

**EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF FOUNDATION PHASE
TEACHERSTOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT**

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DECLARATION

I, **MASIKHWA ROFHIWA**, hereby declare that this thesis titled

“EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT”

... for the Masters in Curriculum Studies at the University of Venda hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other University and that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature: *R Masikhwa*

Date 24/02/2025.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Ntavhanyeni Esther Makushu, my late sister, Mbavhalelo Munyai, my sisters, Livhuwani Munyai, Mrs Rafumbedzani Muano, Mrs Ramano Mukundi, my brother, Tshililo Munyai and my husband, Magoro Vhutshilo, for their support and encouragement during the course of my study.

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education. Learners with special needs are often excluded or overlooked in early childhood education, yet it is enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa that every child has a fundamental right to education. An interpretivist paradigm was used in the study. The study was qualitative. The population for this study comprised all Foundation Phase teachers in full-service schools in Vhembe West District. A purposive sample of 6 Foundation Phase teachers from three selected schools was used. Data was collected using interviews, classroom observation and document analysis. Data was analysed thematically. The study found out that Foundation Phase teachers have negative attitudes and perceptions towards inclusive education, which disadvantages learners with special needs. To improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education, the study recommends the following strategies: ongoing support for teachers through teacher training, workshops and teacher engagement with parents and caregivers of learners with special needs. The study also recommends the provision of equipment and facilities for the smooth implementation of inclusive education in schools.

Key Concepts: Access, Attitudes, Foundation Phase, Inclusive Education, Inclusion, Perceptions, Special Education Needs.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	:	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BCTF	:	British Columbia Teachers Federation
BED	:	Bachelor of Education
CELP	:	Centre for Education Law, Leadership and Policy
DBE	:	Department of Basic Education
DOE	:	Department of Education
NCCIE	:	National Coordinating Committee Meeting
NEPI	:	National Education Policy Investigation
OBE	:	Outcome-based Education
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goal
UK	:	United Kingdom
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	:	United States of America
WHO	:	World Health Organisation
WTO	:	World Trade Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In South Africa, every child has the constitutional right to basic education (Maher, 2017:22), which is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). This goal ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (DBE, 2011:2). Regarding access and quality, SDG4 rallies behind reducing disparities and inequities in education (Maher, 2017:22). It is estimated that in Africa, only 10% of children with special needs attend school (UNESCO, 2017:2). In South Africa, specifically, up to 70% of children of school-going age with disabilities are out of school (Department of Education, 2020:4), although school attendance is compulsory for all children between 7 and 15 years of age. Of those learners who attend schools, most attend separate, special schools for learners with special needs.

Early Childhood Education is considered a fundamental and vital part of the education process. A low level of inclusion rate was found in many developing nations. This level is significantly lower when it comes to kids with special needs (Maher, 2017:22). Teacher attitudes and perceptions towards Inclusive Education have been cited to be one of the reasons behind the low level of inclusion (Maher, 2017:22). Moreover, the philosophy of inclusion and best practices for ensuring success to inclusive education are not fully understood by Foundation Phase teachers.

All children have the right to Early Childhood Education (Howett, 2016:4). However, children with special needs cannot make use of the opportunities and advantages that Early Childhood Education has to offer in South Africa. The reason is that there are negative attitudes and perceptions by teachers towards them (Maher, 2017:22). These are children who have disabilities, and they are often excluded and overlooked in Early Childhood Education (Ainscow, 2018:1). This study aimed to explore the attitudes and

perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education. It is vital to explore teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, their feelings and beliefs about the process of including children with special needs in the mainstream schools to ensure quality and inclusive education for all. Maher (2017:49) and Ainscow (2018:3) consider early childhood education a fundamental component in children's development.

Including children with special needs in Early Childhood Education worldwide has been considered challenging. Challenges are related to the unclear definition of the concept of special needs, insufficient instruments to identify and assess children with special needs (Perolli-Shehu, 2019:2). Moreover, difficulties in creating an inclusive education system that will lead to professionalism, including professional education and qualified teachers, including the difficulties of different strategies for physical and social accommodation of children with special needs (Sharma, 2020:67).

Young children with special needs are often excluded or overlooked in Early Childhood Education. These children do not receive the specific support and education required to meet their rights and needs (Sharma, 2020:8). Without the appropriate early intervention and support, their impairment or special needs could become more severe or complex, potentially preventing them from learning.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teachers' inadequate or lack of appropriate skills and knowledge to handle learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms poses challenges to those learners. This threatens and contradicts quality education as identified in Sustainable Development Goal 4. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is a commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Department of Education promotes the implementation of inclusive education to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have reasonable access to inclusive, quality, free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with other young people in the communities in which they live (Sharma, 2020: 67). However, there are numerous

challenges and hurdles for effective inclusion of learners with special education needs into the mainstream public schools. Teachers seem to lack appropriate skills in accommodating and teaching learners with special needs for the successful implementation of Inclusive Education.

In South Africa, school attendance is compulsory for all children between 7 and 15 years of age. However, up to 70% of children of school-going age with disabilities are out of school (Department of Education, 2020:1). Excluding people with disabilities and children with special needs in Early Childhood. Thus depriving learners of Early Childhood Education and other fundamental human rights. Some of these are the right to basic education, the right to play with other children, the right to enjoy their childhood like other children of their age, the right to form friendships, and the right to opportunities and stimulation to promote their maximum development and realise their full potential. Education structures in various education districts are not enabled, nor do attitudes, teaching and learning methods, as well as the curriculum, reflect inclusive values (Swart & Pettipher, 2015:7). It is sad and unfortunate that young children with special needs are often excluded or overlooked in Early Childhood Education. This shows that children with special needs do not receive the specific support and education required to meet their rights and needs. Without the appropriate early intervention and support, their impairment or special needs could become more severe or complex, potentially preventing them from learning. Bornman and Rose (2020:1) state that teachers' attitudes and understanding have been identified as a problem in the success of Inclusive Education in the early childhood phase. Therefore, this study explored the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education. The following objectives guided the study:

- To explore Foundation Phase teachers' experiences towards Inclusive Education.

- To describe attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education.
- To investigate challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers about Inclusive Education.
- What strategies could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education?

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question was what are the attitudes and perceptions of foundation phase teachers towards inclusive education in Vhembe West District ? To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following research questions were asked:

- What are the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education?
- What are the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers Towards Inclusive Education?
- What are the challenges of Foundation Phase teachers face with regards to Inclusive Education?
- What strategies could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education?

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS/CONCEPTS

1.5.1 Access

In education, the term access typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure or at least strive to ensure that learners have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education (Ojeda & Carugno, 2021:1). In this study, access refers the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure or at least strive to ensure that learners with disabilities have equal and equitable opportunities to acquire education in an inclusive classroom.

1.5.2 Attitude

Attitude is defined as the way in which a person views and evaluates something or someone that predisposes an action or behaviour to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation (Altmann, 2018). In this study, attitudes mean the way in which Foundation Phase Teachers view and feel about Inclusive Education, which makes them respond positively or negatively towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province.

1.5.3 Foundation Phase

Foundation Phase helps children develop a strong educational base and a love of learning (Ojeda & Carugno, 2021:1). This includes teaching children to read and write and supporting them in developing their numeracy skills. In this study, Foundation Phase refers to the first phase of formal schooling in South Africa. It involves teaching from the reception year, which is called Grade R (5-6 years of age), to Grade 3, which is about 9 years of age.

1.5.4 Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education entails when all learners, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighbourhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and support that enable them to succeed in the core curriculum (Bui, 2018:3; Alquraini & Gut, 2020:1). In this study, Inclusive Education means children with special needs and special needs' inclusion in acquiring and accessing" education.

1.5.5 Perceptions

Perceptions refer to the act or faculty of apprehending by means of the senses or of the mind, cognition, and understanding. It is the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting, and organising sensory information (Heart of Wisdom, 2002). In this study, perceptions refer to the senses or of the mind, cognition, and understanding of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province.

1.5.6 Special Education

Special education is the process by which learners with special needs receive education via the process of addressing their differences while integrating them as much as possible into the typical educational environment of their peers (Ojeda & Carugno, 2021:1). In this study, special education means the process by which learners with special needs receive education while addressing their differences and integrating them as much as possible into their classmates' typical educational environment.

1.5.7 Special Educational Needs

According to Westwood (2017:1), special educational needs is a legal definition and refers to children with learning problems or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. In this study, special education refers to children who have cognitive difficulties or disabilities that make it more difficult for them to learn than most children their age.

1.5.8 Observation Schedule

An observation schedule is a structured framework used to systematically record and analyze behaviours, interactions, and practices in a specific setting (Ojeda & Carugno, 2021:1). For exploring Foundation Phase teacher perceptions of Inclusive Education in Vhember West District, South Africa, the observation schedule was designed to capture key aspects of classroom environments, teaching strategies, teacher-student interactions, and inclusivity practices at the three selected schools.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study may benefit both Foundation Phase teachers and children living with disabilities and other stakeholders, including the following: curriculum advisors and the Department of Education. By exploring the research questions, the study explored the Foundation Phase teachers' perceptions of Inclusive Education. It generated findings to overcome the challenges in the understanding of Inclusive Education to support its implementation in schools and somehow contribute to its development to benefit both Foundation Phase teachers and children living with special needs; however, they might add knowledge to the existing body of knowledge. This study might help improve policymakers' understanding of how teachers understand and implement Inclusive Education. Furthermore, the recommendations of this study may guide school principals, teachers, parents, and District-Based Support Team (DBST) in finding new ways to support learners living with special needs. The findings might also assist researchers in further studies.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study**

This is the first chapter of the research, and it introduces the study. The sections that are included in this chapter are as follows: the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, and research questions of the study was presented in Chapter 1.

- **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Chapter Two provides a literature review from a broad frame of reference through which Foundation Phase teachers' understanding and attitude towards Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase will be explored.

- **Chapter 3: Methodology of the Study**

This chapter deals with the research design, the sampling method, techniques of data collection and the limitations of the study area.

- **Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

This is the fourth chapter of the research, and it presents the analysis and interpretation of data.

- **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research findings are furnished to present the main results in Chapter 5. The chapter summarises the findings for the purpose of making recommendations.

1.8 SUMMARY

This study explored the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District. This chapter comprised the background of the study, problem statements, aim of the study, objectives research equations, significance of the study, definition of the concepts and outline of the chapters.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review involves a review of surveys articles, books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory. By so doing, the literature review provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. Literature reviews are designed to provide an overview of sources the researcher has explored while researching a particular topic and to demonstrate to your readers how your research fits within a larger field of study. The theoretical framework of the study is discussed first, followed by the context of inclusive education in South Africa and the teachers understanding and attitudes towards inclusive education are discussed thereafter.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1986) forms the basis of the theoretical framework of this study. Central to this theory is the idea that people learn behaviours from each other through observation, imitation, and modelling. This theory emphasises that people learn from one another. This means that interacting with each other in a social context is crucial because people learn from each other's interactions in a social context. By observing the behaviours of others, people develop similar behaviours. After observing the behaviour of others, people assimilate and imitate that behaviour, especially if their observational experiences are positive ones or include rewards related to the observed behaviour (Bandura, 1986). This study is based on this theory because of its emphasis on the importance of social interaction, observation, imitation and modelling in the teaching and learning process, hence the interaction between teachers and learners for knowledge and skills transfer. During the interaction in the classroom, learners observe and imitate their teachers' behaviour. It is, therefore, important for teachers to model good practices, good attitudes and perceptions towards the inclusivity of learners with special needs so that learners observe and imitate good attitude and

behaviour after them. The researcher used this theory assuming that the interactions of teachers would highlight the likelihood for teachers to serve as models for all learners so that they (learners) interact well with each other in class and any other given social context. When learners with special needs are fairly included in an inclusive classroom context, they will interact and learn from their peers as well. Therefore, Social Learning Theory is the ideal theory for this study, which explores the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education in Vhembe West District. According to Bandura (1997), theories must accurately demonstrate predictive power. This means that theories must closely identify the determinants of human behaviour as well as the intervening mechanisms responsible for the changes.

The Social Cognitive Theory of human functioning explains how individuals develop and that the ways humans behave are interlinked with their own selves and the influences they receive from the environment. Social Cognitive Theory provides a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behaviour. It posits that an individual's behaviour is primarily learnt through their observation of others as well as through interactions with their environment (Bandura, 1986). Social Cognitive Theory stemmed from the work of Miller and Dollard, who, in 1941, proposed the theory of social learning. Central to their theory is the idea that individuals learn behaviours by observing others, if they are sufficiently motivated to do so. In other words, the behaviour they would want to learn would be related to favourable outcomes. By imitating these observed actions, individual observers would solidify that learnt action and would be rewarded with positive reinforcement (Miller & Dollard, 1941). From a social learning viewpoint, psychological functioning is explained in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants (Bandura, 1986).

