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TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE

by

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TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE

I, Fana Mduduzi Mazibuko, thus certify that this paper, titled "Teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase," is original to me and has not been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. I further certify that sources have been fully acknowledged in the text and in the reference section. I also vouch that I haven't already submitted this work.

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DEDICATION

The value of education was instilled in me by my late father, Paul Mbeni Mazibuko, who is honoured by this effort. Thank you to my wife and my children for the support, prayers and for bearing with my busy schedule.

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ABSTRACT

The increasing diversity of children in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase has made it clear that all teachers need to recognise and assist learners with special educational needs. There are more young children entering Early Childhood Development classes with a variety of needs that call for responsive inclusive practice. Since 2014, the Department of Basic Education has implemented the SIAS policy (Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support). The goal of the policy was to establish a framework for standardizing the process for identifying, evaluating, and supporting all learners who need extra help.

As a result, teachers should be knowledgeable about how to respond appropriately to learners' needs. Additionally, the SIAS policy provides instructions on how to register learners in educational institutions, as well as protocol and a collection of official forms that should be used by educators, the School Based Support Team (SBST), and the District Based Support Team (DBST) when screening, identifying, and evaluating learners. The fundamental goal of this policy is to ensure that all learners, and vulnerable learners or those who experience barriers to learning, gain access to high-quality education. The goal of this study was to investigate how teachers in the Pixley ka Isaka Seme municipality identified and helped learners who were facing learning challenges in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classes. Because it was believed that problems could be caused by the educational system and other associated issues, the study was predicated on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems and social-cultural theories. The findings were examined using a qualitative study design. Three teachers from each school were interviewed and watched as part of a qualitative research design to evaluate the experiences of teachers in identifying and assisting learners with learning difficulties.

A focus group was used to conduct interviews with three ECD practitioners in one selected centre while documents, school policies and meeting's minutes pertaining to the identification and support rendered were analysed. Six steps of thematic content analysis were applied in analysing the raw data to generate themes.

Keywords: *Early Childhood development, learners with special needs, Inclusive education, Screening, Identification, Assessing, Support, School Based Support Team, District Based Support Team, teachers' experience.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DPO	Disabled People Organisation
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EI	Early Intervention
EWP5	Education White Paper 5
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FP	Foundation Phase
IE	Inclusive Education
ILST	Institution Level Support Team
ISP	Individual Support Plan
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisations
SBST	School Based Support Team
SEN	Special Education Needs
SGB	School Governing Body
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SNA	Support Needs Assessment
SSRC	Special School Resource Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Early childhood is a critical window of opportunity for investments in talents or skills that can set children up for success in adulthood, (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Elliott, 2017). Learners with special educational needs have a very difficult time gaining access to education. There were very few special schools, and they were only able to admit learners based on rigidly applied categories. Learners who experience learning difficulties due to a variety of reasons, including only people with biological or medical limitations were given access to support programs under the categorisation system.

The earlier obstacles are discovered, the faster support may be offered, and the greater the likelihood that a child will succeed. However, early detection and evaluation of a child's life barriers helps prevent backlogs and potential learning issues. This may cause emotional and psychological issues, necessitating more extensive support— which may or may not be successful—in the long run (Frederickson& Cline, 2009).

To guarantee that barriers are effectively recognised, and the ensuing assistance methods are utilised, it requires coordination amongst all parties concerned. Families of young, impaired children can play a critical role in their development in order for this to happen. They require encouragement, comprehension, and guidance on how to assist their children (Dash, 2006). They need both professional and non-personal support. The information needs to be accessible from birth or as soon as the disability becomes apparent. An early intervention program is crucial to support organisations for persons with disabilities and other training because children's health and educational needs are crucial, especially in the early stages of life when development is most rapid.

The ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner and the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasise the interactions between the systems of claim and characterise learning as a social process and the source of human intelligence, were the inspiration for this proposed qualitative study.

The central thesis of Vygotsky's theoretical system is that social interactions are essential to the development of cognition. According to the report, if teachers can make accommodations for diversity in their classes, inclusive education would be a success. For all learners with different requirements to have access to school and succeed in their academic endeavours, inclusive education is essential.

The research for this study was conducted in the Ermelo Region, Gert Sibande District in Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit in Mpumalanga Province. Much research on learners with educational needs has been conducted. This study sought to learn more about how teachers in the Gert Sibande District of Mpumalanga identified and assisted learners who were experiencing learning barriers in Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase classes. The population of the study included three teachers from one primary school and one focus group that comprised three members in one ECD centre. The researcher used purposeful sampling to pick our subjects. Semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, observation, and document analysis were among the methods used to gather data. Semi-structured interviews with Foundation Phase teachers and one focus group with three ECD practitioners were used in a qualitative manner to gather data.

1.1.1 Background

The effects of apartheid are still most noticeable in the field of special needs education. In addition to racial segregation, there was also disability- based segregation. As a result, apartheid special schools were organised based on the two segregation factors of race and disability. According to apartheid policy, schools that accommodated white disabled learners had excellent resources, while few schools that served black disabled learners had systematic underfunding, (DoE;2001). According to Farrel (2003), a child has special educational needs if they encounter greater learning difficulties than the majority of children of their age. Children are said to have a learning challenge if they (a) struggle with learning much more than most children of their age, according to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2009). This calls for a certain level of education and expertise (b) have a handicap that prohibits or restricts them from using educational resources of the kind that are typically made available to learners of their age in schools under the local education authority's supervision.

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In my interactions with colleagues, it has come to my attention that certain teachers frequently label and still label learners who have learning obstacles.

These issues have made it extremely difficult to comprehend the basic principles of classroom management, teaching, and learning for learners with a variety of educational needs, including but not limited to physical, sensory, cognitive, or emotional needs (Mampe 2014: 250, 257). According to Mampe (2014), an inclusive teacher should be aware of the many learning barriers as well as the impact of context on learners' growth. Teachers' efforts to educate are greatly hampered by their failure to identify learning obstacles that affect both teaching and learning, and many teachers struggle to deal with the diversity in their classrooms.

Learners' academic results are reviewed every year in Gert Sibande District, both in the General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET). Gert Sibande District has 18 municipalities. When results analysis was reviewed, the Dr Pixely ka Isaka Seme local municipality, under the Pixely ka Isaka Seme, was the worst performer. The reason the researcher conducted the research in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit was to explore teachers' experiences in identifying barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase schools in that circuit.

1.1.2 Rationale and Purpose of the study

According to Vithal and Jansen (2004), a justification explains how a researcher came to be interested in a certain subject and why they thought the research was worthwhile.

Why is the research worth doing?

Many children with educational needs, who had not been identified in their early years of development, are at risk of producing a poor outcome, such as dropping out of school.

How did I develop an interest in the topic?

The researcher's interaction and casual conversations with few educators gave rise to the original justification for the planned study. The Support Needs Assessment (SNA 1 & 2 forms) listed in the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy document, which is used to identify learners with special needs, are challenging

for some teachers to complete, according to comments made by them during our conversations.

They also indicated that they had insufficient information about inclusive education since they were taught only one module pertaining to inclusive education in their respective institutions. This inspired the researcher to perform this study in an effort to develop tools and techniques that will enable teachers to spot learners with special needs in the very early stages of development. The purpose of this research was to ascertain how teachers in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classrooms identified and supported learners who had learning difficulties.

1.2   Literature review

A written summary of journal articles, books, and other documents that reflect the past and present level of knowledge on the topic of a research endeavour is what is meant by a literature review Creswell (2012:80). Scholars, like Brimbring (2001, 2006, and 2007) and Osborne (2005), are concluding that early experiences have a significant impact on children's long-term cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Their experiences ought to contain both official and informal education in this regard. Children with disabilities are typically not included in formal schooling, nevertheless the authors contend that a child's ability to contribute to society at large as well as his or her own well-being are both impacted by child development. Giving disabled children no early education means denying them a promising future.

One significant educational reform document has been the movement toward inclusive education (IE). The SIAS policy outlines procedures and formal documents that should be followed by teachers, SBST, and DBST when screening, identifying, and evaluating learners. It also offers instructions for enrolling learners in special schools and settings.

This study set out to find out how teachers handle variety in their individual classes when they are compelled to use IE. The study that served as its foundation sought to understand how teachers view their roles in including learners with a range of needs in the classroom. Some in-service teachers were not initially trained in IE. They should still take seriously their duty to identify and support learners who are experiencing learning barriers in ECD and Foundation Phase classrooms and have more realistic

expectations for themselves as educators. For the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase to successfully promote interest in education and favourable attitudes toward school, self-concepts must be created. This is where the foundation is effectively laid. According to Joshua (2006), if a child fails at this period, they will be negatively affected and may even leave the educational system before having the chance to fully realise their learning potential. The right of every child to engage in wide variety of activities is supported by the beliefs, policies, and practices that are symbolised by the identification of learners with special educational needs in early life, according to Gargiulo and Kilgo (2011). Although IE is a top priority in South African schools, several systemic elements have an impact on how the policy is implemented. In light of this, the researcher took into account difficulties that arise at various levels of the educational system when attempting to meet the demands of learners who have a variety of needs.

Large classes, lack of parental support, and other social difficulties are all influenced by socio-economic conditions. Teachers should identify learners who are having difficulty learning as early as possible in their phase and provide the appropriate help, paying close attention to them in all learning environments so that any required adjustments can be done. In the past, employees of educational support services or special schools with the appropriate training were in charge of helping learners who were experiencing learning challenges. This gave the impression that schools and teachers solely had the job of identifying and referring learners who were having difficulty learning to more specialised professionals. Classroom teachers must acknowledge that those concepts need to be applied differently or handled more systematically, even though they are not expected to have all the answers or to complete the assignment alone.

This is something that Giangreco, Carter, Doyle, and Suter (2010) recognise. Most teachers lack the necessary training to teach young children who have special needs. As a result, they are unable to provide these children with the same educational opportunities that they do for regular children. Most studies on South Africa's teachers' support for inclusive education are negative. According to Geldenhuys and Wever's (2013:12), the District Based Support Team is unable to effectively help schools adopt inclusive education. This shows that school districts are not helping teachers sufficiently. According to policy papers, teachers are crucial in ensuring the successful

implementation of inclusive education.

Although challenges can be overwhelming, it needs to be emphasised that an inclusive teacher is a reality. Further, the research assumed that the more intensively Early Childhood and Foundation Phase teachers are involved in their children's learning, the more they will engage in identification of children who need support for learning which will lower the learner dropout rate. Teachers struggle to meet the demands of a variety of learners, according to Walton, Nel, Muller, and Lebeloane (2014:329). According to the study by Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, and Tlale (2015:7), South African teachers should receive training in handling various learners in mainstream classes as part of their preparation for inclusion in the classroom. Teachers have a difficult time managing learners that have variety of learning barriers, which has been shown to have an impact on these learners' performance.

In my literature review, I discuss the following topics that may contribute to teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in Early Childhood and Foundation Phases: legislation and policies that support early identification of learners with special educational needs; international and developing countries in support of inclusive education; historical perspective of Inclusive Education in South Africa; teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education; the factors that hinder the implementation of identifying learners with educational needs; the strategies that can be employed in identification of learners with educational needs in the early years of development; the role of teachers and parents in identifying learners with special needs; the benefit of learners if they are identified at an earlier stage of development and the possible support they get; the early childhood intervention; the process of identifying learning disabilities; parental engagement in the screening and identification process of learners with special needs; the benefits of early childhood education; and teachers' understanding of inclusive education and support they get in implementing inclusive education. In order to address the research question on the early identification of learners with special educational needs, this study investigated pertinent material as well as other sources. The focus was on the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases since it is where the foundation of learning is laid and affects the development of the child and may result in a child experiencing learning barriers.

1.3 Problem statement

One of the objectives of the inclusive education system, which advocates for everyone to be respected, accommodated, and appreciated, is to promote inclusion in schools. This means accepting each person for who they are, regardless of how they may look, what they may need, or how they may live, believe, or think. According to Ainscow and Mile (2008), inclusion is a matter of principle that requires reorganising school policies and practices.

To standardise the process for identifying, assessing, and providing programs for all learners who need additional help to improve their engagement and inclusion in schools, the Department of Education created the SIAS policy, (DBE 2014:1). However, in my experience teaching in the Foundation Phase, I have noticed that many teachers find it difficult to recognise learners with special educational needs since they may not be familiar with the range of learning issues. The development and execution of inclusive education did not fully incorporate educators as topic specialists and curriculum implementers (Carpenter, Ashdown & Bovair, 2017).

Some school leaders and educators in particular also feel threatened and sometimes overwhelmed by the many challenges that they encounter in IE. As a teacher himself, the researcher is exposed to such experiences. Educators appear helpless as they are not trained to teach learners with diverse needs. They mainly rely on general teaching skills and trial and error.

Within the special education community, the issue of identifying learners with special needs has been contentious and hotly debated. Information gathered over the past ten years has demonstrated that the incorrect identification of learners as having educational needs has detrimental effects on both the education of the individual learner and the educational system. For instance, according to Vaughn and Fuchs (2005), learners who exhibit academic difficulties miss out on possibilities for early intervention, such as extra educational services, and may lag behind their peers in content areas as a result.

Being a teacher of an Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase has allowed me to observe the knowledge and difficulties experienced by some of my colleagues in identifying learners with educational needs. Many children who haven't been identified as having physical or mental problems by their parents or other

caregivers reach the Foundation Phase. Although teachers are willing to identify learners in their Early Childhood, there are some parents who do not want to work together with teachers after they identified those learners.

Early identification of children with special needs can be ascertained and dealt with before the problem becomes unmanageable. Much research has been conducted about this topic but the reason I conducted this study is because I have observed a lot of teachers that are hostile to inclusive education. Some struggle to identify and teach learners with special needs. I have observed the problem that begins when one teacher identify a leaner as having special educational needs other will not see why was the child being identified as having barriers to learning. I have also seen that teachers have no equal understanding of what constitutes a learning barrier. There is an imperative need for the DoE to intercede and provide with necessary training skills and workshops that will capacitate teachers with relevant skills that they will apply in correctly identifying and supporting learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classrooms. The reason I carried out this study is because I have seen low quality in Early Childhood education causing poor outcomes for at-risk children such as dropping out of school. As a result, many teachers regularly assign the wrong labels to learners who are having difficulty learning. Finding the true issue(s) preventing learners' academic performance and advancement may be challenging for teachers if they are unable to recognize learning barriers.

This study investigated teachers' experiences in identifying and supporting learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classrooms in the Gert Sibande District, Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit in Mpumalanga Province. The research reveals how important it is to identify learners in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classrooms. Furthermore, the findings offer details on possible methods for identifying learners who have learning difficulties, as well as on the roles and expertise of teachers in this area.

1.4 Motivation of the study

Teachers must be given the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude to recognise learning barriers in light of current ideas and developments in special needs education

toward Building an Inclusive and Training System (DoE, 2001:10). This is crucial because, according to the Department of Education, "all children and youth should be able to perceive barriers to learning and that all children and youth can learn" in South Africa (DoE 2001:6).

By identifying tactics that can be used to support these learners, the study gave insight into and added to the body of knowledge on teachers' impressions of the operation and efficacy of the early identification of learners with educational needs. The findings of this study help to define teachers' responsibilities in the early identification of learners with special needs in order to facilitate the learners' obtaining support from many departments.

1.5 Research question

1.5.1 Primary question

What are teachers' experiences in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classroom?

1.5.2 Sub-questions

Secondary questions arising from the abovementioned included:

- How do teachers understand early identification of learners with special needs?
- What are the teachers' roles in identifying learners with special educational needs?
- What support do teachers receive in identifying learners with special needs?
- What strategies are used by educators in the identification of learners with special educational needs in Early Childhood?

1.6 Aims and subsidiary aim of the study

- To investigate the experiences of teachers in identifying learners who have learning difficulties.

- To investigate the support teachers receive in implementing inclusive education (identification of learners with barriers to learning).
- To discover the techniques that can be utilised to spot young learners that need special education.

1.7   Theoretical framework

A conceptual framework is produced as a result of a theoretical framework, which is defined as "an alignment of the fundamental concepts of the study", and "facilitates the conversation between the literature and the inquiry" (Henning, Van Renburg & Smit, and 2004:26). A theoretical framework, in the words of Kombo and Tromp (2013:56), is "a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories". Using theoretical frameworks strengthens research as they enable strong connections between the current study and past studies. According to Vinz (2015), a theoretical framework offers an investigation's scientific justification. This study cannot be seen in a vacuum in this sense. The theoretical underpinnings of the investigation were the socio-cultural theory and the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner.

Using the ecological systems theory as a foundation, American psychologist Bronfenbrenner developed a child development model. According to this theory, changes and improvements in the physical, social, and psychological realms result from layers of multiple interconnected systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:11).

This theory describes how these systems, as well as the connections between them, influence how a learner develops. In order to make judgments that are in the best interests of the child, it centres the systems on the child. Investigations into learners with special educational needs take place within the framework of the interactions that shape their development, such as those with their families, peers, schools, and the local community. The model highlights the interconnection within and between the systems to describe how learners develop in a complex system of relationships and the implementation of inclusive education in particular situations (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht, and Nel (2016) provide an explanation of the positioning of the key strategies from Education White Paper 6.

The numerous levels of the child development system, as described by Bronfenbrenner, provide a basis for understanding how children develop (Gray &

MacBlain, 2012). The system is integrated, illustrating how the law and the environment in which people congregate and produce work interact (Paquette& Ryan, 2001). The idea may be applied to identify the systems in a children's life that pose challenges, and interventions may then be undertaken within those systems to help the child in an effective manner (Woolfolk, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Bronfenbrenner also stresses that the environment in which the child finds him/herself is a contributing factor to development. No person develops in isolation, according to Excell and, Linington (2015:21). As a results, interactions between systems affects a child's development and learning, according to Donald et al. (2009:41). The micro, meso, exo, and macro systems, along with the interconnections of the crono-system, are the four nested systems in which child development takes place. The ecosystem approach demonstrates the relationships between the micro-systems, such as the family, the meso-systems, such as the school, the exo-systems, and the macro-systems, such as the larger community, as well as the chrono-influence systems on the interaction due to developmental time. The infant, who has a unique temperament and set of circumstances, was placed in the centre, or micro-system, by Bronfenbrenner.

A micro-system is described by Okeke, Van Wyk, and Pasha (2014:86) as the system that is closest to a child, which includes their family, school, nearby environment, and friends. Changes to these systems can be detrimental to the child's development or beneficial. Given that children have their strongest emotional bonds with their mothers or other key caregivers during their earliest years, the nuclear family system, or meso-system, should have the most impact on a child's emotional development. The neighbourhood a child lives in and the school(s) they attend are then viewed as crucial variables. According to this study, the persons closest to the learners who should make sure they achieve their full potential are the principals, parents, teachers, ECDs and Foundation Phase staff members.

They must make sure to spot a learner's barriers as early as feasible and provide them with the necessary support. A child's social and emotional development is also influenced by exo-system, specifically by the early childhood programs they attend and the interactions they form with their teachers or providers. It is evident that even though the DoE has solid policies in place, such as the SIAS policy, arrangements must also be made for resources, staff development, and teacher training for these

policies to be effectively implemented by all schools. The SIAS policy, which is not performing as expected due to systemic flaws, indicating that some teachers have not received inclusive education training, is an example of an exo-system that is used in this study.

Next is Bronfenbrenner's macro-system, or society, which encompasses public policies, the government, and culture, covered transitions like moving, switching schools, getting divorced, and other life changes that may have an impact on a child's social and emotional growth. Since it acknowledges through a zone of proximal development (ZPD) that there is a gap between what a child with special educational needs can learn on their own and what they can only learn when assisted by an expert like a special teacher.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory from 1978 is also pertinent to this study. The ZPD emphasised the significance of other people in assisting children with exceptional educational needs in their growth by helping them with learning activities that are above and beyond their levels of comprehension and ability. The socio-cultural theory has been shown to be effective with children who have unique educational needs because it emphasises the significance of enabling their learning through environmental mediation, according to Klein et al. (2001). The socio-cultural theory offers a potent theoretical explanation of how people develop that acknowledges the crucial role those social connections play (Van Compernolle, 2014). According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, "knowledge reflects a permanent construction and deconstruction of reality," depending on each person's experiences (Alexandru, 2012:19). As opposed to replacing pre-existing systems, it sees knowledge as the accumulation of earlier information. Although each person actively participates in their own development, certain people require support since they are unable to solve challenges on their own.

The theory also stresses the importance of assessment in order to determine the type and quantity of intervention program needed for children with special educational needs to learn successfully. This is done through the concept of scaffolding. In other words, the use of scaffolding dictated a child's placement in special education, integrated, or inclusive educational settings.

1.8 Research design and methodology

Introduction to paradigmatic perspective

Research helps people understand the world, but each person's understanding is unique and depends on how they see the world and what they think the aim of this understanding should be (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Research assumptions can be of an ontological or epistemological nature, which will lead to methodological considerations (Grix, 2002, Maree & Du Toit, 2003). I describe the paradigmatic viewpoint I employed in my study in this part.

1.8.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm, in the words of Bertram and Christiansen (2014), is the researcher's worldview. It examines acceptable research practices and research methodologies. Various approaches have been suggested in our quest to grasp truth. Many people believe that something can only be proven to be true using scientific methods (positivism). However, other considerations in the field of study have shown that reality can still be looked at from an interpretive standpoint (Murkheji & Albon, 2015). Positivism is associated with quantitative research, in which the utilization of experiments plays a major role. This type of study calls for a more cogent and methodical approach to data collection that will result in logical findings (Denscombe, 2008:14). In qualitative research, interpretivism holds that the truth can only be discovered when individuals themselves define their situations. This investigation followed the interpretivism paradigm. According to interpretivism, reality can have many different meanings and is socially produced rather than being objective. As a result, knowledge is created through interactions between individuals, including researchers, and research objects (Lotz-Sisitka, Fien & Ketlhoilwe, 2013

In other words, the findings of this research will be a culmination of the interactions that the researcher had with ECD and Foundation Phase educators. To understand how people in the common contexts create meaning and account for the happenings in their lives, the researcher employed a qualitative paradigm based on interpretivism, (Creswell in Fouche & Delport, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Through exploration of participants' experiences, opinions, and sentiments regarding the current

professional development and support options offered by the department of education, the research developed a comprehensive picture of participants within their contexts throughout the research process (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). The interpretivism point of view, according to Jansen (2007:21), emphasises the meaning that people give to their experiences and the importance of social context in analysing and comprehending human behaviour.

