P11:** *“We have overcrowded classrooms, we don't have enough resources, and the District was informed of this challenge, and they promised that they would expand our school. They last came here in 2010 to assess and check how many more classrooms we are in need of, and to this day, they never came back with building materials. One classroom has more than 50 learners, and our school has a few blocks. Then how are we expected to give learners with barriers to learning individual attention when the situation is like this? To us, the White Paper 6 policy is good in black and white only”.*

**P12:** *“We really need parents to support us, in fact, to support their children, but they behave as if they have given up on their children’s future. Another challenge I have observed again is that most parents are illiterate; hence, they do not attend parent meetings because they do not know how to help their kids. I do not even think they go through their children’s classwork books”.*

Most participants during data collection raised the lack of parental support and overcrowded classrooms as serious issues to address. It was evident that overcrowded classrooms hindered teachers from providing differently abled learners with the individual support they needed. Overcrowded classrooms are barriers that increase teachers’ level of stress and they negatively affect the quality of education learners receive (Sigh, 2019:20). Lepheana, Campus, Chisango and Campus (2022:10) mention that in South Africa, schools in township and rural areas have more than 50 learners in a classroom of different age groups. Moreover, Mphahlele (2019:14) confirms that accommodating all learners in large classes becomes impossible due to limited resources.

Further, participants highlighted the issue of parental involvement, particularly in rural areas, as a significant challenge. Without active engagement from parents, teachers struggle to reinforce inclusive education practices in the classroom, which is crucial for the holistic development of learners with barriers to learning. Parental involvement is critical in creating a more inclusive education system, as parents offer valuable insight into their children's needs which support the educational process (Alzahrani, 2020:10). Lamentably, Namanyane and Shaoan (2021:362) note parental participation is often limited, particularly in rural areas, which significantly affects the ability of teachers to implement inclusive education strategies effectively.

In sum, teachers and principals felt that their school environment is not conducive to implementing inclusive education effectively because of several challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources and the absence of parental involvement, among others. Makuya and Sedibe (2021:23) contend that even if teachers were adequately trained, the lack of essential resources further hampers their ability to implement inclusive education successfully. Mphahlele (2019:14) points out that such challenges impede individualised attention to learners which stifles implementing diverse and modern educational strategies to promote best practice.

### **4.2.3 Theme 3: Support schools need to implement inclusive education**

The third theme explored the support schools needed to successfully implement inclusive education without any hiccups. The following subthemes emerged:

#### **Subtheme 1: Educational assistant**

**P3:** *“Because of the overcrowdedness in the classrooms, I think it would be great to have assistants to ensure that the lessons run smoothly”.*

**P4:** *“We need support in terms of systems to help us manage learners who struggle in specific areas. Maybe if they introduce an educational assistants programme, we can manage inclusive better”.*

**P7:** *“Educational assistants are a must; during COVID-19, we were coping much better because of the assistance offered. We need assistance in the classroom; managing more than 50 learners alone puts us under too much pressure”.*

**P12:** *“The department must introduce the permanent post of educational assistants, and I think they would help teachers in handling the workload and manage our overcrowded classrooms better”.*

The principals mentioned that additional support, such as recruiting educational assistants, were necessary to aid teachers to manage and guide learners with special needs. Without this support, classroom management becomes increasingly difficult. The participants believed that they could not overcome inclusive classroom challenges without extra support.

#### **Subtheme 2: Specialised teachers**

**P4:** *“I think our government must consider hiring teachers who are qualified to teach learners with learning disabilities so that other teachers can focus on those who do not have any challenges”.*

**P6:** *“Our school is short-staffed. For example, I teach from grade 8 to 12, and grade 12 needs more time and attention than other grades. On top of that, each class has more.”*

**P8:** *“The Department of Education must hire more teachers, especially those who specialised in special needs”.*

**P10:** *“I have more than 45 learners in one classroom. Then, how am I going to manage to accommodate learners with learning disabilities? Government must hire more teachers, including those who specialised in dealing with learners with barriers”.*

**P11:** *“We have one teacher here at our school who never specialised in special needs education that helps learners who struggling to read to know how to read. She helps them after school hours. The progress is very slow, and we do not blame her; she is trying her best. Maybe if we had a specialised teacher or psychologist, they would know how to accelerate the process since some grade 12 learners are part of the group that cannot read.”*

**P12:** *“The top management, which is the Department of Education, is expecting us teachers to perform miracles; how can they expect us ordinary teachers who have been teaching before they introduced inclusive education to accommodate learners with special needs? We are teaching in ordinary schools for a reason: they must hire teachers that specialised in inclusive education”.*

Principals and teachers reported that it was beneficial to have specialised teachers who mainly focus on learners with barriers, instead of general teachers who teach multiple classes but are also be expected to teach learners with barriers to learning. They emphasised that the DBE must hire specialised teachers who are trained in understanding different learning disabilities which ensures that learners receive the appropriate support and interventions tailored to meet their learning needs. They elaborated that, as ordinary teachers, they lack the time and skills to offer diverse learners the special help they need. Learners with barriers to learning who receive specialised attention are more likely to excel academically and develop fine social skills. Kefallinou, Symeonidou and Meijer (2020:20) claim that learners can perform better when there is close collaboration between schools and services such as educational psychologists, school counsellors, speech and language therapists, learner-support specialists, and mental health services.

### **Subtheme 3: Support from the District (DoE)**

The DBST plays a critical role in supporting schools to successfully implement inclusive education practices by offering specialist guidance, training, and resources. The goal is to ensure that schools have the capacity to address the different learning needs of learners, especially learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. The

participants in this study shared their views about the support they need from the District officials. Below are their concerns:

**P4:** *“We need support from the district level to help us on how to teach these kids or to recommend schools that would be suitable for them. They come to our school but not to workshop or guide us on how to help learners with special needs. Without proper guidance, we will still remain in the dark in terms of inclusive education, and our kids will continue to suffer”*

**P6:** *“We need the support of the district to offer us workshops and also provide practical demonstrations on how to tailor our lesson plan to implement inclusive education”*

**P8:** *“We hardly receive support from the Department of Education and our district, and we need them on board to assist us. Without them, there won’t be any progress, and our learners will continue to drop out because we do have learners that drop out due to feeling neglected in the classroom”*

**P12:** *“I wish the district to be fully involved in facilitating continuous workshops about inclusive education. The most important thing we need while waiting for the government to offer us other resources, like building more classes, is for the district to offer us training on inclusive education but we do not have their support. They know very well that we were never workshopped on inclusive education, and it is recorded in their books that they never visited us.”*

The principals from the three schools expressed the same concern about the DBST’s non-involvement in enhancing inclusive education. The District-Based Support Team’s (DBST’s) responsibility is to promote inclusive practices and to provide teachers with adequate support and training to equip them to implement inclusive education effectively (Ngcezulla 2018:50). The DoE (2001:29) pledged its commitment (via the DBST) to improve the knowledge and skills of everyone involved in inclusive education by providing regular in-service training. Furthermore, the DoE (2005:9) indicated that one of the key roles of the DBST was to offer classroom-based support to teachers and learners, such as direct learning support for learners with special education needs, ongoing professional development for teachers, guidance to ensure all curriculum components are covered so that teachers become responsive to learners’ needs, and

supply teaching and learning resources and materials to support learning for all learners (DoE, 2005:9).

#### **Subtheme 4: Technological resources**

**P1:** *“Technology is currently transforming how things are done in the classrooms, but we do not have access to appropriate resources. I mean, even us teachers do not have our personal laptops to use to make things much easier for us”.*

**P2:** *“We need access to advanced technology resources in the classrooms, and as teachers, we must first be offered ICT training. This would make teaching and learning more interesting”.*

**P3:** *“What specific resources or support do you think teachers need? We need lots of resources here. Technologically, we are way too behind. The school does not have access to free Wi-Fi, just like other schools, and we don’t have enough teaching aids”.*

**P4:** *“The school has no important resources like science labs and computer labs. Whenever we want to experiment with something, I have to talk to the principal to organise transport to go to a certain school in town just to use their science lab, and that only happens twice or once a year, which is not enough. Our learners are suffering”.*

**P8:** *“Our school need lots of resources like smartboards to play videos, whiteboards and computer labs. Most learners do not know how computers work”.*

**P10:** *“Integration of technology in the classroom is needed, but we are still doing things the traditional way. We are struggling in many areas: we do not have relevant resources, there is a lack of ICT, whenever we teach, we use only textbooks, and we do not have projectors or even whiteboards. So, we need ICT. These kids must be supported in every angle by being given access to the internet or tablets that support their learning needs”.*

Teachers and principals prioritised the need for technological resources such as assistive devices, projectors, and educational videos, to make lessons interesting, engaging, and accessible for learners with special needs. The subtheme was developed based on frequent mentions by participants concerning the need for modern educational tools.

### **Subtheme 5: Need for proper Infrastructure**

**P4:** *“Our DBE must give itself a project to assess the situation of rural schools to confirm first whether the schools are in good shape to implement inclusive education. Our school is not conducive to inclusive education. We need our school building to be expanded. Even staff members do not have a proper staff room setting, and as a principal, I do share the same staff room with our teachers; where else I should be having my own office”.*

**P6:** *“Our buildings are not that bad, but they need renovation and more classes. So the main focus should be on building more classes”.*

**P7:** *“We asked for more classes, and they gave us containers that are not what we want. These containers are not designed for proper accessibility. So we need enough classrooms to reduce overcrowdedness”.*

**P8:** *“We need infrastructure that is accessible and designed for learners with disabilities.”*

**P12:** *“Many learners with special needs struggle because they are not properly catered for; the setting in the classroom is not conducive for learners with special needs.”*

The principals add that current infrastructure and resources are insufficient to properly accommodate learners with disabilities, resulting in their needs not being met. In addition, the principal highlights the need for flexible infrastructure that can accommodate diverse learners. This includes facilities like accessible toilets and classrooms designed to meet the needs of all learners.

### **Subtheme 6: Access to free school transportation**

The participants have raised the issue of learners’ transportation to and from school:

**P4:** *“Another support that we need here at our school is free school transportation for our learners. These kids walk long distances to school, which is not good and safe”.*

**P6:** *“Our kids walk miles and miles to school because they do not have access to free school transportation, and not everyone can afford monthly transport because of different backgrounds. This is a rural place where most parents rely on social grants”.*

**P7:** *“Another barrier is school transport; most learners travel long distances to school, and by the time they arrive here, they are too tired to pay full attention to us in the classroom. All they need is to rest instead of concentrating”.*

**P8:** *“Our problems are many, and we need support in almost all areas. We want our learners to have access to free school transport that would pick them up in the morning and drop them at their homes after school. They are forced to walk to school even when it's raining, they cross bridges, and it takes some of them 1 hour and 30 minutes to get to school. Oftentimes, they arrive at school, missing the first lessons in the morning, and when the weather is bad, some choose not to come to school. So, we need support in terms of free transportation. Some of them have private transportation that they pay monthly, but the majority of them walk to school due to their home backgrounds”.*

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Transport (DoT) developed the National Learner Transport Policy (NLTP) in 2015 with the objective of addressing the challenges of learners' accessibility and safety (DBE, 2015). According to this policy, learners who walk at least five (5) kilometres to and from the nearest school, qualify for free transportation. However, the participants in this study lamented that their schools do not have access to free school transportation. The participants criticised the fact that due to transport challenges, learners' education is compromised since they arrive late at school and miss classes, especially during inclement weather. Walking to school results in fatigue that hampers learners' concentration during lessons. Shikalepo (2020:23) concurs that the lack of transportation and long distances to and from school are barriers preventing learners from attending schools.

#### **4.2.4 Theme 4: Support teachers need to implement inclusive education**

The lack of adequate resources and support systems was a common concern among participants, thus leading to the emergence of this theme. These subthemes which were identified follow:

##### **Subtheme 1: Professional development and training**

The participants called for specialised training and continuous professional development to improve inclusive education practices. This subtheme was developed from participants' consistent statements about the lack of adequate training for

enhancing inclusive practices while addressing the diverse needs of learners. In other words, participants believed that additional training would help them to better understand how to accommodate abled and differently abled learners.

**P4:** *"We don't have teachers who are trained in sign language or Braille. As teachers, we are not trained to cater to learners with special needs at all, and we are just doing our best to help these learners where we can. So we need training in inclusive education".*

**P6:** *"We need more training on inclusive education and ongoing workshops."*

Teachers consistently expressed the need for more intensive professional development on inclusive education. They recognised that additional ongoing training would equip them with in-depth knowledge and creative strategies required to support learners with special needs.

**P10:** *"We have learners that have visual problems, and the only thing we do to accommodate them is to seat them in front. There is nothing more that we can do to help because we are not trained to cater for them, and the school does not have the resources to meet their learning needs. We do not have important skills and knowledge on how to accommodate learners with special needs, to be honest with you".*

**P12:** *"The district must send people to workshop us on how to include learners with disabilities in our lessons. We understand that our schools are in rural areas and they are far from specialised schools. So, we need workshops, training and they must not be once off".*

The principals pointed out that there was a shortage of trained and qualified teachers to service learners with specific needs, such as those requiring sign language or Braille instruction. This underscores the critical need for specialised training in inclusive education. Owhondah and Nwosu (2022:1) define teachers' professional development as an ongoing process that enhances teacher knowledge and skills to benefit all learners.

Several studies emphasise the need for intensive, targeted training in inclusive education practices. Hooijer, Van der Merwe and Fourie (2021:132) note that most mainstream class teachers are not adequately trained to address the diverse needs

of learners with barriers to learning. Mahlo (2017:6) also found that teachers require intensive training to successfully implement inclusive classroom practices, while Adigun (2021:4) emphasised that continuous training ensures that teachers become better prepared to meet the challenges of inclusive education; hence, the significance of creating a sound system of inclusive education in mainstream schools cannot be overstated. In sum, it is critical to acknowledge the importance of having well-trained teachers in mainstream schools who can effectively implement inclusive practices in diverse classrooms.

### **Subtheme 2: Short course in inclusive education**

**P1:** *“I think if we were to be given a short course that covers inclusive education and psychology, it would help us understand the field better and the learning needs of learners. Yes, psychology courses can help us understand their social issues too”.*

**P9:** *“Maybe the Department of Education must offer us a short course about special needs education; I think that can help us teachers to understand our learners and have the right knowledge about inclusion”.*

**P10:** *“A short course and workshops can help us better understand the needs of the learners even beyond classrooms”.*

**P11:** *“Our DBE must focus on empowering us teachers first by providing us with free courses that focus on inclusive education and psychology”.*

South Africa’s legal frameworks such as the South African Constitution and White Paper 6, favour inclusive practices in education. Participants noted that short courses might equip them with the relevant skills to effectively implement inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Since many remarked that they were not formally trained in inclusive strategies during their formal education, they advocated for short courses to help them, not only to assist their learners in the classrooms but also to offer emotional and psychological support. Therefore, by offering teachers short courses in inclusive education in addition to professional development training, South Africa can move closer to achieving the goal of inclusion in schools.

### **Subtheme 3: Appropriate teaching and learning materials**

Teachers felt they lack both physical resources (e.g. teaching aids) and adequate training to effectively implement inclusive education as articulated in the excerpts below:

**P7:** *“As teachers, we do not have enough teaching materials and resources that support diverse learning, and somehow, we end up compromising the quality education that must be offered to these kids”.*

**P9:** *“Our learners do not have enough textbooks, and you find that during the lesson, we group them into 4 or 5 to share one textbook”.*

**P10:** *“How do you teach inclusively when your school has only a chalkboard in the classroom? this school does not have appropriate learning materials for learners with special needs, and in terms of resources, you can see for yourself, the school is struggling”.*

**P11:** *“We need projectors and smartboards so that we can play videos to teach inclusively and display other important learning material.”*

The articulations show that teachers lack physical resources such as teaching aids and learning materials such as textbooks to effectively implement inclusive education. The availability of adequate physical and technological resources is vital for supporting inclusive education (Sandoval, Muñoz & Márquez, 2021:35). Teachers often feel constrained by the lack of educational tools which hinders their ability to deliver successful inclusive lessons (Kohli, 2019:2). In support, Francisco, Hartman and Wang (2020:8) noted that physical and technological resources are key to overcoming barriers that learners with special needs may face, thus enabling them to participate fully in the classroom.

### **Subtheme 4: Curriculum differentiation**

This subtheme emerged from participants’ recognising that rigid teaching approaches were impractical in an inclusive classroom. Participants advocated for training that demonstrated differentiation in teaching styles and methods to meet the varied needs of their learners.

**P3:** *"We need curriculum differentiation training and application. Right now, the curriculum is not flexible, or we do not know how to make it flexible".*

**P3:** *"We do not have resources that support flexibility when we teach our kids, and I think resources matter the most when teaching them so that the lesson can be interesting and engaging".*

**P5:** *"Our lessons are straightforward; we want training on how to make it interesting and engaging for every learner".*

**P7:** *"The support we need as teachers is how to tailor down our lessons to accommodate learners with special needs because what I do personally is that I give those struggling learners extra work to do, and sometimes they do not do it".*

Teachers recognised that rigid teaching strategies were outdated in inclusive classrooms. They advocated for curriculum differentiation in addressing different learning abilities.

The evidence indicated that giving the same assessments to all learners defeated the aim to provide differentiated content, instruction, or assessments. Teachers acknowledged that some learners require specialised tasks, but limited resources and time prevented this, thus creating a disconnect between learner needs and lesson delivery. In congruence, Jali (2014), states that the South African curriculum is rigid and does not promote flexibility and understanding for learners with diverse needs which limits teachers' ability to plan lessons and assignments according to the unique learning abilities of each learner.

Further, the evidence reveals that there is a demand for more curriculum differentiation regarding teaching approaches that allow teachers to adapt lessons and content to different learning styles and pace. Teachers acknowledge that rigid, standardised methods marginalise the diverse needs of learners, thus this calls for dynamic training programmes to resolve this issue. In agreement, Ahmad Zaky El Islami, Anantanukulwong and Faikhamta (2022:2) note that inclusive practices require teachers to adapt their teaching methodologies to meet the needs of learners with different abilities. This adaptability is crucial for ensuring that every learner can access and benefit from curriculum delivery (Yıldız, Köse & Akın, 2022:1).