In 1963, Bandura and Walters broadened the theory of social learning to include the principles of observational learning and vicarious reinforcement as follows: Learning can occur by observing the behaviours of others as well as the outcomes of those behaviours, learning can occur without change in behaviour, the consequences of behaviour affect learning and cognition affects learning. Bandura later altered the label of his theory from

social learning to Social Cognitive Theory to distance it from the prevalent social learning theories of the day and to 'emphasise the critical role of cognition in people's capability to construct reality, self-regulate, encode information and direct behaviour (Pajares, 2012). Social Cognitive Theory supports the sense that learning occurs through several processes: symbolic, vicarious and self-regulatory, which hold a prominent role in the acquisition of new knowledge and behaviours. The capability for intentional action is rooted in symbolic activity. Through verbal and imagined symbols, people process and preserve experiences in representational forms. Through symbolising, people can conceptualise experiences and solve problems without having to enact all the various solutions. Vicarious: one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed by observing others and, on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action (Bandura, 1986).

By observing others, people are able to see behaviours and their consequences. In social cognitive theory, modelling holds a conspicuous position in the ways people learn. Through modelling, people acquire symbolic representations that, as mentioned earlier, enable future intentional actions. Social Cognitive Theory acknowledges the influential role of evolved factors in human adaptation and change, but it rejects one-sided evolutionism in which evolved biology is seen to shape behaviour whilst the selection pressures of social and technological innovations on biological evolution are ignored (Bandura, 2001). Therefore, the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1986) forms the basis of the theoretical framework of this study. Central to this theory is that learners with special needs in the classroom setting will be able to learn behaviours from each other, their teachers and their peers through observation, imitation, and modelling. The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1986) is the ideal theoretical framework of the study with regards to exploring the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education in Vhembe West District.

2.3 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

2.3.1 The Context of Inclusive Education in South Africa

The Department of Education (DoE, 2018) states that the main objective of any education system in a democratic society is to provide quality education for all learners so that they will be able to reach their objectives. With the publication of the Education White Paper 6 in 2001, South Africa has proclaimed its policy of inclusive education, the goal being the advancement of human rights as well as environmental justice. The national curriculum flowing from Education White Paper 6 is particularly sensitive to diversity, including poverty, inequality, race, gender, and barriers to learning, as well as language and age. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2010) argue that inclusive education should be understood “as a basis of a new paradigm which by-passes the medical approach and the concept of academic deficiency, and which additionally promotes inclusive environments that embrace diversity. The context of education in South Africa is particularly complex because, during the apartheid years, separate education departments existed for each of the four designated population groups, namely Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites.

This system was characterised by vast disparities in per capita funding in different education departments, as well as fragmentation and duplication of functions, responsibilities and services (Archer, Green & Pooler, 2012). The inequalities apparent in mainstream education were also reflected in special education, as it was separated from the mainstream in terms of both service delivery and overall administration. For those shaping education policy after 1994, it was a priority to transform education by addressing the disparities and inequalities of the past and creating one system that could provide all learners with access to quality education. The South African School Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) emphasises the right of all learners to an appropriate education. In a parallel endeavour the international inclusive education movement increasingly desired to replace a charity or medical discourse about disability with a rights discourse. In South Africa, the rights of those with disabilities are highlighted in the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Department of Education, 1997). Khumalo (2018) points out that emphasis should be placed on system deficiencies and the need for the department to produce a policy position paper setting out a comprehensive action plan, rather than on learner’s difficulties.

In their effort to reconstitute education, education policymakers in South Africa were made aware that the rights of learners vis-a-vis special educational needs would have to be given due consideration.-- Swart and Pettipher (2015:16) state that, in line with international thinking, South African inclusive education activists argued for an education system that could accommodate the learning needs of diverse learners, including those with disabilities, in mainstream classrooms. The White Paper on Education and Training and the South African School Act 84 of 1996 created the basis necessary for policy and legislation to facilitate a paradigm shift to inclusive education. In the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Department of Education, 1997), strategies for access to the curriculum for learners with impairments were emphasised, consequently further stressing and supporting the paradigm shift from a medical model of disability to a socio-critical model that is based on the premise that society must change to accommodate the diverse needs of all its people. Implementing inclusive education, the achievement of an Inclusive Education system is said to be a major challenge facing countries around the world (Avramidis, 2015).

Inclusive education is guided by the principle that schools should work toward accommodating all learners regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions (Lockwood, 2013). Lockwood (2013:2) adds that the differences among children ought to be respected, and teaching and learning need to be adapted to the needs of the child rather than the child being fit into an existing set of expectations. Implementing Inclusive Education implies the development of broad learning strategies to accommodate and include learners with special needs. This is based on individual perceptions of special needs and the focus that is put on the school organisation and culture (Armstrong & Moore, 2013). The schools have to be committed to and responsible for the process of restructuring themselves in response to the diversity of learners. To successfully implement inclusive education, Hay (2013) states that the school has to provide quality education support services. The 1994 UNESCO World Conference also realised this situation by arguing that a school should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions.

This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas and groups (UNESCO, 1994:6). These inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their learners, accommodating both different styles of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities (UNESCO, 1994:11). Teachers must perform their usual duties while providing special support and attention to learners with special needs at the same time. To survive, teachers must be able to deal with the unpredictable, immediate, public, simultaneous, and multidimensional demands of classroom life in ways that win and maintain some respect from their colleagues, learners, and themselves (Nind et al., 2013).

Mabaso (2016) conducted a study whose findings indicated that most teachers understand what Inclusive Education is about. The study's findings also indicated that most teachers were untrained in Inclusive Education. The study showed that resources and the teacher-learner ratio are among the challenges that teachers and learners experience in implementing Inclusive Education in public primary schools (Mabaso, 2016). It was also found that most teachers were in favour of Inclusive Education, as it addresses the imbalances of the past and promotes tolerance of social interaction (Mabaso, 2016). In addition, the study found that most schools have School-Based Support Teams, although most of them are only partially effective or ineffective (Mabaso, 2016). Another study conducted by Maphula (2015) on managing the implication of inclusion in five schools in Johannesburg South Mega District in Soweto found that a lack of knowledge of the concept of inclusion, its management and its implementation has been detected as one of the basic challenges prevailing among the teachers. Training, which is a way of acquiring knowledge, was the most spoken about concept throughout the study's investigation (Maphula, 2015). The teachers indicated that the very trainers that are being sent by the Department of Education lack understanding, direction and confidence about the implementation of this inclusive approach.

They noted that the trainers' emphasis was and remained on the basic principles and orientation of the terminology instead of dealing with crucial issues like the application of the inclusive lesson plan, assessment criteria and strategies, designing and curriculum planning (Maphula, 2015). It appears that in South Africa, implementing inclusive education has challenges and is difficult because of a lack of training. While some teachers are found to understand inclusive education, other teachers lack the knowledge and understanding thereof. This poses a need for further research and intervention in this aspect. Swart and Pettipher (2015:19) and UNESCO (2018:18) identify the ultimate goal or purpose of building an inclusive school as a contribution towards the development of an inclusive society where all members of society are able to fulfil their potential and participate optimally, and where respect for and the valuing of diversity in the context of social integration is an active value. When confronting the challenges of building an inclusive school current conditions must be taken into account.

Prinsloo (2015:28) states that, as a result of South Africa's particular history of inequalities and discrimination and the context of recent social changes, most schools do not even have basic resources such as toilets, water, electricity or sufficient classrooms, and they experience a serious breakdown in the culture of teaching and learning. These factors should be viewed as part of the challenges of inclusion because if they are not addressed, they will act as major barriers to learning and development, ultimately resulting in the exclusion of many learners. Any effort at building an inclusive school must include the identification of specific priorities relating to particular needs within the context of building a culture of teaching and learning.

Hallahan and Kauffman (2016) admit that in terms of primary prevention, parents are the primary caregivers, and little will be achieved in the prevention of health-related causes as well as basic social and emotional causes of disabilities and difficulties in learning, unless they become directly involved. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2012:290) suggest that "where learners have already developed disabilities or difficulties, it is essential to invite parents to be active partners in the whole process of secondary prevention to ensure that the problem does not worsen. Donald et al. (2012) further suggest that if

inclusive education is to work in developing social contexts, such as in South and Southern Africa, extra help and support may be required in the regular classroom as most disabilities and difficulties in learning require individual attention.

2.3.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

The concern in South Africa is that most teachers did not receive training in special education. They are expected to work hard and produce good results at the end of each academic year. It is, therefore, important that their perceptions of and attitudes towards Inclusive Education are positive and unbiased. Little research exists on teachers' perceptions of Inclusive Education (Koay, Lim, Sim & Elkins, 2016). The educator's perceptions of Inclusive Education are significant because they can influence the degree to which learners with barriers to learning are accepted and accommodated within mainstream schools. In their study, Koay, Lim, Sim and Elkins (2016) found that the success of Inclusive Education depends heavily on the perceptions and attitudes of teachers within mainstream schools towards learners with special needs/barriers to learning. They state that positive perceptions and feelings on the part of teachers tend to encourage successful inclusion; this has been found to be influenced by various factors. Some survey studies have shown that educator acceptance or resistance to the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning into mainstream classrooms is related to the knowledge base and experiences of teachers (Stoler, Taylor, Richards, Goldstein & Schilit, 2017).

Other researchers have cited the lack of skills necessary to teach learners with barriers to learning as the most common source of educator resistance (Kauffman, Gerber & Semmel, 1988). The results of the research in Brunei Darussalam by Koay, Lim, Sim and Elkins (2016) support the findings of these previous studies. They found that as teachers gain more experience and knowledge with learners with barriers to learning, they become more positive in their perceptions and beliefs about including these learners. They also found that the teachers who had received the most training and experience in special

needs have the most positive views and perceptions about inclusive education (Koay, Lim, Sim & Elkins, 2016).

Chen, Turner and Cheng (2013:7) write that research supports the fact that teacher expectations influence student achievement, behaviour, and self-esteem. They go on to say that if an educator's perceptions of learners with disabilities are negative, then including such learners in mainstream schools may not result in a beneficial experience for the learners. According to Schuum, Vaughn, Gordon and Rothlein (2014:2), prior research has indicated that general education teachers do not always feel prepared to teach learners who have special needs, and special and general education teachers often lack the skills in teaming and collaboration needed to teach learners with disabilities in the general education classroom. According to Luseno (2011:1), the educator's perceptions of success in educating learners in inclusive classrooms seem to be influenced by their efficacy beliefs for teaching learners with special needs.

The effective implementation of inclusive programmes requires that the teachers know the characteristics of children with disabilities, the special education laws, strategies for assessing the learners' needs, and strategies for teaching and structuring instruction to individual learner needs, if they are to successfully educate exceptional learners in inclusive settings (Luseno, 2011:12). Scruggs and Mastropieri (2016) conducted a synthesis of the research pertaining to teacher perceptions of inclusion spanning the years from 1958 – 1995. This review organised the findings of 28 studies around key questions that appeared to be most relevant to the issues involved in inclusion, and evaluated the prospective impact of geographical region, year of publication, and teacher characteristics on teacher perceptions. These issues included teacher support of the philosophy of inclusion and their willingness to include learners in their classrooms, the benefits of inclusion to learners and the barriers to its effectiveness, the perceived effects of inclusion on the general education classroom environment, and perceptions about the needed resources in order to implement inclusion effectively.

The findings from this study indicated that some mainstream teachers held positive perceptions regarding mainstreaming or inclusion only at a conceptual level, not on a practical level, while other teachers indicated a willingness to include learners in their classrooms (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2016). This variability in support of inclusion tended to be related to the severity level of the disability and the degree of intensity of implementation. Variability in willingness to include learners with barriers to learning was also related to the degree of perceived added responsibilities on the part of the mainstream educator as a result of the inclusion (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2016).

2.3.3 Teachers Experiences and Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education

Research shows that teachers are struggling to adjust to the new way of doing things, and they are suffering because of the overload they have (Hay, 2013:135). Other research emphasises that Inclusive Education assumes that there is adequate classroom and other support for learners with special needs (Stainback & Stainback, 2016). However, most teachers do not have adequate training to provide such support (Donald & Hlongwane, 2013). The latter poses a big challenge to schools and teachers because the Human Rights Foundation of Inclusive Education suggests that a learner should be able to choose their classroom and school preference, and that adequate support should be provided in that chosen classroom (Hay, 2013). Cook, Klein, Tessier and Daley (2014:1) state some of the challenges of Inclusive Education. The teachers have to accept and deal with the diversity of their learners. They have to teach learners without special needs together with learners with learning difficulties, behaviour, speech, language, and communication problems in the same classroom (Roaf, 2013). The teachers work becomes wider, and much higher targets are set for them to achieve. Learners who are struggling in lessons need extra attention and extra support, which is not always possible to give in class.