1.8.2 Research design

A research design is a comprehensive plan for carrying out a reset study quickly and methodically (Cresswell, 2009:3). The qualitative method was used in the research design. According to Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011), the qualitative research approach is centred on examining and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups place on a social or human event.

For the qualitative component of the study, the instruments that were selected to acquire knowledge regarding social issues under investigation included the face-to-face interview design and case study design (qualitative component). These made it easier to explore and clearly describe the phenomenon by providing a variety of information sources (Mart in Fouche & De Vos, 2002). Hancock, Ockleford (2009) claim that qualitative research focuses on how individuals or groups who have various perspectives on social or psychological reality interact. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) assert that the interview design allows the researcher to work with a wide range of raw data and offers a significant quantity of information and depth about the research issue. In order to better understand the dynamics of recognising learners with special educational needs, this study looked into the perspectives of teachers.

My study therefore comprised two cases, namely, ECD practitioners and Foundation Phase educators. Because the researcher was aware of the design's limitations, he avoided letting them compromise the quality of the study by, for instance, excluding prejudicial viewpoints and closely observing all interpretations to produce a rich account of the participants' perspectives on their environment. Three respondents from one school were approached to conduct semi-structured interviews to elaborate on the basic frame of reference to be provided by an extensive pool of participants. With the participants' permission, all interviews were audiotaped to help the researcher

with data analysis (Kanjee, 2002; Neumann, 2000)

1.8.3 Participant selection/sampling

According to Christiansen, Bertram, and Land (2010:41), sampling requires choosing which individuals, environments, activities, or behaviours to pay attention to. The researcher chose small group of teachers who were most likely to be competent and informative about the topic under examination using purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; 489)

The population for the study included schools in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit. In addition, the following standards were used to outline the deliberate choice of participants:

- Foundation Phase teachers must have taught at least 2 years in the sampled schools.
- ECD practitioners must have taught at least one year in the sampled centres or schools.

1.8.4 Data collection methods

Stake (2010:90) states that data collection methods for qualitative research include observation, interviews, photography, texting, documentary gathering, and artefact gathering. In this study, interviews were used by the researcher to collect data from a sample of participants.

The following table lists the data collection techniques used for the intended study:

Table 1.1: Data collection techniques

Qualitative approach
Focus group interviews
Semi-structured interviews
Observation
Document analysis

The study collection method for the qualitative part of the study was semi-structured interviews. Questions were formulated and used during individual and focus group interviews sessions with selected respondents in order to gain clarification about teachers' experiences in identifying learners with barriers in Early Childhood Development. The gathering of data allowed the researcher to comprehend the phenomenon under investigation (Pandey & Pandey, 2015:57). The use of multiple data gathering techniques is encouraged, according to Pandey & Pandey (2015:57), as it increases validity. In this instance, data collection techniques included interviews, observation, taking field notes, and audio recording.

1.8.5 Research instruments

Focus group interviews, observation, semi-structured interviews, and document.

1.8.5.1   Focus group interviews

A focus group is a carefully crafted discourse meant to elicit thoughts on a particular subject in a friendly, non-threatening setting (Maree, 2010). A focus group's main goal is to encourage self- disclosure among its participants. It is also used to understand people's true thoughts and feelings (Krueger & Casey 2000:7). The researcher used one focus group which includes three participants as a technique for data collection using a questionnaire and interview. All of the participants' biographical data was gathered in Section A of the questionnaire. The opinions of ECD practitioners on their perceptions of the significance and their roles in the identification of learners with educational needs, as well as what they believe could be done to improve them, were gathered through focus groups. Interviews took place in their respective centre after school hours.

1.8.5.2   Semi-structured interviews

It is defined as a two-way dialogue with the goal of gathering information and comprehending the participants' intent by Maree (2013: 87). The participants had the opportunity to contribute their thoughts, information, and comprehension of the

research issue during the interviews that were conducted to collect information from them. Semi-structured interviews are those that offer a lot of depth and breadth while being organised around specific themes of interest. Crabtree & Dicicco-Bloom (2006:315). Semi-structured interviews were also employed in addition to the literature review to gather the necessary data. They featured a few key questions, but also gave the interviewer or interviewee the freedom to explore a topic or response further (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008:292). There were two sub-sections in the interview questions for the teachers. Section B focused on teachers' experiences in identifying learners who had learning difficulties in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase, while Section A concentrated on gathering demographic data on the teachers.

1.8.5.3   Observation

A research stage observation is the practice of acquiring unstructured, first- hand information through observing people and places (Creswell, 2014: 235). In other words, observation refers to what is visible to the observer (De Clerck, Willems, and Timmerman & Carling, 2011:8). Observation is the systematic note and recordings of events and artefacts (things) in a social setting selected for the study, according to Marshall and Rossman (2006:107). The subtle meaning of language is implied by the subtle hints, gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, and other non-verbalized social interactions that are included (Hoberg, 1999: 103).

According to Maree (2016:90), observation is a methodical approach of documenting participants' behaviour patterns without asking or speaking to them. Based on participants' observations, the researcher first confirmed the significance of the activities and interactions. In order to watch the lessons and activities designed for learners with special educational needs, the researcher asked permission from the principals and described the goal of the research to them. To obtain data and comprehend the situation being witnessed, the researcher used many senses to investigate what happened. Being a non-participant gave the researcher the freedom to gather data without being distracted by those who were taking part in the activities they were observing.

1.8.5.4   Document analysis

I examined many documents for the indicated learners in my document analysis, including the learners' observation books, learner profiles, lesson plans, individual support plans, and the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) forms. The information acquired from the documents helped the later phases of data collection, especially the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. The principle or justification for the creation and use of inclusive education was explained in these papers.

1.8.6   Role of the researcher

The researcher's responsibilities in the interpretative field of study include being an active participant in interviews and observations, which includes gathering data (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). The researcher must continually recognise participants' biases, values and personal interests with regards to the research topic and process (Creswell, 2003). In order to gather detailed information from participants, researchers must build trust and demonstrate empathy, especially when they are looking into topics in which individuals have a strong personal stake (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012).

From the outset, I was transparent to all my role players regarding the purpose of my study and obtained informed consent from the principals, teachers and the parents of the identified learners of the participating schools. It was made clear to participants that they could leave the research at any time. I led and guided participants through the focus-groups interviews in a professional manner. Permission to record and transcribe the interviews was obtained from participants

During face-to-face interviews, I observed, listened carefully and continuously abided by all ethical guidelines. The researcher's primary functions in this study included interview transcription, data analysis, and data triangulation. The researcher must therefore be conscious of his own involvement and bias, which may be reflected in his capacity as an observer, recorder, and interpreter of data. The researcher observed teachers in the sampled schools delivering lessons designed for learners with special educational needs.

1.9 Data analysis and interpretation

Inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorising according to Creswell (2013:236) are undoubtedly different from structured, mechanical, and technical methods for drawing conclusions from actual evidence on social life. Numerous analytical techniques are employed to analyse data by grouping, organising, and condensing it into more manageable chunks before considering how to put it back together again (Schwandt 2007:7). The qualitative information gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, document analysis, and observation was analysed by the researcher. To properly examine the substance of each interview, the researcher had it transcribed. According to Jakuja (2009:75), the goal of analysis is to find recurring themes among transcripts.

Recurring themes are ideas, thoughts, pictures, and narratives that are similar and consistent. Since the analysis is phenomenological in nature, it places a focus on the essence and structure of the phenomena, or the experience. Data analysis, according to Neuman (2006:322), is a method for obtaining and examining textual content. Additionally, it refers to any message that can be conveyed by words, meanings, images, symbols, ideas, or themes.

The raw data was analysed using six steps of thematic content analysis to produce themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The term "thematic analysis" refers to the reporting, analysis, interpretation, and support of themes in existing literature. The crucial incident reports, observation field notes, and interview transcripts were all meticulously typed. In order to compare the data with other data sets and themes, the critical incident reports were transcribed. In the interpretive research paradigm, raw data were reduced into manageable bits and coded with a specific description that included multiple words, not simply "classifying" the data but also awarding and interpreting the meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In order to create categories and construct linkages between themes and categories to suit logical patterns and potential groupings, codes were created by carefully identifying patterns in the data that addressed the study question (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). By gathering and organising codes that had patterns and were pertinent to the research issue, themes were extrapolated. Being credible permits qualitative research to be thorough without jeopardizing its relevance (Mahlo, 2017).

With informed consent, cross-checking and confirmation of transcribed data with participants, and transparency of data collection techniques, the standards of reliability were upheld throughout the research.

1.10 Concept clarification

1.10.1 Barriers

A circumstance or hindrance that divides people or things is referred to as a barrier (Prinsloo, 2005:2).

1.10.2 Barriers to learning

Learning barriers are problems that prohibit the needs of the learner as well as the needs of the education system, the learning environment, or the learners themselves from being met (DoE, 2011). "Barriers to learning" are difficulties in the learning process that occur from a range of experiences in the classroom, at school, at home, in the community, and/or as a result of health issues or disabilities (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2014:5).

1.10.3 Inclusive education

Integrating all students, especially those with disabilities, into traditional educational systems regardless of their race, class, gender, handicap, religion, culture, sexual orientation, or language (DoE,2001; Woolfolk, 2010:557).

1.10.4 Identification

Teachers must recognise the strengths, weaknesses, contextual barriers, and the support required for learners who are having difficulty learning. According to Du Toit (2004:179), "identification" in this context refers to the process of recognising features in children that may point to the presence of one or more issues.

1.10.5 Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

In order to promote all leaners' involvement and inclusion in learning, the screening, identification, assessment, and support (SIAS) technique was developed for the educational system. It identifies, assesses, and provides programs to all learners who require additional support (DoE, 2008).

1.10.6 Early Childhood Development

This phrase can be used from infancy through primary school. Education during this time can be official, informal, or non-formal. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, children can develop and do well. It is a delicate time characterised by quick changes in physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development. Early experiences shape health, learning, and behaviour trajectories that can last a lifetime. Young children build their self-concepts and self-esteem through their interactions with adults and their peers (UNESCO, 2009:18).

1.10.7 Foundation Phase

The Foundation Phase, which lasts four years and starts with Grade R, includes leaners aged five to eight. The three most important learning initiatives at this stage are life skills, literacy, and numeracy (Mudau, 2004:2).

1.10.8 Support

Support encompasses all initiatives made at a school to enhance its capacity to handle diversity. Giving assistance, encouragement, or approbation is referred to as support (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2010); (DBE, 2014). Magare, Kitching, and Roos (2010) defined support as offering emotional care, building positive connections, and open and trustworthy communication.

1.10.9 Special Education (SE)

Special education is described as "instruction that is specifically designed to suit the individual requirements of children with exceptionalities" by Singh (2012:1). It necessitates the use of specialised teaching aids, pedagogical techniques, subject content, equipment, and resources. According to Mangal (2012:29), the term "SE" refers to a special educational program that is specifically designed to meet the needs of children who are exceptional or distinctive.

1.10.10   Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN)

LSENs are learners with learning disabilities who have been determined to have hearing, visual, physical, or intellectual impairments (MoE, 2013). Additionally, it addresses brilliant or talented learners, those with learning difficulties, communication issues, autism, and behavioural disorders. These are learners who qualify for SE services who have disabilities of any severity.

1.10.11   Experiences

Experience, as described by the Oxford South African Dictionary (2010, sv), is the actual engagement with and observation of facts and occurrences. Through experiences, one learns about something after experiencing or witnessing it. Experiences for this study were gathered through actively participating in an observation of the implementation of inclusive education.

1.11 Issues of reliability and validity

Validity and reliability are metrics that aid researchers in assessing the merit, plausibility, and problem-solving potential of their investigations. The goal of research is to offer issues with answers. Validity is a gauge of how well a researcher was able to get the desired data for a study using the research equipment (Babbie, 2010:14). Reliability is a metric of study confidence that establishes whether or not conclusions can be trusted to address a given issue. Results from reputable investigations can be repeated or applied. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are

the four characteristics that Guba (1981) suggests a qualitative researcher should consider when looking for a reliable study.

1.11.1 Validity

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:330), validity is the level of agreement between the explanations of the phenomena and the fact of the outside world is what determines the validity of qualitative research. In other words, can you strike "the bull's eye" of your study objects with the research instrument? He adds that researchers typically conduct a series of inquiries to determine veracity. Validity is a gauge of how reliable a study is, according to Vanderstoep and Johnson (2008), Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006), and Mukherji and Albon (2015). A study is valid if the instruments used measure what they were designed to measure. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:391), the researcher used the following strategies to circumvent challenges to the validity of this study:

- Language of the participant: Interview questions were written in a manner that was as like the participant's native tongue as possible, and the researcher gave explanations where necessary.
- Field research: Interviews and observation were conducted in natural settings, which more effectively captures the reality of everyday life.

1.11.2 Reliability

A measuring instrument's reliability refers to how repeatable and reliable it is. The research instrument is regarded as dependable if the study's findings can be obtained under similar conditions (Joppe, 2001:1). Reliability is defined as dependability or consistency by Neuman (2003:185). It means that results will be consistent if the investigation is carried out again under the same or very comparable settings. Combining several data collection techniques, according to Patton (in Golafshani, 2003:603), enhances the validity of the study. Relying solely on one source of information or evidence increases the likelihood that any biases or flaws in the data or evidence will go unnoticed by the researcher (Struwig & Stead, 2004:130). It is advantageous to combine evidence from several sources that paint a similar image

since it gives the conclusion more credibility.

1.12 Ethical considerations

In order to ensure that research participants weren't in any way put at risk by taking part in my study, the researcher adhered to the research ethics guidelines mentioned by McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 121-122). Anonymity, confidentiality, informed permission, voluntary involvement, participant privacy, and safety are some examples of these concepts. The Mpumalanga Department of Education, the participating schools, and the principals were all asked for and granted permission for the researcher to perform the study. The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) was also asked for an ethical clearance certificate for the researcher to collect data from the participants. Protecting the participants' rights and wellbeing was the researchers' ethical duty, McMillan &Schumacher (2010:15). Any study project must take ethical considerations into account to prevent violating participants' rights. The participants were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded, and that both the recordings and transcripts would be kept secret and confidential. Additionally, the researcher considered issues of informed permission, anonymity, and consent.

1.12.1 The right to privacy

Participants' confidentiality was never compromised because their names were never stated in the data gathering, according to Maphutha (2006:49). Since the respondent's right to secrecy had to be honoured, no private information was made public. Because their names were not utilized when gathering data, participants' privacy was never jeopardized. Since the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed and participants were asked not to provide their identities when responding to the questionnaires, the researcher took care to ensure that no secret or private information was disclosed.

Participants had the right to know where the information does, they provided is going to be applied. They have the right to ask the researcher to give feedback towards what has been recorded during the interview.

1.12.2 Anonymity

Blackstone (2012:64) asserts that anonymity exists when no one can connect specific participants to the information that was acquired, such as interview questions or survey answers, and only the researcher may do so after taking a public oath not to.

In order to preserve participant identities, anonymity entails eliminating participants' names from the entire study. To ensure that individuals remained anonymous, the participant names from the collected data were not used by the researcher. To ensure that the participants' identities were concealed, the researcher employed pseudonyms instead of their real names, *such as teacher 1, and practitioner 2.*

1.12.3 Informed consent

Participants must be given the choice of what will or won't happen to them out of respect for others (Leedy& Omrod, 2015). The Foundation Phase teachers and the ECD practitioners were told that participation in the study was optional. Participants received a consent form from the researcher, which stated that they might stop the study at any time if they felt compelled to do so.

Informed consent was also requested from the parents during lesson observation by the researcher. Before taking part in the study, participants had to fill out and sign a consent form that had been created by researcher. The study's rationale, the nature of the experiment, and the strict confidentiality of all data were all explained to the participants before they gave their signed agreement.

1.13 Contribution of the study

The goal of the study was to educate different stakeholders on the significance of early detection of learning hurdles in order to provide help and enhance learners' performance. Early identification of difficulties in young children, together with prompt, appropriate support, is crucial to ensuring that learners succeed in their academic endeavours. High-quality Early Childhood education can help many at-risk children by preventing negative outcomes like dropping out of school. The study will be helpful to policymakers, educators, parents, and children in the ECD and Foundation Phase.

The criteria that policy makers and implementers will use to assess the quality of ECD, and Foundation Phase will serve as the foundation for the early identification of learners with special educational needs.

This study will add to the scant information on the effectiveness of ECD programs currently available in South Africa. The study will also give academics a foundation of data for the creation of future high-quality ECD inclusive education studies. The data from this study will be useful to policymakers and administrators in restructuring the ECD children's programs in South African elementary schools. The study's findings offer details that may help in the early detection of learners who are experiencing learning difficulties.

1.14 Challenges of the study

The researcher observed the following challenges of the research:

- A concern about sufficient research participants.
- Time constraints, since the research was conducted during and after school hours. The educators were exhausted that led to the researcher not getting enough information from them.
- The costs of the research.
- Researchers who are skilled in group processes.
- Bias.
- The risk that passive participants may be unduly influenced by active participants in the focus group for ECD practitioners.
- The constraints of Covid-19.

1.15 Limitations of the study

Generalizability is a constraint that applied to this investigation, according to Cohen et al. (2000). The results of this study cannot be applied to a larger population because there were a limited number of participants. But with qualitative research, conclusions are constrained and cannot be extrapolated to a larger population (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). It didn't cover every employee in the district or at the schools. Future

research could involve more participants and a greater sample size because the researcher was aiming for a relatively small sample.

1.16 Preliminary chapter outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

The backdrop of the problem, the research problem, the research design, the scope of the literature study, and the methods by which the research was conducted are all included in this chapter's broad summary of the study. This chapter further explained several inclusive education model ideas.

Chapter 2: Literature review and conceptual framework

It describes teachers' opinions of inclusive education, their experiences with identifying learners with special needs, identification techniques that can be used, the assistance that parents can provide for learners with special needs, legislation and policies that encourage inclusive education. It also talks about the study's theoretical foundation.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

The research strategy, methods, and empirical examination as described in Chapter 1 are all detailed in this chapter. The procedures for gathering data for this investigation are described. It includes the population, the sample and the sampling methods, the research tools, the research approaches and design, and the data collection processes.

Then, ethical considerations and data analysis are discussed.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation

This chapter contains a detailed overview of the analysis and findings of the empirical research undertaken.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

It offers conclusions, proposals for further research, and recommendations.

1.17 Chapter summary

The background, justification, problem solving statement, study objectives, research methods, theoretical framework, ethical considerations, reliability, definitions of the important concepts, and chapter outlined of this study were all presented in this chapter. In chapter 2, the experiences of teachers in identifying learners with exceptional educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases are highlighted.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

An overview of published works on a particular topic or in a certain field is given by the review of the literature (Hammond, 2013:99). It provides an overview of current theories and techniques, publications, authors, and publications (Hammond, 2013:99). Chapter 1 provided the study's direction by outlining the study's background, stating the issue, and emphasising its objective. The chapter also included a summary of the research. The researcher also discussed the study's four main goals, which are: the significance of identifying learners with special educational needs in the early years; teachers' familiarity with this topic; an examination of the techniques employed by educators to identify learners with such needs in the early years; and the potential parental involvement in supporting their children with such needs.

This chapter presents an extensive review of the literature on inclusive education practices, with a focus on the identification of learners with special educational needs in order to address early childhood challenges, the significance of early years' development, the study's theoretical framework, and the laws and policies that support inclusive education.

In the current study, the researcher conducted a literature review that is based particularly on the topic: *teachers experience in identifying learners with special educational needs.*

2.2 Theoretical framework: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory and the Socio-Cultural Theory

According to the dictionary, a theory is "a mixture of ideas, assumptions, and concepts structured in such a way as to teach us about the universe, ourselves, or some element of reality" (Swart & Pettipher, 2011:10).

Although theories often offer a collection of organised principles, they might produce insight into a particular circumstance when combined with contextual knowledge.

Theories can change throughout time when people actively engage with them since they are not unchanging and are not thus absolute truths. The complexity of life cannot be fully explained by a single theory; thus it is essential to examine various theories and then draw the conclusions that are true in each situation (Swart & Pettipher, 2011:10). Constructivism (particularly social constructivism) and the ecosystem view are the two primary theoretical paradigms that affect the philosophy and implementation of inclusive education. The ecological system developed by Bronfenbrenner and socio-cultural theories served as the study's foundation.

2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory

The Bronfenbrenner theory was crucial to this research because it sought techniques for directing and structuring the growth and support of learners with unique educational needs. Our understanding of how many system levels in the social context interact in child development has been greatly and significantly shaped by Bronfenbrenner & Evans' 2000 study.

According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development, change, growth, and development are influenced by interactions among physiological, biological, psychological, social, and cultural levels.

Changes are the outcome of continuous causal processes, which means that whatever occurs in one system will have an impact on or be influenced by the other systems. According to Bronfenbrenner, a person's development is the outcome of a web of links between cultural, social, economic, and political systems as well as psychological systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2011:10).

In an inclusive education system, there are a variety of complicated interactions and relationships between learners and several different social institutions, including the classroom, school, family, community, and government. For the learner to have a supportive structure, these systems must interact with one another. A framework for understanding the interactions between various social context systems at various levels was developed by Bronfenbrenner. He identified four interacting dimensions that are central to this process (Landsberg et al., 2011); Swart & Pettipher, 2011:11-13).

In order to understand aspects that influence the implementation of Inclusive Education (more especially the identification of learners with educational needs in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase), Bronfenbrenner's exosystemic framework was adopted. This framework focuses on the programmes that influence the development of a child. The Bronfenbrenner's sub-system however influences the development of learners. The interplay between organisms and their physical environment is referred to as an "ecological system." The maintenance of the cycles of regeneration and decay ensures the continuity of the entire system because each element in this interdependent relationship contributes equally to their maintenance. An ecology ought to be continuously in balance. The stability of the entire system may be in jeopardy when there is a disturbance in one area (Landsberg et al., 2011).The systems theory, which contends that links and interactions exist between systems (groups of individuals) and individuals within certain social settings, supports the same premise. The overall functionality of the system depends on how all its parts interact with one another.