Additionally, Makhalemele and Tlale (2021:155) emphasise that professional development programmes should be ongoing and focused on inclusive practices that allow for curriculum differentiation by focusing on teaching methods. Teachers must be trained to incorporate differentiated instruction and assessment approaches to address diverse learning styles and paces (Hooijer et al., 2021:132). Flexibility in teaching is essential in inclusive classrooms, where learners' needs vary significantly.

### **Subtheme 5: Support of social workers**

Teachers indicated that their learners not only experience hurdles to learning, but also social obstacles that are beyond their control which require the urgent counselling of social workers. According to the Social Service Profession Act, 1978 (Act No 110 of 1978), the school social worker has a specialised position within the multidisciplinary support team to provide psychosocial support services within the context of inclusive education (Van Sittert & Wilson, 2018:3). Within the DBE (2010), the multidisciplinary team includes educational psychologists, social workers, teachers and educational specialists who should provide essential services to enhance the lives of learners with special needs. This subtheme emerged from participants discussing the critical role of social workers within school environments.

**P8:** *"We are teaching learners with different problems; they come to school with one problem after another, which distracts them from coping with their schoolwork. We offer support, but it is not enough. I think professional support is needed".*

**P9:** *"We also need the support of social workers; even if they come twice a week, I think it would make a huge difference; as an LO teacher, most learners confide in me with their issues, and because I am not a qualified social worker or psychologist, I sometimes do not know how to support them besides offering them emotional support and alerting the principal. You can see that their problems are preventing them from concentrating on their studies".*

**P10:** *"The assistance of social workers would be much appreciated in this school. Sometimes, these learners go through heavy things that prevent them from concentrating on their studies. Some end up having anger outbursts when we reprimand them".*

The principal confirmed the above statements by mentioning that their school is not only facing one issue, but many issues that require multifaceted support.

**P12:** *“This school really need the intervention of a social worker; these kids are going through psychological problems at a very tender age. Some of them have reported issues of rape, and I did contact a social worker at our local clinic. She promised to come, but even now, we are still waiting. It would be better if our district allocated one social worker to visit our rural schools weekly. This place is far from many things, and it becomes difficult to refer a learner to town for help”.*

It is assumed that experts such as social workers, psychologists, counsellors, and therapists are available at the District to visit schools to assist teachers and learners. Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned that they received such support for learners. Since, teachers deal with learners from different backgrounds, some of whom may face challenges in their home environments, social workers' presence in schools is critical for addressing such issues. Also, social workers at in-house school level help in interventions to support learners as they are qualified to identify and assess learners with various emotional, psychological, and socio-economic barriers that affect their ability to learn. Vergottini and Weyers (2020:131) agree that social workers have an important role to play within the school context by providing emotional support to learners by using their knowledge and skills to establish a supportive school environment.

### **Subtheme 3.6: Parental support**

**P3:** *“Another support we need in our school is parental support. We hardly see concerned parents about the progress of their learners. Even when we issue reports, they do not bother by asking about the low performance of their children. They are quick to blame us, not understanding the kind of challenges we are faced with in the classrooms”.*

**P5:** *“We need the involvement of parents. They should not only come to school when they want to or when they want to complain about a certain teacher. We believe that together, teachers and parents can come up with different strategies for their children”.*

**P6:** *“In this rural area, parents are hardly involved in their kid’s education, and when helping learners with special needs, we want them to be part of the process and also*

*to provide us with the necessary information that can help us better understand the learner”.*

**P9:** *“We want the support of the parents from January to December, the last day of the school calendar. It becomes better when you know as a teacher that you are not fighting alone with the schoolteachers. Most parents come at the beginning of the year for grade 12 meeting, but during the year, only a few of them come through when we send them the invitation”.*

**P11:** *“I think our parents do not know what inclusive education is and its benefits to their struggling children, and most of them do not know the kinds of barriers their children have in the classroom; hence, they are hesitant when we call them to come through, but we need them. It is not only the job of a teacher to figure out everything on their own”.*

The participants in this study recognised the importance of parental involvement in their children’s education. It is imperative for schools to actively engage with parents about their children’s education. However, most parents do not know the kind of barriers their children face, therefore it is important for parents to be informed about inclusive education practices and their benefits for their children. Schools can provide guidance by conducting regular meetings to enlighten parents on the different learning needs, styles, and strategies to support and motivate their children at home. Further, encouraging parental support in decision-making processes, such as developing individual education plans (IEPs), fosters a collaborative approach. Segoe and Bisschoff (2019:167) mention the advantages of involving parents in schools: enhanced learner-attitudes, sound parent-school relationships, enhanced motivation, genuine cooperation amongst all parties, as well as parents’ interest in their children’s academic progress. Cabanero (2023:20) adds that collaboration with parents enhances an inclusive school culture, a sense of belonging, and mutual respect. Also, a study by Freeman-Green, Williamson and Cornelius (2023:75) confirms that parental support and involvement in children’s educational activities play a fundamental role in implementing inclusive education to promote academic results. In sum, teachers, parents, and support staff can create a more inclusive, equitable learning environment for all learners through collaborative processes.

#### **4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Thematic analysis was applied to determine factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. This chapter discussed the responses of 12 participants from three different mainstream secondary schools. Four research questions were used to generate themes to arrive at the findings. The data was analysed to arrive at themes and subthemes. This study's findings answered the main and secondary research questions. While inclusive education is acknowledged as a sound reform policy that addresses educational inequalities, most teachers still struggle to implement it. The findings reveal that teachers understand inclusive education, but their lack of experience hampers implementation. Participants also mentioned their challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, time and curriculum constraints, lack of individualised education, and lack of facilities, among others. They further mentioned that they needed multifaceted support such as professional development and training, educational assistance, technological resources, parental support, appropriate teaching and learning materials, teacher-aides, and assistance from social workers. Startlingly, the participants revealed that they had not received any form of training to teach learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms. The data disclosed that they rely on their own understanding of implementing inclusive education. The next chapter (5) presents the discussion of findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I conclude the study on factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. It presented the discussion and summary of the findings, implications, recommendations, limitations, and the conclusion of the. The discussion responds to the following sub-research questions:

- How do teachers perceive inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What challenges do teachers face implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do schools need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms?

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section outlines the findings from the data analysis presented and interpreted in chapter four. The findings were aligned to the literature review in chapters one and two. The discussion of this chapter was based on four themes presented and discussed in chapter four (section 4.3) to provide answers to factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province.

##### **5.2.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education**

Understanding teachers' perceptions about inclusive education improves teaching-learning environments regardless of their learner differences. Jia, Tan, and Santi (2024:3) maintain that teachers' understanding of inclusive education, including their pedagogical knowledge and skills, has a huge impact on the implementation of inclusivity. The findings in this study indicated that teachers and principals claim to understand inclusive education, but many barriers hinder them from implementing it.

They identified many challenges that prevented them from effectively implementing inclusive education, such as the lack of experience. Woodcock, Gibbs, Hitches and Regan (2023:111) indicate that inclusive education entails removing barriers to learning for all learners in mainstream classrooms. Moreover, the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) is the foundation policy document that guides the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. It acknowledges that all children and youth have the ability to learn but will require special support. Additionally, Hodkinson (2019:30) asserts that although teachers understand the concept of inclusive education, they lack the resources and assistance necessary to effectively teach and meet learners' different learning needs. This was confirmed by one of the participants, who stated:

**P2:** *“Inclusive education is a policy that was introduced way back, which is good in black and white, but we never implemented it. It compels us to teach all learners with or without special needs in the same classroom. I do not think we can do that without training, but we are compelled to implement it because they want all learners to be accommodated”.*

A study by Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018:3) agrees that mainstream teachers were not previously prepared to address barriers to learning, and they are now required to accommodate diverse learners in their mainstream classes because of the shift to inclusive education. Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018:3) elaborate that policy implementation is ineffective because teachers lack the competencies to adopt inclusive pedagogies in their classrooms. Teachers were expected to implement inclusive education, but implementing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms can be complex and challenging as they are unprepared and under-skilled to teach diverse learners in the same classroom. Thus, P5 voiced (below) the fact that participants lack the necessary knowledge and experience to implement inclusive education:

**P5:** *“I have heard about the White Paper 6 policy before, but I do not have knowledge and experience in teaching learners with special needs, and what pains me is that our school has lots of learners who need special teachers”.*

Under-skilled and unprepared teachers cannot implement inclusive teaching practices in their mainstream classrooms because they are limited in knowledge and skills to accommodate learners with various barriers to learning (Woodcock et al., 2023:112).

Dally, Dempsey, Ralston, Foggett, Duncan, Strnadova, Chambers, Paterson and Sharma (2019:68) emphasise that to implement inclusive education successfully, teachers need not only the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitude, but also the ability to support and cater to the learning needs of all learners regardless of their differences. Dally et al. (2019:68) point out that teachers are the primary implementers of any educational policy, so this implies that the successful implementation of any policy within the educational system relies on the effectiveness of teachers delivering lessons that caters to all abilities. Despite teachers indicating that they understand the concept of inclusive education, the findings of this study unearthed areas of concern such as the lack of experience and pressure on teachers, which also indicates the gap between policy and practice.

### **5.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges in implementing inclusive education**

The participants in this study mentioned multiple challenges that hinder them from implementing inclusive education practices such as time and curriculum constraints, lack of individualised education, teacher stress and burnout, lack of support, absence of monitoring and evaluation at the District level, lack of parental support, and overcrowding.

Teachers identified time constraints as a factor in implementing inclusive practices in the classroom because they struggle to manage time effectively due to an overwhelming workload. In support, Skae, Brown, and Wilmot (2020:6) contend that teachers struggle to implement inclusive strategies in mainstream classrooms due to burdensome workloads, time constraints, overcrowded classrooms, lack of ongoing training, and insufficient resources. Onyishi and Sefotho (2020:141) add that teachers are unable to cover content within a stipulated duration because of a rigid timetable.

Moreover, due to time constraints, teachers fail to give learners individual attention because they must cover the curriculum content within the stipulated time. In Materechera's (2020:12) study, teachers mentioned that their concerns related to inclusive education was time for lesson preparation, feedback, and individual learner support for all learners who experience barriers to learning. Chow, De Bruin and Sharma (2023:13) observed that it is impossible for teachers to provide learners with individual attention in a classroom of over 40 learners. This confirms that large classrooms are one of the challenges teachers must persevere with. Chow et al.

(2023:13) concur that although teachers know that some learners need more individualised attention, it is practically impossible in an overcrowded classroom. Teachers revealed that learners become easily restless and noisy when giving another learner attention.

The findings in this study revealed that the demands of implementing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms put teachers under severe stress resulting in burnout. Candeias, Galindo, Calisto, Borralho and Reschke (2021:63) claim that teachers in mainstream schools experience burnout and stress because they are required to deal daily with new demands that require new resources and innovative professional skills. A study by Granger, Sutherland, Conroy, Dear, and Morse (2023:2) proved that the more teachers are exposed to stressful situations, the more it causes emotional exhaustion, and the more teacher-wellbeing declines, the more challenges arise in managing learners with barriers to learning. Furthermore, Candeias et al. (2021:64) point out that these challenges are caused by a lack of adequate training and knowledge in working with learners with special needs. Weiss, Muckenthaler, Heimlich, Kuechler and Kiel (2021:589) add that teachers who are not experienced in inclusive education face obstacles in its implementation, thus causing anxiety, stress, and doubts due to demands that require more effort in preparing lessons for heterogeneous classes with many diverse learning needs requiring a range of creative teaching methods. Classrooms become complex spaces where teachers are expected to adapt their teaching methodologies to fit the diverse learning needs of children; therefore, the creation of flexible inclusive strategies to deliver interesting lessons for all require sustainable intensive training and support.

Additionally, the findings indicate that the District is not supportive enough of inclusive education. The participants exposed the lack of support, monitoring, and evaluation at the District level. The structure of the DBST was formulated to support school management and teachers with the process of implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools and classrooms (Engelbrecht, 2020:222). According to DoE (2005:22), DBSTs primary goal was to support teachers and the management of schools to support learners directly or indirectly to enhance inclusion. This ensures that the environment and framework for teaching and learning are conducive to the full spectrum of learning needs. In cases where institutional-level support teams cannot address specific learning needs, a secondary goal would be to offer learners direct

learning support. However, that was not the case according to the findings in this study. This was articulated by one of the participants:

**P8:** *“District officials hardly come to our school to evaluate or monitor implementation of inclusive education. They only visit our school for other things, not for the purpose of monitoring teachers if they are coping with the implementation of inclusive education or if they need assistance. They are aware of our problems, and they keep on giving us false hopes”.*

The roles of DBST have changed over time; they are now expected to deliver resources to schools, evaluate programmes, suggest modifications, and promote collaboration with various stakeholders such as parents and communities. Findings from Nembambula, Ooko and Aluko’s (2023:3) study indicate that DBST members are struggling to perform these duties as they are not being implemented effectively. This is because of the lack of DBE, the Provincial Departments, and the Districts’ support.

Parental support is fundamental for smooth school functioning as this plays a significant role in enabling teachers to implement inclusive best practices effectively. However, evidence indicates that parents are not actively involved in their children’s education, thus hindering school-parent collaboration. Munje and Mncube (2018:81) note that parental support is limited by factors such as poverty, single-parent households, child-headed households, unemployment, illiteracy, and the lack of a supportive family structure. Unfortunately, the schools and Government are not remedying these challenges.

The findings also revealed the issue of overcrowded classrooms as participants stated that they were not coping with managing a diversity of learners in the same classrooms, which hinders them from teaching effectively. One participant articulated:

**P8:** *“We are dealing with too many learners in one classroom. Some of them are even disruptive, which makes it difficult for us to teach. we do not have space to walk around during the lesson to monitor learners. Sometimes, it’s also difficult to spot learners who require extra support”.*

Overcrowded classrooms are one of the main barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education practices as they hinder teachers from offering learners individualised attention. For inclusive education to occur, classes must be

manageable. Meier and West (2020:3) believe that overcrowded classrooms are another reason there are inadequate spaces, Limited natural light, excessive noise, and disruptive behaviours, which can cause learners to be distracted and not receive the attention they deserve (Matsepe, Maluleke & Cross, 2019:92). These stress teachers who have to devote more time managing learners' behaviour than focusing on teaching and learning (Osai, Amponsah, Ampadu & Commey, 2021:74).

### **5.2.3 Theme 3: Support schools need to implement inclusive education**

Principals indicated areas where they needed support such as educational assistance, specialised teacher support from the District, technological resources, proper infrastructure, and free school transportation for learners. Hence, inclusive education requires a multi-faceted support system: relevant and functional infrastructure, educational assistants, specialised teachers, and support from the District.

Additionally, the findings indicate that teachers need extra help in their classrooms, especially when dealing with more than 40 learners (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2023:551). Research conducted by Van Rensburg, Thobane, Kader, Aphane, Mpuru, Mokotong, Ngoveni, Ratiba and Tredoux (2024:337) report that educational assistants in schools have multifaceted roles to play, such as monitoring class activities while teachers are engaging with learners, and when the teacher is absent. They can fill in and offer insightful feedback on learners' progress by following the teacher's guidance, assist in maintaining discipline, and assist teachers in designing, organising, gathering, disseminating, sharing, and storing teaching and learning materials, and provide language support through translation to learners who are not fluent in the language of instruction.

Although teachers are obliged to teach learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms, this study recommends that teachers need specialised teachers to deal with learners experiencing barriers to learning. This was because they feel ill-equipped to teach learners with special needs which causes learners with barriers to be isolated in mainstream classrooms. Kwari (2021:3) explains that the model of teaching and support for learners with barriers to learning is based on a medical deficit approach instead of the social model such that support from specialised teachers and education support services will be provided to enhance teaching-learning among diverse ability

learners. Moreover, Hove and Phasha's (2020:1) study revealed that learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms should receive extra support from teachers, peers, learner- support teachers, and psychologists implying that teachers need multifaceted support to successfully implement inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms. Paulsrud and Nilholm (2023:549) and Opoku (2022:2) acknowledge that specialised teachers are important in teaching learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools as they can enhance inclusive education practices while promoting the wellbeing of all learners. Specialist teachers can teamwork with classroom teachers in identifying learning needs, strengths, and weaknesses of learners with barriers to develop intervention plans to implement innovative strategies that promote teaching-learning for learners to achieve a better level of academic performance (Opoku, 2022:2).

Principals reported that they are not receiving any support from the District. One principal noted:

**P12:** *“I wish the District to be fully involved in facilitating continuous workshops about inclusive education. The most important thing we need while waiting for the government to offer us other resources, like building more classes, is for the district to offer us training on inclusive education, but we do not have their support. They know very well that we were never workshopped on inclusive education, and it is recorded in their books that they never visited us.”*

Principals confirmed that there was a lack of continuous support from the DBSTs, whose involvement might benefit them in successfully implementing inclusive practices. According to Mfuthwa and Dreyer (2018:3), many schools in South Africa lack support services from the DBST that should be arranging continuous professional workshops on how to implement inclusive practices successfully.

The findings in this study indicated that schools need adequate technological resources to meet the learning needs of diverse learners. The participants mentioned that they do not have sufficient textbooks and modern classroom resources. They further stated that their schools do not have resources such as science labs to conduct experiments for learners, hindering effective learning. Chinangure and Chindanya (2019:198) concur with the above statement that effective teaching and learning suffer the most when schools lack important facilities. Teachers and principals require

appropriate learning resources, such as science labs and the latest technology at all levels. Maffea (2020:2) also noted that a lack of adequate resources impacts learners negatively by not developing independent learning skills and problem-solving skills, and that hinders them from learning to their fullest potential.