Another challenge is that teachers have differences in their training backgrounds, level of education, and remuneration (BCTF, 2014; Cook, Klein, Tessier & Daley, 2014:372). There are also differences in their levels of experience and understanding of disabilities. The challenge is that they must be able to explain the nature of a learner disability and

learning style, which requires a certain level of expertise across all disabilities (Cook, Klein, Tessier & Daley, 2014:372). Then, they would have to take on an unfamiliar role of providing support services. Cook, Klein, Tessier and Daley (2014:372) add that teachers have to manage their role as teachers and avoid being invasive; this might lead to teachers feeling uncomfortable with their lack of knowledge and experience with disabilities, thus experiencing additional stress in an already stressful job.

Teachers would then have to seek and find ways of coping so that they would be able to adequately provide their services to the school and the learners. They are faced with the challenge of maintaining their psychosocial and emotional well-being. There is also a challenge of strict adherence to a particular curriculum as opposed to adopting a more flexible implementation of the curriculum (Cook et al., 2014). Teachers have to decide whether to use very unstructured interventions or a combination of more structured, teacher-directed teaching interventions. At the same time, they have to decide how to organize their daily activities and whether the activities should be fairly unstructured and flexible or should be predictable daily routines (Cook et al., 2014). As mainstream classroom teachers are responsible for teaching a diversity of learners with a wide range of achievement levels, the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning further increases variance in achievement, as well as in behaviour problems, requiring these teachers to direct more attention to their specific needs. The biggest challenge reported is that in the absence of increased time to devote to individual learners, and a continued press to improve the average achievement of the class, mainstream classroom teachers recognise that the educational needs of the learners with and without barriers to learning are likely to suffer (Salend & Duhaney, 2019).

The South African education system has a large percentage of overcrowded classes, with a number of challenges that may jeopardise the practice of human rights within Inclusive Education (Hay & Malindi, 2015). The challenge is having a large percentage of overcrowded classes which is not in line with the national norm of 1:40 for primary schools or 1:35 for secondary schools. Despite efforts from provincial education departments, this problem continues without an imminent solution; underqualified teachers that cannot

implement Inclusive Education well. Huge efforts are under way to improve these educator qualifications, but only time will tell whether this improvement will have a bearing on inclusive classrooms; capacity of education managers to implement Inclusive Education in a coordinated, focused way. It appears as if many provincial managers do not have adequate background to manage this complex process, which is the change overload that teachers are experiencing. The stream of new policies seems never-ending and is affecting educator morale; remnants of the dual system are still operational in combination with the new Inclusive Education system. Special classes at mainstream schools still exist, and the majority of special schools have not been transformed into resource centres yet.

2.3.4 Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Teachers have an attitude towards Inclusive Education in South Africa. An attitude is usually defined as a tendency to react positively or negatively towards a certain object, be it a person, idea, or situation (Engelbrecht & Green, 2017:7). Attitudes are closely related to one's opinions and are based on previous experiences. Attitudes often relate in some way to interaction with others and represent a vital link between social and cognitive psychology. Attitudes towards inclusive education and commitment to Education for All constitute a critical challenge in terms of the impetus to Inclusive Education.

According to Engelbrecht and Green (2017), the Education Labour Relations Council Integrated Report of 2005 shows that the morale of teachers in South Africa is generally low. The report identified some of the key issues that create job dissatisfaction as stress associated with curriculum implementation (the then OBE) and administration, stress with curricula, pass rate requirements and reporting, high workload and having to perform tasks that are not included in the job description. It is clear from this report that stress associated with new curricula is a major challenge. If teachers are unable to implement the curriculum effectively, the dream of addressing the needs of all learners will never come true. The low morale expressed by the teachers will not disappear unless working

conditions are improved and appropriate training is provided. Williams and Finnegan (2013) believe that people perceptions determine their actions.

Schechtman and Orr (in Swart & Pettipher, 2015) argue that a person's perception and attitude are often related directly to learning experiences provided by the environment and the generalised belief systems of society, which also have a direct influence on the way in which one responds to the world. It, therefore, seems that attitudes may have a cognitive (learnt) component, an emotional (affective) component and a component of observable behaviour. In other words, if the teacher feels positive about a certain aspect (based on their belief system), it will have a positive influence on their behaviour. Watkins (2017) points out that the attitudes held by mainstream class teachers regarding inclusion and assessment, and hence inclusive assessment, are crucial. Positive attitudes can be fostered by the provision of appropriate training, support and successful practical experiences. Avramidis and Norwich (2012) explain that teachers are a key element in the successful implementation of inclusive policies and their perceptions of inclusive policies will not only determine their acceptance of those inclusive policies, but also affect their commitment to implementing such policies.

This view is also held by both Cook (2011) and Reynolds (2011), who add that teacher attitudes towards learners with specific needs appear to influence the type and quality of teacher-learner interactions, which directly impact on the learner's educational experiences and opportunities. Teachers are now obliged to seek ways to instruct all learners in their classrooms while paying special attention to the physical environment, instructional strategies employed, classroom management techniques as well as educational collaboration. These changes must result in fundamental alterations in the way teachers think about knowledge, teaching, learning and their role in the inclusive classroom (Carrington & Robinson, 2014:147). If teachers cognition is addressed by supplying them with well-planned information about Inclusive Education, it could influence their motivation, which could change their attitudes. Talmor, Reiter and Feigin (2015:220) point out that research has shown that there is a correlation between positive attitudes of teachers towards the mainstreaming of learners with special needs, the

support they receive from management and other more technical variables. These variables include the availability of adequate resources, smaller classes, the availability of time to design special teaching materials, and opportunities for personal development gained from further learning.

As stated earlier, the primary condition for successful inclusion of learners with special needs in the regular classroom is a change from negative to positive attitudes of regular schoolteachers towards learners with special needs and their inclusion in the regular classroom. Another necessary condition for the successful implementation of inclusion is continuous support and assistance to teachers by others (Talmor, 2015). It is believed that by addressing the reasons for negative attitudes to Inclusive Education among teachers and by supplying well-planned training that considers their attitudes relating to Inclusive Education and their support needs, positive attitudes to Inclusive Education could be established and maintained. According to Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff and Pettipher (2012), fear of not being able to manage diversity results in feelings of hopelessness, which leads to learners being referred for assessments by specialists and subsequently placed in special programmes. They further argue that specific concerns associated with attitudes include the lack of educational and teacher support, insufficient facilities, infrastructure and assistive devices.

Negative attitudes and labelling result from misconceptions and assumptions about learners with specific educational needs and the potential effect inclusion may have on these learners as well as other learners in the classroom (Swart, 2012). Engelbrecht (2012) singles out administrative issues, the behaviour of the learner, the teacher perceived self-competence, and the parents of the learner with specific educational needs as possibly stressful areas for South African teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. Engelbrecht's (2012) study showed that administrative issues that worried teachers include having to take full responsibility for the learner with specific education needs as well as for all the other learners in the class. Furthermore, administrative issues included adapting the curriculum, adjusting lesson plans and obtaining funds for necessary support. With regards to the learner behaviour, poor communication skills

and short attention span appeared to place stress on teachers. Sixteen teachers perceived a lack of competence as a result of reported inadequate preservice or in-service training to prepare them for Inclusive Education, which also caused them stress. Issues pertaining to the parents of the learners with specific needs included limited contact with parents and their perceived lack of understanding of the learner's capabilities (Swart, 2012).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2015), attitudes represent our covert/hidden feelings of favourability or unfavourability towards an object, person, issue, or behaviour. Attitude is defined as a learnt predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2015:6). It is said that people learn attitudes over time by being exposed to the object directly (experience) or through receiving information about the object. The learnt attitudes serve as general guides to overt/unhidden behaviour with respect to the attitude object, giving rise to a consistently favourable or unfavourable pattern of response (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2015:6). How well teachers implement inclusive programmes depends on their attitude towards Inclusive Education. The teachers have to believe that all learners can be educated, that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be educated in regular classrooms, and that Inclusive Education is a beneficial programme if they are expected to accept working with included learners (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher & Saumell, 2016). Research on teachers attitudes has been carried out in most regions of the world and mirrors the political agendas of these countries in focusing attention on the exclusion of children from educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2014). One of the most important factors affecting educator attitudes toward Inclusive Education is the type and severity of disability or barriers to learning. Research has revealed that irrespective of teaching experience, the severity of disability or barriers to learning shows an inverse relationship with positive attitudes such that as the perception of severity increases, teachers positive attitudes decrease (Dupoux, Hammond, Ingalls & Wolman, 2016). Mainstream teachers find it difficult to respond to the mandate to integrate learners with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate in general settings, and they may perceive this as an additional burden on their already stressed workloads (Dupoux, Hammond, Ingalls & Wolman, 2016). It

has been reported that male teachers attitudes toward integration are more negative than those of female teachers (Alghazo, Naggar & Gaad, 2014).

Factors related to administrative support have been **linked to teachers** attitudes towards Inclusive Education. Teachers consider the presence of organisational support and resources to be critical in forming positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education (Kruger, Struzziero & Vacca, 2015). An additional component of a positive attitude is related to class size. Mainstream teachers reported that reducing class size to 20 learners would facilitate their inclusion effort (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2016). Research has found that there are variables that influence the educator attitudes towards Inclusive Education. These variables consist of the availability of building principal and parental support; teachers pre-service and in-service preparation; experience with disabled children; knowledge of disabling conditions; knowledge of pertinent special education laws; and the length of teaching experience; the availability of community support, technical support, and administrative support (Wigle & Wilcox, 2017). The degree to which special and general classroom teachers are prepared to work in inclusive settings greatly determines the ultimate success of inclusive programmes (Luseno, 2011).

These authors note that teachers are more willing to include learners with mild disabilities than learners with more severe disabilities due to their perceived ability to successfully implement instructional goals for the entire classroom. Luseno (2011) reports that previous research indicates that teachers do not believe the academic and social needs of majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning can be best met in general education classrooms. Previous research indicates that effective teachers in mainstream schools tend to be less tolerant of maladaptive behaviour and learning problems and have higher standards for acceptable classroom behaviour (Roaf, 2013). These teachers believe that learners experiencing barriers to learning are disruptive in the classroom; therefore, they tend to be more likely to resist the placement of these learners in their classrooms. These teachers also believe that educating these learners requires additional time, work, and attention, and there are significant classroom changes that need to be made to accommodate these learners, in addition to perceiving inclusion as

requiring significant changes in classroom and instructional procedures and curricula (Salend & Duhaney, 2019).

Subban and Sharma (2016) report that previous research on educator attitudes toward Inclusive Education links demographic and contextual variables to educator attitudes towards Inclusive Education. Variables such as the educator gender, age, level of qualification in special education, and the severity of the learner disability have previously been investigated as factors that may shape teachers attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning. It was found that older, more experienced teachers appear to foster fewer positive attitudes than younger teachers (Cartledge & Johnson, 2016). Also, the lack of training in the field of inclusive or special education may lead to less positive attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools, while increased training has been associated with more positive attitudes in this regard (Briggs, Johnson, Shepherd & Sedbrook, 2012). Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2010) state that another variable refers to the perceived confidence of mainstream teachers. Teachers who perceive themselves as confident enough to include learners with barriers to learning appear to hold more positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education, and previous experience educating learners experiencing barriers to learning may allow the mainstream teacher to view inclusive educational practices more positively (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2010).

Another finding was that the educator attitude towards the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning and learning disabilities into mainstream schools may also be influenced by the severity of the disability experienced by such learners (Kuester, 2010). The inclusion of learners with behavioural disorders and emotional difficulties appears to attract the least favourable responses from mainstream teachers (Kuester, 2010). Avramidis et al. (2010) report that previous studies support the view that teachers perceive learners with emotional and behavioural disorders as more challenging in the classroom, and most mainstream teachers believe that they lack the skill, knowledge and competence to effectively include these learners. There is also evidence that teachers are reluctant to include learners with emotional and behavioural disorders, while

preferring to include learners with learning disabilities (Briggs et al., 2012). Literature also suggests that teachers are more willing to include learners who present with speech and language disorders than they are to include learners with physical disabilities (Briggs et al., 2012). In a study by Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2016), most special education teachers were found to be highly supportive of inclusion – they held positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education, while most general education teachers were not highly supportive of inclusion, and had strong reservations about including learners with barriers to learning. These findings were consistent with the work of Taylor et al. (2017).