To ensure an efficient, functional school, for instance, a variety of stakeholders, including the Department of Education, management staff, teachers, parents, learners, and community members, must communicate with one another and collaborate(Alant and Harty 2011;82); (Davin 2013). According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development, change, growth, and development are influenced by interactions among physiological, biological, psychological, social, and cultural levels. Changes are the outcome of continuous causal processes, which means that whatever occurs in one system will have an impact on or be influenced by the other systems. A person's growth, according to Bronfenbrenner, is the result of a web of connections between cultural, social, economic, political, and psychological systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2000:10).

A complex web of interactions and relationships exists between learners and various social institutions, including the classroom, school, family, community, and government, in an inclusive education system. For these systems to work together as a cohesive unit and offer the learner a supportive framework. A framework for understanding the interactions between various social context systems at various levels is provided by Bronfenbrenner. Davin, van Staden & Janse van Rensburg (2013:33) also use Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model to explain the development

of the child. Bronfenbrenner identified four interacting dimension that are central to this process (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). According to this theory, the Foundation Phase teacher is in a good position to consider the developmental levels of the learners and the contextual influences on the learners' development (Bouwer 2011:50):

1. *Personal factors*: Individual qualities, including impulsivity, distractibility, aggression, insecurities, shyness, and curiosity; ecological resources, including genetic flaws, low birth weight, and brain damage; and demand traits, like joyful or fussy baby hyperactivity versus passivity.

2. *Proximal process* elements, such as interactions between people and their environments, are influenced by both social and personal settings. This entail intensifying reciprocal interactions and connections between an active person and the physical, intangible, and symbolic elements of their immediate surroundings (e.g. interaction within a family).

3. *Context* such as schools; and

4. *Time* such as changes in the environment due to maturation over time.

According to Bronfenbrenner, infant development occurs within four nested systems: the micro-, exo-, meso-, and macro-systems (also known as contexts, ecological levels, or environmental systems). These four influence the chrono-system in some way (Landsberg et al., 2011; Swart & Pettipher, 2011:11-13).

The interactions between people and systems that are the closest to a person's daily existence, such as those between a child and his or her family, peers, and teacher, constitute the *micro-system*, which is the immediate environment. This scenario definitely has significant consequences for tight interactions involving the child at the micro-system level. As parent are the people who spend more time with their children in the first six year of development, they should detect any problem pertaining the child. The parents are the ones who can work closely with the department of health if they detect any problems with the development and the health status of the child. In the situation whereby parents are illiterate, it may cause negative impact for parents to provide appropriate support to their children. They may fail to assist their children to do homework. Physiological consequences, such as malnutrition, may also negatively influence the child's ability to engage in learning opportunities. According to this study, the most direct individuals who

should make sure a learner realises his or her full potential are the principals, parents, teachers, and ECD and Foundation Phase staff members. They must ensure that they identify learners as early as possible and give an appropriate support.

The meso-system is made up of a number of micro-systems that are constantly in communication with one another. It refers to one or more settings in which the learner is not an active participant but in which events occur that influence or are influenced by what takes place in those contexts, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979).

For instance, school regulations created by school governing bodies (SGBs) to cater to the needs of learners who experience learning obstacles. The behaviour of a youngster at school may be influenced by what occurs in his or her family or peer groups. For instance, a youngster going through a divorce may find it difficult to focus, exhibit negative behaviour out of the blue, and see a decline in academic performance.

The term "*exo-system*" describes circumstances in which a child is not directly and actively engaged, but which nonetheless have an impact on the people in the child's micro-system who are close to them. For instance, events at a parent's place of employment may affect the ambiance at home. The media and other systems, such a neighbourhood with a high gang activity rate and subpar health care, can also have an impact on the child's local environment. Although the DoE has strong policies in place, such as the SIAS policy, it is evident that the provision of resources must also be made available in terms, staff development and teachers' knowledge so that they can be implemented by schools.

The *macro-system* is made up of the main social and economic institutions as well as the attitudes, convictions, ideologies, and values that make up a society's and a culture's systems and may have an impact on or be impacted by other systems. Different stakeholders from various department have a positive impact to the learners with special needs. Psychologists have an access in schools to come and assess the learners with special needs while the social workers have access to provide with disability grants for learners who are referred to special educational needs.

Any changes that take place throughout time in any one of the systems are represented by the *chrono-system* (Donald et al., 2010).

In the current study the shifting of policies from the apartheid era to democratic era whereby exclusions were practiced to policies of inclusion like SIAS policy and EWP6 are implemented to accommodate the diverse needs of learners.

2.2.2 The socio-cultural theory

The Zone of Proximal Development, which distinguishes between what a child with special educational needs can learn on their own and what they can only acquire with the assistance of a specialist, such as a special educator, makes the socio-cultural theory applicable for this subject. In order to identify and provide appropriate support for all learners with special educational needs, the ZPD emphasises the involvement of stakeholders.

The socio-cultural theory offers a potent theoretical explanation of how people develop that acknowledges the crucial role those social connections play (Van Compernolle, 2014). Although each person is a proactive agent in their own development, this process nonetheless needs support for individuals who encounter obstacles. Teachers and competent peers must encourage the development of these people. Through interactions with others, a person learns, and this is possible with help. The Zone of Proximal Development, aided learning, the magic middle, scaffolding, and cognitive apprenticeship are among the theory concepts that have been used for this study to illustrate the support provided to learners in inclusive classrooms. In addition, the theory maintains that assessment is required to determine the appropriate scope and nature of an intervention program for children with special educational needs for learning to be successful. This is done through the notion of scaffolding. In other words, scaffolding aids in choosing where to place a learner with special needs in an educational environment like a special school, integrated classroom, or inclusive classroom.

2.3 The importance of the early years of development

The World Conference on Education for All (EFA), which was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, emphasised the importance of the early years as the cornerstone of a person's life. Recent research on brain development, which emphasises that environmental experiences during the first six years of life are significant in influencing a person's entire life, has supported the deliberations. In particular, Shore, 1997; Mustard, 2008; O'Donnell & King, 1999; Stephens, Dunlop & Trevarthen, 1999. The experiences of this time may help or hinder a person from reaching their full potential. The rate of growth and development in all areas is likewise at its fastest currently. Early years are also when the brain develops the fastest. A child's brain has 70% of an adult brain by the second year. By the end of their first six years, children's brains have formed all the connections they will ever need. All that is necessary is for early stimulation and high-quality care to make these connections permanent.

The brain is at its most pliable and impressionable during this time. The largest influence on the brain comes from environmental factors, including care, nurturing, and stimulation. During this time, it is simple to mould children's personalities by teaching them social conventions, values, and habits, as well as how to regulate and control their emotions. This is a crucial time for maintaining optimal physiological development as well as for important health and nutrition treatments that will set the child up for success in life .However, children undergone the five major domains of development which are physical,cognitive,language, social and emotional. Children often experience a significant and obvious change in one domain at a time, for example if a child is focusing on learning to walk, not notice as much language development, or new words, until they have mastered walking. As children grow and learn, they will pass certain developmental milestones. While every child is different and progresses at a different rate, these millstones provide general guidelines that help parents and care givers gauge whether or not a child is on track. When young children have been deprived of stimulating learning opportunities during their preschool years, their cognitive development could be delayed and they experience problems in terms of their adjustment to the formal learning environment, as well as failure during learning activities (Welsh et 2010).

2.3.1 The legislation and policies that support Inclusive education (the identification of learners with special needs)

Policy documents represent how the government makes decisions, hold the government responsible for service delivery, influence public viewpoints and behaviour, and track social development over time. A major step in realizing numerous international initiatives to guarantee equitable educational opportunities for people with special needs is having special needs education. Several laws, regulations, and publications relating to those with special needs have been adopted by South Africa and, to some extent, put into practice. White Paper 6, the South African Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Education for All Act, and the White Paper 6 on Special Needs are among the policies that are featured. Education: Creating an Inclusive Training and Education System (DoE, 2001).

2.3.2 The National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) and the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) Report

In November 1997, a report was produced by the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) and the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET). The NCSNET and NCESS report makes the following recommendations: "The education and training system should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to actively participate in the educational process in order to develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society" (DoE,2001). The report "Special Needs Education: Building on Inclusive Education and Training" was produced as a result of the NCSNET and NCESS recommendations. NCSNET/NCESS (DoE, 1997:13) claims that the learner's ability may be increased or decreased as a result of a lack of early intervention facilities and services.

2.3.3 The Educational White Paper 6 on Special Needs and Training System (EWP6)

The official strategy for developing an inclusive education and training system, White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), was developed and published in that year. These documents were all based on the South African Constitution, which upholds human rights. This essay explains how the education and training system must evolve in order to help create a compassionate and humane society, how it must adapt to meet all types of learning demands, and the procedures that should be followed.

The dedication of everyone is crucial to the deployment of EWP6 being successful. The "Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System," which emphasizes "overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs," explains how discriminatory practices and imbalances from the past can be corrected and the principles of inclusion promoted (DoE, 2001:17). Given that not all learners who experience difficulties with their learning, including those with disabilities, have access to the appropriate kind of help, this policy aims to provide a more stringent and uniform approach of screening, identification, and support of learners throughout the system.

2.3.4 South African School Act (SASA)

Public schools must accept learners and meet their educational needs without engaging in any unlawful discrimination, as stated in Section 5(1) of the 1996 South African Schools Act. Sections 12(4) and 12(5) additionally address the "special education needs" of learners with impairments in regular public schools and the physical accessibility of public schools to those leaners (5). According to Section 6(4), recognized Sign Language has the status of an official language for educational purposes in a public school.

The South African Schools Act [SASA] (Act 79 of 1996), as stated by the DBE (2010:3), establishes guidelines for all schools to be full-service by stating that public schools must enrol learners and provide their educational needs without participating in any type of unjustified discrimination. According to the SASA, all learners have a legal right to equitable access to a foundational education that satisfies high standards

and is devoid of any form of discrimination. The obligation that a public school promote its own best interests by offering outstanding instruction to all its learners brings attention to the idea of quality instruction for all learners (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

2.3.5 The Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) policy

The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (DoE, 2014c), which was created after a consultative process involving teachers and individuals with disabilities from a variety of contexts in all nine provinces took place over a period of ten years, has been one of the innovative supporting policies. In order to improve access to high-quality education for vulnerable learners and those who encounter learning obstacles, such as out-of-school and under-supported learners with disabilities, the policy orders the construction of a support system for districts, schools, and teachers.

The SIAS aims to increase access to high-quality education for vulnerable learners and those who encounter learning barriers, including learners in regular and special schools who are unable to learn due to barriers of any kind (family disruption, language barriers, poverty, learning difficulties, disabilities, etc.), as well as children and teenagers who may not be in school but are of compulsory school age. In order to provide a seamless system of early diagnosis and efficient intervention to minimise learning breakdown and probable dropout, this policy is closely integrated with the Integrated School Health Policy. Furthermore, this policy must be seen as an essential step in ensuring that the educational system is turned into an inclusive education system in line with the guidance of Education White Paper 6, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System for Students with Special Needs (DoE, 2001). The SIAS strategy's goal is to screen for and identify learners who have learning barriers, then offer support that removes those barriers (DoE, 2008; Dalton, McKenzie & Kahonde, 2012).

The policy also aims to determine how much help is needed in classrooms and schools to maximise learners' participation in the learning process. It describes a procedure for determining the degree and scope of additional help required by outlining the needs of each individual learner in relation to the home and school context. (DoE, 2014b).

The SIAS process consists of three stages:

Stage 1

At this point, it is necessary for the teachers to compile fundamental data on each learner. This stage calls for the gathering of fundamental data that will help paint a general image of the child's identity, prior experiences, current family and home situations, strengths, weaknesses, and areas of interest (parent view). The data obtained at this point is meant to supplement the data included in the learner profiles.

Stage 2

It applies to learners who have learning difficulties that their teachers have identified. At this grade level, the first learner needs assessments would be based on a synthesis of oral and written information from other teachers and parents, as well as information gathered during the curriculum assessment process, such as observation, documentation from the learner's portfolio, workbooks, and other sources. For a large number of children, information from Stage 2 of the process for assessing assistance requirements will be adequate to show how a school and teachers may successfully aid a learner.

An Individual Support Plan (ISP) that specifies what will be offered at the school level and how it will be monitored must be developed in order to guarantee that assistance is delivered and followed up through continuing procedures. At the conclusion of each year, assessments of progressions will be performed using the learner's ISP.

Stage 3

It is the stage when the DBST coordinated the evaluation of learners who had not benefited sufficiently from the school-based support plans and where the SBST asked the DBST for more assistance (DoE, 2014a). After a leaner has been identified as experiencing barriers to leaning and the SIAS process has been followed, the leaner can be given access to different schools depending of the level of support he or she needs. The support levels are categorised to make sure that the learner receives additional help at the proper institution and that the DBST intervention is of the suitable type. For learners who require low-intensity support and who attend regular schools, level 1 and level 2 support levels have been developed. While levels 4 and 5 of support are designed for learners who require highly intensive levels of help, level 3 of support

is designed for learners who require a moderate degree of care and will be provided in mainstream and full-service schools. Special schools should be suitably equipped to high-intensity educational support programme and services and should offer a range of support services to mainstream and full-service schools (DBE, 2010:26; DBE: 2014: ix).

2.3.6 The South African Constitution

The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) (Section 1a) is founded on the principles of upholding human dignity, achieving equality, and advancing human rights and freedom. In order to ensure that all learners—those with and without disabilities—achieve their fullest potential, an inclusive education system must incorporate these principles (DoE, 2001).

2.4 Historical perspective of Inclusive Education in South Africa

Prior to 1994, during the apartheid era, funding and educational rights, opportunities, and expectations were severely disadvantaged for black, Indian, and coloured learners. Black learners received particularly poor educational opportunities (Stofile & Green, 2007; Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

This was particularly evident in the sector of learners who had special needs. Black learners who had disabilities struggled to learn, while schools for white disabled learners were relatively easily available and well-resourced (DoE, 2001; Swart & Pettipher, 2011). As a result, many disabled Black learners were either enrolled in mainstream classes by default or did not attend school at all. Race and exclusion were decadent and immoral characteristics that defined the place of our innocent and defenceless youngsters, according to a former minister of education by the name of Kader Asmal (DoE, 2014c:4). Children with special needs were marginalised and subsequently stereotyped in a process known as the "medical deficit model," in addition to the unequal provision of special or specialized schooling for black children.

According to the medical model, the child had a problem, a "deficit," or some other kind of issue. Additionally, the youngster was frequently evaluated apart from the

normal circumstances of his or her existence. The youngster may have been sent for therapy and education outside of the classroom to specialists and/or special schools after being evaluated. Services were made accessible in a few carefully chosen instances to help the youngster become as functioning as feasible. The learner's strengths and ambitions are first considered in the new inclusive education method, which also looks at the amount to which the learner's family, learning environment, and community either support or hinder his or her learning and growth in school.

These aspects must be taken into consideration by teachers as they attempt to comprehend the accomplishments and/or difficulties faced by their learners, and they must be continuously monitored to ensure that the support being provided is appropriate and continues to suit the needs of specific learners. Since the classroom is the greatest setting to provide support for a learner who is having difficulty learning, screening and identification are integral parts of inclusive education. It is also an excellent location to start recognizing the variables that could create learning obstacles and to look into what those obstacles might be.

Education in South Africa, like in many other nations, was founded on the idea of exclusion, which in practice meant that only children and teens who were seen as "normal" attended mainstream, regular schools or special classes. To assign learners to a certain placement, learners were assessed and then divided into a variety of categories, including Attention Deficit Disorder, Learning Disabilities, moderately or significantly "mentally retarded," and others where learners were put in special education institutions was determined by these classifications.

However only a small number of affluent children were given access to these unique facilities because of the unequal distribution of education in South Africa. Some underprivileged learners were admitted to the schools, but the majority were disregarded, turned away from, or never integrated in the educational system. It became evident that all children who, for a variety of reasons, are not benefiting from school must be included in the concept of "special educational need."

In light of South Africa's past, the switch to IE is necessary to ensure a just and equal future for everyone. We must all re-evaluate the things we do in our classrooms and schools. The history of education for learners with special needs and education support services in South Africa is characterised by tremendous deprivation and a lack

of resources for most *people*, much like the majority of our country's history. The social, economic, and political conditions that characterised South African society during the apartheid era are directly responsible for the injustices that are apparent in the areas of concern addressed by NCSNET and NCESS.

These factors have produced several outcomes, including unequal educational opportunities for white and black learners, a highly disorganised educational bureaucracy that has isolated and marginalised these learners from the mainstream, and the delivery of highly specialised services to a small number of learners. These injustices have been fostered by legislation and regulations that institutionalised racial segregation, labelled learners with "special needs," and kept them apart from their peers.

The involvement of non-governmental organisations, such as churches, has been a recurring theme in the history of support services and educational programs for learners with "special needs." Advocacy was developed as a result of the lack of provision and the poor quality of most of the meagre provision that did exist.

A formal movement to change South African education into an inclusive education system started after South Africa signed the Salamanca Statement in 1994. The South African Constitution had a major impact on all of these transformational processes, as well as the ensuing actions and policies. This change influenced the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and gave rise to the White Paper Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (DoE, 1995).

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) (DoE, 1997) had a significant impact on the recognition of children with disabilities and impairments' equal rights to education. It became evident that the educational system needed to embrace inclusivity in order to move away from segregation in school based on race and disability, aside from the effect of the worldwide movement towards inclusive education and South Africa's history with human rights (or lack thereof). Before 1994, it is thought that just 20 percent of learners with disabilities particularly black learners— were given accommodations in the educational system.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), any educational system could identify 2, 2% to 2, and 6% of learners as having a disability or impairment (DoE, 2001). In 2001, out of a possible total of 4 000 000 learners with disabilities, only

64 200 learners were accommodated in special schools. The few special schools that were available for black learners with disabilities were also under-resourced and under-funded (DoE, 2001).

2.5   The shift towards Inclusive Education in South Africa

In addition to separate race education for children, South Africa had a separate special education system for those with disabilities or impairments during the apartheid era. It is necessary to address this nation's segregated and fragmented educational system in order to bring South African educational practices in line with international trends that emphasise the inclusion of learners with special education needs in regular classes((Lemmer and van Wyk 2010). In order to create a just and equitable educational system, the new government created new policies after 1994: "Policy measures have also realigned teacher education with new social aims for a reformed society" (Lemmer and van Wyk 2010: 248; Proudlock 2014: 1; Badat and Sayed 2014: 127; Osman and Booth 2014: 161). Due to its emphasis on enhancing all children's chances in life, teaching for diversity, multicultural education, anti-oppressive education, and addressing general concerns influenced by privilege and power, South Africa's educational background makes it an ideal location for social justice teaching (Philpott & Dagenais, 2012). In order to actualise the principles of IE and social justice in South Africa, the Department of Education (DoE) began policy analyses and policy reforms to offer equitable, non-discriminatory access to education for everyone. Following the modifications, the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 was enacted (DoE, 1996).

2.6   The international perspective/responses to Inclusive Education

In the UK, teachers were trained in inclusive education at both the initial and in-service levels. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) were integrated into normal classrooms as early as possible (Tudor, 2015:68). This suggests that teachers need ongoing inclusion training in order to properly implement IE in Early Childhood settings. To stay current with program development, Foundation Phase teachers should not rely just on knowledge they learned during their training. Differentiated

tactics should be used by teachers who are knowledgeable about inclusive education to meet the various needs of all learners in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases.

2.7 Inclusive educational international discourse

Different strategies are used around the world to implement inclusive education. This can range from a focus on integrating learners who had previously been referred to special schools into regular classrooms and offering them support through well-established and well-resourced special education systems to integrating all learners who had previously been excluded from attending schools. Learners who were previously excluded due to different contextual considerations, such as disability, gender inequities, social and economic position, and location, are now included in the latter category (Dreyer, 2008).

The international committee is dedicated to creating societies that are more inclusive. As a result, there have been significant advancements made in regard to including learners with impairments. However, a disproportionate number of children with disabilities continue to encounter impediments to participation, according to the executive report on the state of the world's children, which focuses on this population (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2013). On a global scale, several significant publications offer a helpful history of policy change from 1948 to the present. These documents are summarised in the table below.

Table 2.1: International inclusive policy document

Year	Policy Document	Content of the Document
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	"Everyone has a right to education," it declares.
1960	Convention of the United Nations against Discrimination in Education (OHCHR) (Article 1,2, 3 & 6)	Promotion of equal chances will help eradicate and stop discrimination in education.

1971	OHCHR's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities (Article 2)	Supports each person's right to education, training, rehabilitation, and assistance so they can reach their full potential.
1975	United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons [UN]	For the first time acknowledges the rights and needs of all individuals with disabilities and encourages their inclusion
1981	Sundberg Declaration [UNESCO]	According to the declaration, every person with a disability "must be able to enjoy his fundamental rights to have full access to education," to be integrated through education and training, to have access to the resources they require, and to be inspired to use their creativity."
1982	Concerning Disabled Persons [UN]	Enable and equalization of opportunities.
1989	Tallin Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development. [UN]. Section D	The promotion of training and education was the aim. Cost-effective alternatives should be created and used, according to recommendations.
1990	Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNICEF] (Article 23)	Emphasised the rights of children. "A full and harmonious development of personality and preparedness to live a responsible life in a free society" are rights that belong to children.
1993	United Nation Standard Rules on Equalization of opportunities for persons with disability. [UN Enable]	The regulations broadened the scope of disabled people's access rights in society. Rules were increased to cover involvement in religion, sport, and leisure activities.
1994	World Congress on Special Needs Education, Salamanca [UNESCO]	The Salamanca Statement signaled a linguistic change from integration to inclusion as a worldwide descriptor and established a global policy agenda for inclusive education.