Further, the findings revealed that all three schools were in need of proper infrastructure as principals and teachers raised concerns about insufficient classrooms, and the lack of libraries, science labs and sports facilities. They reported that their school infrastructure was built in a manner that makes accessibility a barrier. To foster inclusion, the physical environment at school needs to be safe and accessible to all learners, including those who are physically challenged. Appropriately designed school buildings are critical in providing safety and accessibility for learners to access classrooms, cloakrooms, hostels, parking lots, and other important facilities. Lordye and Jato (2023:56) explain that inadequate school infrastructure can impact learners' learning and progress negatively. Proper infrastructure is imperative in promoting a conducive learning environment as learners feel more comfortable and focused when their surroundings are accessible and well-maintained (Umar, Sadiqi, Hussai & Qahar, 2023:67). A sufficient number of spacious classrooms, adequate lighting and ventilation, ample and comfortable furniture, and access to technology can contribute to a positive learning environment (Umar et al., 2023:67). Umar (2019:33) concurs that school infrastructure is key for effective teaching and learning in schools as it improves learner-attendance, enhances staff motivation, and improves academic achievement.

Lastly, principals were disgruntled about the issue of school transport by mentioning that learners do not have access to free and reliable transport from home to school and vice-versa. As a result, they often arrive at school late and exhausted and thus miss the first class. Kuthalingam, Shanjuvigasini, Swarnakumari and Hollis (2023:371) add that most children reside long distances from school, especially children from deep rural areas in South Africa where public transport is not always accessible or too expensive as not all parents can afford public transport due to poverty-stricken conditions. Thus, learners are left with no option but to walk long distances to school which exhausts them, compromises their safety and security, and leads to poor school performance.

#### **5.2.4 Theme 4: Support teachers need to implement inclusive education**

Given that teachers are primarily responsible for implementing inclusive practices in the classroom therefore it is imperative that they are well-trained to be prepared and supported to implement inclusive education (Chow, De Bruin & Sharma, 2023:2). Teacher participants complained that they were not receiving adequate support to implement inclusive education effectively, such that they are left alone but expected to implement best practices without proper resources and training. Moreover, despite policies promoting inclusive education practices, teachers still fail to successfully implement inclusive education in the classrooms, thus the need for practical training. Mfuthwa and Dreyer (2018:2) assert that this is because many mainstream teachers have no formal qualifications to cope with learning impediments. Therefore, teachers need to receive ongoing support and undergo thorough training as they play a critical role in advancing inclusive education. Teachers' were concerned about their level of competency in teaching learners with barriers to learning as indicated below:

**P4:** *"We don't have teachers who are trained in sign language or Braille. As teachers, we are not trained to cater to learners with special needs at all, and we are just doing our best to help these learners where we can. So, we need training in inclusive education".*

**P6:** *"We need more training on inclusive education and ongoing workshops."*

All the participants mentioned that they need training workshops in inclusive education. To this end, DBSTs were established as part of national attempts to create an inclusive education system in South Africa to provide all schools with support, including CPD. Doyi (2023:24) confirms that DBSTs comprise departmental experts who promote inclusive education by providing training, curriculum delivery strategies, resource distribution, and identifying and addressing barriers to learning. This structure aims to offer systematic and structured training and support to all schools. Disappointingly, teachers reported that they had not received any support or training from the DBST. Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018:1) agree that DBSTs were not coping in supporting schools and teachers to implement inclusive education. Yeboah, Aloka and Charamba (2023:118) suggest that teachers would be more amenable to inclusive education if they were thoroughly trained to create a learning environment where all

learners, regardless of their learning barriers, are integrated and given the same opportunity to achieve their full potential.

In sum, inclusion requires teachers to be empowered as change agents with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude necessary to support each learner to succeed. In this regard, teachers are willing to expand their knowledge of inclusive education by enrolling for short courses in inclusive education, including psychology. Teachers stated:

**P11:** *“Our DBE must focus on empowering us teachers first by providing us with free courses that focus on inclusive education and psychology”.*

It is imperative for mainstream school teachers to possess sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to teach diverse learners in the same classroom. Rabi, Ghazali and Piragasam (2018:1849) agree that teachers’ willingness to teach learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms can be reinforced through relevant courses which provide teachers with proper guidance and practice on how teachers can improve and implement inclusion successfully (Rabi et al., 2018:1849). Teachers who enrol for courses in inclusive education can transform their negative attitudes towards constructively promoting inclusive education. Although teachers indicated that they have no formal qualifications in inclusive education, they can enrol for short courses to teach more effectively and confidently in their classrooms.

Importantly, teaching and learning cannot function smoothly without proper teaching and learning materials. During the interview, the teachers raised concerns about not being supplied with appropriate teaching and learning materials.

**P10:** *“How do you teach inclusively when your school has only a chalkboard in the classroom? This school does not have appropriate learning materials for learners with special needs, and in terms of resources, you can see for yourself, the school is struggling”.*

Appropriate teaching and learning materials enable teachers to deliver lessons that are more enjoyable, understandable, and interesting (Mulovhedzi & Luhalima, 2023:307). Additionally, teachers must be provided with teaching materials in various formats, including diverse classroom learning activities that enable learners to grasp knowledge in multiple ways (Education Links, 2020).

The findings also revealed that teachers are not adapting to differentiation regarding the curriculum due to the lack of knowledge, experience, and training. Curriculum differentiation is critical for implementing effective inclusive education to ensure all learners have equal access to the curriculum. The DoE (2011) refers to curriculum differentiation as modifying, changing, and adapting various teaching strategies, assessment strategies, resources, and curriculum content to accommodate diversity. Teachers in this study reported that they need training to differentiate their curriculum content to accommodate learners with barriers to learning. Although curriculum differentiation is a useful strategy for addressing each learner's needs in the classroom, Eikeland and Ohna (2022:166) claim that it is not well implemented in mainstream classrooms because of the lack of resources and proper training. Teachers commented:

**P3:** *"We need curriculum differentiation training and application. Right now, the curriculum is not flexible, or we do not know how to make it flexible".*

Teachers revealed that they lack knowledge on how to create curriculum differentiation to meet diverse learning needs. They indicated that the only way they accommodate them is to give learners extra work. According to Shigetomi (2023:136), different factors contribute to teachers' inability to promote differentiation in the curriculum; these are the lack of knowledge, time, resources, training, and the lack of support from the DBST.

**P5:** *"Our lessons are straightforward; we want training on how to make it interesting and engaging for every learner".*

Many teachers regard learners in mainstream schools as a single, homogenous group, as argued by Shigetomi (2023:138). They expect learners to demonstrate what they have learned in the same way through a paper-pencil test by delivering the same curriculum topics, and using the same teaching approach. They overlook diverse interests, needs, abilities, limitations, and learning styles by adopting a one-size-fits-all strategy that leaves many learners academically stranded (Shigetomi, 2023:138). However, teachers indicated a willingness to learn how to differentiate the curriculum. Also, Lindner and Schwab (2020:16) found that the lack of knowledge and understanding of curriculum differentiation severely affected the learning and participation of learners with barriers to learning. This implies that teachers must

acquire the relevant skills to meet various learning needs to deliver meaningful lessons.

Moreover, teachers revealed that they needed the assistance of social workers to deal with various social problems that learners encounter. They mentioned that learners are unable to cope with schoolwork because they do not know how to seek help for their social problems. Hence, the assistance of social workers is critical in guiding learners to resolve their social problems that teachers cannot handle. According to Vergottini and Weyers (2020:41), in the South African context social workers form part of a multidisciplinary support system of providing psychosocial support within inclusive education settings but remain specialists as social workers in terms of the Social Services Professional Act (Act 110 of 1978). Asamoah, Tam and Cudjoe (2023:37) indicate that social workers offer services that involve crisis intervention, case management, counselling, grief support, violence prevention, health solutions, and academic support. Teachers mentioned that they need the support of social workers to help learners deal with their social problems:

**P9:** *“We also need the support of social workers; even if they come twice a week, I think it would make a huge difference; as an Life Orientation (LO) teacher, most learners confide in me with their issues, and because I am not a qualified social worker or psychologist, I sometimes do not know how to support them besides offering them emotional support and alerting the principal. You can see that their problems are preventing them from concentrating on their studies”.*

During the interviews, teachers mentioned that they need the support of social workers because their learners are also facing personal challenges that hinder them from performing academically well. Teachers perceive social workers as those who can make a valuable contribution by offering learners emotional support since it is their area of specialisation. Vergottini and Weyers (2020:43) report that teachers are not trained to create positive working relationships with learners with barriers to learning - they are generally imparters of knowledge and skills through teaching a homogenous class of learners. Therefore, the involvement of social workers is critical in providing psychosocial support (among others) to learners. Pretorius (2020:147) adds that social workers can collaborate with other stakeholders such as teachers, support teams, psychologists, parents, and learners to ensure the success of inclusion. The reason

for specialists collaborating is that social workers and other specialists have knowledge and skills that teachers may not have to encourage learner-participation (Pretorius, 2020:147). Moreover, social workers are focused on addressing the psychosocial and social problems encountered by children with learning disabilities, which affect their academic achievement (Asamoah, Tam & Cudjoe 2023:46). By addressing these psychosocial and emotional difficulties, learners with learning disabilities can improve their academic performance, feel comfortable, and have a sense of belonging.

Lastly, teachers mentioned that they need the support of parents in implementing inclusive education. Teachers revealed that parents are rarely involved in their children's education, thus making it more challenging to address the learning needs of special needs learners. Parents are perceived as big role-players in their children's education. Given that they know their children better than anyone else, they can inform teachers about their children's learning challenges and offer advice about their children's behaviour to promote the implementation of collaborative learning support plans (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024:34). The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:50) stipulates that partnership between parents and schools must be formed to engender a more collaborative role to promote children's education through inclusion activities.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education**

This theme discussed teachers' perceptions of inclusive education which revealed that teachers have an understanding of this innovative concept. However, implementation was the only barrier they faced due to several challenges; hence, the need to equip teachers with relevant knowledge and skills to promote inclusive education. Lamentably, findings revealed that teachers were experiencing challenges when teaching 'differently-abled' learners in the same classrooms as 'abled' learners. This implies that the implementation of Education White Paper 6 has not been adhered to because of the lack of knowledge and experience. If the DBE provides teachers with adequate, relevant, thorough and effective training in inclusive education, teachers would be able to effectively implement inclusive education since they are the main

implementers of the curriculum. However, if they are ill-prepared, acceptance and recognition of learners' unique learning needs will be a pipedream. Additionally, although teachers seem to understand the basics of inclusion in education, there is poor implementation. Once teachers are thoroughly equipped with skills, they will develop strategies to foster inclusive education by implement best practices, and eventually change their attitudes towards learners with disabilities.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges of implementing inclusive education**

Several studies describe numerous challenges in implementing inclusive education in South Africa. Walton and Engelbrecht (2024:1) explain that despite the introduction of the Education White Paper 6, commitment to addressing inequalities and promoting the integration of all learners into the mainstream of South African schools is still lacking. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the lack of support from the District and parents, insufficient training, and overcrowded classrooms. Other challenges include time and curriculum constraints, lack of individualised education, ill-discipline, demotivation, teacher stress and burnout, no monitoring and evaluation from the District, and overcrowded classrooms. Although challenges prevail, teachers are still expected to implement and support inclusive education as outlined in the Education White Paper 6.

Disappointingly, findings confirmed that schools were still battling with successfully implementing inclusive education due to the challenges mentioned above. Since Districts have a significant role to play in implementing inclusive education, they are responsible for overseeing implementation and instituting monitoring and evaluating mechanisms to promote inclusion. However, this cannot occur if schools work individually, as revealed in this study. Also, the DBE must ensure that aspects of inclusion are properly addressed by DBE sub-directors. Time and workload issues are also challenges raised by teachers that hinder the implementation of inclusive education, as they struggle to cover content within the allocated time due to overwhelming workloads – this should be urgently addressed by all role-players. In sum, despite having policies that guide the implementation of inclusion in South Africa, there are persistent challenges that need to be addressed.

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Support schools need to implement inclusive education**

Participants revealed that they needed multiple support in order for their school to adopt inclusion. The principals indicated that they should be supported by the District to organise workshops on how to effectively accommodate learners with barriers to learning. Each District is required to have DBST members who manage, facilitate, and monitor the implementation of inclusive education. The DBST structure is comprised of a group of professionals who promote inclusive education by providing training, guidance in curriculum delivery, distribution of resources, as well as identifying, assessing and addressing barriers to learning (DBE, 2014). However, findings indicated that support from the District is still absent, hence teachers do not have support and guidance on how to transition from traditional approaches to adopt innovative strategies that align with inclusive education best practices. In sum, findings indicated that schools need support from different stakeholders that would make the implementation of this inclusion smoother.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Support teachers need to implement inclusive education**

Another focus of this study involved investigating the support teachers need to implement inclusive education which revealed that teachers are not supported at all in implementing inclusive education. Additionally, most teachers were not prepared and untrained to implement inclusive education in their mainstream classrooms. Teachers emphasised the need for professional development, intensive training, and free short courses in inclusive education. Therefore, the DBE should provide teachers with relevant support and training so that they can be equipped to meet diverse learning needs. Ferriday and Cantali (2020:157) mention that teachers should be equipped only with knowledge and understanding of various learning barriers, but also practical training by applying creative teaching strategies to implement inclusion successfully. Since teachers are the agents of transformation at schools, they must be supported by intensive professional development and training opportunities. Once teachers are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills for the successful implementation of inclusive education, they will be able to support learners experiencing barriers to learning. This support must also focus on teaching and learning processes that migrate from rigid approaches to more flexible methods of instruction.

In sum, the findings revealed that teachers require the support of parents and social workers, among other professionals, for inclusive education to be implemented

successfully. Relevant stakeholders must be involved as teachers cannot work in isolation. Rogers (1983:16) pointed out that during the stages of diffusion of innovation, all the stakeholders must interactively participate. Kudarinova, Autaeva, Paylozyan and Rymkhanova, (2023:153) confirm that the implementation of inclusive education is complex and requires the involvement of stakeholders such as communities, families, paraprofessionals and schools. Since teachers struggle to implement relevant and innovative inclusive education strategies in their classrooms, they need to be workshopped on how to differentiate the curriculum and methodologies because they lack of training, knowledge, and support. Regarding accommodating learners experiencing learning barriers as an additional responsibility, will dissipate once thorough and ongoing training in inclusivity is rolled-out.

#### **5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The implications of this study affect the Department of Education (DoE), District Based Support Team members (DBST), schools, teachers, and parents:

##### **5.4.1 Implication for the Department of Basic Education (DBE)**

Based on the findings of this study, the Department of Basic Education has a significant role to play in enabling the success of inclusive practices within schools. The DBE should provide teachers with continuous training and support in implementing inclusive education practices. Also, the DBE must ensure the active collaboration between the school and the District. Additionally, they should provide schools with adequate and sufficient resources such as textbooks, libraries, science labs, and technological resources to cater for learners with diverse learning needs. Furthermore, it is imperative to workshop teachers and parents to improve their knowledge and ability to support learners with barriers to learning. Moreover, it is essential to create access to a flexible curriculum that prioritises learners with barriers to learning. This involves adapting the curriculum, teaching methods, teaching materials, and assessments. The Education White Paper 6 emphasises curriculum adaption to accommodate all learners in the classroom. Lastly, providing principals and teachers with continuous professional development opportunities is essential to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure that no child is left behind.

#### **5.4.2 Implications for the District-Based Support Team (DBST)**

The findings of this study indicated that there needs to be more support from the District. With better support from the District, teachers might be able to successfully implement inclusion in their classrooms. The DBST should be hands-on in supporting schools and teachers to ensure that all learners are attain their full potential.

#### **5.4.3 Implication for Schools**

Principals indicated they need professional development workshops and adequate resources in their schools. Principals should be trained and equipped with the relevant knowledge concerning inclusive education. They must consider securing relevant teaching and learning materials that meet the learning needs of all learners in their schools. Collaboration is critical to implementing inclusive education; therefore, schools should collaborate with all relevant stakeholders to develop proper intervention plans and astute strategies that support teachers in implementing inclusive practices.

#### **5.4.4 Implication for Teachers**

The study's findings highlighted that teachers must be thoroughly equipped to accommodate learners with barriers to learning. They revealed that they failed to differentiate the curriculum due to the lack of knowledge and experience. They further indicated that they lack the support as well. They need the guidance and support of various stakeholders to implement inclusive education successfully. Teachers must be trained on an ongoing basis to implement various teaching strategies to accommodate all learners.

#### **5.5.5 Implication for Parents**

This study revealed that there needs to be more parental support. Participants bemoaned that parents were not involved in their children's education, and were seldom responsive. Parents should take responsibility and support the school and teachers in promoting inclusive education practices. They must be educated about different learning disabilities to be aware of them to provide their children with the

support they need. Providing parents with the relevant knowledge will encourage them to be involved in the schooling of their children.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

Below are the suggestions for further studies:

- The study indicated that schools and teachers were not receiving much support to address learners' diverse needs. It was revealed that factors that hinder them from implementing inclusive education include the lack of support from the DBST, knowledge and training, and overcrowded classrooms. This calls for intensive research to be conducted in the areas of concern.
- More research is required to explore the role of SBST members in supporting teachers in implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools.
- A study focusing on the strategies and intervention programmes offered by SBST members in implementing inclusive education should be pursued.
- A study that explores the role of DBST members in supporting teachers in implementing inclusive education in the classrooms.
- Teachers stated that they need intensive training on inclusive education. Therefore, conducting a study focusing on the specific areas in which teachers need training in implementing inclusive education would be valuable.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study was conducted in only three secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, and the results could not be generalised to other Districts. Another limitation of this study was that data collected through only semi-structured interviews may have been subjective in nature, which may have compromised the validity of the research.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. This study found that teachers and principals understood what inclusive education is; however, they are still struggling to implement it due to various reasons such as the lack of experience and resources. The study concludes that

teachers and principals need intensive training on inclusive education to implement it successfully. Learners with barriers to learning are still excluded from lessons due to various factors such as the rigid curriculum and teacher-attitudes. The participants highlighted that they face multiple challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of support from the DBST and the parents, unavailability of resources like teaching and learning materials, and the lack of knowledge and training. Although teachers were willing to support all learners, they stated that more training is needed. Teachers within inclusive education must be offered professional development and training on an ongoing basis to keep abreast of modern trends in inclusive education which will ensure that the goal of Education White Paper 6. Lastly, teachers must work in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the success of inclusive education practice, lest Inclusion remains as a pipedream.