2.3.5 Teachers Concerns About Inclusive Education

Teachers view the inclusion of learners with disabilities into mainstream settings as difficult and stressful (Subban & Sharma, 2016). The need for collaboration with several support staff has resulted in tension and confusion, and the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms is viewed by some teachers as contributing to increased workloads (Daane, Beirne-Smith & Latham, 2010). Teachers appear to be concerned about the non-acceptance of such learners by their non-disabled peers (Daane et al., 2010), and they seem to fear that the dynamics within inclusive settings may impact on the academic progress of non-disabled learners (Forlin, 2018). Research shows that mainstream teachers are apprehensive about meeting the individual needs of learners with disabilities, of the risk of social stigmas being attached to such learners in inclusive settings, of the availability and supply of resources to assist in the implementation of inclusive programmes (Bradshaw, 2018), the level of preparedness experienced by teachers through training, the access to funding to support learners with disabilities within mainstream settings, and the perceived lack of support from the administrative personnel at schools to support inclusive programmes (Daane et al., 2010). Other teachers are concerned that as more learners are included, the teachers will need additional tools and skills for coping with the social and emotional problems that accompany inclusive schooling (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2016). Bradshaw (2018) found that teachers are most concerned about the provision of paraprofessional staff to assist schools with the provision of an equitable education system for all learners. Other areas

of concern included the severity of the included learner disability and the need to adequately cater to the needs of both learners with disabilities and non-disabled peers.

Teachers evidently view access to resources as being limited and restricted (Subban & Sharma, 2016). It would appear that the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms necessitates the need for more assistants for teachers in the classroom. The results of previous studies concur with the view that educator concerns about the inclusion of learners with disabilities could stem from the need for additional support, resources, funding and access to teacher aids (Kuester, 2010). It was found that other concerns experienced by mainstream teachers included their ability as teachers to adequately cater for learners with disabilities, their part in the decision-making process regarding Inclusive Education, concerns about catering to the needs of both disabled and non-disabled learners, and concerns about having sufficient time to implement inclusive programmes (Kuester, 2010). Some of the mainstream teachers claim that they have chosen to teach a specific discipline and not special education, and the inclusion policy forces them to enter areas they are unsure about or not interested in (Ali et al., 2016).

It is argued that teachers experience higher degrees of concern about inclusive education because they believe that they have not been consulted as part of this process (Avramidis et al., 2010). Increased levels of concern also arise from the teachers' need to consider the progress of all learners within the inclusive classroom and concerns about the time and attention they require to include learners with disabilities in mainstream settings (Avramidis et al., 2010). Avramidis et al. (2010) report that it was evident that teachers who had undertaken training in special education, those who had a close friend with a disability and those with higher levels of concern expressed lower degrees of concern about implementing Inclusive Education. It is probable that teachers who received the appropriate training experienced fewer concerns about including learners with disabilities in mainstream settings, as the training provided them with some form of preparedness. The increased need for more specialised training and professional support is viewed as critical to the success of inclusive education (Briggs et al., 2012). Subban and Sharma

(2016) found that training in special education appeared to lessen pre-service teachers' concerns regarding Inclusive Education.

2.3.6 Factors that Influence Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Research shows that teachers are struggling to adjust to the new way of doing things, and they are suffering because of the overload they have (Hay, 2013). Other research emphasises that Inclusive Education assumes that there is adequate classroom and other support for learners with special needs (Stainback & Stainback, 2016; Swart, 2010). However, most teachers do not have adequate training to provide such support (Donald & Hlongwane, 2013). The latter poses a big challenge to schools and teachers because the Human Rights Foundation of Inclusive Education suggests that a learner should be able to choose their classroom and school preference, and that adequate support should be provided in that chosen classroom (Hay, 2013). Roaf (2013), Cook, Klein, Tessier and Daley (2014) state some of the challenges of inclusive education. The teachers have to accept and deal with the diversity of their learners. They have to teach learners without special needs together with learners with learning difficulties, behaviour, speech, language, and communication problems in the same classroom (Roaf, 2013).

The teachers' work becomes wider, and much higher targets are set for them to achieve. Learners who are struggling in lessons need extra attention and extra support, which is not always possible to give in class. Another challenge is that teachers have differences in their training backgrounds, level of education, and remuneration (BCTF, 2004; Cook et al., 2014). There are also differences in their levels of experience and understanding of disabilities. The challenge is that they must be able to explain the nature of a learner disability and learning style, which requires a certain level of expertise across all disabilities (Cook et al., 2014). Then, they would have to take on an unfamiliar role of providing support services. Cook et al. (2014) add that teachers have to manage their role as teachers and avoid being invasive; this might lead to teachers feeling uncomfortable with their lack of knowledge and experience with disabilities, thus experiencing additional stress in an already stressful job. Teachers would then have to

seek and find ways of coping so that they would be able to adequately provide their services to the school and the learners. They are faced with the challenge of maintaining their psychosocial and emotional well-being. There is also a challenge of strict adherence to a particular curriculum as opposed to adopting a more flexible implementation of the curriculum (Cook et al., 2014).

Teachers have to decide whether to use very unstructured interventions or a combination of more structured, teacher-directed teaching interventions. At the same time, they have to decide how to organise their daily activities and decide whether the activities should be fairly unstructured and flexible or they should be predictable daily routines (Cook et al., 2014:4). As mainstream classroom teachers are responsible for teaching a diversity of learners with a wide range of achievement levels, the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning further increases variance in achievement, as well as in behaviour problems, requiring these teachers to direct more attention to their specific needs. The biggest challenge reported is that in the absence of increased time to devote to individual learners, and a continued press to improve average achievement of the class, mainstream classroom teachers recognise that the educational needs of the learners with and without barriers to learning are likely to suffer (Salend & Duhaney, 2019 ppage). The South African education system has a large percentage of overcrowded classes, which is faced with a number of challenges that may jeopardise the practice of human rights within Inclusive Education (Hay & Malindi, 2015page).

These challenges are as follows: a large percentage of overcrowded classes, which are not in line with the national norm of 1:40 for primary schools or 1:35 for secondary schools. Despite efforts from provincial education departments, this problem continues without an imminent solution: underqualified teachers who do not have the capacity to implement Inclusive Education well. Huge efforts are under way to improve these teachers' qualifications, but only time will tell whether this improvement will have a bearing on inclusive classrooms, the capacity of education managers to implement Inclusive Education in a coordinated, focused way. It appears as if many provincial managers do not have adequate background to manage this complex process, which is the change

overload that teachers are experiencing. The stream of new policies seems never-ending and is affecting educator morale; remnants of the dual system are operational in combination with the new Inclusive Education system. Special classes at mainstream schools exist, and the majority of special schools have not been transformed into resource centres yet. To that end, all the above factors influence teachers to have an attitude towards Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase.

2.3.7 Challenges that Foundation Phase Teachers are Faced with in Inclusive Education

Teachers view the inclusion of learners with disabilities into mainstream settings as difficult and stressful (Subban & Sharma, 2016;4). The need for collaboration with several support staff has resulted in tension and confusion, and the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms is viewed by some teachers as contributing to increased workloads (Daane, Beirne-Smith & Latham, 2010page). Teachers appear to be concerned about the non-acceptance of such learners by their non-disabled peers (Daane, 2010), and they seem to fear that the dynamics within inclusive settings may impact on the academic progress of non-disabled learners (Forlin, 2018:1). Research shows that mainstream teachers are apprehensive about meeting the individual needs of learners with disabilities, of the risk of social stigmas being attached to such learners in inclusive settings, and of the availability and supply of resources to assist in the implementation of inclusive programmes (Bradshaw, 2018:1).

The level of preparedness experienced by teachers through training, the access to funding to support learners with disabilities within mainstream settings, and the perceived lack of support from the administrative personnel at schools to support inclusive programmes (Daane, 2010;6). Other teachers are concerned that as more learners are included, the teachers will need additional tools and skills for coping with the social and emotional problems that accompany inclusive schooling (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2016:3). Bradshaw (2018:2) found that teachers are most concerned about the provision of para-

professional staff to assist schools with the provision of an equitable education system for all learners. Other areas of concern included the severity of the included learner's disability and the need to adequately cater to the needs of both learners with disabilities and non-disabled peers. Teachers evidently view access to resources as being limited and restricted (Subban & Sharma, 2016). It would appear that the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms necessitates the need for more assistants for teachers in the classroom. The results of previous studies concur with the view that teachers' concerns about the inclusion of learners with disabilities could stem from the need for additional support, resources, funding and access to teacher aids (Kuester, 2010).

It was found that other concerns experienced by mainstream teachers included their ability as teachers to adequately cater for learners with disabilities, their part in the decision-making process regarding Inclusive Education, concerns about catering to the needs of both disabled and non-disabled learners, and concerns about having sufficient time to implement inclusive programmes (Kuester, 2010). Some of the mainstream teachers claim that they have chosen to teach a specific discipline and not special education, and the inclusion policy forces them to enter areas they are unsure about or not interested in (Ali, 2016). It is argued that teachers experience higher degrees of concern about inclusive education because they believe that they have not been consulted as part of this process (Avramidis, 2010). Increased levels of concern also arise from the teachers' need to consider the progress of all learners within the inclusive classroom and concerns about the time and attention they require to include learners with disabilities in mainstream settings (Avramidis et al., 2010).

Avramidis (2010) reported that it was evident that teachers who had undertaken training in special education, those who had a close friend with a disability and those with higher levels of concern expressed lower degrees of concern about implementing Inclusive Education. Teachers who received the appropriate training probably experienced fewer concerns about including learners with disabilities in mainstream settings, as the training provided them with some form of preparedness. The increased need for more specialised training and professional support is viewed as critical to the success of

Inclusive Education (Briggs, 2012). Subban and Sharma (2016) found that training in special education appeared to lessen pre-service teachers' concerns regarding Inclusive Education.

2.3.8 Strategies that can Improve Foundation Phase Teachers Attitudes and Understanding Towards Inclusive Education

Education White Paper 6 includes six broad key strategies for establishing an Inclusive Education system: the improvement of existing special schools and the conversion of some special schools to resource centres; the mobilisation of nearly 300,000 children with disabilities who are of school-going age but not currently in school (Department of Education, 2011); the conversion of some mainstream primary schools into full-service schools, which will be those schools that are inclusive; the orientation of the staff and administration in mainstream schools to the tenets and practices of Inclusive Education, as well as how to make early identifications of children who may have disabilities; the establishment of district-based support teams to help support teachers with the process of implementing inclusive practices in their classrooms; and the implementation of a national advocacy campaign to orient South Africans on the ideas of Inclusive Education, and the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in society (Department of Education, 2011).

These six strategies highlight the fact that Education White Paper 6 itself is lacking in specificity and detail, as it only has broad strategies, which give little guidance on how to effectively implement this policy in practice. In addition to school and cultural-level challenges to inclusion, difficulties associated with the implementation of inclusive policy appear to stem, in part, from the ambiguities within Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2011). For example, the White Paper suggested that the cost effectiveness of inclusion is one of the benefits of inclusive policy (Department of Education, 2011). Yet, it is difficult to envisage how significant transformations to the educational system in South Africa, for example, mobilisation of out-of-school children with disabilities and

infrastructure changes to schools, can be made without providing provincial departments with substantial increases in their short-term funding to help take these necessary first steps (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2017). This ambiguity in financial means and departmental responsibilities may be intentional. Jansen (2011) suggests that some South African policies are enacted for their political symbolism rather than their practicality; thus, vague policies often get passed, but no one is held accountable for their implementation. In fact, a chief complaint of education officials in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa was that they got the impression that the national Department of Education was not committed to the implementation of the inclusive policy and had tried to relegate their responsibilities to others (Stofile, 2018).

The very same study found that school officials reported having received no support or funding from the Department of Education to help sustain any progress they had made in the implementation of some of the broad strategies mentioned in the White Paper. Without support and recognition, it is difficult for schools to make inclusion a reality. According to Matland's (2015), ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation, ambiguity in policy is the result of a lack of clarity in a policy document regarding the goals or the means by which such goals will be reached. When goals are not explicitly stated, there is uncertainty and misunderstanding about the purpose of policy. In studying the content of Education White Paper 6, it is clear that the proposed implementation strategies lack specificity and detail, thereby increasing the policy's ambiguity (Department of Education, 2011). Research found that education officials in South Africa were unsure regarding the goals of inclusive education, with some officials reporting they were unclear about how ordinary and special schools would be transformed into schools more suitable for Inclusive Education (Stofile, 2018).

Education officials were confused about the parameters of barriers to learning and exactly how these barriers would be addressed within inclusive schools (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2017). For example, trying to eliminate learners' intrinsic barriers (e.g. physical or sensory impairment) is more straightforward than trying to address some of their extrinsic barriers to learning (e.g. poverty or orphan-hood). If the goals of inclusion include addressing extrinsic barriers to learning, then schools would need more explicit guidelines

from the Department of Education to help them accomplish this rather complicated task of implementing the inclusion policy. Even more ambiguous than goals, the means by which the policies within Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2011) will be realised is not explicitly stated. Generally, when new policies have been implemented, sufficient funding and capacity to deliver these policies are assumed (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2017). The Department of Education appears to have deficits in funding to provide to schools, while schools cannot currently accommodate diverse learners in one classroom. Initial funding will be necessary while schools locate out-of-school learners, buy devices for learners who need them, make the needed infrastructure changes to accommodate a diverse body of learners, and hire specialists who will provide specialised systemic support to teachers and schools that need assistance (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007).