1995	World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen [UN]	The summit emphasized the importance of placing people at the center of development-related concerns by drawing linkages between education, poverty, and disability.
2000	Education for All (EFA): The Framework for Action (UNESCO, Dakar)	The Framework for Action calls for identifying children with special education needs and enhancing their care and education.
2015	*Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All* UNESCO (2015)	The document intends in *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All.*

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It protects the rights of everyone, everywhere, putting a strong emphasis on equality, fairness, and the acknowledgment of everyone's intrinsic value and dignity as human beings (UN, 1948).

Children who were at risk of being excluded from education and their human rights to inclusion were only given emphasis in 1990 at a World Education Forum conference in Jomtien, Thailand.

Focus was consequently placed on the millions of school-going age children without access to formal education setting at the initial stage of schooling, as well as those dropping out for various reasons and thereafter not finding an opportunity to re-enter the schooling system. Learners with impairments were also particularly mentioned as being extremely vulnerable to exclusion from access to and participation in education. As a result, the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning were initiated at the conference (UNESCO, 2000)

At the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, 92 nations and other pertinent organisations decided to pursue strategic action, focusing on access to and the quality of education. The outcomes of the framework were summarised in a document titled Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (SSFASNE).

This statement affirms that every child has a fundamental right to an education and that because every child is different, education must consider their various needs and traits. The necessity of giving special education learners access to regular schools was also emphasised. The primary tenet of inclusive schools, as articulated in this document, is that all learners should be able to learn at the same time and in the same classroom, regardless of their individual learning needs or differences (Swart & Pettipher, 2016; Walton, 2006). This implies that the needs of each learner must be met.

At the 2000 World Education Forum conference in Dakar, Senegal, 164 countries ratified the Dakar Framework for Action, "Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments." The heart of EFA lay at country level," as this framework emphasised, and particular attention was placed on areas of concern, such as HIV and AIDS, early childhood education, school health, education of girls and women, adult literacy, and education in crisis and emergency situations (UNESCO,2000:3).

This framework was compiled to address a progress report from 1990 Jomtien conference. Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, the UN ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006. However persons with disabilities still don't have access to the same opportunities as the general population (roughly). Numerous physical and social challenges they face hinder them from gaining an education, finding employment despite their high qualifications, accessing information, and receiving adequate medical treatment (UN, 2006).

In a 2015 publication by UNESCO (2015) called, f*ixin*g *the Broken Promise of Education for All*, it was reported that there are still 58 million children, between the age of 6 and 11, out of school globally. The document maintains that the progress to include all children in a school has stalled since 2007. Apparently, 9 percent of primary school-aged children and 17 per cent of adolescents of lower secondary school age have been found to be still excluded from education. Besides the issue of poverty, this document describes five barriers to education for all. These barriers include conflict, gender discrimination, child labour, language challenges, as well as social, institutional and environmental barriers linked to disability. It is asserted in this report that for children with disabilities the lack of physical access and the stigma that keeps them

hidden away in many communities need to be removed. Appropriate support for these learners is also regarded as important.

2.8   Early Childhood and Inclusive Education in developing countries

Children who are exposed to Early Childhood education do better than those who had no opportunity for preschool learning, according to a Diener (2013) study on Early Childhood Development in Zambia concerning the inclusion of learners with learning difficulties. Despite the government of the Republic of Zambia's efforts and execution of Early Childhood education, children with disabilities were not visible or considered in any of the developments when it came to inclusivity of schools for early childhood education in Zambia. To ensure that children with impairments received early schooling, very little was being done. Giving disabled children early schooling also improves the likelihood that they may be identified as having special educational needs, which may facilitate the provision of early interventions (Diener, 2013). Early childhood education centres can aid with the early identification of children with special educational requirements in Zambia, where it has been difficult to find children with these needs. Early detection of children's learning disabilities would allow schools, teachers, and parents an opportunity to identify and understand a learner's disability to develop the potential of learners with disabilities. Participation in early childhood education improves language proficiency of children.

The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (1994) ensures the establishment of early childhood education to promote children's holistic development to prepare them for formal education (Tirussew, 2005:41). But the government is failing to strengthen and expand the pre-school programme in Ethiopia, because this sector is run by private and other non-governmental organisations. In addition, the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia needs to consider early childhood education as a pre-condition before joining in the regular education system. Hence, some education programmes for children with special needs, such as the blind and the deaf, require preparatory programmes in pre-schools kindergarten (Tirussew, 2005:45).

Scholars, like Brimbring (2001, 2006, and 2007) and Osborne (2005), are concluding that children's early experiences have an impact on their long-term cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. This means that both formal and

informal education should be part of these encounters. Children with disabilities are typically not included in formal schooling, nevertheless. The authors contend that a child's ability to contribute to society at large as well as his or her own well-being are both impacted by child development. The young children develop the fundamental abilities necessary to control and express emotion, interact and build relationships with others, and express needs and wants during the first five years of life. These fundamental abilities have an impact on the child's quality of life as an adult, peer relationships, social development, peer interactions, and academic success. Giving disabled children no early education means denying them a promising future.

The Gambia's Educational Policy and Strategy Plans (2004–2005) make it abundantly clear that supportive services would be offered to meet the requirements of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. The strategy also emphasises the importance of mainstreaming children with mild to moderate disabilities in education. It is also important to note how existing educational practices, curricula, and classroom structures can be modified to accommodate the requirements of all learners. To achieve an efficient mainstreaming program, it is suggested that regional education centres be strengthened with enough funding and that skilled teachers be placed in mainstream schools. The importance of teacher preparation, early identification, vocational training, and skill development is also emphasised as being essential to the success of inclusion programs. The summary provided above demonstrates the slow progress made by African nations in establishing comprehensive laws, policies, strategies, and plans for guaranteeing the educational access of children with disabilities.

The Ghanaian Ministry of Education (MOE) regards the right to an education as a fundamental one. The fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana, adopted in 1992, which affirms the government's commitment to achieve Universal Primary Education as envisioned by Education for ALL (EFA) and encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals, (MDGs), strengthens this viewpoint. The Ghanaian Ministry of Education and Sport has released the Education Strategy Plan (ESP) for 2003-2015 provides the framework for Ghana to fulfil its obligations under the MDGs for education. Prior to 2003, Ghana's formal educational system did not include preschool education for children aged 4 to 5 years old. The President's Committee on Review of Education Reform's (October 2002) recommendations, which emphasised the

significance of Early Childhood Development and its wide-ranging consequences, led to its inclusion. Benner and Grim (2013) defined early childhood education as the training of children between the ages of four and five in the kindergarten through eight, which ensures cognitive stimulation and socialisation.

Schools must value children and design meaningful activities for them in order to enhance their development for life. These concepts have developed into the fundamental principles of modern early childhood education, as stated in Ghana's Education Act 2008, Act 7888, which specifies that the system of education as the basis stage shall be organized in three progressive levels, with the two-year kindergarten education being an aspect of the first level. The infrastructure already in place must be improved, and when additional facilities are required, they must be provided by the institutions that provide education to children with special needs. Walwoord (2010) states that an individualised education program (IEP) will be created to address the child's holistic needs after an interdisciplinary team of professionals' diagnoses and evaluates the child as an individual. Cohen and Spenciner (2007) concur that a thorough form of diagnoses and assessment procedures tailored to meet diversity is necessary.

Witt (1998) states that parent or guardian must use inclusive education facilities to send a child with special educational needs to the proper educational facility or, if resources are not available, must request that the proper educational facility be provided. The ministry in charge of social welfare, the health services, and the education department will work together to screen children upon admission and perform routine medical exams on children. The Ministry of Health (MOH) organised health visits to schools in order to fulfil the aforementioned statement. In the meantime, the government's plans for the education system over the coming ten years are outlined in Ghana's education strategic plan, particularly for the years 2010-2020. The plan's goal is to make sure that education contributes positively to both the national development plan and the accomplishment of the international development goals (MoE, 2012). Significant obstacles still exist after 50 years of existence and educational change. Due to the refusal of some school administrators to admit special needs children into special schools before the age of six and the absence of a policy to address the identification of early childhood education, this raises important questions about education in Ghana.

Primary education in Swaziland is guaranteed to be free and open to all. The Inclusive Education Policy was created by the Swaziland government in 2005 to support Education for All (EFA) and was put into effect in 2006 to ensure uniformity and ongoing program quality improvement. The Ministry of Education also established an inclusive education unit to keep an eye on the proposed policy. The policy emphasises that when creating their school development plans, all primary schools must be mindful of concerns of inclusion. The inclusive education portion of the school development plan provides strict guidelines for record keeping and improvements in the provision of education for all learners.

Based on this part, each school presents an annual report to the regional education officer (REO). The strategy outlines the major concerns that must be resolved in order to attain universal inclusive education and, when put into practice, it guarantees the establishment and upkeep of a successful inclusive educational system. The government must offer all children in Swaziland the years of free elementary education through a rolling out program in order to achieve inclusive education. Preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary mainstream education programs must support children and young people with special educational needs. The National Curriculum Centre must offer coherent and pertinent curriculum that are appropriate for the children's ages, their various communities, and their lifestyles, as well as support materials for educators and, where necessary, learners textbooks.

2.9 The factors that contribute to the roles of teachers in identifying learners with special educational needs

Knowing the factors that contribute to the teacher's role in identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase and their mechanisms might help the curriculum designers and teachers to design a better implementation of inclusive education for learners to become more successful.

2.9.1 Involving parents in the early education programme

The most enduring teachers for children are their parents. In early childhood settings, collaboration between parents and professionals has a multiplied effect on the growth

and learning of the child. According to research, parents who engage in intellectual enrichment activities see an improvement in their children's academic achievement (Nye, Tuner& Schwartz, 2006). To ensure a long-lasting and sustained impact, early education facilities must effectively partner with parents. For the child to experience more consistency in their lives, there must be continuity between their home environment and their early childhood education programs. Together, parents and teachers can better understand how children develop and cooperate to accomplish a common objective. Participating in educational activities at Early Childhood Development centres gives parents the chance to enhance their own abilities and gives them the confidence to speak up for their children in the educational system. Participation in schools event also bring parents together, allowing them to talk and express their joys and worries. Parents and other caregivers can play a crucial role in promoting early development in order to maximise a child's potential and prevent the onset of secondary impairments that can impair both physical and cognitive ability. Without early assistance, many disabled youngsters won't be able to benefit from education as much, even if they can attend their local community schools (UNESCO, 2009, Kilgo, 2005)

Families of young, impaired children can make a significant contribution to their children's early development, but for this to happen, they need support, understanding, and helpful knowledge on how to assist their children (Dash, 2006). The availability of this information must begin at birth or as soon as the handicap is apparent, support that is both interpersonal and personal is required. It is equally crucial to help organisations that serve persons with disabilities as well as other training centres that children's health and educational needs are met. All decisions on the help to be given to children should involve their parents and other caregivers. They should collaborate to support their children, especially by eradicating stigma and protecting them from harm.

2.9.2 Early identification, intervention and assessment of learners with special educational needs

Children with exceptional educational needs must be discovered and helped as soon as possible; the earlier help is given, the better the outcome of the intervention.

Learning is a cumulative process, thus problems that are discovered early on, if not addressed, can have a ripple impact on a child's entire life. Early identification and intervention, according to Reynolds et al. (2014), often refers to identifying emotional, intellectual, behavioural, and mental health difficulties at the youngest age possible. If left untreated, these issues can arise early in childhood and worsen over time. Therefore, early detection of the issues can help youngsters receive the assistance they require to have successful futures both inside and outside of the classroom. Being aware of the early signal that young children are at risk for early diagnosis and intervention for learning problems are aided by knowledge of typical developmental milestones. The key element impacting these children's long term results and other educators can or must play a role in the early identification of learning difficulties in children at an early age, in addition to paediatricians and parents.

This enables the curriculum writers to serve every learners. Thus, early childhood intervention addressed both the need to prevent difficulties in children who are at risk as well as the need to lessen the effects of the impairments.

The goal of early childhood intervention, according to Meisels and Shonkoff (2001:3), "is to assist young children and their families in thriving". Therefore, addressing early intervention from bio-ecological viewpoint means not only putting the child and their needs first, but also making the environment they inhabit in more conducive to their development. This indicates that families have a significant role in the early intervention phase. However, in addition to families, the larger neighbourhood in which the children reside plays a big factor in facilitating early childhood treatments.

According to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), parents and teachers should work together to help children make successful transitions away from home, and special accommodations should be made in schools for young children with special needs. According to Landsberg, Kruger, and Swart (2011:89), early childhood interventions focus on preventing developmental disorders in young children as well as lessening the effects of issues or impairments once they are identified.

The primary goal of early interventions in teaching and learning, according Adelman& Tylor (2008:17), is to support decision making. All stakeholders are given guidance by early interventions regarding the types of difficulties they are facing. Early intervention's primary goal is to stop children from developmental issues. To achieve

greater long-term success, efforts must be made to identify children and families at risk before the child enters school rather than waiting until they are there. The relevance of educational assessment as a continuous process that guides teaching on a daily basis is emphasised by early assessment and intervention. Early identification of a child's challenges is crucial, nevertheless, in order to implement early intervention. Early evaluation and intervention do not just pertain to the child's first few years. It also implies that prospective issues must be recognised before they develop into significant academic issues. Early identification and intervention lessen the effects of problems, cut back on the need for expensive rehabilitation and remediation programs, and increase the likelihood that the learner's needs will be satisfied in the mainstream. The early years of life, the school year, and the transition stage are some of the stages at which such early examinations and interventions are particularly crucial.

A basic system that applies to all learners, but that can be made more thorough and specialized in individual circumstances, is what countries have found to be the optimum setting for assessment systems to function. Challenges are more likely to be identified with such universal systems. Additionally, they increase the likelihood that assessments will support the child's growth and progress rather than merely direct and categorise him or her.

In order to implement early interventions, educational assessments are a continual process that impacts instruction every day. When a child first starts school, a lot of potential issues become apparent. Teachers sometimes postpone taking action until there is demonstrable evidence of educational failure; this can result in a one- to two-year delay in addressing a child's challenges. There are efforts that may be taken to prevent this, which means that early childhood educators should be knowledgeable with typical patterns of infant development and be able to see any substantial departures from these patterns.

This knowledge must be part of initial and in-service training for such teachers. Teachers need to listen to parents and elicit information from them about their child's development, skills, interests and difficulties. Teachers must be able to use simple screening instruments. These could take the form of a checklist for sensory acuity, school-related learning, social and emotional development, language development,

and motor development. The checklist can be compared to subsequent progress. Teachers must be able to collaborate effectively with those in health and social work so they can ask for guidance or refer children to them as needed.

2.9.3 The identification of barriers to learning and development

There will always be one or more learners that face different learning obstacles in the classroom. Because their teachers frequently lack the skills necessary to identify learning barriers, some of these learners are mistakenly labelled as "problem" or "difficult" learners. It is crucial that teachers can identify when a learner is acting or performing in a way that is problematic and necessitates additional support.

But it's crucial for a teacher to understand that, when a barrier is detected, it takes a collaborative effort to precisely characterise the barriers and put the right evaluation and support techniques in place. As a result, it is crucial for a teacher, who plays a key role in a learner's education, to expand their knowledge and abilities through workshops, self-improvement, and additional education in order to recognise learners who have learning obstacles.

2.9.4 Teachers' Professional development

Teachers sometimes view inclusive education as something they are required to perform, frequently without any support or resources, and it turns into a burden rather than a cooperative effort (Singal, 2009). Teachers must acquire the skills and knowledge required to identify and support learners with special educational needs. In order to support the practice of inclusive education, it is crucial for all parties involved in a school to perform their respective parts. The leadership of the school, SGB, and SBST should establish a supportive atmosphere for learners with special educational needs. Through workshops and staff development meetings, different training in inclusive education should be made available as continuing professional development. There is an expectation that this brief course will contribute to inclusive educational practices (Kuroda, Kartika & Kitamura, 2017; fullan, Rose & Doveston, 2015).

In order to implement inclusive education more sustainably, the emphasis on inclusive pedagogy in pre-service teacher preparation for all teacher candidates as well as sustained and continuous in-service development would need to be raised. It has a favourable effect on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion by emphasising that they have a professional commitment to include all learners in their classroom and that this is not just the responsibility of experts and creators of special curricula (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Graham & Scott, 2016; Sharma, Simi & Forlin, 2015; Subban & Mahlo, 2017).

This is a significant reason why so many disadvantaged children choose not to go to school or participate in classroom activities. To ensure that every child receives a top-notch fundamental education, regular teacher must be prepared to satisfy the learning and engagement needs of children with impairments (early childhood, primary, and lower secondary schooling). To achieve this, they must have access to continuing, first-rate support and guidance from knowledgeable professionals, as well as the appropriate initial training, ongoing training, and professional development.

Investment must be made in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs on all facets of inclusive education, including inclusive pedagogy, classroom management, use of resources and technology, differentiated assessments, and addressing the social and academic aspects of learner diversity in the classroom. A network of qualified professionals, knowledgeable teachers, community-based workers, and school administrators is also necessary to provide teachers with the assistance they need. Teachers gain from educational experiences when they may watch inclusive education in action, learn from it, and share what they have learned. In addition to focusing on skill development, teacher training programs should aim to create networks of support for both teachers and learners.

To ensure that emphasis on high-quality, inclusive teaching and learning is considered as a natural part of every teacher's profession, it is crucial for trainee teachers to learn about inclusive education from the beginning of their training. It is also crucial that current educators take part in continuing professional development that enables them to regularly evaluate their attitudes and behaviours and work to enhance the inclusion of their institutions. Formal in-service training programs and ongoing learning opportunities, such as having access to relevant reading material, being given the time

for independent study, taking part in action research projects, and participating in teacher discussion groups, can be part of this professional development.

It is insufficient to merely deliver one-time or standalone training on inclusive education to teachers and teacher candidates. Since such courses are frequently not required and/or might not affect the trainee teacher's final grade, they provide little motivation to enrol. Stand-alone courses may also convey the idea that inclusive education is something that only a select group of specialized teachers should focus on, rather than being a concern for all teachers. Finally, standalone courses frequently reinforce the myth that inclusive education is a distinct project or campaign rather than a strategy for whole-school reform. The existing individualised nature of educators' professional development and the limited systemic chances for peer learning have been highlighted in a number of studies. Therefore, a change to more systematic methods for teacher educators' individual and collective professional growth is necessary (Karagiorgi & Nicolaidou, 2013). There are numerous approaches for teachers to keep improving their methods, both generally and specifically for diversity challenges.

2.9.4.1 In-service professional development

In terms of in-service training for teachers, "courses, workshops, and conferences predominate in practically all educational institutions," according to research (European Commission, 2015:4). However, a wider range of professional development activities is starting to appear (European Commission, 2015:4). Professional development, according to Avalos (2011:10), "is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and putting their knowledge into practice for the benefit of the growth of their learners." She also emphasises how complicated the process of professional development is and how it calls for both:

Individually and collectively, teachers' cognitive and emotional engagement, their ability and desire to consider their convictions and beliefs, and their consideration and implementation of suitable options for improvement or change (Avalos 2011:10).

Numerous studies demonstrate that teachers overwhelmingly desire professional development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014b).

2.9.5 Implementing Inclusive Education (IE) in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase

Identification of learners with special needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase shows that the diverse needs of all children are being recognised and accommodated for, with a view of providing relevant support to individual learner. The SIAS (DBE, 2014) appropriately emphasizes the importance of early identification of learners who need special education. It states properly that inclusive schools must acknowledge and address the various needs of learners. The goal of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) procedure described in this policy was to determine the type and amount of support needed in classrooms and schools to maximise learners' engagement in the learning process. In order to determine the type and quantity of additional help required, it also describes a procedure for assessing each learner's unique needs in connection to the contexts at home and at school.

Teachers need to identify learners with special needs at an early stage of their development, so as to provide appropriate support to the learners. According to Taylor and Francis (2011:299), teachers frequently lack the abilities necessary to address the requirements of many learners while implementing inclusive education.

2.10 The role of teachers in identifying learners with barriers to learning

The importance of teachers in ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education is made abundantly evident in policy papers. Regular cooperation between co-workers, parents, and experts can aid in identifying, evaluating, and supporting learners who encounter learning challenges. As part of the teaching and learning process, the learner profile document is primarily used by teachers to plan daily interventions and support for all learners. Teachers must be careful to avoid labelling learners who are recognised as needing additional support because doing so could encourage exclusionary behaviours. To fulfil the needs of all learners, adjustments must be made to attitudes, behaviours, instructional strategies, curricula, and settings. Teachers and anybody else who often interacts with the learner must abide by the SIAS policy. To understand the learners' fundamental requirements, talents, and goals, the class teacher should complete Learner Profiles of the learners.

The teacher in charge of the learner's instruction determines the obstacles to learning and development by reflecting on teaching methods and strategies, classroom practices, and set-ups, identifying and addressing learner support needs (such as differentiation), identifying and addressing contextual barriers (such as seating arrangements), involving and consulting with the parents, and providing and referring to SBST if the support provided has little to no impact.

2.11 The early childhood development and Foundation phase teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education

According to NCSNET/NCESS report, labels and discriminatory attitudes are just two examples of how negative and detrimental attitude toward differences in our culture continue to be a significant impediment to learning and development (DoE, 1997: 15). According to NCSNET/NCESS (DoE, 1998:15), negative attitudes and labelling may be motivated by fear due to ignorance of the specific needs of learners and the obstacles they may encounter. The attitudes of teachers influence whether inclusive education is promoted in the classroom (Monsen, Ewing & Kwoka, 2014).