## REFERENCES

- Abualrish, M.A. & Khasawneh, M.A.S. 2024. Using social media as a platform of communication between school administration and the local communities to promote inclusive education for children with special needs. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 12 (2): 79 – 87. <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v12i2.6560>
- Adams, D., Harris, A. & Jones, M.S. 2018. Teacher-parent collaboration for an inclusive classroom: Success for every child. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 4(3):58-72. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1106456>
- Adams, W.C. 2015. Conducting semi-structured interviews. In *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. (pp. 492-505).
- Adedoyin, O.B. 2020. Qualitative research methods. In *Principles of Social Psychiatry*. (pp. 77-87).
- Adeoye-Olatunde, O.A. & Olenik, N.L. 2021. Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, 4(10):1358-1367. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1441>
- Adewumi, T.M. & Mosito, C. 2019. Experiences of educators in implementing inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected Fort Beaufort District primary schools, South Africa. *Cogent Education*, 6 (1): 1-20.
- Adhabi, E. & Anozie, C.B. 2017. Literature review for the type of interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Education*, 9(3):86-97. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v9i3.11483>
- Adigun, O.T. 2021. Inclusive education among pre-service educators from Nigeria and South Africa: A comparative cross-sectional study. *Cogent Education*, 8(1):1–19.
- Adirika, B.N. & Okolie, V.C. 2020. Examining models of curriculum development and processes: implications for African educational heritage and review. *Social Science and Humanities Journal*, 5(1): 325-342.
- Agavelyan, R.O., Aubakirova, S.D., Zhomartova, A.D. & Burdina, E.I. 2020. Educators' attitudes towards inclusive education in Kazakhstan. *Integration of Education*, 24 (1): 8-19.

Agulhas, C. 2021. The role of the school-based support team (SBST) in two primary schools in the Cape Metropole. Master's Dissertation. University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.

Ahlin, E.M. 2019. *Semi-structured interviews with expert practitioners: Their validity and significant contribution to translational research*. SAGE Publications Ltd., Thousand Oaks.

Ahmad Zaky El Islami, R., Anantanukulwong, R. & Faikhamta, C. 2022. Trends of Teacher Professional Development Strategies: A Systematic Review. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 10 (2): 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v10i2.4628>

Ahmed, S.K. 2024. The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 11(2): 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>

Ainscow, M. 2020. Inclusion and equity in education: Making sense of global challenges. *Prospects*, 49 (3): 123–134.

Ainscow, M. 2020. Promoting inclusion and equity in education: lessons from international experiences. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6(1):7–16.

Akbari, O., Dehghan, M. & Tirgari, B. 2022. Muslim nurse's spiritual sensitivity as a higher perception and reflection toward spiritual care: a qualitative study in southeast Iran. *BMC Nursing*, 21(1):1-9.

Akbarovna, A.S. 2022. Inclusive education and its essence. *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research*, 11 (1): 248-254.

Alamri, W.A. 2019. Effectiveness of qualitative research methods: Interviews and diaries. *International Journal of English and Cultural Studies*, 2(1):65-70. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijecs.v2i1.4302>

Alasuutari, H., Savolainen, H. & Engelbrecht, P. 2019. *Learning for all: The essential role of educators in inclusive education*. World Bank.

Alcosero, A., Carcueva, H., Abasolo, M.C., Arranchado, W.M. & Cabanilla Jr, A. 2023. Preparedness of Regular Educators in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in the Philippines: A Meta-synthesis.

Alexander, A.P. 2019. Lincoln and Guba's quality criteria for trustworthiness. *IDC International Journal*, 6(4):1-6.

Alharahsheh, H.H. & Pius, A. 2020. A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3):39-43.

Alkaabi, A.M., Abdallah, A.K., Badwy, H.R., Badawy, H.R. & Almammari, S.A. 2022. Rethinking School Principals' Leadership Practices for an Effective and Inclusive Education. In *Rethinking Inclusion and Transformation in Special Education* (pp. 53-70). IGI Global.

Allan, T. 2019. The Perceptions of Teachers in Rural Areas Towards Inclusive Education. *The International Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research*, 13(2): 1-33.

Al-Samarrai, S., Cerdan-Infantes, P. & Lehe, J. 2019. Mobilizing Resources for Education and Improving Spending Effectiveness. *World Bank Policy Research WP*, 8773.

Alsamiri, Y.A., Hussain, M.A., Aljohani, M.M. & Alsawalem, I.M. 2023. Primary school educators' knowledge of differentiation for students with giftedness and learning disabilities in mixed-abilities classrooms in Saudi Arabia. *South African Journal of Education*, 43 (1): 1–7.

Alzahrani, N. 2020. The development of inclusive education practice: A review of literature. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 12 (1): 68–83. <https://doi.org/10.20489/INTJECSE.722380>

Amankwaa, L., 2016. Creating Protocols for Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Journal of cultural diversity*, 23(3).

Anas, N.A. & Ishaq, K.A. 2022. Qualitative research method in social and behavioural science research. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies*, 5(1).

Andrews, D. 2019. *The affordances and constraints to inclusive teaching in four South African schools: A cultural historical activity theory perspective*. Doctoral Thesis. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Andrews, D., Walton, E. & Osman, R., 2021. Constraints to the implementation of inclusive teaching: a cultural historical activity theory approach. *International journal of inclusive education*, 25 (13): 1508-1523.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1620880>

Anney, V.N. 2015. Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria.

Asamoah, E., Tam, C.H.L. & Cudjoe, E. 2023. A systematic review of the roles of social workers in inclusive education for children with disabilities. *International Social Work*, 66(1):36-51.

Asian Development Bank. 2022. *Inclusive education with differentiated instruction for children with disabilities: A guidance note*. Philippines: Asian Development Bank.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.22617/TIM220450>

Aspers, P. & Corte, U. 2019. What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative sociology*, 42:139-160.

Ayaya, G., Makoelle, T.M. & Van der Merwe, M. 2020. *Participatory action research: A tool for enhancing inclusive teaching practices among teachers in South African full-service schools*. Sage.

Ayaya, G.I. 2018. *Developing an Inclusive Teaching Framework for Learners with Diverse Needs in Full Service Schools in Johannesburg East District*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).

Ayre, J. & McCaffery, K.J. 2022. Research Note: Thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Physiotherapy*, 23(3): 1-45.

Banks, L.M., Hunt, X., Kalua, K., Nindi, P., Zuurmond, M. & Shakespeare, T. 2022. "I might be lucky and go back to school": Factors affecting inclusion in education for children with disabilities in rural Malawi. *African Journal of Disability (Online)*, 6(1): 1–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v44ns1a2386>

- Bearman, M. 2019. Eliciting rich data: A practical approach to writing semi-structured interview schedules. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-Professional Journal*, 20(3):1-11. <https://doi.org/10.11157/fohpe.v20i3.387>
- Beaton, M.C., Thomson, S., Cornelius, S., Lofthouse, R., Kools, Q. & Huber, S. 2021. Conceptualising teacher-education for inclusion: Lessons for the professional learning of educators from transnational and cross-sector perspectives. *Sustainability*, 13 (4): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042167>
- Belotto, M.J. 2018. Data analysis methods for qualitative research: Managing the challenges of coding, interrater reliability, and thematic analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(11):2622-2633. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3492>
- Bennett, T. 2023. *Making Sense of Differentiating Instruction in an Elementary Inclusion Classroom*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Bernadine, G. G. 2019. Challenges Faced by Educators in the Implementation of Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD): Gauteng Province. *Teacher Education in the 21st Century*.
- Besic, E. 2020. Intersectionality: A pathway towards inclusive education? *Prospects*, 49 (3-4): 111–122.
- Boitumelo, M., Kuyini, A.B. & Major, T.E. 2020. Experiences of General Secondary Education Educators in Inclusive Classrooms: Implications for Sustaining Inclusive Education in Botswana. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 16 (1): 1-34.
- Bos, J. & Bos, J. 2020. Confidentiality. *Research ethics for students in the social sciences*, 23(2): 149-173.
- Boyle, C., Anderson, J. & Allen, K.A. 2020. The importance of teacher attitudes to inclusive education. In *Inclusive education: Global issues and controversies*. (pp. 127–146).
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2021. *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. SAGE.

Brock, M.E., Carter, E.W. & Biggs, E. E. 2020. Supporting peer interactions, relationships, and belonging. In *Instruction of students with severe disabilities*. (pp. 384–417).

Brown, A. & Buthelezi, J. 2020. School-based support team responses to sexual diversity and homophobic bullying in a South African school. *Interchange*, 51 (4): 471-482.

Brown, A.M. 2015. Has the Policy Window Closed? A Critical Analysis of South Africa's Inclusive Education Policy. *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v4i2.3139>

Busetto, L., Wick, W. & Gumbinger, C. 2020. How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(1):14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>

Bush, E.J., Singh, R.L. & Kooienga, S. 2019. Lived experiences of a community: Merging interpretive phenomenology and community-based participatory research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20(1): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919875891>

Cabanero, J. 2023. A Policy Study on the Implementation of Inclusive Education Program in the Philippines. [Online]. 10.13140/RG.2.2.11224.88325.

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D. & Walker, K. 2020. Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8):652-661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

Candeias, A., Galindo, E., Calisto, I., Borralho, L. & Reschke, K. 2021. Stress and burnout in teaching. Study in an inclusive school workplace. *Health Psychology Report*, 9(1):63-75.

Carter, E.W. 2018. Supporting the social lives of secondary students with severe disabilities: Considerations for effective intervention. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 26 (1): 52–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426617739253>

Cele, N. 2023. Lack of Supportive Resources for Inclusive Education in South African Schools. [Online]. 10.13140/RG.2.2.31858.48324.

Cerna, L., Mezzanotte, C., Rutigliano, A., Brussino, O., Santiago, P., Borgonovi, F. & Guthrie, C. 2021. Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework.

Chan, T. & Yuen, M. 2015. Inclusive Education in an International School: A Case Study from Hong Kong. *International Journal of Special Education*, 30(3):86-97.

Charles, S.K. 2020. *Teacher's coping strategies in the management of overcrowded classrooms in public primary schools in Chemba District, Tanzania*. Doctoral dissertation. The University of Dodoma, Dodoma (Tanzania).

Chen, Y. 2019. Exploring the role of communication in inclusive education for children with learning disabilities. In *2019 International Conference on Advanced Education Research and Modern Teaching*. Atlantis Press, 296–298. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aermt-19.2019.75>

Chinangure, F. & Chindanya, A. 2019. Revisiting Zimbabwe's new curriculum—assessing the factors that adversely affected the implementation and support of the curriculum initiative. *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, 13(5):193-202. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v13i0.1268>

Chisango, G. & Lepheana, L.J. 2022. Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa: A Case Study in Buffalo City Education District. *Ponte International Journal of Science and Research*, 78:12. <https://doi.org/10.21506/j.ponte.2022.12.14>

Chow, W.S.E., De Bruin, K. & Sharma, U. 2023. A scoping review of perceived support needs of teachers for implementing inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24 (2):1-20.

Cirus, L. & Simonova, I. 2020. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory Applied on Primary Education: Case Study of Czech Educators. In *International Symposium on Educational Technology (ISET)*, pp. 33-37.

- Collins, C. 2014. *Barriers to admission to mainstream primary schools for children with high functioning Autism/Asperger's Syndrome* (Umlazi District). Doctoral thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.
- Connelly, L.M. 2016. Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medical surgery and nursing*, 25(6):435.
- Corral-Granados, A., Rapp, A.C. & Smeplass, E. 2023. Nordic challenges related to exclusion and local responses in Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian urban compulsory education. *Education Inquiry* 2(1): 1-32.
- Costa, K. 2019. *Systematic Guide to Qualitative Data Analysis within the COSTA Postgraduate Research Model*.
- Cotterell, E.M. 2015. *The perspective of parents of learners with learning disabilities regarding the implementation of inclusive education in independent schools in the Western Cape: a case study*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Crispel, O. & Kasperski, R. 2021. The impact of teacher training in special education on the implementation of inclusion in mainstream classrooms. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25 (9): 1079-1090.
- Cuthbertson, L.M., Robb, Y.A. & Blair, S. 2020. Theory and application of research principles and philosophical underpinning for a study utilising interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Radiography*, 26(2):94-102.
- Dally, K., Dempsey, I., Ralston, M.M., Foggett, J., Duncan, J., Strnadova, I., Chambers, D., Paterson, D. & Sharma, U. 2019. Current issues and future directions in Australian special and inclusive education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 44(8):57-73. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2019v44n8.4>
- Das, B. 2022. Diffusion of innovations: Theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence. *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 14 (1): 94–103.<http://hdl.handle.net/10.1080/20421338.2020.1814517>
- Dawadi, S. 2020. Thematic analysis approach: A step-by-step guide for ELT research practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 25(1-2):62-71. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.49731>

- De Jager, M. 2019. *Mind Moves: Removing Barriers to Learning*. BG Connexion.
- Dearing, J.W. & Cox, J.G. 2018. Diffusion of innovations theory, principles, and practice. *Health affairs*, 37(2):183-190.
- Deghaye, N. 2021. *Disability support and accessibility in ordinary schools in South Africa*. University of Stellenbosch.
- DeJonckheere, M. & Vaughn, L.M. 2019. Semi-structured interviewing in primary care research: a balance of relationship and rigour. *Family medicine and community health*, 7(2):1-8.
- Delubom, N.E., Marongwe, N. & Buka, A.M. 2020. Managers' Challenges on Implementing Inclusive Education: Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 15(6):1508-1519. <https://unpub.eu/ojs/index.php/cjes/article/view/5294>
- Delve L., & Limpaecher, A. 2022. *What is Phenomenological Research Design? Essential Guide to Coding Qualitative Data*. [Online]. <https://delvetool.com/phenomenology>
- DeMatthews, D.E., Serafini, A. & Watson, T.N. 2021. Leading inclusive schools: Principal perceptions, practices, and challenges to meaningful change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 57 (1): 3–48.
- Department of Basic Education (RSA). 2014. *Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Department of Basic Education (RSA). 2010. *Guideline for Full-service/Inclusive Schools*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Department of Basic Education (RSA). 2014. National strategy on screening, identification, assessment, and support (SIAS): Operational guidelines. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Department of Basic Education (RSA). 2010. Guidelines for inclusive teaching and learning. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education (RSA). 2005. Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: District-based support teams. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Dibra, M. 2015. Rogers's theory on diffusion of innovation-the most appropriate theoretical model in the study of factors influencing the integration of sustainability in tourism businesses. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 16(2): 453-1462. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.443>

Dignath, C., Rimm-Kaufman, S., Van Ewijk, R. & Kunter, M. 2022. Educators' beliefs about inclusive education and insights on what contributes to those beliefs: a meta-analytical study. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34 (4): 2609-2660. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09695-0>

Donath, J.L., Lüke, T., Graf, E., Tran, U.S. & Götz, T. 2023. Does professional development effectively support the implementation of inclusive education? A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35 (1): 30.

Donohue, D. & Bornman, J. 2014. The challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2).

Donohue, D.K. & Bornman J. 2015. South African teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of learners with different abilities in mainstream classrooms. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 62(1):42-59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2014.985638>

Douglas, H. 2022. Sampling techniques for qualitative research. In *Principles of Social Research Methodology*. Springer Nature Singapore (pp. 415-426).

Doyi, E.M. 2023. *The implementation of inclusive education with regard to curriculum transformation in the primary schools*. DoctoralThesis. North-West University, Potchefstroom (South Africa).

Du Plessis, P. & Mestry, R. 2019. Teachers for rural schools: a challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39.

Ecoben, M.E. 2019. Readiness of public-school educators in handling inclusive education. *Loer International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 1 (2): 1–9.

USAID. 2020. *The Importance of Accessible Learning Materials*. United States Agency for International Development. USAID Press.

Rajendran, P. 2020. Will Emotional Intelligence do Justice? *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(1): 169-182.

Eikeland, I. & Ohna, S.E. 2022. Differentiation in education: a configurative review. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 8(3):157-170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2022.2039351>

El Shourbagi, S. 2017. Parental involvement in inclusive classrooms for students with learning disabilities at Omani schools as perceived by teachers. *Journal of Psychology and Cognition*, 2(2):133-137.

Elphick, J., De SasKropiwnicki, Z. & Elphick, R. 2015. "Our children have the right to an education too": Strategies employed by Orange Farm caregivers of children with disabilities in pursuit of the right to basic education. *Disability, CBR & Inclusive Development*, 26(4):101-116.

Emiliussen, J., Engelsen, S., Christiansen, R. & Klausen, S.H. 2021. We are all in it: Phenomenological Qualitative Research and Embeddedness. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(1): 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069219953>

Engelbrecht, P. & Muthukrishna, N. 2019. Inclusive education as a localised project in complex contexts: A South African case study. *Southern African Review of Education*, 25(1):107-124.

Engelbrecht, P. 2020. Inclusive education: Developments and challenges in South Africa. *Prospects*, 49(3):219-232.

Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Nel, N. & Tlale, D. 2015. Enacting understanding of inclusion in complex contexts: Classroom practices of South African teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(3).

Equal Education Law Centre. 2021. *Let in or left out: A 20-Year Review of the Regulatory Framework for Inclusive Education and Its Implementation in South Africa*. EELC Press.

Farah, D. & Muhammad A, R. 2023. An Analysis of Teachers' Insight Concerning Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools of Punjab. *Alhamed Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. 2(2):153-172.