Added to a lack of funding, schools currently lack teachers who have the capacity and knowledge to instruct a diverse body of learners in a single classroom without considerably increasing their workload. Education White Paper 6 states that new curriculum and assessment initiatives will be required to focus on the inclusion of the full range of diverse learning needs since curricula create the most significant barrier to learning and exclusion for many learners (Department of Education, 2011). How teachers are expected to accomplish the task of tailoring the curriculum to suit each learner's particular needs and pace of learning is not thoroughly detailed. The Department of Education envisaged that many teachers would be reoriented to new methods of teaching via comprehensive training programmes that they provided. Training programmes that educate teachers on how to accommodate and teach learners with disabilities are generally a week or two long, but teachers report that although these brief training programmes are helpful, they are insufficient (Stofile, 2018). The programmes also tend to focus on developing a couple of skills, whereas teachers often need far more comprehensive training programmes.

2.4 CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE

Critiquing literature to understand the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in South Africa involves a systematic analysis of existing research studies, reports, and academic papers. Inclusive Education is a cornerstone of South Africa's education policy, as outlined in Education White Paper 6 (2001). It aims to address barriers to learning and ensure equitable access to quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Teachers in the Foundation Phase play a critical role in implementing inclusive practices, as Early Childhood Education sets the foundation for lifelong learning. Studies reveal mixed attitudes among Foundation Phase teachers. While many teachers support the principle of inclusion, they often express concerns about their ability to implement it effectively due to systemic challenges. Positive attitudes are often linked to training and experience, while negative attitudes are associated with a lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient support. Many teachers feel underprepared to address the diverse needs of learners, particularly those with disabilities or severe learning barriers.

Teacher training programmes are often criticised for not adequately equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed for Inclusive Education. There is a need for policy reforms to address systemic barriers, such as inadequate funding and resource allocation. Teacher training programmes should be restructured to include practical, hands-on training in Inclusive Education. The literature highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of Foundation Phase teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards Inclusive Education in South Africa. While many teachers support the ideals of inclusion, systemic challenges often hinder effective implementation. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that includes policy reforms, teacher training, and community involvement.

2.5 SUMMARY

To sum up, Inclusive Education implies a sense of belonging and acceptance and, therefore, has to do with how teachers and the system respond to individual differences. It is important to realise that renewal and change must be coordinated, comprehensive and efficient. It must present a clear and strong moral imperative to promote the quality of life of the learner with specific needs in order to become part of the mainstream education communities. Regardless of the unique characteristics of children with barriers to learning, Inclusive Education implies that all learners should have access to the core curriculum. The learner's individual differences, needs, abilities and capacities, as well as the notion that all learners learn in different ways, should be treated with respect. How well teachers implement inclusive programmes depends on their attitude towards Inclusive Education. The teachers have to believe that all learners can be educated, that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be educated in regular classrooms, and that Inclusive Education is beneficial to all learners in schools.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This section introduces research paradigm, design and methodology. Methodology entails population, sampling procedure, data collection method, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Barker (2013:1), paradigm is a model or pattern containing a set of legitimated assumptions and a design for collecting and interpreting data in social sciences. A paradigm is like a compass that guides the researcher in choosing the ideal method and the theoretical underpinning of the study, which is of primary importance (Guba & Lincoln, 2014:1). A paradigm is thus a set of ideas, beliefs or understandings within which theories and practices can function. Most paradigms derive from one of two research methodologies: positivism or interpretivism. Every research project employs one of the research paradigms as a guideline for creating research methods and carrying out the research project most legitimately and reasonably. Guba and Lincoln (2014:1) further stated that the following are essentially connected to a research paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology.

The common examples of research paradigms are positivism, interpretivist or constructivism and pragmatism. Constructivism and interpretivism are two closely related philosophical approaches in social science research that emphasise the role of human consciousness, perception, and interpretation in shaping our understanding of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 2014:4). While they have some similarities, they also have distinct

characteristics that set them apart. Constructivism posits that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals based on their experiences, interactions, and mental frameworks (Guba & Lincoln, 2014:4). It emphasises the role of cognitive processes and how individuals interpret and make meaning of their experiences. Interpretivism, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of understanding the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals attach to their experiences. It is interested in exploring the diverse ways people make sense of the world through their cultural, historical, and social contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 2014:1)

Out of these two, interpretivist paradigm is the most ideal for the study because it is based on the belief that the methodology utilised in research should explore the minds and meaning-making, sense-making activities as is often practised in qualitative research, such as the case study approach that uses methods including interviews and observations (Creswell, 2014:3). Interpretivists believe that there is no single reality or truth, but rather multiple realities. They devote themselves to understanding and interpreting the meaning attached to an action. For this reason, interpretivists tend to use qualitative research methods, such as interviews or case studies, which focus on providing different perspectives. To that end, this study used interpretivist paradigm to explore attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. The interpretivists paradigm was suitable for this study for the researcher to understand attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in their context, which is the schools and particularly the classrooms. Ok

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design refers to the overall strategy that the researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed (Maree, 2017:1). It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Ascher, 2011:3). To answer the research questions and to achieve the aim of the study, a qualitative research design was adopted for this study. The researcher used qualitative research design to

explore the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education. The qualitative research design was used because it provides unique strengths and suitability for addressing research questions and exploring the complex phenomena about the attitude and perception of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. Qualitative research design is justified because it provides in-depth understanding, which allows researchers to delve deeply into the experiences, perceptions, and behaviours of individuals or groups (Maree, 2017:1). It provides rich, detailed insights that can help researchers gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities underlying a phenomenon that is the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education. Therefore, the qualitative research design was ideal for this study to understand and explore attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in their context, which is the schools and, particularly, the classrooms.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Furthermore, research methodology provides a detailed description of the research approach and how the research will be designed and conducted. It further explains the procedure that will be used to conduct this study. It also describes the research methods, such as the data collection methods that were used in this study. The research design explains how participants were selected, how data was transcribed and translated, and how the data was analysed. It further explains how issues of trustworthiness were handled. It concludes by discussing the ethical considerations that guide the researcher during the research process. A qualitative research methodology was employed in the study. Using qualitative research methodology, one is able to get an depth understanding of the human experience, which is aimed at generating information needed for the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:45). It explains more about the feelings and experiences. Instruments, such as observation, in-depth view, open-ended questions and field notes are used to collect data (Berg & Howard, 2012:23). Therefore, this study used class observation, document analysis and interviews to collect data given that it was a

qualitative research methodology to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe District.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The following section presents the study's population and sampling.

3.5.1 Population

A population is the entire set of people who conform to specific criteria on which the study focused (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2016:56). Mouton (2016:33) states that population is a collection of objects, events, or individuals that have mutual futures that the researcher is captivated to study. The population for this study comprised all Foundation Phase teachers in full-service schools in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

3.5.2 Sampling Procedure

Sampling means taking part or a smaller number of units of a population as a representative or having particular characteristics of that total population (De vos et al., 2014:22). Bryard and Heineken (2006) announced that sampling is a method that compares elements of the population selected for inclusion in the research. The sample population determines the method of data analysis of a study. Non-probability sampling method was employed for this study. Non-probability sampling represents a group of sampling techniques that help researchers select units from a population that they are interested in studying (Taherdoost, 2016:12). A core characteristic of non-probability sampling techniques is that samples are selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher rather than random selection, which is the cornerstone of probability sampling techniques (Grinnel & Williams, 2020:77). Therefore, a purposive sample of 6

Foundation Phase teachers from 3 schools was chosen to participate in the study and were full-service school Foundation Phase teachers.

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This section discusses the research instruments that were used in this study, together with the procedures that were followed when developing it.

3.6.1 Interview Schedule

In this study, the researcher used interview schedule as an instrument to collect data from the participants. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), an interview schedule is a framework that outlines the main topics or questions to be addressed during an interview, serving as a flexible tool that allows the researcher to adapt to the interviewee's responses while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) highlight how interview guidelines or schedules facilitate meaningful data collection by balancing structure and adaptability, making them essential for ensuring the depth and relevance of the information gathered. The primary research instruments are the researchers themselves because the process involves consciously gathering sensory data through sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch (Creswell, 2014:59).

3.6.2 Schedule for Classroom Observation

The researcher used a schedule for classroom observation as a data collection instrument. The researcher observed Foundation Phase teachers as they interact with learners in their inclusive classroom settings. During classroom observation, the researcher took field notes on the behaviour and activities of Foundation Phase teachers in their inclusive classrooms. Observation entails being present in a situation and making a record of a person's impressions of what takes place (Creswell, 2014:96). The primary

research instrument is the researchers themselves because the process involves consciously gathering sensory data through sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch (Creswell, 2014:59).

3.6.3 Schedule for Document Analysis

The researcher used a schedule for document analysis as a data collection instrument. Document analysis is another way in which this study is used to collect data. Document analysis encompasses the identification, verification and consideration of documents that relate to the subject under study. This method is valued for the richness of the information extracted, and it helps broaden the understanding of the object under study plans (de Andrade, Schmitt, Storck, Piccoli & Ruoff, 2018). The documents analysed were the teachers' lesson plans.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection methods in qualitative research include interviews, observations and document analysis (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2016:44). Qualitative researchers collect data by interviewing participants, observing behaviour and examining documents. Creswell (2014:16) states that qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data rather than rely on a single source of data. To that end, the following section describes data collection methods.

3.7.1 Interviews

Given that this study was qualitative, data was collected through the use of interviews. An interview is a two-way conversation between two people in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, opinions, and behaviours of the participants (Maree, 2014:77). Individual interviews are also referred to as in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are guided, one-on-one sessions (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2011:5). They attempt to determine the participant's feelings,

interpretation, or reaction to an event or a set of circumstances or life experiences. The researcher allows participants to express their thoughts in their own words (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2016:62). The researcher was guided by an interview guideline to ask questions from the participants during the interview. These questions derived from the main objectives of the study served as the framework for the interviews. The researcher referred to the interview guideline to contribute to the discussion with the participants and ensure that the conversation goes in the direction desired and defined by the objectives of the study with regards to exploring Foundation Phase teachers' perceptions of Inclusive Education in the three selected full-service schools in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

3.7.2 Classroom Observation

Observation, as the name implies, is a way of collecting data through observation. This data collection method is classified as a participatory study because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are while taking notes or recording (Creswell & Poth, 2017:47). Observation data collection method may involve watching, listening, reading, touching, and recording behaviour and characteristics of phenomena (Maree, 2014:26). Therefore, the researcher observed Foundation Phase teachers' as they interact with learners in their inclusive classroom settings. During classroom observation, the researcher took field notes on the behaviour and activities of Foundation Phase teachers in their inclusive classrooms. Observation entails being present in a situation and making a record of a person's impressions of what takes place (Creswell, 2014:96). The primary research instrument is the researchers themselves because the process involves consciously gathering sensory data through sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch (Creswell, 2014:59).

3.7.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis is another way in which this study is used to collect data. Document analysis encompasses the identification, verification and consideration of documents that

relate to the subject under study. This method is valued for the richness of the information extracted, and it helps broaden the understanding of the object under study plans (de Andrade, Schmitt, Storck, Piccoli & Ruoff, 2018). The documents that the study analysed are the teachers' lesson plans.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were organised, coded, analysed and interpreted. Data was analysed utilising themes. After the transcription of the interview, the data was read and reread, and then the categories were identified and conceptualised. Thematic analysis was done by using all the text from the transcripts. The data was grouped into themes and divided into three sub-themes determined by the research questions and the literature review. Thematic analysis using an indicative coding approach allows the researcher to generate themes and descriptors (open coding) after analysing interviews as the main text of this study (Creswell, 2014:2; Nowell, 2017:8). All the information collected in this study was kept strictly confidential and this ensures the anonymity of participants.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics emphasises on the protection of the rights of participants by reducing any potential harm to them (Creswell & Poth, 2017:1). This study, just like any other study, presented ethical issues because people were involved (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:2). In any research, there are ethical guidelines which have to be adhered to. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:44) and Strydom (2011:3), these guidelines include informed consent, avoiding deception, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, avoiding harm to subjects, and respecting privacy. In order to ensure that research participants were not placed at any risk, the following ethical principles were used as guidelines throughout the research process.

3.9.1 Informed Consent

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, which was to explore how Foundation Phase teachers understand inclusive education in a system that is undergoing transition and faces significant challenges overall. The thrust was to generate findings to overcome the challenges in the understanding of Inclusive Education, support its implementation in schools and somehow contribute to its development for the benefit of both Foundation Phase teachers and children living with special needs. They were informed that, following their consent, interviews could last between 30-60 minutes, and they were conducted at a convenient place and time. Bless, Higson-Smith, and Sithole (2016:22) and Bryman (2016:4) believe that it is important for a study to contribute to the well-being of others potentially.

The researcher ensured that participants were not harmed, whether intentionally or unintentionally, during data collection. Accordingly, efforts were made to ensure that the location of the interviews was private, with a low risk of distractions. Participants were informed that if, at any time during the process, they felt uncomfortable, they could skip a question or withdraw their participation entirely.