However, teachers' perspectives on including children and teenager with Special Educational Needs (SEN) have a significant impact. When there are sufficient resources to teach learners with special educational needs, for example, some teachers are willing to incorporate those learners in the mainstream classroom; however, some teachers are of the opinion that doing so could affect the rest of the class 'education (Grieve, 2009). Others feel that special schools would be better able to care for children and young adults with SEN since they are said to offer higher-quality and levels of support than those available within the regular school (Grieve, 2009). The attitudes that teachers have about the ideas and the practice of inclusive education are influenced by a variety of things, including the perceived quality and availability of resources and support, teachers' perceptions of their competence in fostering an inclusive classroom learning environment, and the behaviour of learners with SEN (Forlin,2008; Goodman & Burton, 2010). Evidence reveals that learners express less pleasure and cohesiveness in the classroom and more friction, conflict, and difficulty between learners when their teachers have less positive attitudes about inclusion (as stated by themselves). Less inclusive learning settings in classrooms

may relate to negative attitudes

On the other side, it has been discovered that having access to inclusive practices, an inclusive school culture and ethos, and effective classroom and school administration support inclusive practice (Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua & Frederickson, 2007). Making sure that teachers have good attitudes toward learners with special educational needs and their histories is one of the hardest tasks in teaching them to recognise learners with special needs. Making sure teachers are willing participants in the inclusion movement presents another issue in educating them to engage with other stakeholders. According to Unianu (2012), the educational system's ability to create the necessary conditions for successful practices in this area can help shape and improve teachers' attitudes toward IE. However, Nel, Muller, Hugo, Helldin, Backmann, Dwyer and Skarlind (2011) draw the conclusion that teachers in both South Africa and Sweden have unfavourable sentiments toward IE policies. It is important to recognise that teachers have their own attitudes and beliefs about how to identify and support learners at earlier stages of development. If these issues are not properly addressed, it will be impossible to practice inclusive education in schools. The attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding inclusion and helping learners with special educational needs are particularly important since they are seen to be the factors that have the greatest influence on the outcome of inclusion.

According to earlier research, teachers find it more challenging to work with learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the classroom than they do with learners with other types of disabilities (Chhabra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010). The ability to recognise and assist learners with special educational needs is not something that teachers feel they are prepared or equipped to do. The primary reason is that they lack the training necessary to manage these inclusive education programs (Hay, Smith& Paulsen, 2001). The teachers' negative views regarding inclusion and its principles, as well as their negative attitudes toward identifying and assisting learners in Early Childhood and the Foundation Phase, serve as one of the key obstacles to the practice of inclusive education. Most of teachers feel that they do not have experience in detecting learners with special educational need. They find difficulties to differentiate between leaners with special needs and slow learners in their classroom (Peacock, 2016). Teachers may see identification and recording of learners with special needs as a burden and time consuming.

When teaching the other learners who are typically developing, teachers may see the child as a burden in the classroom and as a learner who reduces their efficacy (Newton, Cambridge & Hunter-Johnson, 2014). Johnson Peacock (2016) contends that teacher attitudes are complicated and varied based on his or her examination of how general and special educators' opinions of their work in inclusive co-teaching situations affected instructional strategies and student learning. He asserts that teachers' biases toward learners with special needs are a result supporting the aforementioned, In Jakarta, Indonesia, Kurniawati, Minnaert, Mangusong, and Ahmed (2012) investigated the attitudes of primary school teachers regarding inclusive education. According to their research, special education training and prior teaching experience both appear to affect teachers' opinions. According to Mutisya (2010), teachers resisted or refused to deal with learners who had special needs because they believed they lacked the necessary skills, resources, and time to do so, of their lack of confidence in their own capacity to teach learners with special needs.

2.12 The strategies in identifying and supporting learners with special educational needs in Early Childhood and Foundation Phases

2.12.1 Early identification of learners experiencing challenges in learning

It is crucial to recognise the support needs of learners in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase, even before they reach the Intermediate Phase, in order to stop learning problems from emerging or getting worse.

Many Foundation Phase teachers follow a policy of routine screenings. In order to bring such difficulties to the notice of the teacher as soon as possible, schools could work with community knowledge and transdisciplinary resources found in medical, paramedical, psychological, and social services. Continuous evaluation may also make a huge difference in identifying learners who require learning support early on. Failure to direct the teacher's attention to the specific support requirements connected to the difficulties encountered that may be addressed in the classroom may result in the learner being labelled rather than receiving support.

2.12.2 Participants to involve

Who will be involved in identification, evaluation, and learning support must be decided by the school. The learners should clearly come first on the list, followed by any teacher(s), the School Based Support Team, the District Based Support Team, peers, parents, siblings and other family members, as well as other practitioners. In order to the greatest extent feasible (Kleinert Thurlow, 2011) advice that support figures be drawn from the learners' immediate environment, noting that the development of friendships and a strong web of social ties is a key result of the educational process.

2.13 Teachers' understanding of Inclusive Education

Different strategies exist for teachers to comprehend inclusiveness. Literature from various regions of the world demonstrates the necessity for teachers to properly comprehend the idea of inclusive education in order to put it into practice. According to Meltz, Herman and Pillay (2014:5), some South African teachers see inclusive education as a style of instruction that eliminates historical injustice by putting aside children's cultural and social distinctions and treating all learners equally, regardless of academic ability. In light of this, teachers view inclusive education as a way to put aside historical injustices and concentrate on providing an equal learning environment for all learners. The bio-ecological paradigm developed by Bronfenbrenner, which serves as the theoretical basis for this study, emphasises the need for meaningful connection between people, the environment they are in, and the technology they use. When adopting inclusive education, it is crucial to consider the family, the school, the friends, and the entire physical environment. The current study's goal was to determine if teachers understood the concept of identifying learners with special educational needs.

2.14 Implementation of Inclusive Education and teachers' support in identification of learners with special educational needs

Teachers across the globe have variety of difficulties while implementing inclusive education in traditional classrooms. The difficulties include, among others, a dearth of resources and inadequate teacher training. Teachers from all over the world report

varied degrees of success in terms of the support they receive for implementing inclusive education. O'Riordan (2017:49) claims that teachers in Ireland struggle to implement inclusive education because the education department and their schools do not provide them with necessary support. Most research show that teachers in South Africa don't support inclusive education. School Governing Bodies (SGB) do not develop policies that encourage inclusive education in their schools (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013:12). SGBs should take a proactive role in the creation of policies in order to help the school. According to the bio-ecological method of Bronfenbrenner, there are exo-systems, or surroundings, which are not directly related to the child but may have an effect on their education. Although the Department of Education's lack of assistance is not directly related to the learners, it might have a detrimental impact on the implementation of inclusive education because teachers need help in order to successfully implement inclusive education for the learners' benefit. The District Based Support Team (DBSTs) is likewise either organised or equipped to assist schools in the implementation of inclusive education, Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:12). This suggests that districts are not providing teachers with enough assistance to develop inclusive practices. The elements listed below provide additional context for teachers' experiences with the implementation of inclusive education elementary schools.

2.14.1 Lack of teacher training

When implementing inclusive education in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases, teachers in most countries around the world confront a variety of difficulties. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2015:7), inclusive education teacher should instruct teachers on how to deal with learners of varied abilities in typical classroom situations. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2015:7), South African teacher education for inclusion should prepare educators to engage with a diversity of learners in conventional classroom settings

Walton et al. (2014:329) concur that teachers find it difficult to plan lessons for a variety of requirements. It is extremely difficult for teachers to manage learners with a variety of learning barriers, and it has been proven that this has an impact on the performance of these learners. In addition to not having received adequate training in implementing inclusive education, teachers frequently struggle with a lack of parental support. Many

learners, according to Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:6), originate from dysfunctional homes where the parents are not involved in their growth and may face learning challenges. Teachers at schools find it difficult to integrate learners with disabilities since parents don't communicate with them about how their children are doing in class. The current study investigated how teachers identified learners with special educational needs, whether they had received enough training in this area, and whether they had access to the materials needed to execute inclusive education.

2.14.2 Lack of resources

The primary causes of resource constraints in South Africa, according to Meltz et al. (2014:1), are poor management and a lack of finance, which is why inclusive education has been adopted gradually. Donahue & Bornman (2014:8); Engelbrecht et al (2015:17) assert that the Department of Education does not offer the financing for schools to provide the tools required to embrace inclusion in regular classrooms.

The study investigated whether the teachers in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit, Gert Sibande District schools see financial constraints as obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education. The majority of South African public schools do not receive financing from the Department of Basic Education to adequately conduct inclusive education. They also lack the funds to invest in the assistive technology that is crucial for achieving inclusive education.

2.15 Capacitating of the implementation of identification of learners with special educational needs

Closing the gaps between policies and practices is one of the key elements that might improve the implementation of inclusive education, according to UNESCO (2015; 27). It goes on to say that for the efficient implementation of inclusive education around the world, all stakeholder inclusive education policies, including parents, NGOs, schools and education agencies, must cooperate. Education departments should have more stringent, comprehensive rules with benchmarks for evaluating the responsibility of state authorities, according to the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2017: 25). To improve their execution and ensure that all learners are successfully

accommodated, nations must enforce inclusive education policies. Teachers' knowledge of various inclusive education policies, such as the SIAS strategy policy in South Africa, can improve the implementation of inclusive education in that country (Geldenhuys& Wever's, 2013; 12).

To improve the implementation of inclusive education, teachers must get comprehensive training, in compliance with SIAS and White Paper 6. Early screening and assessment would allow for the implementation of inclusive education practices like differentiation. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2015: 8), it is crucial for teachers to be highly qualified, understand barriers to learning, and have strategies for overcoming these barriers. To effectively implement inclusive education, teachers must be aware of their duties in this area. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2015:7), inclusive teacher education should instruct teachers on how to deal with learners of varied abilities in typical classroom situations. According to Engelbrecht et al (2015:7), South African teacher education for inclusion should prepare educators to engage with a diversity of learners in conventional classroom settings The Department of Education must provide schools with enough funding to allow them to adapt their physical spaces to accommodate learners with disabilities. In order to improve the implementation of inclusive education, the current study examined teachers' assessments of the infrastructure's feasibility in the Early Childhood Foundation and Phases. The study examined the systems in place in schools to help learners during the Foundation Phase.

2.16 Conclusion

The researcher covered pertinent literature on identifying learners with unique educational needs in this chapter. Ecological systems and socio-cultural theories developed by Bronfenbrenner were defined and described because they are likely to offer a suitable framework for child development. The literature focused on topics such as teacher's attitudes toward inclusive education, parental involvement in the education of children with special needs, teacher's roles in that education, legislation and policies supporting inclusive education, identifying learners with special needs, the history of inclusive education in South Africa, and perspectives and responses from around the world. The study's methodology is described chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The previous chapter offers an analysis of the literature pertinent to the topic. Data collection techniques were used in this investigation. The study methodology, research design, sample techniques, and data analysis fall under this category. The ethical issues are also covered, including participant dependability, conformability and confidentiality.

This study explored the current practices in the Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phases of selected schools, investigated teachers' experiences in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit. This chapter gives a comprehensive discussion of the data collection process and tools, as well as an overview of the research methodology.

3.2   Research aims

The study was guided by the following research questions.

3.2.1   The main aim of the study

To investigate teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit.

3.2.2   Sub-aims of the study

- To investigate the support teachers, receive in implementing inclusive education (identification of learners with barriers to learning).
- To identify the strategies that can be used to identify learners with special educational needs in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase; and

- To investigate the teacher's role and responsibilities in identifying learners with special educational needs.

3.3   Research paradigm

A paradigm is described by Baker (2003:12) as a model or pattern that has a set of reasonable premises and a plan for gathering and analysing data. A research paradigm is a group of presumptions or convictions about fundamental truths that give rise to a specific worldview (Vosloo, 2014). It looked at fundamental beliefs based on faith, including notions about the nature of reality (ontology), the connection between the knower and the knower (epistemology), and presumptions about methodology (Guba & Lincoln,2005)

Du Plooy-Cilliers and Davis Bezuidenhout (2014) claim that a research paradigm aids the researcher in determining which questions are crucial for the inquiry and what techniques to use to guarantee that, the questions are addressed. The research paradigm in this instance is the professional training that SBST members have received in support of the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

As a result, a research paradigm operates as a lens or organising principle through which reality is perceived. It embodies a philosophical position that influences the study approach and directs the investigation process (Maree, 2010). A research paradigm, according to Wagner et al. (2012), is the point of view from which a scholar approaches their investigation; it contains the ontological underpinning that embraces the concepts of socially created knowledge (Kelly, 2011)

The interpretive paradigm was pertinent to the study because it assisted the researcher in comprehending and outlining inclusive support programs for children with special needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase from the perspective of educators and subject-matter experts from their own fields (Khanare, 2012). This is consistent with Maree (2007) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014), who emphasise that, in the interpretive paradigm, knowledge is based on the people' particular experiences and the meanings that are imparted; knowledge was acquired based on information provided voluntarily by educators.

A research paradigm in this study gave the researcher insight into the kinds of questions he believes are essential to ask and the steps to take to make sure that the questions are answered. The interpretive paradigm holds that through focusing on individual's subjective experiences and their interactions with one another, human life may be understood from the inside out. The interpretive paradigm helped to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences of recognising learners with special needs in various educational institutions because the researcher personally collected data from various participants.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 Phenomenological design

The research design, according to Kumar (2014), is the itinerary a researcher takes when conducting research. According to Van Manen (2007), phenomenology is centred on the serious analysis of the lived experience of human existence. The researcher used a phenomenological approach to truly comprehend the participants' viewpoints on identifying leaners with special educational needs. According to Maree (2016:77), phenomenological data analysis focuses on how people perceive the world. The participant's descriptions helped the researcher grasp what they had gone through. Therefore, the fundamental goal of phenomenology is to reduce personal encounters with a phenomenon to a description of the "very nature of the thing" (Roulston cited in Flick, 2014:302. The researcher used Brofernbrenner's bio-ecological and socio-cultural theories in the current investigation. Gauvan (2020) cites Vygotsky's theory as holding that a child's developmental level is enabled by the assistance provided by the significant person, which in teaching and learning is the teacher. According to Woolfolk (2013:12), the organisation seeks to promote effective learning that is strongly related to social situations and engages with others in communities. In this sense, teachers should enable parent participation in the classroom, early identification and support of learners through classroom interaction. Teachers need to have enough training to be able to identify and assist learners with special needs. The researcher adopted this idea because he believed that teachers could have trouble in identifying learners with specific needs. According to this theory, for learning to occur, there must be full social contact so that children's zones of

proximal development (ZPD) are fully formed. Teachers must be aware about inclusive education in order to identify learners and provide them with the appropriate support. The Brofernbrenner's bio ecological theory was thus applied in this qualitative study to comprehend teachers' experiences in identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase (De Vos and Strydom, 2013:37, Morgan, 2007:49; Donald Lazarus & Lolwana 2010:60). Brofenrnbrenner' theory was selected to form basis of this study because it is ideal to explore the experience and perspective of the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase.

The design of the study was based on evidence that would show what kind of education and assistance teachers need in order to be empowered in identifying and supporting the learners with special educational needs. The study assessed how well-prepared the Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase teachers in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit were to recognise and assist learners with specific educational needs. The research questions posed in Chapter 1 of this study were addressed by the chosen research strategy.

3.5   Research approach

To gain a thorough grasp of the phenomena, circumstance, or occurrence in naturalistic contexts, a qualitative research approach was adopted (Leedy & Omrod, 2015). A qualitative researcher is someone who gathers data in the field by interviewing or observing individuals at the location where they are exposed to the subject or problem under study, according to Cresswell (2009:175). According to Vaughan, Bos and Schumm (2009: 175), qualitative researchers are concerned in how people interpret their experiences, build their worlds, and give those experiences meaning.

Observations, focus groups, interviews, and document analysis were all employed in this study to conduct qualitative research in order to better understand the participants' perspectives (Niewenhuis, 2010). Because of this, the participants had the chance to openly explain how they felt about their experiences recognising learners with special needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase, and the researcher had the chance to ponder tempting questions (from general to specific)

3.6 Data collection instruments

The majority of qualitative research relies on a variety of data collection techniques (Leedy & Omrod, 2015). In order to gather data, the researcher used interviews and document analysis (McMillan& Schumacher, 2014). These are discussed in the following section.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

A researcher can gather demography, background, attitudes, views, opinions, values, years, number of times a phenomenon is measured, and human experiences using questionnaires, according to Mukherji and Albon (2015). A questionnaire is a set of inquiries that respondents respond to and may be either closed- or open-ended (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). A questionnaire, according to Hair, Ringle, and Sarsted (2011:247), is a prepared series of questions (or measurements) that respondents or interviewers use to record their responses (data). Primary data are generated by a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was therefore designed to collect the demographic backgrounds of the educators which are their gender, title, age and their qualifications. This study was best served by a questionnaire since it made it possible for the researcher to quickly acquire information from many teachers. Three educators received questionnaires (refer to Appendix E).

3.6.2 Focus group

A focus group is a planned discussion meant to elicit perspectives on a particular participants in a friendly, non-threatening environment (Maree, 2010). The focus group's main goal is to elicit as many opinions and viewpoints from the participants as possible (Kumar, 2014). The researcher should promote active member participation and interaction and utilise probing to fully direct debate or to explain points. Through a free and open dialogue between the teachers and the researcher, the researcher studied the teachers' views, beliefs, or perceptions towards recognising learners in the early childhood development. Numerous academics contend that focus groups offer

detailed data, however some members find focus groups as intimidating. The researcher needs to be aware of this potential and pay close attention to how the focus groups are conducted. One focus group conversation with three ECD practitioners was held as part of this study, and it lasted about 60 minutes. The research questions served as the basis for all focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews (Consult Appendix D), which the researcher developed prior to the interaction in order to remain focused on the aim of the investigations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

3.6.2.1   *Limitations of focus groups*

One limitation addressed in the literature is the frequent small size and potential unrepresentativeness of focus group participants. Additionally, all participants must be able to congregate in the sample location simultaneously, which is difficult if the potential participants live in far locations. The information gathered may be biased as a result of actions like grouping and difficulties evaluating the viewpoints or less assertive parties dominating the discussion. The moderator's abilities will determine both the calibre of the discussion and the value of the material.

3.6.2.2   *The advantages of focus groups*

They are quite simple to set up, and depending on the facilitator's expertise, the data may be more illuminating than that obtained through other methods of data collecting. They offer the researcher the chance to see a lot of conversations on a certain subject in a short amount of time. Additionally, they provide concrete evidence of the similarities and variances between perspectives of participants. There are multiple ways to conduct this procedure, according to Jayanthi and Nelson (2002), who argue that this makes it equally valid. Because "what you see is what you get", focus group data are reliable. The information is not challenging to comprehend. Participants in focus group are stimulated so that their responses cause reactions and additional responses from the other respondents. The focus group should give the research useful details on how people discuss the subject and react when they exposed to the opinions and experiences of others.

3.6.2.3 *The disadvantages of Focus group*

Facilitator bias may affect the process. A few people in the group might control (or even try to control) the conversation in order to further their own objectives.

3.6.3 Document analysis

According to Creswell (2012:223) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014), documents are important sources of data for qualitative research. The researcher uses a variety of document analysis techniques to get information from schools. Document analysis, according to Leedy and Omrod (2015), gave light on the topic under investigation. Documents such as institutional documents, rules, files, and records are among them (Leedy & Omrod, 2015). The researcher used document analysis as a method of data collection, concentrating on all forms of written communication that could provide insight into the phenomenon he was studying. To gain background knowledge for the current investigation, the researcher examined the following documents:

- Policy documents on inclusion (SIAS, EWP6).
- Lesson plans.
- Learner Profiles; and
- Special Needs Assessment form (SNA1 & 2).

3.6.4 Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are the most common method of gathering data or information. During an interview, a researcher gets information from a person or group who is known to have or is anticipated to have the expertise they seek Gilson and Depoy (2008:108); Maree (2013:87). The researcher is interested in the ideas, beliefs, perspectives, opinions, and behaviours of the participants as they relate to the research topic.

The participants replied with their beliefs and understanding pertaining to the research topic (Maree 2013:87). In the current study, the researcher adopted the semi-structured interview as a technique to collect data. The researcher and participants have far greater freedom in this type of research. The participant can provide a more

complete picture and the researcher is able to pursue specific intriguing areas that arise throughout the interview. The researcher was able to prepare planned questions for the semi-structured interview and set up an interview timetable, but the interview was directed rather than controlled by the schedule.

The researcher adopted this kind of technique to corroborate data emerging from the participants' questionnaires, field observation and document analysis. In order to spot fresh, emergent lines of inquiry that are specifically relevant to the phenomenon being examined, the researcher would pay close attention to the responses of his participants (Maree 2016:93). The researcher in this study paid close attention to the participants' comments as they discuss how they investigate the identification of learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase. The researcher helped participants get back on track during moments when they got distracted by unimportant details that had nothing to do with the study. The researcher's task was to ensure that the interview focuses on the context of the study to get responses that are relevant to the study. Maree (2013:85) believes that a good interviewer is someone pay attention to the participants' responses and someone who empathise with their feeling and behaviour. According to White (2005:143–144), interviews typically endure for a long time and can become heated and complex depending on the specific subject. Interviews also have the following benefits:

- **Clarit**y - Clarity was given to participants in questions that were seen to be difficult.
- **Question order-** questions were ordered in such a way that participants may not feel to withdraw early during the interview. The researcher was able to start by probing simple and unambiguous questions.
- **Flexibility-** the interviewer was able to probe questions that he can be able to change in order to accommodates the participants' understanding at all time
- **Non-verbal** – The researcher was present during the fieldwork so that he could watch the nonverbal behaviour and evaluate the participants' responses for validity.

The researcher employs a semi- structured interview to get data that might not be easily accessible in any other formats. In order to focus throughout the interview on what the participants are saying and to periodically keep an eye on the coverage

schedule interview, the researcher was able to revise the interview schedule in advance. The interview research questions were non-judgmental, unbiased, and neutral rather than value-laden or leading, the researcher made sure to encourage participants to speak freely throughout the interview, more open-ended questions were designed.

3.6.5 Observation

According to Maree (2016:90), observation is a methodical process of noting participants' behaviour patterns without asking or speaking to them. As it offers the chance to give the researcher and insider's perspectives on the group dynamic and behaviours in the various settings, observation is a crucial data collection tool. It enables the researcher to perceive, hear, and experience reality in the same ways that participants do, McMillan and Schumacher (2010:350).

In current study the researcher employed observation as a technique to hear the participants' dynamics knowledge and understanding of identifying learners with special educational needs. Before the researcher use observation as a data-gathering technique, he made sure that he defines the purpose and the focus of observation to the participants. During the initial phase of the observation processes the researcher adopted relatively passive role.

In order to collect data without interfering with the research processes, the researcher assumed the role of a non-participant observer. The researcher had adequate time to see, hear, and document the participant's sentiments and actions regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Schumacher and McMillan (2010:350). Being a non-participant to the study allowed the researcher to gather information without affecting the participants' decisions. The benefits and difficulties of assisting learners with exceptional needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase were noted by the researcher. Borden and Abbott (2011:237) claim that observation enables researchers to understand how behaviour functions.