Ferreira, R. & Manis, M. 2022. Addressing Equity for Learners with Visual Impairment through Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in South African Schools. *Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*, 3(1): 142-170. [https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-alt\\_v39\\_nsd\\_a7](https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-alt_v39_nsd_a7)

Ferriday, G. & Cantali, D. 2020. Teachers talk about inclusion, but can they implement it in their classroom? Exploring teachers' views on inclusion in a Scottish secondary school. *Support for Learning*, 35(2):144-162.

Fodo, S. 2020. *Collaboration in inclusive education: Teachers' perspectives and practices*. Master's Dissertation. University of the Western Cape, Cape town.

Fourie, J. 2017. School-based support teams: A social network model addressing special needs in South African mainstream schools. In *African Academic Research Forum*. (pp. 1-9).

Franceschinis, C., Thiene, M., Scarpa, R., Rose, J., Moretto, M. & Cavalli, R. 2017. Adoption of renewable heating systems: An empirical test of the diffusion of innovation theory. *Energy*, 10(2): 313-326.

Francisco, M.P.B., Hartman, M. & Wang, Y. 2020. Inclusion and special education. *Education Sciences*, 10 (9): 238.

Frechette, J., Bitzas, V., Aubry, M., Kilpatrick, K. & Lavoie-Tremblay, M. 2020. Capturing lived experience: Methodological considerations for interpretive phenomenological inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20(3): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069209072>

Freeman-Green, S., Williamson, P. & E. Cornelius, K. (2023). Promoting Inclusive Practices in Education: Bridging Gaps and Fostering Independence. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 56(2): 68-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00400599231223785>

Frei-Landau, R., Muchnik-Rozanov, Y. & Avidov-Ungar, O. 2022. Using Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory to conceptualize the mobile-learning adoption process in

teacher education in the COVID-19 era. *Education and information technologies*, 27 (9): 12811-12838.

Friedman, C. 2020. *Language Barrier Challenge in South African Schools*. Namseoul University.

Frost, N. 2021. *Qualitative research methods in psychology: Combining core approaches 2e*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Garcia-Aviles, J.A. 2020. Diffusion of innovation. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*. (pp. 1-8).

Garcia-Melgar, A., Hyett, N., Bagley, K., McKinstry, C., Spong, J. & Iacono, T. 2022. Collaborative team approaches to supporting inclusion of children with disability in mainstream schools: A co-design study. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 126(1): 1–11.

Genné-Bacon, E.A., Wilks, J. & Bascom-Slack, C. 2020. Uncovering factors influencing instructors' decision process when considering implementation of a course-based research experience. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, 19 (2): 13. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.19-10-0208>

Genovesi, E., Jakobsson, C., Nugent, L., Hanlon, C. & Hoekstra, R.A. 2022. Stakeholder experiences, attitudes and perspectives on inclusive education for children with developmental disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *Autism*, 26 (7): 1606-1625.

Ghedini, E. & Aquario, D. 2020. Collaborative teaching in mainstream schools: Research with general education and support educators. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 16 (2): 1-34. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Gichuru, M.J. 2017. The interpretive research paradigm: A critical review of its research methodologies. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies*, 4(2):1-5.

Gill, M.J. 2020. Phenomenology as qualitative methodology. In *Qualitative Analysis: Eight Approaches*. (pp. 73-94).

Ginja, T.G. & Chen, X. 2023. Conceptualising inclusive education: The role of teacher training and teacher's attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27 (9): 1042-1055.

Gleckler, M.M. 2021. *Faculty attitudes toward online education: faculty profiles in the diffusion of innovation*. University of Toledo.

Goldan, J., Loreman, T. & Lambrecht, J. 2020. Resources for inclusive education—impacts of funding and provision. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(4): 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1821452>

Gorard, S. 2015. A proposal for judging the trustworthiness of research findings. *researchED magazine*.

Gorel, G. & Hellmich, F. 2022. Primary school principals' views on the required conditions for a successful implementation of inclusive education. *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education*, 46 (2): 127-137.

Graham, L.J., 2020. Inclusive education in the 21st century. In *Inclusive education for the 21st century*, Routledge, 3-26

Granger, K.L., Sutherland, K.S., Conroy, M.A., Dear, E. & Morse, A. 2023. Teacher burnout and supporting teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 31(2):144-153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426622114997>

Greening, N. 2019. Phenomenological research methodology. *Scientific Research Journal*, 7(5):88-92.

Gueye, M., Ndiyae, M.D., Diouf, A.A., Diallo, M., Wade, M., Mbodji, A., Diallo, A.K., Diouf, A., Thiam, O., Gassama, O. & Mbaye, M. 2022. Using the Diffusion-of-Innovation Theory to Examine Factors Influencing the Implementation of an Electronic Medical Record in Obstetrics. *Integrative Journal of Medical Sciences*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.15342/ijms.2022.619>

Guillemot, F., Lacroix, F. & Nocus, I. 2022. Educators' attitude towards inclusive education from 2000 to 2020: An extended meta-analysis. *International Journal of Educational Research open*, 5(1): 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.01.252>

Gyasi, M.N.K., Okrah, A.K. & Anku, J.S.A., 2020. Educators' Knowledge of Special Educational Needs and Disability Students and Their Classroom Management Approaches. *World Journal of Education*, 10 (4): 160-172.

Hadi, M.A. & José Closs, S. 2016. Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research in clinical pharmacy. *International journal of clinical pharmacy*, 38: 641-646.

Ham, M. 2020. *Theories of Innovation Adoption and Real-World Case Analyses. Driving Educational Change: Innovations in Action 15*. PressBooks.

Haq, Z.U., Rasheed, R., Rashid, A. & Akhter, S. 2023. Criteria for Assessing and Ensuring the Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Business Reflections*, 4(2):1-25.

Harris, J. & Nowland, R. 2021. Primary-secondary school transition: Impacts and opportunities for adjustment. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 8(2): 55-69. <https://doi.org/10.20547/jess0822008205>

Hasan, M., Halder, U.K. & Debnath, D. 2018. Inclusive education and education for all. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(3):605-608.

Hashmi, S., Khan, I.K. & Khanum, N. 2017. Inclusive education in government primary schools: Teacher perceptions. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 4(1).

Heeralal, P.J.H. & Jama, P.P. 2014. Implementation of inclusive education in three schools of Mthatha District in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20):1500.

Hernandez-Torrano, D., Somerton, M. & Helmer, J. 2022. Mapping research on inclusive education since Salamanca Statement: a bibliometric review of the literature over 25 years. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(9): 893–912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1747555>

Hidayat, M. & Mukminin, A. 2022. The Diffusion of Innovations Model: Applications to Education Policymaking and Critique. *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 9 (2): 100-107.

Hlalele, D. & Makoelle, T.M. (Eds.). 2023. *Inclusion in Southern African Education: Understanding, Challenges and Enablement*. Springer Nature.

Hlalele, D., Jiyane, Z. & Radebe, S. 2020. School-Based Support Team Members' Understanding of Curriculum Differentiation and Enhancement in Rural South Africa: A Narrative Inquiry. *e-BANGI*, 17(3):143-156.

Hodkinson, A. 2019. *Key issues in special educational needs, disability and inclusion*. Sage.

Hollings, S. 2021. Implementation barriers of inclusive education and their impact on stakeholders: a review of the literature. *International Journal of Childhood Education*, 2 (1): 27–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2022.2095359>

Holloway, I. & Galvin, K. 2023. *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare*. John Wiley & Sons.

Holmqvist, M. & Lelinge, B. 2021:829. Teachers' collaborative professional development for inclusive education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36 (5): 819-833.

Hooijer, E.L., Van der Merwe, M. & Fourie, J. 2021. Symbolic representations as teachers reflect on inclusive education in South Africa. *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 10 (1): 127-152.

Hove, N. & Phasha, N.T. 2024. Support services for learners with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms using capability theory. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 14(1):10.

Hoyland, S., Hollund, J.G. & Olsen, O.E. 2015. Gaining access to a research site and participants in medical and nursing research: A synthesis of accounts. *Medical education*, 49(2):224-232.

Huang, X., Lai, M.Y. & Huang, R. 2021. Educators' learning through an online lesson study: an analysis from the expansive learning perspective. *International Journal for Lesson & Learning Studies*, 10 (2): 202-216. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-09-2020-0076>

Human Rights Watch. 2015. 'Complicit in Exclusion': South Africa's Failure to Guarantee an Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities. UNICEF.

Hutchinson, A. 2021. *The Effects of Colonization and Apartheid On the Development of South Africa: Namibian Influence, Impacts On Education, and State Capture*. Doctoral Dissertation. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore (USA).

Hutchinson, N.L. & Specht, J. 2020. *Inclusion of learners with exceptionalities in Canadian schools: A practical handbook for educators*. Pearson.

Inclusive Education South Africa. 2019. *Inclusion in Education Perspectives on Inclusive Education in South Africa*, 2 (1):1-39.

Ileri, B.R., King'endo, M. & Thurania, S. 2019. The Effects of Physical Resources on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. <https://www.ijerm.in/index.php/ijerm/article/view/2205/180>

Ismail, S.S. 2023. Barriers Towards the Implementation of E-portfolio in Education Based on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22 (4): 512–540.

Ivala, E. 2017. Implementing Inclusive Education: A Case of KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Education, South Africa. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies*, 11(4):57.

Jali, J.S. 2014. *Challenges of teaching in the context of inclusive education: an exploration*. Doctoral Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

Jama, P.P. & Buka, A.M. 2020. Viable workshops for inclusive classes: The intake of South African teachers. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 8 (1): 114-121.

Janis, I. 2022. Strategies for establishing dependability between two qualitative intrinsic case studies: A reflexive thematic analysis. *Field Methods*, 34(3):240-255.

- Jawahir, A. 2021. Reviewing continuing professional development concept of English educators from the lens of Diffusion of Innovation Theory. *Community Concern for English Pedagogy and Teaching*, 1 (7): 1–15.
- Jenkins, L.D. 2023. Turtles, TEDs, tuna, dolphins, and diffusion of innovations: key drivers of adoption of bycatch reduction devices. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, 80(3):417-436. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsac210>
- Jia, L., Tan, R. & Santi, M. 2022. Educators' understanding of inclusive education: comparing perspectives in China and Italy. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 30(4): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2022.2066628>
- Jia, L., Tan, R. & Santi, M., 2024. Teachers' understanding of inclusive education: comparing perspectives in China and Italy. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 44(2):503-515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2022.2066628>
- Johnson, J.L., Adkins, D. & Chauvin, S. 2020. A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, 84(1):7120.
- Kakilla, C. 2021. *Strengths and weaknesses of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research: A critical essay*. Oxford.
- Kalapula, M. 2019. *The growth and development of towns in a dual land tenure system in Zambia: a case of Lundazi town*. Doctoral Thesis. The University of Zambia, Lusaka.
- Kaminski, J. 2011. Diffusion of innovation theory. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Informatics*, 6 (2): 1–6.
- Kee, K.F. 2017. Adoption & diffusion. In *The International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication* (pp. 1–54).
- Kefallinou, A., Symeonidou, S. & Meijer, C.J. 2020. Understanding the value of inclusive education and its implementation: A review of the literature. *Prospects*, 49 (3): 135-152. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09500-2>
- Kekeya, J. 2019. The commonalities and differences between research paradigms. In *Contemporary PNG Studies*, pp. 26-36.

- Khaleel, N., Alhosani, M. & Duyar, I. 2021. The Role of School Principals in Promoting Inclusive Schools: A Teachers' Perspective. In *Frontiers in Education Open Access, Volume 612*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.603241>
- Kiger, M.E. & Varpio, L. 2020. Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical teacher*, 42(8):846-854.
- Kleinert, H.L. 2020. Students with the most significant disabilities, communicative competence, and the full extent of their exclusion. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 45 (1): 34-38.
- Klykken, F.H. 2022. Implementing continuous consent in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 22(5):795-810.
- Knott, E., Rao, A.H., Summers, K. & Teeger, C. 2022. Interviews in the social sciences. *Nature Reviews Methods Primers*, 2(1):73.
- Kozleski, E., Artiles, A. & Waitoller, F. 2014. Equity in inclusive education: A cultural historical comparative perspective. In *The SAGE handbook of special education*, 2:231-249. SAGE.
- Kudarinova, A., Autaeva, A., Paylozyan, Z. & Rymkhanova, A. 2023. Readiness of pre-service teachers to implement inclusive education. *Wisdom*, 1 (25):145-155.
- Kumar, D. & Singh, M. 2021. Collaborative Teaching and Educators Role in an Effective Approach to Inclusive Education. *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 1(1):1-60.
- Kuthalingam, A.D., Shanjuvigasini, P., Swarnakumari P. & Hollis, B. 2023. The Typical Challenges and Possible Solutions for the Successful Implementation of Inclusive Education. *Hipatia Press*, 13(1):369-378.
- Kuyini, A.B., Desai, I. & Sharma, U. 2020. Educators' self-efficacy beliefs, attitudes and concerns about implementing inclusive education in Ghana. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24 (14): 1509-1526. <https://hdl.handle.net/1959.11/51650>
- Kwari, T. 2021. *The implications of medical and social models of disability in education settings*. Oxford Brookes University.

- Kyngas, H., Kaariainen, M. & Elo, S. 2020. The trustworthiness of content analysis. In *The application of content analysis in nursing science research* (pp. 41-48).
- Lampen, A. 2014. *Principals' Perceptions Towards Inclusive Education and Recent Curriculum Policy Development in South Africa*. Doctoral Thesis. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Larsen, H.G. & Adu, P. 2021. *The theoretical framework in phenomenological research: Development and application*. Routledge.
- Legodi-Rakgalakane, K. & Mokhampanyane, M. 2022. Evaluation of educators' experiences and practices of inclusive education in primary schools: A South African perspective. *International e-Journal of Educational Studies*, 6 (12): 255-263.
- Lehane, P. & Senior, J. 2020. Collaborative teaching: exploring the impact of co-teaching practices on the numeracy attainment of pupils with and without special educational needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 35 (3): 303-317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2019.1652439>
- Lemon, L.L. & Hayes, J. 2020. Enhancing trustworthiness of qualitative findings: Using Leximancer for qualitative data analysis triangulation. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(3):604-614.
- Lepheana, L.J., Campus, K., Chisango, G. & Campus, B. 2022. Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa: A Case Study in Buffalo City Education District. *International Journal*, 78 (12): 1.
- Lewis, B. 2019. TLM-Teaching/Learning Materials. *ThoughtCo. Viitattu*, 2.
- Liebowitz, D.D. & Porter, L. 2019. The effect of principal behaviors on student, teacher, and school outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 89 (5): 785–827. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319866133>
- Linake M., Maphosa C., & Kunene K.E. 2022. Research designs: meaning, rationales and types. In E. Adu & C. Okeke (Eds.). *Fundamentals of research in humanities, social sciences, and science education: A practical step-by-step approach to a successful research journey*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. (pp. 99 – 106).

Lindner, K.T. & Schwab, S. 2020. Differentiation and individualisation in inclusive education: a systematic review and narrative synthesis. *International journal of inclusive education*, 4(1): 1-21.

Lingolwe, F. 2021. *Challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in the primary schools in Malawi: a case study of four primary schools in Zomba district*. Doctoral dissertation. Mzuzu University, Mzuzu (Malawi).

Linker, G. & Yusupova, Y. 2019. The formation and development of teachers' professional competence regarding inclusive education. *Bulletin of Nizhnevartovsk State University*. <https://doi.org/10.36906/2311-4444/19-1/12>.

Lishuai, J., Tan, R. & Santi, M. 2023. Educators' Understanding of Inclusive Education: Comparing Perspectives in Italy and China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 12(2): 13-45

Lochmiller, C.R. 2021. Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6):2029-2044.

Lordye, P. & Jato, T. 2023. Physical School Environment and Students' Achievement: Lessons for Nigeria. *Rivers State University Journal of Education*, 26(1):56-66.

Mabasa-Manganyi, R.B. 2023. Factors influencing foundation phase rural educators' understanding and practices in selecting inclusive teaching strategies. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 13 (1): 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v13i1.991>

Mabaso, R.G. 2019. *District-based support team professional preparation in supporting the implementation of inclusive education in schools: The case of Gauteng Province in South Africa*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Mabokachaba, M.A. 2022. *The management of inclusive education in mainstream pilot inclusive schools: experiences of stakeholders in the Dimamo Circuit of Limpopo*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Maffea, J. 2020. Lack of resources in classrooms: Research for Change. *Wicked Problems in Our World*, 38: 1–14.

- Mager, F. & Galandini, S. 2020. *Research Ethics: A practical guide*. Oxfam.
- Maguvhe, M.O. & Mutambo, A. 2023. A study of inclusive education provision in Zambia: Curriculum reform. *African Journal of Disability*, 6(5): 1-10.
- Mahadew, A. & Hlalele, D.J. 2022. Understanding inclusion in early childhood care and education: A participatory action learning and action research study. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 12 (1):1-11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v12i1.1073>
- Mahat-Shamir, M., Neimeyer, R.A. & Picho-Prelorentzos, S., 2021. Designing in-depth semi-structured interviews for revealing meaning reconstruction after loss. *Death Studies*, 45(2):83-90.
- Mahlo, D. 2017. Teaching learners with diverse needs in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng Province, South Africa. *SAGE Open*, 7 (1): 1–9.
- Mahoney, J.L., Weissberg, R.P., Greenberg, M.T., Dusenbury, L., Jagers, R.J., Niemi, K., Schlinger, M., Schlund, J., Shriver, T.P., VanAusdal, K. & Yoder, N. 2021. Systemic social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high school students. *American Psychologist*, 76 (7): 1-15.
- Maine, M.I. 2022. *Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Majoko, T. & Phasha, N. 2018. *The state of inclusive education in South Africa and the implications for teacher training programmes*. British Council.
- Majoko, T. 2019. Teacher key competencies for inclusive education: Tapping pragmatic realities of Zimbabwean special needs education educators. *Sage Open*, 9 (1): 1-14.
- Makhalemele, T. & Tlale, L.D. 2021. Managing inclusive schools in South African schools: A transformational leadership perspective. In *School leadership for democratic education in South Africa*. Routledge (pp. 149-171).