3.9.2 Voluntary Participation

The researcher informed all participants that their participation in the study was completely voluntary, since participants cannot be compelled, coerced, or required to participate in a study against their will, as suggested by Strydom (2011:23). Participants were also informed that the freedom to participate or not to participate is a basic right which includes the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

3.9.3 Confidentiality

According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2016:7) and Bryman (2016:44), in ensuring confidentiality, researchers have a responsibility of protecting participants' sensitive and personal information. The participants were given assurance that all the

information they provided was not shared with anyone, their identities were not revealed in any record or report, and there was no link between the data and the participants.

3.9.4 Anonymity

Pseudonyms for participants and the school were used to ensure anonymity. In this way, no one could link them to what had been written in the research report. Participants were informed of the progress of the research and guaranteed the provision of courteous feedback in writing following the completion of the research.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness is used to evaluate the quality of the research process, and findings in qualitative research (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2016:17). Lincoln and Guba (2013:22) suggested that research conducted in the interpretivist paradigm should be validated by four criteria of trustworthiness: issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the data were discussed in the following section.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the researcher represents the actual meanings of the research participants' original data (Lincoln & Guba, 2014:46). Credibility is established when the participants in a study agree with the way the researcher interpreted their original views (Moon, Brewer & Januchowski-Hartleyet, 2016:45). Credibility in this study was established by member checks and triangulation as suggested by Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2013:33). After data collection, the researcher went back to the schools to confirm the accuracy of the transcript with participants concerning the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers

towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District. This facilitated clearing up miscommunication and helped the researcher to obtain additional information.ok

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or to other groups (Cope, 2014:62). The researcher establishes transferability, as suggested by Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2016:3), by providing rich, detailed, thick description of context and sample so that other researchers or readers can make necessary comparisons and judgements about similarities of the findings concerning the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive education in Vhembe West District

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be consistent if repeated with the same participants in the same context (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackma, 2016:5). To ensure dependability in this study, the researcher assessed subjectivity amongst the participants (Moon et al., 2016:5). If the study were to be conducted again, in the same context with the same participants, the researcher expected that the findings were similar concerning the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Conformability refers to the extent to which the research findings are only meanings of the participants and not biases of the researcher (Moon et al., 2016:1). The researcher ensured the minimisation of bias when analysing data and by using triangulation and

member checks in this study concerning attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District.

3.11 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to explain the processes involved in data collection and analysis. It also explored the research paradigm, design, and methodology. The qualitative approach was examined in detail. Furthermore, key research elements such as the population, sample, and sampling methods were outlined. Additionally, the research tool used, specifically the interview, and the manner it was developed were discussed.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The chapter also includes the demographic profile of participants.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The following Table represents the demographic information of participants:

Table 4.1 Demographic Information of Participants

Number of Participant	Pseudo Name	Highest Qualification	Years of Experience	Sex	Age
1	Participant A	Higher Diploma in Education	45	Female	64
2	Participant B	BED Honours in Special Needs Education	22	Female	49
3	Participant C	BED Foundation Phase	3	Female	55
4	Participant D	BED Foundation Phase	6	Female	56

5	Participant E	BED Foundation Phase	10	Female	59
6	Participant F	Teachers Diploma Foundation Phase	8	Female	56

As shown above, in Table 4.1, a total of 6 Foundation Phase teachers participated in the study. The participants' highest qualification is Bachelor of Education (BED) Honours in Special Needs Education and Bachelor of Education (BED) Foundation Phase. In contrast, the minimum qualification is a Teacher's Diploma Foundation Phase. Only one participant holds a Bachelor of Education (BED) Honours in Special Needs Education, whereas three participants hold a Bachelor of Education (BED) Foundation Phase, and the last two hold a Teachers Diploma Foundation Phase and a Higher Diploma in Education, respectively. One participant has 45 years of experience, while others have between 3 and 22 years of experience. The participants were all females because they were the only ones available for the interviews. The participants' ages ranged between 49 and 64 years.

4.3 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.3.1 Theme 1: Attitude

Some participants showed positive attitudes and perceived Inclusive Education in a good way, seeing it as a suitable method that caters for all learners, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting academic achievement for all learners. One participant responded:

My view as a 45-year educator in this field is that it is the best method that I can say because it caters for every learner, slow learners, and opens them. The average learners improve tremendously. The most gifted ones really do wonders. Then, I think this method of teaching is good and the best to my own view.

Participant B:

My view is that it fosters a sense of belonging, promotes academic achievement and develops empathy and understanding among learners. It is important because it promotes social cohesion and addresses discrimination. It provides equal opportunities for all learners. It prepares learners for a diverse and global society.

Participants had different perceptions regarding Inclusive Education. They also displayed different attitudes towards Inclusive Education. The findings revealed that some participants perceived Inclusive Education as a good thing, as it caters for the needs of all learners, promotes equality and social cohesion. They added that it helps learners access education rather than being hidden in their homes.

Participant C stated that:

This is how I view it: Inclusive Education helps learners who are differently abled from our rural schools. It does help these learners, according to how I see it, and it helps these differently able learners not to stay at home and not to be hidden at home. They need to come to schools and get equal access to basic education and learning like any other learners.

The following participants appreciated inclusive education, pointing out that it is a good method that caters for all learners and helps those who take time to open up to learning.

Participant A:

My view as a 45-year educator in this field is that it is the best and the best method that I can say because it caters for every learner, slow learners. It opens them. The average learners improve tremendously. The most gifted ones really do wonders. Then, I think this method of teaching is good and the best to my own view.

Other participants showed that Inclusive Education fosters a sense of belonging to learners, making them feel that they are worth something. It also promotes social cohesion and addresses discrimination as it provides equal opportunities for all learners:

Participant B:

My view is that it fosters a sense of belonging, promotes academic achievement and develops empathy and understanding among learners. It is important because it promotes social cohesion and addresses discrimination. It provides equal opportunities for all learners. It prepares learners for a diverse and global society”.

Some participants perceived inclusive classrooms and Inclusive Education as barriers to the smooth learning of learners who do not have special needs. Some also thought that Inclusive Education should not have been introduced in their schools because they were not properly trained. As a result, they pointed out that learners with special needs should be placed in special schools. The following are some of the responses:

Participant F:

The government needs to help us maybe when it comes to these learners with learning difficulties or learners who are differently abled. They need to be in special schools. Because even though we can have resources in an inclusive classroom, it hinders the progress of learners who are not differently able. The differently abled learners should be in special schools only. With others who are like them, who can hardly finish when writing, they need to be in one place with a dedicated teacher who will be patient with them and is trained to treat and teach such learners.

Participant E:

What I see is that this inclusive education should not have been introduced in our schools. Differently abled learners should only enrol

in special schools. They should continue to be taught in special schools because it is really difficult for us. It would be much better if we were being trained for a long time.

The study found that teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusive education because of a lack of training on inclusive education, which results in experiencing a lot of difficulties in teaching learners with special needs. One participant responded, thus,

The government needs to help us when it comes to learners with learning difficulties or learners who are differently able; they need to be in special schools. Because even though we can have resources in an inclusive classroom, it hinders the progress of learners who are not differently able. The differently able learners should be in special schools only. With others who are like them, who can hardly finish when writing, they need to be in one place with a dedicated teacher who will be patient with them, who is trained to treat and teach such learners... we sometimes do things wrongly when it comes to these learners who are differently able. We do things wrongly because we are not trained. We sometimes fail to be patient with them, yet we do not know what their IQ is like. We will be talking and practising things that we are not even sure of. (participant....)

The above statements displayed that teachers lack the training to teach learners with disability. As a result, they faced difficulties in teaching and implementing inclusive education in the classroom. Donald and Hlongwane (2013) state that most teachers do not have adequate training to provide such support. The latter poses a big challenge to schools and teachers because the Human Rights Foundation of Inclusive Education suggests that a learner should be able to choose their classroom and school preference, and that adequate support should be provided in that chosen classroom (Hay, 2013).

Cook, Klein, Tessier and Daley (2014:1) state some of the challenges of inclusive education. The teachers have to accept and deal with the diversity of their learners. They have to teach learners without special needs together with learners with learning

difficulties, behaviour, speech, language, and communication problems in the same classroom (Roaf, 2013). The teachers' work becomes wider, and much higher targets are set for them to achieve. Learners who are struggling in lessons need extra attention and extra support, which is not always possible to give in class. Another challenge is that teachers have differences in their training backgrounds, level of education, and remuneration (BCTF, 2014; Cook, Klein, Tessier & Daley, 2014:372). There are also differences in their levels of experience and understanding of disabilities. The challenge is that they must be able to explain the nature of a learner's disability and learning style, which requires a certain level of expertise across all disabilities (Cook, Klein, Tessier & Daley, 2014:372). Then, they would have to take on an unfamiliar role of providing support services. Therefore, the study found out that teachers have negative attitudes towards Inclusive Education because of a lack of training on Inclusive Education, which results in experiencing a lot of difficulties in teaching learners with special needs.

Some participants showed a positive attitude towards Inclusive Education. They cite that Inclusive Education provides learners access to school with others, caters to the needs of all learners, promotes equality, and promotes social cohesion. This is how one of the participants responded:

This is how I view it: Inclusive Education helps learners who are differently able from our rural schools. It does help these learners, according to how I see it. It helps these differently able learners not to stay at home and not to be hidden at home. They need to come to schools and get equal access to basic education and learning like any other learners. According to how I view it, I see that it is the right and good thing that the differently able learners should be in our schools so that they may be able to live like any other learners. (participant...)

The Department of Education (DoE, 2018) states that the main objective of any education system in a democratic society is to provide quality education for all learners so that they will be able to reach their objectives. With the publication of the Education White Paper 6 in 2001, South Africa has proclaimed its policy of inclusive education, the goal being the advancement of human rights as well as environmental justice. The national curriculum

flowing from Education White Paper 6 is particularly sensitive to diversity, including poverty, inequality, race, gender, and barriers to learning, as well as language and age. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2010) argue that inclusive education should be understood” as a basis of a new paradigm which bypasses the medical “approach and the concept of academic deficiency, and which additionally promotes inclusive environments that embrace diversity. The context of education in South Africa is particularly complex because, during the apartheid years, separate education departments existed” for each of the four designated population groups, namely Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. This system “was “characterised by vast disparities in per capita funding in different education departments, as well as fragmentation and duplication of functions, responsibilities and services (Archer, Green & Pooler, 2012). The inequalities apparent in mainstream education were also reflected in special education, as it was separated from the mainstream in terms of both service delivery and overall administration. For those shaping education policy after 1994, it was a priority to transform education by addressing the disparities and inequalities of the past and creating one system that could provide all learners with access to quality education. The South African School Act 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996) emphasises the right of all learners to appropriate education.

Observation data and document analysis confirmed that some participants displayed a positive attitude towards Inclusive Education. These participants expressed strong support for Inclusive Education, recognising its benefits, such as believing in equal access to education for all learners and acknowledging that learners with special needs can thrive with the right support.

The researcher observed that these participants used differentiated instruction to accommodate learners with diverse needs. They also exhibited confidence in teaching Inclusive Education, which also augured well with all the learners in class. Learners in these classrooms treated each other well despite the special needs other learners had. This aligns well with the theory of this study where the idea is that people learn behaviours from each other through observation, imitation, and modelling. In this instance these teachers are modelling good treatment towards learners with special needs in the

class, and learners in the class copy the behaviour or imitate their teachers. This theory emphasises that people learn from one another. Thus, learners learn from their teachers.

However, there was a reasonable number of participants who displayed negative attitudes towards Inclusive Education. These participants had some concerns about Inclusive Education with regards to lack of training, they also complained about increased workload and indicated that they had large class sizes and limited support from the Department of Education to teach learners with special needs. They also looked unprepared to teach learners with special needs.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Experiences Towards Inclusive Education

The study participants concurred that they have many experiences regarding Inclusive Education. Most participants cited that they experienced difficulties as they implemented Inclusive Education. They indicated that they were working in challenging working conditions, where they experienced a lack of equipment and facilities. As a result, they experience difficulties in implementing Inclusive Education or inclusive teaching due to learners who are slow and unable to concentrate during teaching. Some of these learners always want to move around in class. Participants experienced learners who take time to grasp the concepts being taught. Below are some of the participants' responses:

Participant D:

There are a lot of difficulties because learners who are differently able really face different difficulties. We do not even have wheelchairs, and we do not even have a ramp for wheelchair users.

Participant C:

... There are learners whom, when you are teaching, they do not understand, and they do not grasp the content delivered at the same pace as other learners. They are always behind on what is being thought

Participant F:

... because these learners who are differently able hardly finish, they hardly finish writing, they hardly finish copying, and they hardly understand or grasp what is being taught.