Based on what he saw and heard while the curriculum was being delivered, the researcher observed the study. The researcher will use the information he gathers while in the classroom to analyse, study, and assess the participants' sentiments and

attitudes (Cirocki, 2013:64). The researcher considered what had transpired throughout the observation in order to write down what he had heard and seen.

3.7   Note taking and audio recordings

The researcher should take notes to reflect on what they have observed or heard, as well as what transpired during and immediately after the observation, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 350). During his free time, the researcher collected data by recording it on a variety of electronic media. It allows the researcher to obtain the data before it gets misplaced or confused.

The researcher used the data gathered through recording to do data analysis and make recommendations for more research. In similar vein, Hancock (2002:9) asserts that researchers should make notes about participants' behaviour and the setting in which their research was conducted so that they can refer to them afterwards. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:350), the researcher should make notes to reflect on what they have seen or heard as well as what has happened during and right after the observation. Data collection using various electronic media made it easier for the researcher to obtain the data at his leisure. It gives the researcher access to the information before it is lost or confused. Data collected through recording was used by the researcher for data analysis and for recommendations for future studies. Similarly Hancock (2002:9) maintain that the researcher records people's behaviour, the environment where the research took place by taking notes they can be used at a later stage.

The researcher will benefit from being able to concentrate on what is being said, follow up on interesting points raised, and avoid becoming side-tracked while trying to take down notes. The researcher was helped by the audio recording of the data to prevent incorrect interpretation of the information provided by the interviewees. The participants' interviews were all recorded by the researcher. He benefited from the recordings since he could play back and listen to any parts that could have been confusing without any interruptions. Some of the participants speak quickly, therefore the researcher benefited from listening to all of the audio recordings he took during the interview several times. The researcher used audio recordings to help him record the information that he was unable to write down or observe.

3.8 Data analysis

Interpretative philosophy is often the basis of qualitative data analysis in order to assess the meaningful and symbolic content of quality data. Qualitative data analysis is continuous and recurring, which implies that the processes of data collection, processing, analysis, and reporting are linked. Coding is the process of carefully reading through your transcribed data line by line and dividing it into reasonable analytical units, according to Kothari (2004:122). By classifying and labelling the information obtained during interviews, the researcher was able to streamline it.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:370), transcription is the process of putting data gathering through interviews, audiotape recorded interviews, and observation and note taking into a format that would aid analysis. In order to enhance the data that was audio taped, the researcher himself transcribed the data. In order to review the responses and ask follow-up questions at the end of the interview, the researcher transcribed the data gathered. After the interview is complete, the researcher will listen to the recording or go through the notes and reflect on the conversation to find any gaps that require more investigation in a subsequent interview.

When transcribing information collected digitally, such as via a tape recording, Maree (2013:104) emphasises that everything should be captured verbatim to minimise bias and that laughing, or gesturing shouldn't be disregarded because they may also add significance to spoken words. In the study, both verbal and non-verbal data were considered. They are all extremely important since they explain the study's meaning when analysing data.

3.9 Location

The research study was done at Amersfoort's Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit, which is in the Gert Sibande District of South Africa's Mpumalanga Province. The researcher found the site to be handier and more accessible. The researcher's travel expenses to gather data in the chosen schools were either non-existent or minimal. The chosen classrooms were labelled as being traditional schools that had already begun implementing inclusive education.

3.10 Population

Population is the broad category from which our sampling element is selected and from which the results are produced, according to Terre Blanche, Durkheim, and Painter (2011). The population was all the ECD educators, and Foundation Phase teachers in Gert Sibande District, Pixely ka Isaka Seme municipality. They all had an equal right to be included in the study and out of the population a sample was drawn.

3.11 Sample

A sample is a subset or unit of the population that was used in the study. A sample, according to De Vos et al. (2011), is a subset of measures taken from a population of interest or a population that is really being considered for inclusion in the study. According to Babbie (2010), a study population is the group of components from which the sample is really chosen. The researcher must establish a technique or system that ensures that the various units in the population have equal chances of being chosen in order to use a random selection approach.

Purposive sampling was utilized in this investigation. The term "purposeful sampling" describes how the researcher carefully chooses the participants for the sample (Saldana, 2013:43)." When a researcher wants to investigate, comprehend, and gain insight, they use purposeful sampling, which involves choosing a sample that will allow them to do so (Merriam, 2009). This supports Creswell's (2012) contention that researchers deliberately choose the locations and people, they interview in order to discover and comprehend the primary phenomenon. The sample for this study was purposefully chosen from six educators who work with learners who have unique educational needs in the Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase. They are between the ages of 25 and 50.

3.11.1 Profiles of teachers

Table 3.1: Displays the profiles of teachers (n=3) that were interviewed

Teachers	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher3
Population Group	Black	Black	Black
Gender	F	F	M
Highest Qualification	Diploma in Education	B.Ed. degree	B.Ed. degree
Experience	11-15 years	0-5 years	0-5 years
Grade teacher is teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3

Table 3.2: Profiles of the ECD practitioners (n=3)

Teacher	Practitioner 1	Practitioner 2	Practitioner3
Population Group	Black	Black	Black
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	40years	25years	51 years
Highest Qualification	ECD Level 5	ECD level 4	ECD level 4
Grade teacher is teaching	Grade RR	Grade R	Grade RR

3.12 Trustworthiness

The term "trustworthiness" refers to how information is gathered, arranged, and categorised, particularly when it comes to verbal and written material (Di Fabio and Maree, 2012:140). Utilizing a variety of data gathering techniques, such as observations and interviews, can improve the reliability of a qualitative study. These factors were taken into account by the researcher to guarantee the validity of the study.

3.12.1 Credibility

Credibility is the level of accuracy and dependability of the data and the conclusion (McMillan, 2012:302). The researcher checks members to verify credibility. Member checks suggest that you send your field notes or transcript to participants for fact – checking, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After interviewing the participants, the researcher submitted the field notes and transcript for checking and correcting errors. To establish credibility, the researcher used in depth interviews with Foundation Phase teachers

with more than three years of experience and ECD practitioners with more than one year of experience. The researcher was able to obtain as much data as he could through these conversations.

3.12.2 Transferability

The extent to which the findings can be applied to a larger population is known as transferability (Cohen et al., 2018:248). Qualitative researchers should concentrate on how typical the participants are to the setting being investigated to maximise transferability (Denzin: 1983). The researcher conducted the research to the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase teachers to find how knowledgeable they are, in terms of identifying learners with special needs at an early stage of development.

3.12.3 Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to the degree to which the study's conclusions may be successfully replicated by other researchers. Dependability, according to Cohen et al. (2018:248), is the regularity of the results. To establish dependability, this study included interviews and outside observation.

3.12.4 Conformability

Conformability is described by Cohen et al. (2018:48) as the degree to which study findings are impartial and unaffected by the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. It is about resolving bias concerns and the fact that results are solely dependent on participants' replies. In order to confirm the validity of the study's conclusions, participants were requested to read the verbatim quotes and offer input on their accuracy. This was done to ascertain whether the participants were okay with the researcher directly quoting them in written or vocal study reports.

3.13 Ethical considerations

Research ethics, according to Strydom, 2012, are a set of commonly acknowledged moral precepts that provide guidelines and behavioural expectations for the most proper conduct toward experiment subjects and researchers. The researcher has an ethical duty to uphold the participants' rights and wellbeing (McMillan Schumacher, 2010:15).

It is crucial to emphasise the ethical issues surrounding the research. An ethical aspect that the researcher paid attention on, was the issue of protecting the participants' identities. The participants obtained consent forms from the researcher before they participated in the study. The participants were ensured that of all recording machine like audiotape that were used during the interview will be destroyed after the researcher has done with his data collection. In the current study, the researcher adhered to the following ethical guidelines to ensure that the participants are not placed at risk in any way by participating.

3.13.1 Permission

The researcher was given permission to perform the research by the University of Mpumalanga's ethic committee. Additionally, the researcher has been given authorisation by the Mpumalanga Province Department of Education to carry out study in Mpumalanga schools using the Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit (see Appendix L). The principals and participants of the chosen schools gave the researcher the chance to inform and describe the study's purpose to the participants in the circuit's chosen schools.

3.13.2 Informed consent

The researcher created the consent forms that had to be filled by the participants before they take part in this study. Prior to participation, all participants received written consents outlining the purpose of the study. The participants were made aware that they might stop participating in the study whenever they felt like it was no longer in their best interests. The participants were given a broad overview of the study's

purpose by the researcher. The researcher also informed the participants about their specific engagement so that they could decide for themselves whether they wanted to participate or not.

3.13.3 Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:122), entails ensuring that only the researcher has access to data, that the participants' names won't be used, and that the information gathered is kept private. Participants in this study received guarantees of anonymity and information about how the data will be used without ever using their names.

3.13.4 Anonymity

The state of assuring anonymity to the participants by the researcher allowed the participants to provide information willingly. The participants were ensured that their identities will always be protected. Anonymity is about hiding participant's names from the whole study. To avoid identifying the participants to readers, the researcher employed pseudonyms rather than real names, such as "*Teacher 1," "Teacher 2," and "Practitioner 1," "Practitioner 2."*

3.14 Conclusion

The chapter's main topics included study methodology, research design, demographic and sample issues, data collection methods, data analysis, reliability, and ethical considerations. The analysis and presentation of the data are the main topics of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The researcher covered the research methods used in the study in the previous chapter. In Early Childhood and Foundation Phases, the chapter offers the findings and analysis of data gathered regarding teacher experience in recognising learners with special educational needs. The researcher discusses the majority themes and sub-themes that came out of the inductive thematic analysis of the data. Additionally, he quoted exactly from the transcript.

The data obtained from the participants through the interview schedule and focus group were analysed, coded, categorised and presented as themes with sub-themes. In order to avoid the misrepresentation of the participants' responses, data are presented verbatim in italics to indicate quotations.

The discussion of the results and the researcher's conclusion are both imbued with the literature. The research questions that served as the study's compass will next be covered. In addition, the researcher describes the sampling and data collection techniques. The trustworthiness of the data specifically in reference to credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability were dealt with in the previous chapter. The ethical considerations were also explained in detail.

4.1.1 Key research question

What are teachers' experiences in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classroom?

4.1.2 Sub-questions

- How do teachers understand early identification of learners with special needs?
- What are the teachers' roles in identifying learners with special educational needs?
- What support do teachers receive in identifying learners with special needs?
- What strategies are used by educators in the identification of learners with special educational needs in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase?

4.2 Data analysis method

Making meaning of situations based on the perspectives and opinions of participants is the process of qualitative data analysis (Vosloo, 2014). The following data presentation shows that data was collected from six respondents that were used in this study. Three respondents were from the Early Childhood Development centre, while three of them were from the Foundation Phase. The researcher was aware that employing various graphical representations to visually depict the links between two or more data sets makes data easier to analyse and comprehend. For this study, pie charts and tables were employed to represent data. There was statement that were used as a consent for the respondents to confirm whether they voluntarily entered to the study. The researcher employed the following statements *"I agree, or I do not agree to participate to the study"*, as an indication that participants were not forced to enter the study.

4.3 Data presentation

The following is the data presentation showing the data that were collected from the six respondents that took part in this study. The process of employing different graphical representations to visually depict the relationship between two or more data sets is what the researcher recognises as data presentation. This allows for the analysis and comprehension of the data. For this study, tables and pie charts were used to present data.

The statement below was used as consent for the respondents so that they could indicate whether they entered the study voluntarily or not: "The study's goal and the fact that participation is optional, private, and anonymous have all been explained to me".

4.3.1   Agreement to participation
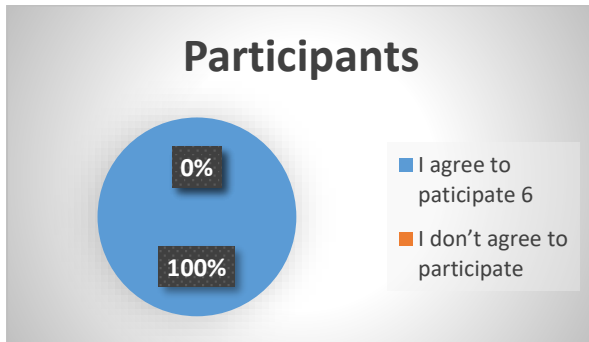
Figure 4.1: All participants consented to participate

4.3.2   Biographical Details

In the first part of the interview schedule, the researcher gathered the participants' biographical information. In this section, a descriptive analysis of the participants is presented in frequencies and percentages.

Table 4.1: Participants' biographical information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	5	83%
Male	1	17%
Total	6	100%
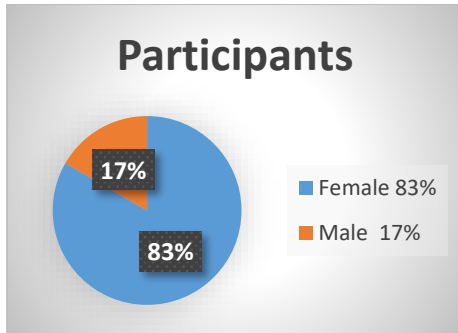
Figure 4.2: Participants' biographical information

Table 4.1 and *Figure 4.2* indicate that most of the participants (83%) were women, whereas 17% of the participants were men. There were no participants (0%) who preferred not to indicate their gender.

4.3.3 Grades that participated

Table 4.2: Grades

Grade taught	Frequency	Percentage
Grade RR	2	32%
Grade R	1	17%
Grade 1	1	17%
Grade 2	1	17%
Grade 3	1	17%
Total	**6**	**100%**
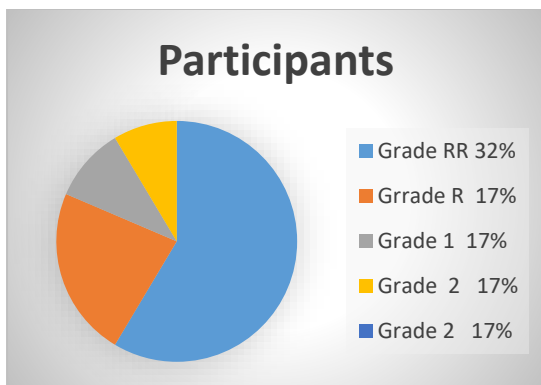
Figure 4.3: Grades

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.3 indicate that 32% of the participants taught Grade RR. Seventeen percent taught Grade R, 17% taught Grade 1, 17% taught Grade 2 and 17% taught Grade 3.

Table 4.3: Participants' highest academic qualifications

Educational qualifications	Frequencies	Percentage
ECD Level 4	2	33%
ECD Level 5	1	17%
Diploma in Education	1	17%
B.Ed. degree	2	33%
Total	6	100%
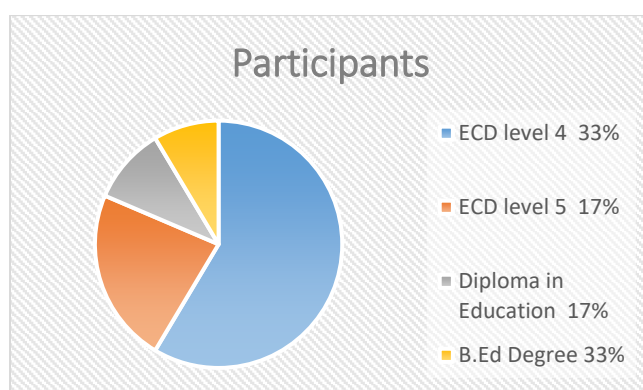
Figure 4.4: Academic qualifications

From *Table 4.3 and Figure 4.4* show that 33% of the participants had a Bachelor's teaching degree; 33% held ECD level 4, 17% had ECD level 5 in teaching, and 17% had a teaching diploma. All the participants that were used for this study had some teacher training, although it differed in qualification types.

Table 4.4: Type of training done by participants

Teacher training attended by teacher	Frequencies	Percentage
I did special needs training	3	50%
I did not do special needs education	3	50%
Total	6	
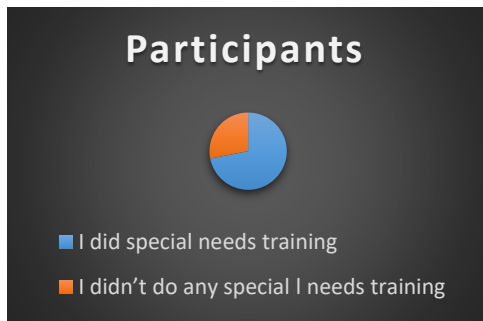
Figure 4.5: Type of Training

Figure 4.5 indicates that half the participants did special educational needs training while the other half did not do special needs training.

4.4 Participants' perceptions in identifying learners with special educational needs in Early Childhood and Foundation Phases

The data obtained from the participants through the interview schedule and focus group were analysed, coded, categorised and presented as themes with sub-themes. In order to avoid the misrepresentation of the participants' responses, data are presented verbatim in italics to indicate quotations.

Table 4.5: Presentation of the themes and sub-themes

Questions	Main theme	Sub-theme
Question 1	**The importance of identifying and support of LSENs**	• Practitioners understanding the importance of early identification of learners with special educational needs in ECDs
Question 2	**Tools used to identify learners**	• Learner profiles • Support Needs Assessment (SNA) forms • Baseline assessment • Journal, observation book and checklist
Question 3	**Lack of support**	• Limited support (only at school level) • Regular workshops not conducted/conducted

		• Support only from the SBST coordinator • Support from the social development
Question 4	**Parental involvement**	• The parents do not cooperate • They are in denial that their children have barriers to education • The parents have bad attitudes towards the teachers • A lack of parental involvement is affected by background, lack of proper education from parents and they do not want their children to be labelled
Question 5	**Inexperienced teachers**	• No experience in identifying the learners • A lack of support from relevant people such as health department, social services and parents (all stakeholders) • Overcrowded classrooms
Question6	**Roles and responsibility**	• Teachers are not sure of their roles and responsibilities
Question 7	**Lack of training**	• No sufficient guidance from the school • No regular SBST meetings conducted or monitoring of the learners' progress • No support hence we use the little knowledge we have
Question 8	**Theme: lack of guidance**	• No sufficient guidance from the school • No regular SBST meetings conducted or monitoring of the learners' progress • No support hence they use the little knowledge they have
Question 9	**Schools are not ready to admit such learners due to a lack of capacity**	• No support (lack of resources placed or available to cater for those learners) • Workshops are needed to capacitate the teachers on how to support learners with special educational needs

Question 10	Challenges experienced by teachers at LSEN schools	• Paperwork (filling in of the SNA form) • No support from parents • Taking much time to identify learners with special educational needs due to lack of experience and knowledge
Question 11	Support for the teachers	• The teachers must be provided with training about inclusive education • Workshops that will help them know how to fill in the SNA form • Support from the DBST

4.4.1 What is your opinion about identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases?

4.4.1.1 Theme: The importance of identifying and supporting LSENs

Teachers and other professionals are able to spot learners who require special educational services and work to set up a system of assistance to help them all.

(a) Teachers' understanding of the importance of early identification of learners with special educational needs in Foundation Phase

When the teachers were questioned about the significance of identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases, they provided the following response:

"*In my point of view, it is important to identify the learners at an earlier stage so that we could understand them well. To be able to prepare their work according to their abilities and to plan according to relevant cognitive levels. Ummh … it is also important to identify them. It becomes easy for learning to continue fast. So, for those slow learners to get time to be supported. Also, it enables the learners to understand what kind of support they will get from you as a teacher*" (**Teacher 1**).

"*Ok … my opinion in identifying learners with special educational needs in Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase is that [it] is really important as it allows the teacher to cater for the learner 'special educational needs' in other ways that uuhmm … the work that is done in the classroom, the level of work that will be given to learners will be able to develop the learners at their levels. And then it will be able*

to assist the teacher in planning the work according to learner needs" (**Teacher 2).**

"*Yaah, I think it is a good idea to identify learners with barriers to learning at an earlier stage in the Foundation Phase. If a child has been identified as earlier, he will be able to get sufficient support"* (**Teacher 3).**

(b) Practitioners understanding the importance of early identification of learners with special educational needs in ECDs

To guarantee that learners learn effectively, early identification and prompt, appropriate help are crucial. The following questions were posed to the practitioners (n=3) regarding their awareness of the significance of recognising learners with special educational needs in the ECDs:

"*I think if the barrier is identified earlier in the ECD, the learner will be easily supported as soon as the barrier is detected. It will help the child to be properly cared and it will help so that she will be developed on that specific area that needs to be developed. Even it helps the practitioner to see how best she can help on her condition"* (***Practitioner* 1).**

"*It helps the teacher to pay attention to that specific area where the learner needs help on and do a special needs. It is important to identify learners with special educational needs so as to get support as early as possible. It helps me as a practitioner to identify the strength and the weakness point of the learners"* (***Practitioner* 2).**

"*I think it helps; it gives a special attention for the learner with special need so that she might get special care every time. Some learners may have physical disabilities. Those learners need special care every time and everywhere, even if they go to the toilet"* (***Practitioner* 3).**

4.4.2 Which tool(s) do you use to identify learners with barriers to learning?

4.4.2.1   Theme: Tools used to identify leaners with special needs

(a) Learner profiles

When the teachers were questioned during the interview about the records, they used to keep tabs on learners who were identified as having special educational needs, a learner profile was brought up. A learner's performance and progress are continuously recorded in a learner profile, which provides a comprehensive picture of the learner. It

helps the teacher in the following grades or institution better comprehend the learner and, as a result, respond to the learner. Beginning in Grade R, the creation of Learner Profiles should proceed until the learner completes Grade 12.

Teachers (n=2) were asked about the tools they used to identify learners with special educational needs:

> *"We are using the Learner Profiles where we profile all the learners. The learner profile document is primarily used by teachers as a planning tool for daily interventions and assistance during teaching and learning process"* (**Teacher 1).**

> "*We fill the learner profiles for all the learners. The information from the Learner Profile assists me as a teacher to get the background of the learner which might be their health status and so on. Then the information I get when I observe the learners will help me to assimilate with the one from the Learner Profile"* (**Teacher 3).**

A learner profile document primarily acts as a tool for keeping track of data that provides a comprehensive picture of a learner and a learner's development and performance. It enables teachers to plan, support and give an intervention for learners with special needs daily. It helps the teacher in the following grade or institution better comprehend the learner and, as a result, respond to the learner. Support will be given through topic diversification, modification of the learning environment and approach, and use of the appropriate accommodations during tests and evaluations.