Makhubela, P.F. 2023. *School Leadership challenges in implementing inclusive education policies in primary schools*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg.

Makoelle, T.M. & Burmistrova, V. 2020. Funding inclusive education for equity and social justice in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(4):1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n4a2037>

Makoelle, T.M. 2016. *Inclusive teaching in South Africa*. African Sun Media.

Makuya, D. & Sedibe, M. 2021. Exploring the challenges that are faced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education at the Grade 9 level in Gauteng North District Schools in South Africa. *Interchange*, 52(4):561-576.

Malatji, M.J., Mavuso, P.M. & Malatji, K.S. 2019. The role of school-community partnership in promoting inclusive and quality education in schools. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 17 (2): 72-86.

Mampane, J.T. 2022. Facilitating educational access for children with learning disabilities: The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. University of Cape Town. <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/37478>

Mampane, S.T. 2017. Managing the teaching of diverse learners in inclusive classes in a South African context. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 18(1-3):181-190. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v44ns1a2287>

Manohar, N., MacMillan, F., Steiner, G.Z. & Arora, A. 2018. Recruitment of research participants. In *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences*. (pp. 71-98).

Manti, S. & Licari, A. 2018. How to obtain informed consent for research. *Breathe*, 14(2):145-152.

Maree, K. 2019. *First steps in research* (revised ed.). Van Schaik.

Maryudi, A. & Fisher, M.R. 2020. The power in the interview: A practical guide for identifying the critical role of actor interests in environment research. *Forest and Society*, 4(1):142-150.

Masana, S. & Kgothule, R. 2022. Teaching learners with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms: Challenges and possible solutions. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11 (8): 367-375.

Mashuri, S., Sarib, M., Rasak, A., Alhabsyi, F. & Syam, H. 2022. Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 12(1): 22-29. <http://repository.iainpalu.ac.id/id/eprint/1247>

Masondo, C.N. 2017. *Enhancing the effectiveness of principals in implementing inclusive education using Ubuntu approach*. Doctoral Thesis. University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

Massouti, A. 2019. *Inclusion and policy enactment in teacher education: A focus on pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom*. Doctoral Dissertation. The University of Western Ontario, Ontario (Canada).

Masunungure, A. & Maguvhe, M. 2023. Paving Ways for Effective Inclusion in Selected Mainstream Secondary Schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22 (5): 558-569. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.5.28>

Materechera, E.K. 2020. Inclusive education: why it poses a dilemma to some educators. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24 (7): 771-786. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1492640>

Mathebula, J.S. 2021. *Experiences of educators at a school in the Tzaneen district in supporting learners facing barriers to learning*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Matlala, S.M. 2015. *Teacher support in the inclusive primary school: addressing barriers to learning in the classroom*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

- Matsepe, D., Maluleke, M & Cross, M. 2019. Re-imagining teachers' experience with overcrowded classrooms in the public secondary schools in South Africa. *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa*, 8(2):81- 93. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1997f9e889>
- Maxwell, J.A. 2021. Why qualitative methods are necessary for generalization. *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(1):111.
- McChesney, K. & Aldridge, J. 2019. Weaving an interpretivist stance throughout mixed methods research. *International journal of research & method in education*, 42(3):225-238. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11937/80089>
- McGill, A., McCloskey, R., Smith, D. & Veitch, B. 2023. Establishing Trustworthiness in Health Care Process Modelling: A Practical Guide to Quality Enhancement in Studies Using the Functional Resonance Analysis Method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 7(2): 1-13.
- McKenzie, J., Shanda, N. & Aldersey, H.M. 2021. Family-teacher partnerships: families' and educators' experiences of working together to support learners with disabilities in South Africa. *British Journal of Special Education*, 48 (1): 26–49.
- McKenzie, J.A. & Dalton, E.M. 2020. Universal design for learning in inclusive education policy in South Africa. *African Journal of Disability*, 9.
- Mckinney, E., Culture, M. & UNICEF. 2019. *Assessing Inclusive Education in practice in Namibia: Challenges and opportunities in leaving no child behind*. Taylor & Francis.
- McMullin, C. 2023. Transcription and qualitative methods: Implications for third sector research. *VOLUNTAS: International journal of voluntary and non-profit organizations*, 34(1):140-153.
- Meier, C. & West, J. 2020. Overcrowded classrooms - the Achilles heel of South African education? *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1):1-10.
- Mendoza, M. & Heymann, J. 2022. Implementation of inclusive education: a systematic review of studies of inclusive education interventions in low-and lower-middle-income countries. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 10(1): 1-18.

Mensah, P.A., Gyamfi, A. & Agbezudor, T. 2022. The Teacher's Knowledge about Special Needs Learners: A Fundamental Element for the Implementation of Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 5 (7): 1-10.

Mensah, R.M.J.K. & Nantwi, W.K. 2020. Challenges and Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs. *British Journal of Education, Learning and Development Psychology*, 3(1):18-32.

Mergia, A.T. 2020. *The practice of inclusive education in Ethiopia*. Global Education Monitoring Report Team.

Mfuthwana, T. & Dreyer, L.M. 2018. Establishing inclusive schools: Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education teams. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(4).

Mitchell, D. & Sutherland, D. 2020. *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Routledge.

Mncube, D.W. & Ngema, T. 2023. Enhancing School Management Teams in Promoting Sustainable, Equitable Resource Allocation in Rural Schools. *Contextualising Rural Education in South African Schools*, 16(31): 148-163. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004547025\\_010](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004547025_010)

Mncube, V.S., Lebopha, N. & Titus, A. 2020. Challenges in implementing inclusive education in some selected South African schools. *Human Ecology*, 70(1-3):98-109.

Mnguni, M.A. 2017. *From inclusive education policy to implementation: a case study of a full-service school in uMngeni District, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. Doctoral Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

Mofield, E.L. 2020. Benefits and barriers to collaboration and co-teaching: Examining perspectives of gifted education educators and general education educators. *Gifted Child Today*, 43 (1): 20–33.

Moosa, M. & Bekker, T. 2021. Initial Teacher Education students' conceptualisation of inclusive education. *Journal of Education*, 6(1): 55-74. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i85a03>

Morelle, M. & Tabane, R. 2019. Challenges experienced by learners with visual impairments in South African township mainstream primary schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(3):1-6.

Moroi, T. 2021. Quantitative and qualitative research and philosophical assumptions. *Journal of Bunkyo Gakuin University, Department of Foreign Languages*, 9(2): 127-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.1958372>

Morris, N. 2021. Leadership and Innovation in a Special Education School. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*, 33: 56-69.

Mpanza, L.P. & Govender, S. 2022. Primary School-Based Support Teams' Experiences and Practices When Supporting Teachers. *Multicultural Education*, 8(2).

Mphahlele, L.A. 2017. *Towards a support structure for the implementation of inclusive education in rural secondary schools in Limpopo*. Doctoral Thesis. North-West University (South Africa), Potchefstroom.

Mphongoshe, S.J., Mabunda, N.O., Klu, E.K., Tugli, A.K. & Matshidze, P. 2015. Stakeholders' perception and experience of inclusive education: A case of a further education and training college in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(1):66-71.

Mpu, Y. & Adu, E.O. 2021. The challenges of inclusive education and its implementation in schools: The South African perspective. *Perspectives in Education*, 39 (2): 225–238.

Msekawanthu, J. 2023. *Implantation of the National Inclusive Education Strategy, a Case of selected mainstream secondary schools in Northern Education Division, Malawi*. Doctoral Dissertation. Mzuzu University, Mzuzu (Malawi).

Mugambi, M.M. 2017. Approaches to inclusive education and implications for curriculum theory and practice. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 10(4):92-106.

- Mulovhedzi, S.A. & Luhlima, T.R. 2023. Impact of Resources on the Delivery of Inclusive Education in the African Context. In *Using African Epistemologies in Shaping Inclusive Education Knowledge*. Cham: Springer.
- Munje, P.N. & Mncube, V. 2018. The lack of parent involvement as hindrance in selected public primary schools in South Africa: The voices of educators. *Perspectives in Education*, 36(1): 80-93.
- Munthe-Kaas, H., Nøkleby, H., Lewin, S. & Glenton, C. 2020. The Transfer Approach for assessing the transferability of systematic review findings. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 67(5): 1-22.
- Murungi, L.N. 2015. Inclusive basic education in South Africa: Issues in its conceptualisation and implementation. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, 18(1): 3159-3195.
- Muthukrishna, N. & Engelbrecht, P. 2018. Decolonising inclusive education in lower income, Southern African educational contexts. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(4):1-11. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n4a1701>
- Muzari, T., Shava, G.N. & Shonhiwa, S. 2022. Qualitative research paradigm, a key research design for educational researchers, processes and procedures: A theoretical overview. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1):14-20.
- Mwarari, C.N. 2020. Head Educators Attitude Towards Inclusive Education: The Key Predictor of Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education in Public Primary Schools of Murang'a County, Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Best Practices*, 4 (1): 1–16.
- Mwila, K., Namuchana, M., Lufungulo, E.S., Chinemerem, O.G., Mudenda, S., Mangwatu, D., Nangandu, C. & Hikaambo, C. 2022. Educators' continuous Professional Development (CPD) in the Southern African Development Community (Sadc): A Review of Policies, Approaches and Implementation Strategies in Enhancing Teacher Competences. *Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*, 5 (1): 105–124.

- Namanyane, T. & Shaoan, M.M.R. 2021. Inclusive Education: A Literature Review on Definitions, Attitudes and Pedagogical Challenges. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 5.
- Nassaji, H. 2020. Good qualitative research. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(4):427-431.
- Nel, M. 2018. *Inclusive Education: All about Humanity and Yet*. North-West University. pp. 1-27
- Nel, N.M., Tlale, L.D.N., Engelbrecht, P. & Nel, M. 2016. Teachers' perceptions of education support structures in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. *Koers*, 81(3):1-14.
- Nembambula, T.A., Ooko, M. & Aluko, R. 2023. Exploring challenges experienced by teachers in implementing inclusive education in classrooms: A South African perspective. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 10(2):1-15.
- Nembambula, T.A., Ooko, M. & Aluko, R. 2022. Educators' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education: a South African perspective. *ScienceRise*, 5(82):42-52.
- Neubauer, B.E., Witkop, C.T. & Varpio, L. 2019. How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on medical education*, 8(1): 90-97.
- Ngcezulla, B. 2018. *Investigating inclusive classroom strategies to support learners identified as LSEN in mainstream schools*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Ngidi, P.T. 2020. *Teachers' understanding of inclusion in urban primary schools in the Pinetown District*. Doctoral Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.
- Ngoma, Z.H. 2020. *Experiences of teachers when supporting learners with behavioural problems in the inclusive foundation phase classes of Gauteng East District*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Ngubane, P.R. 2019. *The experiences of educators in implementing inclusive education in rural schools*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Ngulani, G. 2020. *Educators' experiences in implementing inclusive education in primary schools in Johannesburg East district, Gauteng Province*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Ngulube, J.Y., Njelesani, D. & Njelesani, J. 2020. Implementation of inclusive education policy in secondary schools in Zambia. *Zambia Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 1 (1): 1-29.

Nguyen, H., Ahn, J., Belgrave, A., Lee, J., Cawelti, L., Kim, H.E., Prado, Y., Santagata, R. & Villavicencio, A. 2021. Establishing trustworthiness through algorithmic approaches to qualitative research. In *Advances in Quantitative Ethnography: Second International Conference*. Springer International Publishing.

Ní Bhroin, Ó. & King, F. 2020. Teacher education for inclusive education: a framework for developing collaboration for the inclusion of students with support plans. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43 (1): 38–63.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1691993>

Nickerson, C. 2022. Interpretivism paradigm & research philosophy. *Simply Sociology*, 5.

Niewwenhuis, J. 2019. Analysing qualitative data. In K. Maree (Ed.). *First steps in research* (Revised ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp. 118-148.

Nkoma, E. & Hay, J. 2018. Educational psychologists' support roles regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe. *Psychology in the Schools*, 55(7): 850-866.

Nong, S.I. 2020. The functions of SBST and DBST in South African primary schools. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 5(7):1243-1248.

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J. 2017. Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 16(1):1609406917733847.

Nseibo, K., Vergunst, R., McKenzie, J., Kelly, J., Karisa, A. & Watermeyer, B., 2022. Learning together: The dynamics of training educators for disability inclusion in South Africa. *Frontiers in Education*, 17(1): 1-9.

Ntlhare, L.A. & Mukuna, K.R. 2022. Professional Development Needs of Foundation Phase Teachers in Identifying Learners with Learning Barriers at Primary Schools. *ACE*, 1 (2): 1.

Ntombela, G.N.N. 2019. *The dynamics of inclusive education in further education and training in South Africa: a case study of two technical and vocational education and training colleges in Pietermaritzburg*. Doctoral Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Ntseto, R.M., Kgothule, R.J., Ugwuanyi, C.S. & Okeke, C.I. 2021. Exploring the impediments to the implementation of screening, identification, assessment and support policy in schools: Implications for Educational Evaluators. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 8(2):1383-1392.

Nwaigwe, C.C. 2022. Research designs: meaning, rationales and types. In E. Adu & C. Okeke (Eds.). *Fundamentals of research in humanities, social sciences, and science education: A practical step-by-step approach to a successful research journey*. Pretoria: van Schaik publishers (pp. 99 – 106).

Obilor, E.I. 2023. Convenience & Purposive Sampling Techniques: Are They the Same? *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research*, 11(1):1-7.

Oen, K. & Krumsvik, R. 2022. Educators' attitudes to inclusion regarding challenging behaviour. *European journal of special needs education*, 37 (3): 417-431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1885178>

Ogba, F.N., Ugodulunwa, C.A. & Igu, N.C. 2020. Assessment of Training Needs of Educators and Administrators for Effective Inclusive Education Delivery in Secondary Schools in South East Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 15 (1): 72-91.

Ogbonnaya E.A. 2020. Diffusion of innovation theory: an effective approach to accelerate adoption of information and communication technology in twenty-first century knowledge society. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 9 (4): 147 – 155.

Ogegbo, A.A. Gaigher, E. & Salagaram, T. 2019. Benefits and challenges of lesson study: A case of teaching Physical Sciences in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39 (1): 1-9.

Okaka, W. & Nagasha, I.J. 2017. The Role of Community Media in Promoting Inclusive Education for SDG 4 Progress in Uganda.

Okech, J.B., Yuwono, I. & Abdu, W.J. 2021. Implementation of inclusive education practices for children with disabilities and other special needs in Uganda. *Journal of Education and E-learning research*, 8(1):97-102. <https://doi.org/10.20448/JOURNAL.509.2021.81.97.102>

Onyemaechiede, M. & Okeke, I.C. 2022. Educators implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini: Problems and Implications for Policy and Inclusive Counselling. *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering Educators*, 7 (1): 1701-1707. [https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-persed\\_v39\\_n2\\_a16](https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-persed_v39_n2_a16)

Onyishi, C.N. & Sefotho, M.M. 2020. Educators' Perspectives on the Use of Differentiated Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms: Implication for Teacher Education. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9 (6): 136-150.

Opoku, M.P. 2022. Special educators' intentions towards supporting the practice of inclusive education for learners with disabilities in secondary schools in Ghana. *African Journal of Disability*, 11(0):875. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v11i0.875>

Orlova, L.S. 2019. Open innovation theory: Definition, instruments, frameworks. *Strategic decisions and risk management*, 10(4):396-408.

Osai, J.A., Amponsah, K.D., Ampadu, E. & Commey P. 2021. Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a basic school in Ghana. *International Online Journal of Primary Education*, 10(1):73-88.

- Oswald, M.M. 2019. Educators need scientific and experiential knowledge on learning support: recommendations for a teacher educator. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 33 (4): 237–252. <https://doi.org/10.20853/33-4-2864>
- Owhondah, S.N. & Nwosu, K.L. 2022. Administrative Strategies for Managing Students' Wastage in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Imo State. *Development and Society*, 3 (4): 411-428.
- Padilla-Díaz, M. 2015. Phenomenology in educational qualitative research: Philosophy as science or philosophical science. *International journal of educational excellence*, 1(2):101-110.
- Paires, M.J.P. & Mandal, L.A. 2023. Collaborative Teaching between Special Education Educators and Mainstream Educators in Inclusive Education.
- Paju, B., Kajamaa, A., Pirttimaa, R. & Kontu, E. 2022. Collaboration for inclusive practices: Teaching staff perspectives from Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 66 (3): 427-440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.186908>
- Parveen, A. & Qonsar, T. 2018. Inclusive education and the challenges. *National Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 3(2):64-68. <https://doi.org/10.25073/2588-1159/vnuer.4930>
- Patel, D.P.B. 2023. Promoting Inclusive Education: Strategies for Supporting Students with Special Needs in Mainstream Classrooms.
- Patel, P., Moz-Ruiz, D., Garcia, R., Chatterjee, A., Morreale, P. & Burnett, M. 2024. From Workshops to Classrooms: Faculty Experiences with Implementing Inclusive Design Principles. In *Proceedings of the 55th ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education*, 1035–1041.
- Pathak, V.C. 2017. Phenomenological research: A study of lived experiences. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*, 3(1):1719-1722.
- Paulsrud, D. & Nilholm, C. 2023. Teaching for inclusion—a review of research on the cooperation between regular teachers and special educators in the work with students

in need of special support. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(4):541-555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1846799>

Pearse, N. 2021. Guidelines for theory development using qualitative research approaches. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 19(2):95-103. <https://doi.org/10.34190/ejbrm.19.2.2512>

Petrina, S., 2019. Methods of Analysis Curriculum Analysis. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*. Oxford University Press. (p. 207).