Participant E:

They (learners) are unable to participate in class, they do not concentrate when I teach, they don't listen. They will be walking in the class, doing ups and downs. They are even unable to copy what's written on the chalkboard. They are slow. They end up writing the wrong things.

However, other participants indicated their satisfaction with Inclusive Education because it creates a learning environment that promotes equality and supports all learners. Inclusive Education also caters to the needs of all learners, promotes equality, and promotes social cohesion. It also enhances creativity and problem-solving. This was confirmed by the following responses:

Participant B:

Ok, in my experience, Inclusive Education creates a learning environment that promotes equality and supports all learners regardless of their background, abilities or needs. It also benefits all learners and all learners, as it promotes social cohesion and understanding. It enhances creativity and problem-solving. It supports social and personal growth".

Participant A:

When it comes to my experiences towards this Inclusive Education, it caters for any learner with any disability or any challenge. When it comes to this method, it helps any learner or, whether it is less gifted or not less gifted or gifted or moderate ones.

The participants' experiences range from lack of facilities and equipment to teaching learners with special needs, as in

We do not even have wheelchairs, and we do not even have a ramp for wheelchairs that is user-friendly and for differently ables learners.

This response is supported by Prinsloo (2015:28), who states that, because of South Africa's particular history of inequalities and discrimination and the context of recent social changes, most schools do not even have basic resources such as toilets, water, electricity or sufficient classrooms. They experience a serious breakdown in the culture of teaching and learning. This shows that the schools and the Department of Education must provide the equipment and facilities that should make the experience of Foundation Phase teachers better in teaching Inclusive Education, thus:

differently able learners need to be at special schools with other learners who are like them, and they need to have their own teachers.

The above statement should be viewed as part of the challenges of inclusion because if they are not addressed, they will act as major barriers to learning and development, ultimately resulting in the exclusion of many learners. Any effort at building an inclusive school must include the identification of specific priorities relating to particular needs within the context of building a culture of teaching and learning.

The findings of this study concur with the Department of Education (DoE, 2018), which states that the main objective of any education system in a democratic society is to provide quality education for all learners so that they will be able to reach their objectives. With the publication of the Education White Paper 6 in 2001, South Africa has proclaimed its policy of inclusive education, the goal being the advancement of human rights as well as environmental justice. The national curriculum flowing from Education White Paper 6 is particularly sensitive to diversity, including poverty, inequality, race, gender, barriers to learning, as well as language and age. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2010) argue that Inclusive Education should be understood as a basis of a new paradigm which bypasses the medical approach and the concept of academic deficiency, and which additionally

promotes inclusive environments that embrace diversity. Therefore, the study found that Foundation Phase teachers have good experiences with Inclusive Education because it caters for the needs of all learners in the classroom, promotes social cohesion and promotes equality, which gives all learners equal opportunities to participate in the classroom.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Challenges Faced Regarding Inclusive Education

Classroom observation concurs with interview data that there is a plethora of challenges that participants face in teaching Inclusive Education in class. Participants face learners who sometimes ignore the work and absent themselves from school, as attested by Participant A:

My challenge is that those who are less gifted sometimes ignore the work. They are sometimes absent from school because they are bored with this matter and even this method of learning. The more gifted learners, the more they also become bored because we continue teaching them the same thing concerning the learning area that they are doing. And those who are most gifted also get bored. So, I think this method, when it comes to the changes, can or might be changed, but really, there are more challenges that I can say during this day.

Participants also experience a lack of training and support for teachers. They also face insufficient resources and funding. Some of the learners do not understand and do not grasp what is being taught in the classroom, and they are always far behind on what is being taught in the class.

Participant B:

The challenges are lack of training and support for teachers. Insufficient resources and funding...

Participant C:

There are challenges when we teach these learners. Some learners do not understand and do not grasp what is being taught in the classroom like other learners. They are always far behind on what is being taught in the class. We cannot even read what they write because of how they write. When you ask these learners questions, their answers are so irrelevant to what you have asked them. So that's the challenge I face. Now, I will have to give myself extra time to be with such learners so that I may guide them according to their pace and knowledge, so that they may be like other learners in the classroom.

Participants also faced learners who are difficult to deal with and cannot be controlled. These are learners who have difficulties with learning; they are slow in learning, and instead of sitting down, they remain standing. Participants also dealt with learners whose mothers neglect them. The participants responded as follows:

Participant D:

The challenges that we have are that these kids are just hard to deal with and control, their mothers are young mothers, and some of them do not even take care of their kids. We see clearly that some learners are lacking parental care... We even come across slow learners. These learners give us many problems. I even have another learner here who does not even sit down in the classroom.

Participant E:

These differently able learners, some of them it is difficult for them to even sit down. They are always standing. When you tell them to sit down, they do not even listen to what you are telling them. Some of them, because of their disability, do not even look to the front where the teacher is. They will be looking aside or staring down. We have a challenge there. This is our Grade R class, and when you look at our outdoor activities, they are not even suitable for these kids to play".

Participants indicated that when we inform the parent about the performance of their learners, they are on denial. They think that the teacher disrespects or dislikes their child.

Participant F:

Sometimes when we inform the parent about the performance of their children, they do not take our word truthfully because they are on denial. They think that the teacher does not love their child. They think that we are discriminating against the child because they are slow

The study found out that Foundation Phase teachers faced a plethora of challenges with regards to Inclusive Education. These challenges include the following: poor implementation of Inclusive Education, a lack of teachers' training and support, a lack of inclusive curriculum and difficulties in teaching disabled learners in class. One participant responded as follows:

The challenges are a lack of training and support for teachers. Insufficient resources and funding. Physical and attitudinal barriers in schools. Curriculum that doesn't respect diverse perspectives. Resistance to changes from some stakeholders".

Avramidis (2015) states that the achievement of an Inclusive Education system is a major challenge facing countries around the world (Avramidis, 2015). Inclusive Education is guided by the principle that schools should work towards accommodating all learners regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions (Lockwood, 2013). Lockwood (2013) adds that the differences among children ought to be respected, and teaching and learning need to be adapted to the needs of the child rather than the child being fit into an existing set of expectations. Implementing inclusive education implies the development of broad learning strategies to accommodate and include learners with special needs. This is based on individual perceptions of special needs and the focus that is put on the school's organization and culture (Armstrong & Moore, 2003; DoE, 2005b; 2005d). Schools have to be committed to and responsible for restructuring themselves in response to the diversity of learners. To successfully

implement Inclusive Education, Hay (2013) states that the school has to provide quality education support services.

Teachers have to perform their usual duties while providing special support and attention to learners with special needs at the same time. In order to survive, teachers must be able to deal with the unpredictable, immediate, public, simultaneous, and multidimensional demands of classroom life in ways that win and maintain some respect from their colleagues, learners, and themselves (Nind et al., 2013). Mabaso (2016) conducted a study whose findings indicated that the majority of teachers understand what Inclusive Education is about. The findings of the study also indicated that the majority of teachers were not trained in Inclusive Education. The study showed that resources and the teacher-learner ratio are among the challenges that teachers and learners experience in implementing Inclusive Education in public primary schools (Mabaso, 2016).

It was also found that the majority of teachers were in favour of Inclusive Education, as it addresses the imbalances of the past, and promotes tolerance of social interaction (Mabaso, 2016). In addition, the study found that the majority of schools have School-Based Support Teams, although most of them are only partially effective or ineffective (Mabaso, 2016). Another study conducted by Maphula (2015) on managing the implication of inclusion in five schools in Johannesburg South Mega District in Soweto found that a lack of knowledge of the concept of inclusion, its management and its implementation has been detected as one of the basic challenges prevailing among the teachers. Training, which is a way of acquiring knowledge, was the most spoken-about concept throughout the study investigation (Maphula, 2015). The teachers indicated that the trainers who are being sent by the DoE lack understanding, direction, and confidence in the implementation of this inclusive approach. They noted that the trainers emphasis was and remained on the basic principles and orientation of the terminology instead of dealing with crucial issues like application of the inclusive lesson plan, assessment criteria and strategies, designing and curriculum planning (Maphula, 2015).

It appears that in South Africa, implementing inclusive education has challenges and is difficult because of a lack of training. While some teachers are found to understand

inclusive education, other teachers lack the knowledge and understanding thereof. This poses a need for further research and intervention in this aspect. Therefore, the study found out that the challenges that Foundation Phase teachers face include the following: poor implementation of Inclusive Education, lack of teachers training and support, lack of inclusive curriculum and difficulties in teaching disabled learners in class.

4.3.4 Strategies that could be used to Improve the Attitudes and Perceptions

This section addressed the responses of participants with regard to strategies that could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. Most participants indicated that attending workshops and enrolling at different universities for Inclusive Education could improve the attitude and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. They also stated the provision of resources to help during teaching and learning.

Participant A:

Yes, we can improve this by going to the necessary workshops, and enrolling at different universities for this Inclusive Education. Attending courses, studying pamphlets, and watching TV concerning this Inclusive Education.

Participant B:

Strategies to provide training and workshops. Encouraging teachers to reflect on their own biases and experiences. ... Pair the teacher with a mentor for support and guidance. Encourage respectful language. Engage with parents and caregivers. Ongoing support offers regular - in, coaching, and feedback to sustain teachers' growth and development.

Participant C:

What I am thinking is that maybe the Department of Education can help us with the resources that we will use to teach the differently able learners. They might understand better with those kinds of resources than the ones we are using now to teach them because they do not understand or cannot use the types of resources that other learners are using. The Department of Education should take this issue of resources for differently able learners seriously so that the differently-abled learners can be at the same pace as other learners in the class.

Participant E:

What I think is that maybe the government needs to workshop us for a more extended period. Not one week or three days. Every week, maybe two days per week. Maybe when we are trained, it will be much better.

Participant F:

I think the government needs to train teachers. Sometimes, it is because teachers are not well trained to work with learners who are differently-abled. A teacher who is not trained will not know how to teach learners who are differently able, and they might choose to neglect learners who are differently able and focus on the learners who are not differently able.

The study found out there are a plethora of strategies that could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. The strategies include teacher training, workshops, ongoing support for teachers, engagement with parents and caregivers, and provision of equipment and facilities. The following are the responses from the participants:

Participant B:

Strategies to provide training and workshops. Encouraging teachers to reflect on their own biases and experiences. Promoting self-awareness

and empathy. Pair teacher with a mentor for support and guidance. Encourage respectful language. Engage with parents and caregivers. Ongoing support offers regular -in, coaching, and feedback to sustain teachers' growth and development.

The above statements indicated that training and workshops may improve attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. Stofile (2018) indicated that school officials reported having received no support or funding from the Department of Education to help sustain any progress they had made in the implementation of some of the broad strategies mentioned in the White Paper. This indicates the need for training and support that teachers have regarding Inclusive Education. White Paper 6 includes six broad key strategies for establishing an Inclusive Education system. However, without support and recognition, it is difficult for schools to make inclusion a reality.

According to Matland's (2015) ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation, ambiguity in policy is the result of a lack of clarity in a policy document regarding the goals or the means by which such goals will be reached. When goals are not explicitly stated, there is uncertainty and misunderstanding about the purpose of policy. In this study, some participants indicated that:

The government needs to train teachers. Sometimes, it is because teachers are not well trained to work with learners who are differently able. A teacher who is not trained will not know how to teach learners who are differently able. They might choose to neglect learners who are differently able and focus on the learners who are not differently able.

If teachers are not properly trained, they do not represent the policy well. They stand the risk of misarticulating it and misunderstanding the whole purpose of that policy. This means that when the proposed implementation strategies lack specificity and detail, they increase the policy ambiguity (Department of Education, 2011). Research found

that education officials in South Africa 27 were unsure regarding the goals of Inclusive Education, with some officials reporting they were unclear about how ordinary and special schools would be transformed into schools more suitable for Inclusive Education (Stofile, 2018).

Even more ambiguous than goals, the means by which the policies within Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2011) will be realised is not explicitly stated. Generally, when new policies have been implemented, sufficient funding and capacity to deliver these policies are assumed (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2017).

The Department of Education appears to have deficits in funding to provide to schools, while schools cannot currently accommodate diverse learners in one classroom. Initial funding will be necessary while schools locate out-of-school learners, buy devices for learners who need them, make the needed infrastructure changes to accommodate a diverse body of learners, and hire specialists who will provide specialised systemic support to teachers and schools that need assistance (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007). Added to a lack of funding, schools currently lack teachers who have the capacity and knowledge to instruct a diverse body of learners in a single classroom without considerably increasing” their workload.

Education White Paper 6 states that new curriculum and assessment initiatives will be required to focus on the inclusion of the full range of diverse learning needs since curricula create the most significant barrier to learning and exclusion for many learners (Department of Education, 2011). Participants in this study complained about the diverse nature of learners in their classrooms. This is an indication that teachers still lack detailed knowledge and understanding of the nature of inclusive education, specifically an inclusive classroom. As a result, teachers fail to accomplish the task of tailoring the curriculum to suit each learner’s particular needs and pace of learning in their classrooms, hence the complaints.