(b) Support Needs Assessment (SNA1 and 2) form

For learners who require early implementation of additional support, such as learners with impairments, the SNA1and 2 forms must be completed (see also Health and Disability Assessment**).** It is completed for learners who have additional support needs that are identified during instruction and learning and noted in the learner profile by the teacher of the course or a teacher designated to act as the case manager for SBST. The SBST completes the SNA 2 in collaboration with the teacher and parent for learners who have not benefited sufficiently from the teacher's intervention and require additional support from the school's experienced and/or highly qualified teachers and network of service providers.

The teachers (n=2) also mentioned the SNA 1 and 2 as form they used in identifying and supporting learners with special educational needs:

"Once I identify the learner, I use a Support Needs Assessment form (SNA) form. Then I call the parent to sign wherever it is needed. I also sit down with the SBST and follow all the processes that need to be followed when identifying learners with special educational needs. Then I use the SNA 1 form as it prompts me. It has questions that show what the problems with the learners are" (**Teacher 1**)**.**

"Then I fill the SNA 1 for the learners I have identified of having barriers to learning and development. I set dates of supporting/monitor the learner" (**Teacher 3**)**.**

(c) Baseline assessment

Teachers utilize baseline assessments to determine what learners have already learned, how well they know the curriculum's content, and what they are capable of learning in terms of new information. Educators who participated in this study also said that they used baseline assessments to find learners who needed special education.

"First of all we use the baseline assessment, as I think it also belongs to the tools. It checks the work of the previous grades. We assess learners. Sometimes you may find that there is a learner who can't read and is doing reversal when she/he is writing. Then that is where you find the learners might have barriers. I then put more focus on them. I try to check as a teacher after two weeks that is there any progress. Then I also find that she is struggling" (**Teacher 3**)**.**

(d) Journal, observation book and checklist

The ECD practitioners did not mention the Learner Profiles and the SNA forms as tools they used to record the learners with special educational needs. But there are similar tools that are used by the practitioners together with teachers in the Foundation Phase which are the observation books, journals and checklists. The practitioner (n=1) together with teachers (n=2) mentioned observation and journal books and checklist that they use to record learners experiencing barriers to learning and development:

"We use observation books to observe the progress of the learners. We also use journal books to record all the activities the learners do in the class. In the journal book we write the name and the surname and time. I write everything the learner do and all activities the learners do in the class" (**Practitioner 1**)**.**

"I also observe learners using an observation book. It guides me so as to see whether he/she can observe and imitate what I do in the classroom. Whether she can imitate

others to what they must do. There is also a checklist that I use where I tick whether the learner is able or unable to do such activity" (**Teacher 2**).

"Then the information I get when I observe the learners will help me to assimilate with the one from the Learner Profiles" (**Teacher 3).**

4.4.3 What support do you receive from your school, district and circuit office in respect of collaborative support for identifying learners with special educational needs?

4.4.3.1 Theme: Lack of support

(a) Limited support (**only at school level)**

When they were asked about the support they get from their respective centres and schools, teachers and practitioners replied as follows:

"*Yooh! With that one, I think as ECDs we are being neglected for so long. Things doesn't run smooth in our centres. There are no or either little training we get as practitioners. I was never being trained to identify learners with special educational needs"* (**Practitioner 2).**

"At school level, there is no support" (**Teacher 3).**

(b) Regular workshops not conducted

Teachers (n=2) maintained that there were no regular workshops conducted to support them in early identification of learners with special educational needs**:**

"*Uhmm … I think no. Actually we don't even conduct the SBST meetings regularly. There is no monitoring of learners' progress. For instance, in this term, we have [to] identify this particular learner. Sometimes after a week or two, we have assessed and evaluated, but that doesn't happen in our school"* (**Teacher 1**)*.*

"*I think no … we do not even conduct SBST meeting regularly. There is no monitoring of learner progress. I think uhmm … we don't provide sufficient support to each other. There is no or there is little monitoring and support"* (**Teacher 3).**

(c) Support only from the SBST coordinator

Teachers and practitioners also mentioned that there is limited support from their SBST coordinator and their centre chairperson:

> "*We only get the support from our chairperson. If … uhmm ... if ... it was not our chairperson, they should be no support or training in inclusive education. So I have little skills and knowledge in identifying learners with special needs*" (**Practitioner 1).**

> "*At the district level, I can say, maybe, we get support because there was the Inclusive Curriculum Implementer who once visited us and some of information was left to our SBST coordinator. I might say some of the information was left to our SBST coordinator. But little we did get from our coordinator; was the clarity on how to fill the SNA Forms*" (**Teacher 1).**

> "*Yohh Yohh … the support Eish … the SBST coordinator try … really try. There was feedback in our meeting whereby our coordinator support us on how to fill in the SNA Form. The coordinator supports us on how to identify the learners*" (**Teacher 2).**

> "*We only get the support from our chairperson. If … uhmm ... if ... it was not our chairperson, they should be no support or training in inclusive education. So I have little skills and knowledge in identifying learners with special needs*" (**Practitioner 3).**

(d) Support from the social development

Practitioners from the ECDs mentioned that there is some support they receive from the Social Service Department which assists them in supporting learners with special educational needs**.**

> "*The only assistance we get uhmm as a centre … uhmm is the assistance from the Social Development Department. They intervene if a learner needs social needs. Other people, they come are the nurses. They come to immunise the learners. But … academically, there is no support*" (**Practitioner 3).**

> "*Yaah … ummmh … we usually report to social workers wherever we face challenges from the learners. They come and intervene. If ever they see there is a problem, they write a letter to a parent or they give order to learner to be brought to the clinic if ever the matter need health services*" (**Practitioner 2).**

4.4.4 What are your experiences of parent involvement with learners who experience barriers to learning from your school?

4.4.4.1 Theme: Parental involvement

For IE to be successfully implemented, parents should play a significant role as partners in their children's education. The screening, identification, assessment, and support of a child's needs should involve parents in a significant way. Additionally, parents must critically consider their obligation to help their children learn at home.

When parents actively participate in the teaching, learning, and assessment of their children, inclusion will improve. When a child has a specific sickness or handicap, parents must consult community-based clinics and/or other professionals (including teachers) to perform a preliminary assessment and determine the best course of action for the learner.

(a) The parents do not cooperate

Teachers mentioned that learners were removed by their parents to other schools once they were identified as having special educational needs. And parents did not want to accept that their children might have problems of learning and development of which will delay processes of support.

> "*Some of the parents, uhmmm … don't want to collaborate and communicate with us. We sometimes became reluctant to communicate and even to refer the learner to the health services and other services that might help the learner with special educational needs. Sometimes you may identify the learner as having special educational needs and you invite the parents to the centre so she can provide with the family/learner background. The parent didn't come; it also demotivates us as practitioners as there will be no way forward in assisting that particular learner at an early stage*" (**Practitioner 2).**

> "*The parents don't want to agree with me if …. If I say the child might possible having a special educational needs. We, as practitioners, can easily ummh … detect if there is a problem with the child. Sometimes the parent may think you embarrass her child in front of other parents. It ends up sometimes as we are reluctant to identify the barriers to learner of which is wrong. That might ruin the future of the learners*" (**Practitioner 3).**

(b) Parents are in denial that their children have barriers to educational needs

The main element in the early detection of barriers is acknowledging the crucial role that parents play in education and training. Parents' observations and comments might help the teacher identify the precise types of obstacles that a learner faces. In this process, parents should always be treated equally with other parents. According to the information obtained through interviews, parents' acceptance of their children's learning differences is essential to the successful implementation of IE in the Foundation Phase.

> *"When notified that their children have unique educational needs, some parents object. I find it difficult to support the learners since they are hesitant to collaborate uhmm… closely with us as practitioners.*

> *"Here, for instance, last year, I had a learner who had a barrier to learning. I invited the parent to school. The parent didn't come to school. I also tried to phone her relatives. They responded that she is not around. She left the children alone and the children are young if you can believe their age ranges at 8. That is how you can see that there is lack of parental care"* (**Teacher 3)**

Teachers in the study claim that barriers to parental involvement include parents' denial about their children's education and a lack of communication between parents, teachers, and the school. The current study's findings are in line with those of a study conducted by Savacool (2011) at a cutting-edge childcare centre in New York. The study investigated obstacles to parental involvement in the Foundation and Early Childhood classrooms.

The research found that some parents of children with special needs do not wish to cooperate with teachers. Some parents don't want to hear that their children might face learning obstacles. If they are made aware that the children have special needs, they might not know how to read and may not have any experience helping learners with those needs. Further, the results of the present study concur with those of a study by Murphy and Tierney (2010) in the Republic of Ireland, which found that parents either lack the information to recognise that their children may have special educational needs or are defiant about diagnosis (Murphy& Tierney, 2010).

(c) The parents have bad attitude towards the teachers

Teachers also indicated that some parents reveal bad attitudes towards them when they are told that their children may have possible barriers to learning. They do not want to give teachers full information about their children's background:

"*Hey ... parents are not the same. Some parents are involved, others are not that much. Another ... ummh … the experience I once had when I invite the parent to the school to explain to them about their children's education. They will resist and they won't accept; they will tell that they see their children have no problems. Others will judge you as a teacher by telling you: 'who are you to do anything health wise?' They will also tell you [that you] are not a psychologist to identify their children as having barriers to educational needs. Some parents are very much in denial. They don't want to accept that their children have learning difficulties or barriers to learning*" (**Teacher 2).**

"*Some parents have bad attitude toward the school. They also don't want to be involved in the children's' education. Even if you try to involve them they hide*" (**Teacher 3).**

(d) Lack of parental involvement is affected by background, lack of proper education from parents who do not want their children to be labelled

The parental support of their children's development, academic performance, and future is extremely important. Sometimes, despite receiving appropriate information about their children's development or growth, parents refuse to acknowledge the possibility that their children may have special educational needs.

On the other hand, teachers deny parents a chance to take actively in their children's development. It will be challenging for teachers to conduct inclusive education in their classrooms if they are not trained in it. Conversely, some parents fail to inform their children' teachers. Parental involvement and a lack of recognition of parents by the system contribute to the lack of regard for parents as important players in the evaluation and development of their children.

"*It is lacking. It is not lacking on my side but there is little parent involvement as I have said from the beginning. Parents … don't want to understand ummh … their children when they have barriers to learning. You will find sometimes when you call a parent regarding her child, she will respond by saying, 'I try to teach my child at home'. Even though you give them homework, the parents don't assist them. Some parents don't*

want to operate with us. The parent involvement is still lacking; they don't take education of their children seriously. Sometimes it is determined by home background. In other homes, there is no time to learn their books" (**Teacher 1).**

Working parents and those who stay in remote areas do not have enough time to engage in schoolwork, consult with teachers or other stakeholders. Lacking knowledge about inclusive education will lead some parents not to inform teachers about their children' challenges at the beginning of the year. Early identification of learners' difficulties will free up the teachers to choose intervention strategies like creating Individual Support Plans (ISPs) for each learner. It will assist teachers to differentiate the curriculum by developing lesson plans that will accommodate learners with diverse needs. In order to ensure that the learners receive the assistance they require, it also helps teachers ask health experts for assistance if they are unable to do so.

4.4.5 What factors affect the practice of identification of learners with special needs in your school?

4.4.5.1   Theme: Inexperienced teachers

(a) No experience in identifying the learners

The teachers (n=2) spoke about their experiences in identifying learners with special educational needs:

> "*Sometimes we face difficulties. As teachers, we don't have enough experience or let me say, we haven't been trained, to identify learners with barriers to learning"* (**Teacher 1).**

> *"We don't get those people who can assist or give us support at that time. Exactly here we supposed to work together with the health department, social service and the parent. Sometimes we don't get the relevant support as early as possible"* (**Practitioner 1).**

(b) A lack of support from relevant people such as health department, social services and parents (**all stakeholders**)

During the interview with the participants when they were asking of any support they get from other stakeholders, nurses and social workers were mentions**.** They mention nurses as are the ones who come to school to immunise learners, while social workers

provide with social support to the learners who needs social support.

> "*The only stakeholders who come to our school are the nurses and social workers. The nurses usually come to inoculate leaners and provide them with basic health needs. The social workers come only if they were requested by us to assist in areas where we observe a learner as experiencing social needs*" **(Practitioner 2).**

From participants' point of views, it was evident that teachers lack knowledge of identifying learners with barriers to learning. This was strongly demonstrated by their responses. If they were fully capacitated in inclusive education, they should have invited psychologist to come and assess learners in their schools as the indication that they identify learners with special educational needs. They should have invited DBST and other stakeholders.

(c) Overcrowded classrooms make it hard to identify the learners

Teachers and other professionals (n=2) offered their opinions on what influences the early identification of learners with special educational needs. They expressed their worries about the crowded classrooms with a diverse group of learners, which makes it difficult to identify learners who have specific educational needs. The researcher observed that learners were *packed like sardines* which may create challenges of monitoring and providing an intensive support for every learner according to their needs:

> "*It is the quantity of learners present in the classroom. No, the ratio of teachers to leaners is higher than the recommended one, which is 1:35. As a result, when there are too many learners in a class, teachers can end up overlooking or missing those learners that need to be identified*" **(Teacher 2).**

She also hinted to the fact that one of her demands for the government is that schools establish a reasonable pupil-teacher ratio. Overcrowding in South African classrooms, according to Navsaria, Pasccoe, and Kathard (2011), is disadvantageous, particularly for learners who are facing leaning obstacles.

> "*The … the overcrowded of classes is a factor that might affect, for example, in Grade 1, there are more than 54 learners in a class of which it is a bigger number. The Grade 1 class is a critical class that needs more attention. It is where learners don't know how to grip a pencil. It will take time for a teacher to identify those learners with barriers to learning. The overcrowding leads to learners not to be correctly identified. Sometimes,*

you find the learner with barriers to learning not being identified from the earlier grades" (**Teacher 3**).

Participants' replies made it clear that crowded classrooms have a negative impact on teacher's ability to identify learners with special educational needs in the Foundation Phase. The results also show that inadequate support from the SBST, circuit, and DBST has a bad effect on helping learners with special needs. Therefore, all parties involved should provide teachers the authority they need to accommodate the various learning requirements of learners in an inclusive classroom.

4.4.6 What is your role and responsibilities in identifying learners with special educational needs in the Foundation Phase?

4.4.6.1 Theme: Roles and responsibilities

Understanding inclusion and the diverse needs of learners, including those with impairments, conceptually is essential. The teacher is more interested in learners' identification than the formal diagnosis itself. Identification is the process of establishing the existence or characterising a problem based on observable behavioural manifestations or symptoms that call for further explanation. Due to his or her frequent interactions with the child and professional training, the teacher is well-positioned to identify behavioural and academic issues.

(a) Teachers are not sure of their roles and responsibilities

The participants were questioned about their responsibilities and whether they felt they had significant impact on their children's education. Participants offered their perspectives on the roles they play and voiced their opinion. Most teachers (n=2) who responded to the current study spoke about their roles in recognising learners with special needs

> *"Yes, my role is to identify those learners … in however way I can. If I have everything, I can help with so that they end up being assisted in getting the education they deserve. They also [will] be able to be okay so that they can live their better lives in future. Even though they will be unable to read, but there must be something they can do in future for living. So mine is to try and help parents to understand their children. I want to help*

parents to understand their children as they are. They should uhhmm … also know that, even though they might have barriers to learning, but there still hope for them. There is still something they can do with their hands for living" (**Teacher 1).**

"I must make sure that the learner is correctly identified. Their needs are catered according to their learning barrier. I must make sure I fill the Inclusive Education forms so that the learners will get the support accordingly. To give support individually, educational support. Uhmm…., I as a teacher, it is also my duty to spot learning obstacles as soon as possible so that I can proceed to developing a strategy to support my learners. It is part of my responsibility as a teacher to actively uhmmm…. engage with my learners in my classroom throughout the day" (**Teacher 2).**

"*My role is to identify the learners and design the nature of support. For instance, there are children who struggle in Mathematics. I have to teach or engage them to concrete objects before they can use abstract symbols calculations. I have to monitor and ensuring that I get the support from the district to come and support the learners. I ensure that I inform parents to sign the form. Then, yaah, let say the problem need stakeholders; I refer the parent to the relevant stakeholders like, for instance, the child has social barriers. Maybe the child has been abused. For instance, you may find that the child has been raped. They must conduct health masses. I must intervene as a teacher on that case. I must report this case to relevant stakeholders. That thing may backfire if not reported"* (**Teacher 3).**

The following are the functions that teachers play in education, according to SIAS (DoE, 2014c):

"In an inductive evaluation, the teacher's role is vital. What is required is a conceptual understanding of inclusion and the diverse needs of learners, including those with disabilities. Learning programs, materials, and assessment procedures must be accessible to all learners and must take into account the wide range of learning needs if they are to fully support learners' achievement."

The SIAS approach should be used by the teacher and anybody else who interacts with the learners on a daily basis. To lead the assistance process, the teacher must act as a case manager. External evaluations should only be used to clarify the type of intervention required; they shouldn't play a major role in choosing a support strategy. Any decision-making process must give the utmost consideration to the knowledge and preferences of the parents. (DoE, 2001). Labelling of learners who are identified for additional support, must be

discouraged by teachers, because that will promote exclusionary practices. Once a teacher exhausts all intervention strategies in supporting learners with special educational needs, she/ he must consult the SBST.

Early Childhood and Foundation Phase teachers' responsibilities include identifying and assisting learners with unique needs (Kulisic, 2014). In a class, teachers should meet the varied needs of the learners. Teachers in this study affirm the critical role they play in educating learners with special needs, as they establish the groundwork for all learners' future. The new study's findings overlap with those of Kulisic's (2014) study in some cases.

This study supports the notion that learners face a variety of challenges and have range of demands, and that it is the teacher's responsibility to accommodate these needs. These findings align up with the descriptions of teacher's responsibilities in the SIAS publication (DoE, 2014c). Because each leaner has individual needs, the same learning program cannot be used with all of them.

4.4.7 Have you had any training in inclusive education? What kind of training have you had? Did it give you the skills of identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases?

4.4.7.1 Theme: Lack of training

The research found that few teachers have participated in DBST training sessions. It also showed that not many of the participants in the program experienced much improvement at their places of employment. Thus, it can be inferred that teachers still require additional training in order to get past their obstacle. In order to hasten the training process, it is crucial that the department of education hire more DBST. More trainings should be provided to the SBST so that they can support teachers in schools.

(a) The teachers got no specific training from the tertiary level module they did about inclusive education

When participants were asked about any training they received from their respective institutions, they replied as follows**:**

"*There is no training at all. Aah … but by networking with the colleagues, I get being assisted. I am able to use some of their inclusive education terms that I learn day by day. I can also be able to see a learner who had special educational needs and development*" (**Practitioner 2).**

"*The training, eeh … I would say I had it when I was doing my B.Ed. There is a module on Inclusive Education where we learn about White Paper 6. And I think it gave me theoretical knowledge not necessarily the skills to practice when I go to school or in the classroom when I am in the working environment. It gave me the theoretical knowledge on the EWP6, Inclusive Education, full-service school, learners' educational needs and all that stuff, but it didn't give the actually skills that I will practice when I get to the working environment*" (**Teacher 2).**

"*Actually no. The training, I may say, I get is the support from our chairperson who at least understands inclusive education. Even in the tertiary level, there was an inclusive education module that I attended that capacitated my understanding some of terms that are used in inclusive education. But, ummh, all in all, it was a theoretical knowledge actually (laughter). I can confirm that I didn't get the skills and knowledge of identifying learners with special educational needs*" (**Practitioner 1).**

(b) They want more training

When they were asked about the kind of training they had and whether they had any training in inclusive education, The ECD practitioners indicated that they needed more training from different organisation. They also stress the importance of empowering women to establish childcare facilities in their local communities so they may develop the fundamental ability to identify and deal with obstacles to learning, such as impairments. They also advocated for the empowerment of community-based organisations founded by DPOs, such as the Disabled Children's Action Group and Inclusion South Africa. When children reach school age, it is crucial that centres establish a network with other centres and that every effort is made to ensure that they continue their education there in a formal, required setting.

According to literature, teachers in inclusive classrooms must possess a variety of knowledge and skills (Borman& Rose, 2010: 11). The majority of classroom teachers who were interviewed indicated that they require in depth IE training in order to support the learners in their lessons.

"Our centre must conduct workshops on inclusive education quarterly … actually monthly, to capacitate practitioners with skills and knowledge in identifying learners with special educational needs. It must also invite stakeholders from the relevant departments to workshop us. I think we must work closely with the Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development and others" (**Practitioner 1).**

Other practitioner stated that:

"Women should be empowered uhmm……. in order for them to set up child care facilities in their centres as that I think uhmm …would incorporate basic skills to identify, address and support barriers to learning" (**Practitioner 2).**

(c) They are helped or train themselves using the White Paper 6 document

According to the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6), all learners should have access to learning environment that supports their complete professional, academic, and personal development, regardless of their colour, class, gender, disability, religion, or learning preferences. According to Education White Paper6 (DoE, 2001), schools should accommodate all learners, despite any learning obstacles they may encounter.

Some of the participants have stated that, they consult their White paper 6 as policies that guides them on how to accommodate diversity in their classrooms.

"Some of the training I get is whereby I do self- development training when I read some of the policies like White paper 6 and the SIAS policy which guide me on how to accommodate diversity in my class. I can fully say there is no training I get from the circuit ... Ummh ... together with the district level, I didn't get any training of identifying learners with special education needs even from my seniors in the centre" (**Practitioner 2).**

4.4.8   Do you think your school has provided sufficient guidance regarding the identification of learners with special needs?

4.4.8.1   Theme: A lack of guidance

(a) No sufficient guidance from the school

During the interview with teachers, they alluded that there is no enough guidance that they receive from schools in identifying learners with special educational needs.