Pham, L.T.M. 2018. Qualitative approach to research a review of the advantages and disadvantages of three paradigms: Positivism, interpretivism and critical inquiry. *University of Adelaide*.

Phiri, P.P. 2021. *Teacher's experiences of implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Hhohho region, Eswatini* . Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Pinho, C., Franco, M. & Mendes, L. 2021. Application of innovation diffusion theory to the E-learning process: higher education context. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26 (1): 421-440. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10269-2>

Praveena, K.R. & Sasikumar, S. 2021. Application of Colaizzi's method of data analysis in phenomenological research. *Medical Legislation*, 21(2):914-8.

Pretorius, E. 2020. A collaborative partnership between school social workers and educators: a vehicle to address the social contexts of learners and quality of education in South Africa. *Social Work*, 56(2):139-156.

Putnam, L.L. & Banghart, S. 2017. Interpretive approaches. *The international encyclopedia of organizational communication*, 117.

Qassimi, N.M. & Wade, A. 2021. *My definition of curriculum*. University of the people.

Rabi, N. M., Ghazali, N. H. C. M., & Piragasam, G. A. G. 2018. The Importance of Inclusive Education Course for Preparing Pre-Service Teacher to Teach Students with Special Needs in School. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(11): 1848–1858. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v13i09.8479>

Rabi, N.M. & Zulkefli, M.Y. 2018. Mainstream educators' competency requirement for inclusive education program. *International journal of academic research in business and social sciences*, 8 (11): 1779-1791. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i11/5354>

Rahi, S., Alnaser, F.M. & Abd Ghani, M. 2019. Designing survey research: recommendation for questionnaire development, calculating sample size and selecting research paradigms. In *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, pp. 1157-1169.

Rahman, M.M. 2019. *Semi-structured interview: A critical analysis*. University of Bath.

Rajendran, P., Athira, B.K. & Elavarasi, D. 2020. Teacher competencies for Inclusive Teacher Competencies for Inclusive Education: Will Emotional Intelligence do Justice? *International Journal of Education*, 9(1): 169-183.

Raman, R., Vachharajani, H. & Nedungadi, P. 2021. Adoption of online proctored examinations by university students during COVID-19: Innovation diffusion study. *Education and information technologies*, 26 (6): 7339-7358.

Ramango, S.P. & Naicker, S.R., 2022. Conceptualising a framework for school leaders as they foster an inclusive education culture in schools. *Journal of Education (UKZN)*, (86):85-106. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i86a05>

Ramango, S.P. 2021. *The role of school management teams in developing an inclusive education culture in secondary schools*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg (South Africa).

Rapp, A.C. & Corral-Granados, A. 2024. Understanding inclusive education: a theoretical contribution from system theory and the constructionist perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(4):423-439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1946725>

Ravitch, S.M. & Carl, N.M. 2019. *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage Publications.

Razalli, A.R., Hashim, A.T., Mamat, N. & Ariffin, A. 2020. Collaborative teaching between special education educators and mainstream educators in inclusive

education program. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10 (8): 1055–1065. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i8/7713>

Republic of South Africa. Parliamentary Ministry. 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. Ministry of Education. 1996. *National Education Policy Act, 27 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (DoE) 1996. *The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. Ministry of Education. 2000. *South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000*. Pretoria: Government printers.

Roche, M.K. & Strobach, K.V. 2019. *Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness*. U.S. Department of Education.

Rogers, E.M. 1983. *Diffusion of innovations* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Rogers, E.M. 1962. *Diffusion of innovations*. New York: Free Press.

Rogers, E.M., Singhal, A. & Quinlan, M.M. 2019. Diffusion of innovations. In *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, pp. 432-448. Routledge.

Roux, M.F.L. 2022. Key considerations for an inclusive framework for youth with disabilities in post-apartheid South Africa. *African Journal of Disability (Online)*, 50(9): 1–9.

Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M.S.A., Alhabsyi, F. & Syam, H., 2022. Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education* 12(1):22-29. <http://repository.iainpalu.ac.id/id/eprint/1247>

Rusznyak, L. & Walton, E. 2022. Pre-service educators' experiences of schooling: Implications for preparation for inclusive education. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(3):1-10.

Salamondra, T. 2021. Effective communication in schools. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 13(1):22-26.

Saloviita, T. 2020. Attitudes of educators towards inclusive education in Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64 (2): 270–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1541819>

Sancar, R., Atal, D. & Deryakulu, D. 2021. A new framework for teachers' professional development. *Teaching and teacher education*, 70(5): 1-12.

Sandoval, M., Muñoz, Y. & Márquez, C. 2021. Supporting schools in their journey to inclusive education: Review of guides and tools. *Support for Learning*, 36 (1): 20-42.

SAnews, 2021. *Basic Education sector makes progress in implementing inclusive education*. [Online]. <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/basic-education-sector-makes-progress-in-implementing-inclusive-education>

Sari, R. 2020. The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Yogyakarta's Primary Schools. In *International Conference on Educational Psychology and Pedagogy - Diversity in Education*. Atlantis Press, pp. 194-197

Sarpong, M.B. 2019. *Exploring leadership challenges in implementing inclusive education in Effutu Municipality*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Education, Winneba.

Saunders, C.H., Sierpe, A., Von Plessen, C., Kennedy, A.M., Leviton, L.C., Bernstein, S.L., Goldwag, J., King, J.R., Marx, C.M., Pogue, J.A. & Saunders, R.K. 2023. Practical thematic analysis: a guide for multidisciplinary health services research teams engaging in qualitative analysis. *British Medical Journal*, 381. doi: 10.1136/bmj-2022-074256. PMID: 37290778.

Savolainen, H., Malinen, O.P. & Schwab, S. 2022. Teacher efficacy predicts educators' attitudes towards inclusion—a longitudinal cross-lagged analysis. *International journal of inclusive education*, 26 (9): 958-972. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104228>

Sayed, Y., Sadeck, M., Singh, M., & Williams, T. 2022. *Inclusive Education and Continuous Teacher Professional Development: Lessons from rolling out the Teaching for All Materials in the Western Cape*. CPUT Press.

Sayed, Y., Salmon, T. & Balie, L. 2020. *Embedding inclusive education in teacher professional development in South Africa: Impact evaluation report on the teaching for all project*. British Council.

Schmid, E. & Garrels, V. 2021. Parental involvement and educational success among vulnerable students in vocational education and training. *Educational Research*, 63 (4): 456-473.

Schuster, J. & Kolleck, N. 2020. The global diffusion of social innovations—an analysis of twitter communication networks related to inclusive education. In *Frontiers in Education* (5),92010. Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.492010>

Schuster, J. & Kolleck, N. 2020. The global diffusion of social innovations—an analysis of twitter communication networks related to inclusive education. In *Frontiers in Education* (5),92010. Frontiers Media SA.

Scott, S. & McGuire, J. 2017. Using Diffusion of Innovation Theory to Promote Universally Designed College Instruction. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 29 (1): 119–128.

Seedat, N. 2018. *A thematic review of inclusive education research in South Africa*. University of the Witwatersrand.

Seeko, L. & Mathebula, T. 2023. Democracy and Inclusive Education Policy in Post-1994 South African Schools: Goal, Tension, and Struggle. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 12 (2): 114-129.

Segoe, B.A. & Bisschoff, T. 2019. Parental involvement as part of curriculum reform in South African schools: Does it contribute to quality education? *Africa Education Review*, 16 (6): 165–182.

Seko, L. & Mathebula, T. 2023. Democracy and Inclusive Education Policy in Post-1994 South African Schools: Goal, Tension, and Struggle. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 12 (2): 114-129.

Serdyukov, P. 2017. Innovation in education: what works, what doesn't, and what to do about it? *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, 10(1):4-33. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-10-2016-0007>

Sesay C.F. 2018. *Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education in Sierra Leone*. Doctoral Dissertation. Walden University, Minneapolis (USA).

Shaheen, M. & Pradhan, S. 2019. Sampling in qualitative research. In *Qualitative techniques for workplace data analysis*. IGI Global. pp. 25-251.

Shanda, N., Kelly, J. & McKenzie, J. 2018. Perceptions of South African educators on how they feel supported in teaching learners with special educational needs. *Inclusive Education South Africa*, 1 (1): 20–23. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v11i0.946>

Sharma, U. & Vlcek, S. 2021. Global trends in the funding of inclusive education: A narrative review. In *Resourcing inclusive education*, pp. 51-65. Monash University.

Sheetheni, T.T. 2021. *An exploration of educators' views on the implementation of the inclusive education policy in selected mainstream schools in the Oshana Region, Namibia*. Doctoral Thesis. Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch (RSA).

Shigetomi, E.E.G. 2023. Differentiated Methodological Strategies for Inclusive Education in Basic Education: Scoping Review. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2023-0147>

Shikalepo, E.E. 2020. Challenges facing teaching at rural schools: A review of related literature. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 4(5): 211-218.

Sibise, K. 2021. *Perceptions of principals and circuit managers on the need for school social workers at Mankweng Circuit, South Africa*. Master's Dissertation. Limpopo University, Polokwane.

Sijuola, R. & Davidova, J. 2022. Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education: Evidence from Selected Developing Countries. In *Rural environment: Education Personality*, pp. 140-147.

Silva, T.I.M., Braz, P.R., Cavalcante, R.B. & Alves, M. 2022. Diffusion of innovations theory and its applicability in research studies on nursing and health. *Texto & Contexto-Enfermagem*, 8(4): 1-12.

Singal, N., 2020. *Role of non-government organisations as providers of and advocates for inclusive education*. UNESCO Press.

Singh, J.D. 2016. Inclusive education in India—concept, need and challenges. *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301675529>

Skae, V.A., Brown, B.J. & Wilmot, P.D. 2020. Teachers' engagement with learners in inclusive foundation phase classrooms. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1):1-11.

Smith, N.M., Hoal, K.E.O. & Thompson, J.F. 2020. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In *Mining, materials, and the sustainable development goals (SDGs)*, pp. 29–38.

Somma, M. & Bennett, S. 2020. Inclusive Education and Pedagogical Change: Experiences from the Front Lines. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 6 (2): 285-295.

Republic of South Africa. Department of Education (DoE). 2001. *Education white paper 6: Special needs education: Building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: .

Republic of South Africa. Department of Education (DoE). 2001. *Education white paper 6: Special needs education: Building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Spandagou, I., Little, C., Evans, D., Bonati, M.L. & Spandagou, I., 2020. Inclusive education: Principles and practice. *Inclusive In Education in Schools and Early Childhood Settings*, pp. 35-44.

Spann, B., Mead, E., Maleki, M., Agarwal, N. & Williams, T. 2022. Applying diffusion of innovations theory to social networks to understand the stages of adoption in connective action campaigns. *Online Social Networks and Media*, 28:100201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.osnem.2022.100201>

Srivastava, M., De Boer, A. & Pijl, S.J. 2015. Inclusive education in developing countries: A closer look at its implementation in the last 10 years. *Educational Review*, 67(2):179-195.

Stahl, N.A. & King, J.R. 2020. Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 44(1):26-28.

Stanghellini, G., Broome, M., Raballo, A., Fernandez, A.V., Fusar-Poli, P. & Rosfort, R., 2019. In *The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803157.001.0001>

Stenfors, T., Kajamaa, A. & Bennett, D. 2020. How to assess the quality of qualitative research? *The clinical teacher*, 17(6):596-599.

Stewart, H., Gapp, R. & Harwood, I. 2017. Exploring the alchemy of qualitative management research: Seeking trustworthiness, credibility and rigor through crystallization. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(1):1-19.

Strogilos, V., Lim, L. & Mohamed-Buhari, N. 2023. Differentiated instruction for students with SEN in mainstream classrooms: contextual features and types of curriculum modifications. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 43 (3): 850–866. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1984873>

Subedi, K.R. 2021. Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research. *Online Submission*, 4:1-13.

Suleymanov, F. 2015. Issues of inclusive education: Some aspects to be considered. *Electronic journal for inclusive education*, 3(4):8.

Taherdoost, H. 2022. How to conduct an effective interview, a guide to interview design in research study. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 11(1):39-51.

Taquette, S. R. & Borges L. M. 2022. Ethical Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: A Critical Literature Review. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2 (1): 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406922107873>

Tebid, A.C. 2019. Support strategies to assist foundation phase educators with implementation of inclusive education: a case of selected Johannesburg West schools. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 14 (2): 108–124.

Teherani, A., Martimianakis, T., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Wadhwa, A. & Varpio, L. 2015. Choosing a qualitative research approach. *Journal of graduate medical education*, 7(4):669-670.

Thanh, N.C. & Thanh, T.T. 2015. The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods in education. *American Journal of Educational Science*, 1(2):24-27.

Themane, M. & Thobejane, H.R. 2019. Educators as change agents in making teaching inclusive in some selected rural schools of Limpopo Province, South Africa: Implications for teacher education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23 (4): 369-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1434690>

Thompson, J. 2022. *A guide to abductive thematic analysis*. Edinburgh Napier University.

Tlale, L.D. & Romm, N.R. 2018. Systemic thinking and practice toward facilitating inclusive education: Reflections on a case of co-generated knowledge and action in South Africa. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 31:105-120.

Tomaszewski, L.E., Zarestky, J. & Gonzalez, E. 2020. Planning qualitative research: Design and decision making for new researchers. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920967174>

Travers, H.E. & Carter, E.W. 2022. A portrait of peers within peer-mediated interventions: A literature review. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 37 (2): 71–82.

Travers, H.E. & Carter, E.W. 2022. How do peers benefit from peer-mediated interventions? Examining impact within secondary and postsecondary programs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47 (2): 72–89.

Tristani, L., Tomasone, J., Fraser-Thomas, J. & Bassett-Gunter, R. 2020. Examining factors related to educators' decisions to adopt teacher-training resources for inclusive physical education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 43 (2): 367-396. <https://journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/view/3927>

Tshangela, S. 2019. *Mainstream primary school teachers' perceptions about the implementation of inclusive education*. Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Tubey, R.J., Rotich, J.K. & Bengat, J.K. 2015. Research Paradigms. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(5): 1-6.

Tupiño, R.M.L., Carcausto-Calla, W., Nakiche, K.C., Gamarra, S.K.S. & Onyishi, C.N. & Sefotho, M.M. 2020. Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of Differentiated Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms: Implication for Teacher Education. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(6):136-150. <https://doi.org/10.36941/iesr-2023-0147>

Tuval-Mashiach, R. 2021. Is replication relevant for qualitative research? *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(3):365.

Ugwuanyi, C.S. 2022. Research designs: meaning, rationales and types. In E. Adu & C. Okeke (Eds.). *Fundamentals of research in humanities, social sciences, and science education: A practical step-by-step approach to a successful research journey*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, pp. 99-106.

Umar, M.A. 2019. Influence of Infrastructures in the Implementation of Inclusive Education on Skills Acquisition among Students with Learning Disability in Agricultural Science Subjects. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 24(9):33-43.

Umar, Z., Sadiqi, T., Hussain, S. & Qahar, A. 2023. Compare the Quality of Infrastructure on Student Outcomes in Public and Punjab Education Foundation Funded Schools at Secondary Level. *International Research Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 4(4):26-39.

UNESCO. 2020. *Inclusive teaching: Preparing all teachers to teach all students*. Global Education Monitoring Report Policy Paper 43. UNESCO Press.

Van der Merwe, M., Fourie, J.V. & Yoro, A.J., 2020. Learning support strategies for learners with neurodevelopmental disorders: Perspectives of recently qualified teachers. *African Journal of Disability*, 9(1):1-10.

Van der Voort, G. & Wood, L. 2016. An action-learning model to assist circuit teams to support school management teams towards whole-school development. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4):1-11.

Van Eck, M. 2020. Decolonising legal education in South Africa: Is it time to press the reset button? *Journal of Decolonising Disciplines*, 2 (1): 1–45. <https://doi.org/10.35293/jdd.v2i1.45>

Van Geel, M., Keuning, T. & Safar, I. 2022. How educators develop skills for implementing differentiated instruction: Helpful and hindering factors. *Teaching and Teacher Education: Leadership and Professional Development*, 1: 11.

Van Rensburg, S.K.J., Thobane, M., Kader, S., Aphone, M.P., Mpuru, L., Mokotong, M., Ngoveni, T.D., Ratiba, M.M. & Tredoux, L. 2024. Navigating Learning for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) in South Africa: Barriers and Recommendations. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)*, 5(3): 328-342. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20245314>

Van Sittert, H.W. & Wilson, L. 2018. *School social workers' perceptions of their role within the framework of inclusive education*. Doctoral Thesis. North-West University, Potchefstroom (RSA).

Van Staden-Payne, I. & Nel, M. 2023. Exploring factors that full-service school educators believe disable their self-efficacy to teach in an inclusive education system. In *Frontiers in Education*, Frontiers Media SA, pp. 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.1009423>

Vargo, S.L., Akaka, M.A. & Wieland, H. 2020. Rethinking the process of diffusion in innovation: A service-ecosystems and institutional perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 12(3): 526-534.

Vaughan, T. & Albers, B. 2017. Research to practice: implementation in education. *Teacher Magazine*, 20.

Vergottini, M. & Weyers, M. 2020. The foundations and nature of South African school social work: an overview. *Social Work*, 56(2):125-138.

Vlachou, A. & Tsirantonaki, S.S., 2023. The Importance of School Principals' Values towards the Inclusive Education of Disabled Students: Associations between Their Values and Knowledge, Beliefs, Attitudes and Practices. *Education Sciences*, 13(4):360.

Volker, E., Gupta, S. & Brown, B. 2022. Inclusive education: advantages and overcoming barriers. *MacEwan University Student Journal*, 6 (1): 2–6. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6\\_4318](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_4318)

Vuban, J.A. & Eta, E.A. 2019. Negotiating access to research sites and participants within an African context: The case of Cameroon. *Research Ethics*, 15(1):1-23.

Wack, N.M. 2021. Bridging barriers in inclusive classrooms: Avenues for communication between general education educators and families. Doctoral Dissertation. Kutztown University, Pennsylvania.