The Department of Education envisaged that many teachers would be reoriented to new methods of teaching via comprehensive training programmes that they provided. Training

programmes that educate teachers on how to accommodate and teach learners with disabilities are generally a week or two long, but teachers report that although these brief training programmes are helpful, they are insufficient (Stofile, 2018). The programmes also tend to focus on developing a couple of skills, whereas teachers often need far more comprehensive training programmes. Therefore, the study found out a plethora of strategies could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education, including teachers' training, workshops, ongoing support of teachers, engagement with parents and caregivers and provision of equipment and facilities.

4.4 SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented data obtained from interviewed participants about exploring the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The data gathered from interviews, classroom observation and document analysis was presented and analysed. The study found out that Foundation Phase teachers face a plethora of challenges with regards to Inclusive Education. The challenges that Foundation Phase teachers face include poor implementation of Inclusive Education, a lack of teachers' training and support, a lack of inclusive curriculum and difficulties in teaching disabled learners in class. The study found out there are a plethora of strategies that could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. The strategies include teacher training, workshops, ongoing support for teachers, engagement with parents and caregivers, and provision of equipment and facilities. All the strategies, if fully implemented, may improve attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws conclusions based on the research findings and literature review on exploring the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Thereafter recommendations are also made.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The objectives of the study were to explore Foundation Phase teacher's experiences towards inclusive education, to describe attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education, to explore the challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers with regards to Inclusive Education and to establish strategies which could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education.

Chapter 1 indicated the nature of the research problem, aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, definition of concepts and the significance of the study. A literature review was reviewed in Chapter 2 with regards to exploring the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. In Chapter 3, the methodology of the study was discussed in detail. The study was qualitative. The data collection method used in the study an interview, classroom observation and document analysis with Foundation Phase teachers in Vhembe West District. Purposive sampling was the sampling technique used in the study. Data presentation, analysis and discussion were done in Chapter 4, whereas Chapter Five presented the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research based on the literature review and the findings of the study.

5.3 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.3.1 Attitudes

The study, through classroom observation and document analysis, found out that some Foundation Phase teachers had a positive attitude towards Inclusive Education. These teachers expressed strong support for Inclusive Education, recognising its benefits, such as believing in equal access to education for all learners and acknowledging that learners with disabilities can thrive with the proper support. These teachers also used differentiated instruction to accommodate learners with diverse needs.

The study findings showed that a reasonable number of teachers had negative attitudes towards Inclusive Education. These teachers had some concerns about Inclusive Education with regards to lack of training. They looked unprepared to teach learners with special needs. They complained about increased workload and indicated that they had large class sizes and limited support from the Department of Education to teach learners with special needs.

5.3.1.1 Challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers

The study found out that there is a plethora of challenges that Foundation Phase teachers face in teaching Inclusive Education in class. Many teachers lack formal training in Inclusive Education. The researcher observed that there is inadequate infrastructure. The three schools where the study was conducted lacked or did not have accessible classrooms or necessary teaching aids. Another challenge observed by the researcher is that teachers exhibited emotional and psychological strain. Teachers reported stress and burnout due to the demands of Inclusive Education. As a result, the study found that there are a plethora of challenges that teachers face in teaching Inclusive Education, which include a lack of training, a lack of infrastructure, and emotional and psychological strain.

5.3.2 Interviews Findings of the Study

The researcher conducted interviews at three selected schools with regards to the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The results were presented, discussed and linked with relevant literature in Chapter 2. The findings of the interviews are indicated in the upcoming section.

5.3.2.1 Experiences towards Inclusive Education

The study participants concurred that they had multiple experiences with inclusive education. Most participants cited that they experienced difficulties as they implemented Inclusive Education. They indicated that they were working in challenging working conditions, where they experienced a lack of equipment and facilities. As a result, they experienced difficulties in implementing inclusive education because less gifted learners are slow and unable to concentrate during teaching.

5.3.2.2 Attitudes and perceptions towards Inclusive Education

The study found that some participants had a positive attitude towards Inclusive Education because it caters to the needs of all learners, promotes equality, and promotes social cohesion. On the other hand, the study found out that majority of the participants of the study have positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education because it acts as a barrier to the smooth learning of learners who do not have special needs. Some also think that Inclusive Education should not have been introduced in their schools, because they were not properly trained to handle less gifted and physically-challenged learners. As a result, they pointed out that learners with special needs should be placed in special schools

5.3.2.3 Challenges that Foundation Phase teachers face in Inclusive Education

The challenges that Foundation Phase teachers face include poor implementation of Inclusive Education, a lack of teachers' training and support, a lack of inclusive curriculum and difficulties in teaching physically-challenged learners in class.

5.3.2.4 Strategies that could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions towards Inclusive Education

The study found out that some strategies can be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education. The strategies include teacher training, workshops, ongoing support for teachers, engagement with parents and caregivers, and provision of equipment and facilities. All these strategies, if fully implemented, may improve attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province.

5.4 SUMMARY

Most participants cited that they experience difficulties as they implement Inclusive Education. They indicated that they were working in challenging working conditions, where they experienced a lack of equipment and facilities. As a result, they experience difficulties in implementing Inclusive Education or inclusive teaching due to learners who are slow and unable to concentrate during teaching. Some of these learners always want to move around in class. Participants experience learners who take time to grasp the concepts being taught.

All the participants of the study responded to the question. Some participants showed positive attitudes and perceived Inclusive Education in a good way, seeing it as a good method that caters for all learners, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting academic achievement for all learners. They also displayed different attitudes towards Inclusive Education. The findings revealed that some participants perceived Inclusive Education as a good thing as it caters for the needs of all learners, promotes equality and

promotes social cohesion. They further indicated that it helps learners access education rather than being hidden in their homes.

These include poor implementation of Inclusive Education, lack of teachers training and support, lack of inclusive curriculum and difficulties in teaching disabled learners in class. To improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education, the study recommends the following strategies: teacher training, workshops, ongoing support of teachers, engagement with parents and caregivers and provision of equipment and facilities. All the strategies, if fully implemented, may improve attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The recommendations in this study are based on the findings of the study and the body of literature reviewed and presented in Chapter 2. This study recommends a some strategies that may help improve attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District, Limpopo Province, which involves the following:

- Training for teachers and training programmes for parents and learners should be implemented to create a positive, inclusive learning environment not only in tVhembe West District, Limpopo Province, but in all other areas towards building an Inclusive Education system. It is clear from the study that teachers need enough time to gain adequate knowledge about inclusion, so the way the Department of Education uses workshops and trains teachers needs a thorough review.
- Provision of equipment, facilities and relevant resources has been shown to be of crucial importance. It is evident from the present study that inadequate facilities, resources or lack of teaching and learning materials, especially materials that can help make learning accessible to learners who experience barriers to learning, is

a major challenge. Providing these resources cannot be left to the discretion of schools and teachers to improvise. The government should, as promised in the Department of Education (2002:31) and the National Coordinating Committee Meeting (NCCIE) identify, extend and develop resources and materials which will teach and support teachers to overcome the barriers to learning in all the learners.

- A change of attitude is required as the fact that the inequalities caused by the apartheid system have left many people marginalised and disadvantaged in many spheres of life cannot be disputed. Teachers, principals, SGB, learners, parents and the community at large have stereotypical attitudes towards learners with barriers to learning. The researcher recommends that all the significant role players and those who play a role directly or indirectly in assisting learners to be part of the democratic society be empowered with adequate knowledge on barriers to learning and be equipped with information and skills that could help learners in Inclusive Education to unfold all the latent talents and abilities that they have in their lives.

5.6 STUDY LIMITATIONS

A few limitations were encountered in carrying out the study. The setting of appointments with participants was a challenge. Some participants cancelled appointments, and some would arrive late for the interviews because of their busy schedules. However, the researcher would re-schedule in the unfortunate incidences of participants counselling or not showing up for the interviews. Other than that, there were no other challenges that were encountered in conducting the study.

5.7 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several areas of future study regarding attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education in South Africa, including:

- Teacher training and professional development: The effectiveness of pre-service and in-service training on Inclusive Education.
- The role of support structures. The effectiveness of learning support to teachers and teacher assistants in fostering inclusive practices in schools.
- The role of leadership and school management in supporting Inclusive Education in schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEACHERS INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Teachers' Consent Form for The Interview On: Exploring The Attitudes And Perceptions Of Foundation Phase Teachers Towards Inclusive Education In Vhembe West District
Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, **Rofhiwa Masikhwa**, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study titled, "*Exploring The Attitudes and Perceptions of Foundation Phase Teachers Towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District*"
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (*Participant Letter of Information*) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature
.....			

I, **Rofhiwa Masikhwa** herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name of Witness (If Applicable)

Signature:

Date

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE ON THE THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

SECTION A: BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION

1.1 Gender:

Male ☐ Female ☐

1.2 Age (in years):

1.3 Highest academic Qualification:

1.4 Professional Qualification:

1.5 Experience (in years) as a Teacher:

SECTION B : QUESTIONS

- (a) What are the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education?
- (b) What are the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education?
- (c) What are the challenges of Foundation Phase teachers face with regards to Inclusive Education?
- (d) What strategies could be used to improve the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Phase teachers towards Inclusive Education?
- (e) What is the relationship between the experiences/attitudes of teachers to inclusion and exclusion of Inclusive Education?

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE ON THE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS AS THEY INTERACT WITH THE LEARNERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Attitudes and Perceptions of Foundation Phase Teachers Towards Inclusive Education	Comments
What is the attitude and perceptions of Foundation Phase Teachers as they interact with the learners in the classroom?	

APPENDIX D: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS SCHEDULE ON THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Attitudes and Perceptions of Foundation Phase Teachers Towards Inclusive Education	Comments
How does the lesson plan include learners with special needs?	

APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT

Inclusive Education

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13%	12%	8%	9%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1%
2	univendspace.univen.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	bura.brunel.ac.uk Internet Source	1%
4	Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper	1%
5	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
6	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	1%
7	ebin.pub Internet Source	1%
8	vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source	1%
9	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	1%
10	Submitted to University of the Free State Student Paper	<1%
11	ulspace.ul.ac.za Internet Source	<1%

APPENDIX F: EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

kufazano@gmail.com

+27631434276

23 February 2025

To whom it may concern,

RE: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

This serves to confirm that I have copy-edited a dissertation written by Rofhiwa Masikhwa, 16000527, titled **EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT**.

The scope of my editing comprised:

- Spelling
- Tense
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Word usage
- Language and sentence structure

If you need any further details, kindly contact me on the details provided above.

Yours faithfully



Kufakunesu Zano.

[Dr Kufakunesu Zano, PhD \(English\). A member of the South African Translators' Institute, Ref 1000686](#)

APPENDIX G: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE

CONFIDENTIAL



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X9483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

Tel: (015) 230 9910, Email: mokobij@premier.limpopo.gov.za

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Review Date: 26 June 2024

Project Number: LPREC/43/2024: PG

Subject: Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Foundation Phase Teachers towards Inclusive Education in Vhembe West District

Researcher: Masikhwa R

Chairperson: Prof I Swarts



Date: 04 July 2024

Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number REC-111513-038.

Note:

- i. This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors as enshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- ii. Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.
- iii. The researcher(s) must provide annual reporting to the committee as well as the relevant department and also provide the department with the final report/thesis.
- iv. The ethical clearance certificate is valid for 12 months. Should the need to extend the period for data collection arise then the researcher should renew the certificate through LPREC secretariat. PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

APPENDIX H: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS LETTER

CONFIDENTIAL



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: MS. MABOGO MG

FROM: PROF I SWARTS

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

REVIEW DATE: 26 JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF FOUNDATION PHASE
TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT

RESEARCHER: MASIKHWA R

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC). The committee is satisfied with the methodological and ethical soundness of the proposed study.

Decision: The proposal is granted full approval.

Regards

Chairperson: Prof I Swarts



Secretariat: Ms. J Mokobi



Date: 04/07/2024

APPENDIX I : UNIVEN ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Ms R Masikhwa

STUDENT NO:

16000527

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the attitudes and perceptions of foundation phase teachers towards inclusive education in Vhembe west district.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FHSSE/24/CSEM/03/1405

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr RM Mthiyane	UNIVEN, Curriculum studies	Supervisor
Ms R Masikhwa	UNIVEN, Curriculum studies	Investigator – Student

Type: Masters Research

Risk: Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)

Approval Period: May 2024 – May 2025

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (REISSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report to the REIC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
 - Within 48 hours in case of any adverse event (e.g. whether that interrupts sound ethical practices) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Should any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of those changes at the REIC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the REIC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REIC retains the right to:
 - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
 - To ask further questions, seek additional information, request further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the internal consent process.
 - Withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - Any unethical practices or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
 - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REIC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
 - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately.
 - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions. As necessary.

ISSUED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: April 2024

Name of the REISSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof M. Mwaale-Manjono

Signature: 



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