Walton, E. & Engelbrecht, P. 2022. Inclusive education in South Africa: path dependencies and emergences. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 9(3): 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2022.2061608>

Walton, E. 2018. Decolonising (through) inclusive education? *Educational research for social change*, 7(SPE):31-45.

Walton, E., Carrington, S., Saggars, B., Edwards, C. & Kimani, W. 2022. What matters in learning communities for inclusive education: a cross-case analysis. *Professional development in education*, 48 (1): 134–148.

Wani, T.A. & Ali, S.W. 2015. Innovation diffusion theory. *Journal of General Management Research*, 3 (2): 101-118.

Weiss, S., Muckenthaler, M., Heimlich, U., Kuechler, A. & Kiel, E., 2021. Teaching in inclusive schools. Do the demands of inclusive schools cause stress? *International*

Wibowo, A.M. and Prihatin, T., 2020. The Diffusion Innovation of Madrasa Ibtidaiya Inclusion from Regular School to Inclusive. In *International Conference on Science and Education and Technology*. Atlantis Press.

Wilson, T.P. 2017. Normative and interpretive paradigms in sociology. In *Everyday life* (pp. 57-79). Routledge.

Wium, A.M. & Louw, B. 2015. The South African National School Curriculum: Implications for Collaboration between Teachers and Speech-Language Therapists Working in Schools. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 5(1):19-41.  
<https://sajce.co.za/index.php/sajce/article/view/348/87>

Woltran, F. 2023. Insights into educators' perceptions of parental involvement as a predictor of educational inequity. *Education*, 5(2): 1–14.

Woodcock, S., Gibbs, K., Hitches, E. & Regan, C. 2023. Investigating teachers' beliefs in inclusive education and their levels of teacher self-efficacy: Are teachers constrained in their capacity to implement inclusive teaching practices? *Education Sciences*, 13(3):280.

Wright, S., O'Brien, B.C., Nimmon, L., Law, M. & Mylopoulos, M., 2016. Research design considerations. *Journal of graduate medical education*, 8(1):97-98.

Yada, A. & Savolainen, H. 2017. Japanese in-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and self-efficacy for inclusive practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 64:222-229.

Yan, T. & Deng, M. 2019. Regular education educators' concerns on inclusive education in China from the perspective of the concerns-based adoption model. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23 (4): 384-404.

Yeboah, A., Aloka, P.J. & Charamba, E. 2023. Educators' Personal Barriers Hindering Implementation of Inclusive Education in One Mainstream School in South Africa. *Studies*, 10 (3): 109-123.

Yeboah, A., Aloka, P.J. & Charamba, E. 2023. Teachers' Personal Barriers Hindering Implementation of Inclusive Education in One Mainstream School in South Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(3):109-123. <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v10i3p109>

Yıldız, N.G., Köse, H. & Akın, E. 2022. Classroom Management: Significance in Inclusive Education, Current Problems and Proposed Solutions. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi*, 23 (3): 699-720.

Yilmaz, R.K. & Yeganeh, E. 2021. Who and How Do I Include? A Case Study on Educators' Inclusive Education Practices. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 17 (2): 406-429. <https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2021.332.25>

Zhang, X., Yu, P., Yan, J. & Ton, I. 2015. Using diffusion of innovation theory to understand the factors impacting patient acceptance and use of consumer e-health innovations: a case study in a primary care clinic. *BMC health services research*, 15:1-15.

Ziegler, M., Matthews, A., Mayberry, M., Owen-DeSchryver, J. & Carter, E.W. 2020. From barriers to belonging: Promoting inclusion and relationships through the peer-to-peer program. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 52 (6): 426-434.

Zwane, S.L. & Malale, M.M., 2018. Investigating barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools in Gege branch, Swaziland. *African Journal of Disability*, 7(1):1-12. <https://ajod.org/index.php/ajod/article/view/391/955>

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: UFS Ethical Clearance Letter



#### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

10-May-2024

Dear Ms Hellen Malebe

#### Application Approved

Research Project Title:

**Factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune district, Limpopo Province**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2023/2612**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted via an Amendment on RIMS to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit a Final Report on RIMS for your study/research project to the ethics office once the project has concluded. Should you require more time than the allotted 12 months to complete this research, please apply for an extension by submitting a Continuation/Report on RIMS. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

**Dr Adri  
du  
Plessis**  
Digitally signed by Dr  
Adri du Plessis  
Date:  
2024.05.16  
23:20:22  
+02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela P.O. Box 339  
Drive  
Park West  
Bloemfontein 9301  
South Africa  
Bloemfontein 9300  
Tel: +27 (0)51 401  
9337  
[aduplessis@ufs.ac.za](mailto:aduplessis@ufs.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



## Appendix B: LDE Permission Letter



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2      Enq: Makola MC      Tel No: 015 290 9448      E-mail: [MakolaMC@edu.limpo30.gov.za](mailto:MakolaMC@edu.limpo30.gov.za)

**Malebe HR**  
House no 28 Block P  
Soshanguve  
0152

2018509430@ufs4life.ac.za

### RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.

---

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research with the title "**Factors influencing the implementation of Inclusive Education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province**" has been approved.
3. The following conditions should be considered:
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in any how disrupt the academic programmes at the school(s).

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: Malebe HR Page 1

---

Gnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700  
Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

***The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people***

3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially in the fourth term.

3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected and treated with dignity).

3.6 Upon completion of the research, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

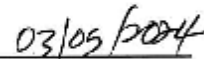
4 Additionally, you are expected to produce this letter at School(s)/Office(s) where you intend to conduct your research as evidence that permission has been granted for access to the research site(s).

5 The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



MC Makola PhD

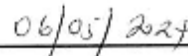


Date



Molohe NM

Acting DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES



Date

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: Malebe HR Page 2

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700  
Tel: 015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

**The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people**

**Appendix C: School Permission Letter**

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



Principal's Name & Surname: CHILONGWE LB

[Handwritten Signature]

23 / 07 / 2024

Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname: HR Maiebe

[Handwritten Signature]

23/07/2024

Researcher's Signature

Date

## Appendix D: Sample of Participant Consent Form



### INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant

My name is Hellen Malebe, a Master's student in Psychology of Education at the School of Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein Campus. You are invited to participate in a research study that I am conducting titled ***“Factors Influencing the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Secondary Schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province.”*** The purpose of the study is to explore factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province from the teachers' and principals' perspectives. Before deciding to participate, it is very important for you to understand the nature of the study. Please read the following information carefully:

#### **Procedure:**

If you decide to participate, please note the following:

1. Participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview, where you will share your experiences related to factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education and the interview will be audio-taped
2. The interview is expected to take approximately 1 hour.

#### **Risks and Benefits:**

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, such as potential discomfort in discussing experiences. However, your insights will contribute to a better understanding of factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District. The benefits include contributing to the knowledge in the field of inclusive education and potentially improving practices in the area.



**Confidentiality and voluntary participation:**

The interview will strictly remain confidential, and your name will not be mentioned anywhere. The audio-recording will be stored securely. Codes will be used to ensure anonymity. All shared information will be strictly confidential and the collected data will be used only for the purpose of the study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any given time without facing consequences.

**Transcription of Interview:**

Transcripts will be given a code to protect identities. Only the research team members and I will have access to the transcripts.

**Information storage:**

All data collected, including audio-taped, transcription and other important material, will be stored in secure, locked storage facility. I will store the data for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

**Compensation:**

Participating in this study is purely voluntarily.

I, the participant, have read and understood the information provided above. I am fully aware that the interview will be audio-recorded. I have had an opportunity to ask questions for clarity and I have been given satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Interview Guide



### QUALITATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Dear Participant,

My name is Hellen Malebe, a Master's student in Psychology of Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein Campus. I am inviting you to participate in this research titled: "***Factors Influencing the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Secondary Schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province.***" The aim of the study is to explore factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. Please be aware that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and confidential. Should you choose to participate in this study, please be aware that your participation will require an estimated time commitment of about one hour and the interview will be audio-recorded.

#### **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Thank you once more for agreeing to participate in this study. I would appreciate it if you could tell me about yourself. Probes in this section may include, but are not limited to the participant's gender, grade, years of experience, etc. Please use the box below to capture the background information necessary for the study.

<b>Date of interview</b>	
<b>Participant code</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Qualification</b>	
<b>Grade being taught</b>	
<b>Years of experience</b>	

## **SECTION 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- How do teachers perceive inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What challenges do teachers face when implementing inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do schools need to implement inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools?
- What support do teachers need to implement inclusive education in mainstream classrooms?
- 

## **SECTION 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **For Teachers**

1. What is your perception of inclusive education in the mainstream school?
2. What are the challenges you encounter when implementing inclusive education in the classrooms?
3. How do these challenges impact on your classroom management ability?
4. What inclusive strategies do you implement to accommodate learners with various learning needs within the same classroom?
5. What specific resources or support do you think teachers need to implement inclusive education successfully?
6. What kind of professional development training teachers need to be able to successfully implement inclusive education in the mainstream classroom?

### **For Principals**

1. What is your perception of inclusive education in the mainstream school?
2. What are the challenges your school experiences when implementing inclusive education?
3. What kind of support do you think your school requires to implement inclusive education successfully?

4. What suggestions do you have to promote inclusive education in mainstream schools?

***Thank you for participating in the study!***

## Appendix F: Sample of a transcribed interview

### Audio 2024-09-24 at 18.12.24.mp4

- SPEAKER1 00:00 So, the first question is, what is your perception of inclusive education in the mainstream school?
- SPEAKER2 00:12 Mm hmm. Inclusive education in the mainstream school is needed. My understanding of inclusive education is that it refers to including all learners in the same classroom regardless of their differences. Inclusive means to include. It truly needs to be implemented even though we do not know how and where to begin. Mmmmmmm...ehhh, if you look at how it should be normal to include learners with special needs in our lessons. Even learners without special needs can grow some tolerance and know that everybody has good capabilities. Yes. So, they need to be together and share everything.
- SPEAKER1 01:50 All right. The second one is what are the challenges your school experiences implementing inclusive education?
- SPEAKER2 02:01 Mmmmmmm, my school has lots of challenges and problems; you can even see with your naked eyes that our school has lots of challenges.
- SPEAKER2 02:10 One of the problems we are facing is that teachers do not know how to include learners with special needs in their lessons. Most learners, especially grade 12 learners, cannot read with understanding, while others cannot write. For example, here, they are challenged in writing. Especially the writing part is really too slow, and the second one is the workload. Teachers are overloaded with work and don't have time to give special attention to learners with disabilities. So how are they going to cater for those special learners? So, in our school, to be honest, they are not catered for. The school needs enough important resources as

well. We are still using chalkboards, while other schools have moved ahead using smartboards and whiteboards.

SPEAKER1 03:43 Mm hmm. I hear you, so what are those resources your school needs besides smartboards and whiteboards?

SPEAKER2 04:00 We need lots of resources, like extra classes, our learners are overcrowded. School transportation, most learners stay far from the school. This is a high school but we do not have a library, can you imagine? These are the kinds of problems our department must look into before expecting us to implement inclusion. At the sports ground, we do not have any grounds that support extra mural activities.

SPEAKER1 05:34 So, the third question is, what kind of support do you think your school requires to implement inclusive education successfully? The type of support.

SPEAKER2 05:48 From the infrastructure, we need some buildings that can meet the requirements of inclusive education and then we need accessibility in terms of some toilets. And then we also need a computer lab. The most important thing is the support. I wish the district to be fully involved in facilitating continuous workshops about inclusive education. The most important thing we need while waiting for the government to offer us other resources, like building more classes, is for the district to offer us training on inclusive education, but we do not have their support. They know very well that we were never workshopped on inclusive education, and it is recorded in their books that they never visited us. I think it is the duty of our district officials to offer us workshops and training about inclusive education, right? But our teachers never received any single workshop or training, I do not remember, honestly. They must offer us continuous training about inclusion and evaluate our teachers by providing them with solid feedback. Hence, I say it must not be a once-off training. They must monitor us otherwise we cannot expect our teacher to be the jack of all trades. The district must

send people to workshop us on how to include learners with disabilities in our lessons. We understand that our schools are in rural areas and they are far from specialised schools. So, we need workshops and training and they must not be once off.

The top management, which is the Department of Education, is expecting us teachers to perform miracles; how can they expect us ordinary teachers who have been teaching before they introduced inclusive education to accommodate learners with special needs? We are teaching in ordinary schools for a reason: they must hire teachers that specialised in inclusive education. The department must introduce the permanent post of educational assistants, and I think they would help teachers in handling the workload and manage our overcrowded classrooms better.

This school really need the intervention of a social workers; these kids are going through psychological problems at a very tender age. Some of them have reported issues of rape, and I did contact a social worker at our local clinic. She promised to come, but even now, we are still waiting. It would be better if our district allocated one social worker to visit our rural schools weekly. This place is far from many things, and it becomes difficult to refer a learner to town for help.

SPEAKER1 08:15 Mm hmm. Mm hmm. So, do you perhaps have support from the district level?

SPEAKER2 08:31 Not so much. I wish the District to be fully involved in facilitating continuous workshops about inclusive education. The most important thing we need while waiting for the government to offer us other resources, like building more classes, is for the district to offer us training on inclusive education, but we do not have their support. They know very well that we were never workshopped on inclusive education, and it is recorded in their books that they never visited us.

SPEAKER2 08:35 Because the district every year they send the personnel to come into this school to assess the needs of our school. To check the status of the buildings and they see the challenges of our school. They have promised to come back to improve our building and build more classes even now we are still waiting. Instead, they have given us container classes, which in my opinion they are more expensive compared to building classes from the ground. But well, they are only concerned about production of good results. When you are underperforming, then they will call you for accountability. Our classes are overcrowded and many classes are not in good condition for learning.

SPEAKER1 11:37 Okay. The final question is, what recommendations do you have for inclusive education promotion in mainstream schools?

SPEAKER2 11:54 I think our department must make it a norm to monitor schools especially those that are in rural areas. Inclusive education is an ongoing thing, and we cannot implement it overnight without their involvement and support. They must also consider the conditions of our schools before they force us to implement inclusive education. They must ensure that all the schools are well-furnished and also make sure that every learner is well-catered for. And then I think that even all the streams can be implemented at the school. All schools should practice or implement inclusive education. Yeah. Yeah. We understand some special schools are really far from us, and the department is also failing to build all those special schools to cater for everybody.

SPEAKER1 13:38 Okay. So that'll be all from me. I don't know if there's any additional information you want to share with me.

SPEAKER2 13:54 Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Yeah, but, uh. I would wish that such research may reach the higher level of the Education Department so that they try to pay attention to rural schools. This is a great research. The department must equip us with great buildings so that we can improve the education system and that means infrastructure. Even

educators, where are those teachers for sign language? Where are those teachers who can understand the Braille? So, the department must be hands-on.

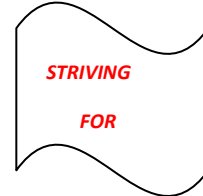
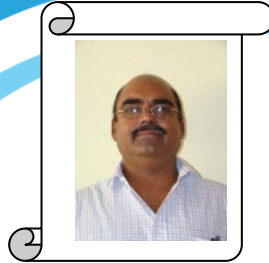
SPEAKER1 15:17 I hear you, everything has been noted down. Thank you so much for affording me the opportunity to gather important information about inclusive education from your school. I really appreciate your valuable time and support.

SPEAKER2 15:20 You are welcome!

## Appendix G: Certificate of Language Editing

590 Miami Road  
Hibberdene  
KZN  
4220

# PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES



Brian Naidoo (BA Hons. in English; BA Hons in TESOL; BEd Hons.  
BA- English major; UDE [English]; UCT Cert. in Legal &  
Business Writing; UCT Cert. in Copy-Editing; MA Coursework in Research  
UFS. Assessor Cert. UFS; Umalusi Evaluator of Schools.

**SPECIALISING IN THE LANGUAGE EDITING OF THESES, DISSERTATIONS,  
JOURNAL ARTICLES, PROPOSALS, BOOKS, POLICIES AND PUBLICATIONS**

### CERTIFICATE FOR EDITING A DRAFT MASTER'S DISSERTATION

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE  
SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

**HELLEN R. MALEBE**

**2018509436**

**University of the Free State**

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that the above-mentioned student submitted her draft master's dissertation to me for language-editing. This was duly edited and returned to the student. I make no claim as to the accuracy of the research content. The text, as edited by me, is grammatically correct. After completion of the language editing, the student has the option to accept or reject changes prior to re-submission to the supervisor. The editor is not accountable for any additional content and changes that may have been executed post-editing.

**ID 5606255134081**

**08/12/2024**

Professional  
EDITORS  
30+ Guild  
Est 1993  
Promoting excellence in editing

Brian Naidoo  
Associate Member  
Membership number: NAI001  
Membership year: March 2024 to February 2025  
084 264 8401  
brian.naidoo25@gmail.com  
www.editors.org.za

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

## Appendix H: Turnitin Report

# Final Draft-Hellen Malebe.docx

*by* Hellen Malebe

---

**Submission date:** 10-Dec-2024 12:14PM (UTC+0200)

**Submission ID:** 2547617718

**File name:** Final\_Draft-Hellen\_Malebe.docx (2.09M)

**Word count:** 53377

**Character count:** 326299

## Final Draft-Hellen Malebe.docx

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>6%</b> SIMILARITY INDEX	<b>12%</b> INTERNET SOURCES	<b>8%</b> PUBLICATIONS	<b>3%</b> STUDENT PAPERS
-------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

### PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>hdl.handle.net</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>uir.unisa.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Dlamini, Phindile Pamela. "Challenges Experienced by Teachers in Supporting Learners with Barriers to Learning in the Intermediate Phase", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2023</b> Publication	<b>1%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Submitted to University of Hull</b> Student Paper	<b>1%</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>vital.seals.ac.za:8080</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>scholar.ufs.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>doaj.org</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>library.open.org</b> Internet Source	