"*There isn't enough guidance. Those who stay in a pool, they usually say 'you suppose to swim with that little you have', with that little experience you have, with that little knowledge you have. I don't think [it] is sufficient but there is some guidance but [it] is not sufficient enough for me to actually identify the learners properly, for me to actually support my learners holistically, for me to actually the learner articulation to be done in a fully fleshed in my classroom. There isn't enough sufficient guidance. We are expected to do this because we had that little knowledge. We are also expected to meet the deadlines but to be guided, that doesn't happen properly*" (**Teacher 2**).

(b) No regular SBST meetings conducted or monitoring of the learner's progress

According to SIAS policy paper, the SBST may be given the authority to properly identify learners with special educational needs. The findings showed that the SBST is dysfunctional, which prompted teachers to use ineffective interventions to recognise and assist learners in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase with unique educational needs. Teachers (n=2) were questioned about the support they get from their schools for identifying learners with special educational needs.

"*Uhmm … I think no. Actually we don't even conduct the SBST meetings regularly. There is no monitoring of learners' progress. For instance, in this term, we have [to] identify this particular learner. Sometimes, after a week or two, we have assessed and evaluated, but that doesn't happen in our school*" (**Teacher 1**).

"*I think no … we do not even conduct SBST meeting regularly. There is no monitoring of learners' progress. I think uhmm … we don't provide sufficient support to each other. There is no or there is little monitoring and support*" (**Teacher 3**).

(c) No support hence they use the little knowledge they have

The practitioners replied that they get little or no support or guidance from their centres, but they use the knowledge they receive from their institutions:

"*Having little experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning is a challenge on its own. Ummh … I am still crawling. I am still struggling in using the inclusive education terms. There is little training I get from my centre specifically on inclusive education. I wasn't trained by no-one to identify learners with special educational needs*" (**Practitioner 1**).

"*Yooh! With that one, I think as ECDs, we are being neglected for so long. Things doesn't run smooth in our centres. There are no or either little training we get as*

practitioners. I was never being trained to identify learners with special educational needs" (**Practitioner 2).**

4.4.9 If your school admitted a child with barriers to learning, how would you ensure that he/she is supported?

4.4.9.1 *Theme: Schools are not ready to admit such learners due to a lack of capacity*

(**a) No support** (**lack of resources placed or available to cater for those learners**)

The early identification of learners with special educational needs is impacted by a lack of human resources, such as expert who have received specialised training in inclusive education. There is now available policy document such as the SIAS policies, Education White Paper 6, and Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning, but they still require interpreters and practitioners to implement them. Participants in this study highlight a lack of resources, either human or physical, to support learners with special educational needs.

> *"As we wish to help the learners, if we don't have enough resources, it becomes a challenge to support that learner. I wish the school must find more of information mmmh … information about learners with special needs so that it could be easily for us as teachers to be able to quickly accept them and help them with the little knowledge the school supported us. And even those workshops that incorporate resources that we can use in the classroom to help those learners with special educational needs"* (**Teacher 1).**

> "*Hey … I try, as I try. But I try in such a way that I identify the problem first, the weakness thereafter is where I do not find resources that are suitable to support the learners"* (**Teacher 2).**

> *"You know what … knowledge and understanding counts. With the little knowledge I have with inclusive education, I think the child will suffer a lot. For inclusive education to be properly implemented, it needs someone who is fully capacitated with the skills, knowledge and values of inclusive education. Someone who is an expert on inclusive education"* (**Practitioner 1).**

> "*Even if you might have knowledge in identifying and supporting of learners with barriers to learning, but if there are no resources, that learner would not be fully*

supported. Our centre does not have physical resources like ramps and rails. If it might happened tomorrow come a parent to admit a learner who is wheelchair bound, there will be no space for that learner or the learner will suffer in many ways within our premises. Human resources, I myself, I have not been trained for inclusive education" (**Practitioner 2).**

Participants also emphasized that their schools needed human resources, inclusive education experts to train and develop them on how to identify, assess and support learners at an early stages. According to Landberg et al. (2011: 91), identifying the assets and resources in the child's environment can serve as a foundation for learning opportunities and engagement, which is essential for Early Childhood education.

(b) Workshops are needed to capacitate the teachers on how to support learners with special educational needs

Teachers may be able to modify their teaching and assessment methodologies as well as choose from a variety of learning resources with the help of ongoing professional development opportunities such as workshops, classes, or other formal learning, as well as good cooperation practices. A teacher will be able to design learning settings that anticipate rather than respond to these demands once they recognise that every child has learning needs (Ashman, 2012:82).

The SBST has a duty to provide programs that would train teachers on how to fill up learner profiles and ISPs, as well as to support teachers by providing workshops and content sessions to overcome learning difficulties. The ISPs ought to be developed as interventions to support certain learners. However, data analysis showed that there was a lack of agreement among teachers over how to support learners. As a result, every teacher employs a distinct method. The participants believed that workshops are needed to capacitate them in identifying and supporting learners with special educational needs:

> *"The school must conduct lots of workshops to capacitate the teaching, learning and with the skills of early identification of learners with special needs. And even those workshops that incorporate resources that we can used in the classroom to help those learners with special educational needs"* (**Teacher 1).**

4.4.10 What challenges, if any, are there in identifying learners with special educational needs?

4.4.10.1 *Theme: Challenges experienced by teachers in identifying LSENs*

(a) Paperwork (**filling in of the SNA form)**

Participants indicated that there is too much paperwork that has been put on their shoulders. They indicated that the SNA forms on their own is long as it is demanding. The participants (n=3) indicated the following:

"*There is too much paperwork when it comes to filling the forms. There are many forms that we need to fill once we identify the learner with special educational needs. The SIAS form has many pages that need to be completed. Ummh … another thing you are expected to design an Individual Support plan (ISP) for each learner. Look, if in your class you have five learners with special educational needs, you are expected to do all the paperwork of which, on the other side, I have little knowledge and skill to fulfil all the needs of the learners*" (**Teacher 1).**

"*Another challenge is the filling of the Support Needs Assessment form (SNA1) that is a challenge. If I can get any assistance on how to fill the form*" (**Teacher 2).**

"*They should understand the policy and its importance. And the form yohh! The form is too complicated and too big. There are many forms that need to be completed. They end up taking time for teaching. Sometimes you may find yourself that you supposed to be in class [but], at the same time, you are expected to complete the form*" (**Teacher 3).**

(b) No support from parents

"*There are challenges special when it comes to parents. As a teacher, you identify a learner as having this kind of barrier but their problem begins after you have followed all the processes of identifying a learner with special educational needs. Once the District Based Support Team has assessed the learner and find out that the learner has mild to severe barrier to learning and has given an order for the child to apply for disability grant and also to be referred to the special school. Then it begins to be a problem whereby the parent supposed to sign an agreement that she/he want the child to go to the special school. The parent refuses to sign and they don't want to accept that their children has special educational needs. It demotivates us as teachers in continuing in identifying learners with special needs*" (**Teacher 3).**

(c) Taking much time to identify learners with special educational needs due to lack of experience and knowledge

It takes time to recognise learners with unique educational needs, both teachers and practitioners agreed. They were unable to distinguish between a slow learner and a learner with special needs. Due to their inexperience and ignorance, they occasionally over- or delayed-identified learners with special educational needs.

> "*This thing goes far … with the little knowledge and skills I have accumulated from my colleagues, I could be able to identify the learners with special educational needs. Sometimes I think I can also miss-identify or over-identify the learner. It is also difficult for me to differentiate between a slow learner and a learner with special educational needs. Aahh … Another thing it becomes difficult for me to identify a learner in the early childhood development because sometimes I think the learner is too young maybe she still need time for development*" (**Practitioner 3).**

> "*The challenges I am currently experiencing in identifying learners with special educational needs is that, you know, they say there are slow learners and learners with barriers to educational learning. The challenge I have is to differentiate between slow learners and those learners with barriers to learning. Sometimes, I say the learners are slow all to find that they have barriers. I see the good in the learners; to me, it is not good to say the learners had barriers to learning and feel the learner had a challenge. I think the learner needs one-on-one session and more practice. Then it becomes a challenge whereby I delay identifying the learner with barriers*" (**Teacher 2).**

4.4.11 What kind of support do you think should be given to teachers in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases in identifying learners with special needs?

4.4.11.1 Theme: Support for the teachers

(a) The teachers must be provided with training about inclusive education

> "*Uhmm … Sometimes teachers need to be trained in order to obtain certain skills to identify learners. Sometimes you will find that we use a guess work that if the child may be if the behaviour is this kind of problem. Sometimes we are wrong; we end up identifying learners in other ways that is incorrect but the child needs time. It might happen she fails to understand at that moment but, if you can support, the learner will change her behaviour.*

Sometimes you will find you mistakenly identify and say that child is a slow learner instead the child has a barrier to learning. That is why it is important for a teacher to change the strategies he use or use different methods of teaching" (**Teacher 1).**

The DBST is in charge of offering the schools, SBST, teachers, and a coordinated professional support service; nonetheless, there was a clear shortage of support.

"I think there is still more that needs to be done by the Department of Basic Education. They must assist us in different forms of training and support. There must be curriculum implementers who might come and assist us from the district level more special with this inclusive education" (**Practitioner 1).**

(b) Workshops that will help them to fill in the SNA forms

The teachers acknowledged that they do not get enough help from the schools. They struggle to complete the SNA paperwork. Even if they make an effort, their issue is that they lack the expertise necessary to distinguish between a slow learner and a learner who needs special educational support. Additionally, it will take longer to provide learners with exceptional needs with comprehensive support. It became apparent that before receiving training on submitting SNA forms, teachers must first receive instruction in identifying learners**.**

"Support that is really needed for identifications of learners may be quarterly but I will not say quarterly, may be half yearly workshop or annually workshops at the beginning of the year where teachers get to be capacitated on how to recognise learners, what kind of barriers are you supposed to look for? Like which support can you give to learners and how do you fill those forms when you identify those learners? And even those workshops that incorporate resources that we can use in the classroom to help those learners with special educational needs" (**Teacher 2).**

"I think … if workshop should be conducted regularly in each and every term, for instance, the newly appointed teachers should familiarise with the SIAS Policy. They should understand the policy and its importance. And the form, yohh… !, the Form is too complicated and it's too big. There are many forms that need to be completed. They end up taking time for teaching. You may find yourself that you supposed to be in class at the same time you are expected to complete the form" (**Teacher 3).**

(c) Support from the DBST

Lack or insufficient support from the DBST was strongly articulated by participants. They strongly emphasize that at some times, the year finishes without being visited by an inclusive education district official in their institutions. According to SIAS, the DBST should offer assistance to teachers and learners. They should advance education by teaching, delivering curriculum, allocating resources, identifying and addressing, leadership, and general management. When participants were asked of any support, they received from the DBST, they replied as follows**:**

> *"And, you know, we identify learners in the classroom and then the SBST do their work and the district also come and do their work. The DBST fill up their forms and tell us that the learner can cope sometimes at Grade R level while is in Grade 2 or 3. And then, after that, they leave us just like that. We don't have any material any support material that will help us to support the learners. We have to go and outsource and, that is exactly the work of the teachers they supposed to do but it will be much easier to tell us if ever that the developmental level is Grade 1. And then, they help us with material for Grade 1 on how to help that learner. Or, if they say the learner's ability is in level of Grade R and then they show or they give us the support material, which will be helpful"* (**Teacher 2).**

> *I think the principals together with the Departmental Heads need a thorough workshop in Inclusive Education so that they will be able to assist the teacher they are monitoring and managing"* (**Teacher 3).**

4.5   Document analysis

Records such as teacher's observation logs, diaries, collages, lesson plans, and departmental documents are essential to the procedure of recognising learners who encounter learning difficulties. The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS, DBE, 2010) technique, which was created to help teachers identify learners' needs, is the predecessor to the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning and Teaching. Most learners in a school, phase, or grade must be considered while creating learning programs, work schedules, and lesson plans.

My first focus was to investigate teachers' knowledge using these documents. Secondly, I asked for any other records, such lesson plans, or notes, that teachers

had used in their preliminary evaluations of the child prior to completing the SIAS forms. All of the participants' provided documents were used by the researcher for document analysis purpose. After the interview, I looked over the records to verify the information gathered there and triangulate the results. For instances, I was informed by teachers that they were having difficulties in completing the SIAS forms. I had to read the materials in order to understand the nature of these challenges. Thirdly, I had the chance to see inclusive education in action in few classrooms. Only few copies were available, and these are appended as Appendix M.

4.5.1 Support Needs Assessment Form (SNA1 and 2)

(a) Section 2.2: Barriers to learning and development: Learning

A general statement, such as: "a learner was assessed and he fail to recognise single sounds in words and to recognise number sense" Some teachers are able to identify the problem and fail state the kind of support that will be provided to the learner to overcome the barrier in their SNA Forms. Bouwer cited in Landsberg et al., 2005:46). Assessment for learning refers to assessment with the aim of support rather than judging the child. Policymakers should at least be alert to these subtle distinctions in inclusive settings.

(b) Section 2.3: Behavioural and social competence

The teachers' information in this part complies with the form's requirements. For instances, the teacher outlined the learner's strengths and weaknesses and recommended the kind of assistance he would offer to help the learner get over the obstacle.

4.5.2 Individual Support Plan (ISP)

The coordinator of the SBST revealed claims that some teachers fail to create individual assistance plans for learners who have been identified as having special educational needs in the earlier section of the SNA1 form. So, I asked samples of few ISPs that were available. The ISPs from the Support Needs Assessment, Leaner Pack section showed signs of the teacher's challenges.

4.5.3 Learner Profile

A learner profile, which offers a complete portrait of the learner, continuously records the performance and progress of a learner. It makes it easier for the teacher in the next grade or school to understand the learner and, as a result, respond to the learner.

The teachers from the school that I visited had completed Learner Profiles for every learner in the school but they need guidance in the medical history of learners. The medical history of the learners has not been completed on many Learner Profiles. In the ECDS, practitioners were not aware of the Learner Profiles. According to the Department of Basic Education, Learner Profiles should be completed from Grade R to 12. Many ECDs have Grade R classes. Workshops should be conducted in the ECDs to train the practitioners in inclusive education particularly in identifying learners with special needs and the filling in of the Learner Profiles.

4.5.4 Teachers' lesson plans

Teachers' lesson plans do not accommodate learners' diversity, which are learners' learning styles and intelligences. They do not accommodate learners' cognitive levels as some of the lesson plans are designed to be a "*one size fits all*". Teachers' lesson plans do not show differentiation of the curriculum, content and assessment. A copy of lesson plan I managed to get hold of is attached in Appendix N.

4.5.5 Teachers' observation journals

Practitioners from the ECD presented their observation journals to the researcher. The value of such journals lies in the teachers being able to record the learner's development, it could be physical, emotional, spiritual, behavioural and social. Learners 'weaknesses, strengths and an intensive support that should be given to address the learners' needs should be recorded. The few journals I was able to see showed that teachers simply concentrate on one area of development, of which is learners' academic development. Teachers only focus on learners' strength. Sentences such as: "This learner cannot read or write" were common.

4.5.6 Observation

Observation, according to Cohen et al. (2018: 542), is the act of paying close attention to and taking note of people, events, behaviours, situations, and routines. To address the research questions, the researcher in this study used observation to track and watch how IE was being implemented in the Foundation Phase an Early Childhood classrooms. As a non-participants observer, the researcher had no impact on what was going on in the classes. In order to validate the information gathered during interviews and determine whether there was consistency between the interview and the practices, observations were used (Jama, 2014:10)

In this study, non- participants' observation method was used by the researcher in observing the content delivery by teachers. The observation events were used by the researcher to compare the interview notes with the experiences of teachers in identifying and providing support to learners' diverse needs. Observation sheets and notebook were used by the researcher during observation.

Table 4.6: Observation sheet for teachers' experience on identifying learners with special educational needs and some of other documents

• Understanding the significance of recognising learners with special educational needs among teachers	The significance of recognising learners with special educational needs is understood by all involved.
• Understanding of SIAS Policy	The SIAS policy is known to all Foundation Phase participants, but its implementation presented a challenge. All participants from the Early Childhood do not know about the SIAS policy and its function.
• The ability to modify lessons to match the needs of various classroom learners.	Most educators were unclear of how to adapt classes to the various learning styles of their learners.

Although just a few of the participants were knowledgeable of South Africa's inclusive education regulations, the majority of them had experience in identifying learners with

special educational needs when they were being observed by teachers. Only few of participants felt comfortable tailoring their classes to meet the needs of learners. The researcher saw that in certain courses, learners with special needs were completely ignored.

4.6 Conclusion

In chapter four, the researcher used themes and the sub-themes that went along with them to present the study's findings. The roles of practitioners and teachers are discussed, as well as early identification of learners with special needs and challenges teachers confront throughout the Foundation Phase.

The sub-themes included parents who don't cooperate with teachers, parents who deny that their children have learning barriers; parents who have negative attitude toward teachers; a lack of parental involvement is affected by background; a lack of proper education from parents who do not want their children to be labelled. The outcomes of the research questions are summarized in the final and subsequent chapter, which also offers recommendations for future research and general conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This study sought to learn more about how teachers in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases of the Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit in the Mpumalanga Province identified learners with exceptional educational needs. This study summarises the study's findings, discusses the suggestions made, and draws a conclusion regarding teachers' experience in identifying learners with special educational needs, the support they received from pertinent stakeholders, and their roles in doing so in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase.

5.2   Summary of the findings

The results of this study showed that teachers still encounter a number of difficulties in recognising and assisting learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases, despite the DoE's introduction of SIAS policy (DoE, 2014c). Teachers talked about their perspectives on inclusive education. Few teachers were able to recognise and help learners with exceptional educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases, even though all interviewees were able to articulate their opinions on the topic. Teachers reported having learners with range of abilities in their classes, but they had difficulty assisting them because they lacked the necessary training. Most teachers reported that neither they nor their in-service training nor their college or university coursework provided them with the theoretical understanding they needed to execute inclusive education.

This study highlights the problems with the way inclusive education was implemented in South Africa's Foundation Phase and ECDs. Most educators claimed that neither they nor their peers were aware of the inclusive education policies in South Africa and the Gert Sibande District. South Africa has inclusive education regulations; however, they are impractical to put into practice due to the overwhelming number of learners in the classroom, a lack of resources and assistive technology, and a lack of cooperation from major participants in the education sector.

Because they weren't taught, most teachers struggled to put the policies into practice because they didn't comprehend them. However, the results showed that while teachers are eager to recognise and assist learners with special needs, the lack of resources and congestion make it difficult to conduct inclusive education.

The results also demonstrated that it appears to be difficult for teachers to receive support from multiple structures, such as SBST, SMT and SGB, in order to address learning impediments. The data for this investigation were presented and analysed in the penultimate chapter. The data collected centred on the main research question, "*What are teachers' experiences in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classroom?*" The primary participants in the data collection used qualitative approaches, and the results were gathered through teachers. Interviews, a focus group, observations, and document analysis were used to gather the data.

The results also showed that educators were not given the authority to recognise and assist learners with exceptional needs. Due to this, some of the tools they used to capture how learners were experiencing learning barriers were not completed completely or accurately during document analysis. In order to make the most of their experiences, teachers have employed tools including peer tutoring, information sharing, and documents like the SIAS and Education White Paper 6 (EWP6). According to the findings, there have been both favourable and unfavourable remarks about the SBST, DBST, SMT, and DoE. Various teachers have different perspectives on how the system and the school deal with learner diversity:

5.2.1 Overcrowding

The study revealed overcrowded classroom pose a challenge for teachers to adapt and differentiate the curriculum and give attention to individual learner. Because some learners may not be identified in the early stages of their development and may be accidentally excluded, or because the issue may not be identified until it is irreversible, overcrowding has a negative effect on teachers as well as learners. According to DBE (2014: 16), there will be a decrease in the teacher-to learner ratio so that teachers can implement inclusive education. The results of the study showed that the teacher-to learner ratio should be followed in order to give teachers the ability to recognise and

assist learners with specific educational needs. The teacher- learner ratio presents difficulties for the teachers since it limits their ability to accommodate learners with specific needs. This implies that this set of learners will be left out even if teachers make an effort to differentiate the curriculum by assisting everyone who is learning. The interviews' findings demonstrated how important it is for the DoE to monitor events to ensure that overcrowding and other related problems don't impair teaching and learning.

5.2.1.1   *Recommendations*

It is advised that the DoE appoint teaching assistants to assist classroom teachers in aiding learners who are having learning barriers by providing them with individualised care (Hassan, Hussain, Parveen & Souza, 2015).

Assistant teachers are indispensable in inclusive classrooms to facilitate the learning process, especially for learners with special needs. The task of a teacher's assistant or para-educator is to assist learners in various subjects (McLachlan, 2014; Burdick & Theoharis, 2012). Paraprofessionals provide support and improve access to the curriculum. For activities, they could divide up learners into groups and, if possible, move part of the activities outside.

Non-Governmental Organisations and organisation of Disabled People are strongly recommended to work in partnership with schools. They can work with teachers in classrooms. For example, if teachers are in classes teaching, the non- organisation member should provide with administration. They should provide with recording learners needs in their profiles, SNAs and ISPs. They should also record all the necessary support to address barriers to learning.

It is recommended that the school encourage the parents/SGB to fundraise so that they should buy resources for the learners with special educational needs. The funds will be used to hire enough teachers to cater for the needs of the learners with special educational needs. It is recommended that the DoE must provide mobile classrooms to reduce the overcrowding in classrooms. The DoE must hire enough teachers to teach the learners with special educational needs and to reduce overcrowding in classrooms.

5.2.2 Resources

During observation and interviews, teachers have strongly accentuated their concern about inadequate resources and facilities that are available at their schools. This was evident during my interview and observation, as there were no ramps and handrails for physical challenged leaners and resources to accommodate leaners with special needs were insufficient. It was obvious there were no special needs teachers who are trained to teach learners with speech problem. As I was in the class observing, I saw a learner with speech problem.

This demonstrated that there are little tools available to teacher in the classroom to improve teaching, learning and support learners. The DoE is in charge of allocating, assigning, and overseeing the budget for Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSMs) in educational institutions. The results showed that the SMT, SBST, or the LTSMs committee had not done much to help teachers in their effort to teach using appropriate resources for learners with special educational needs. The person in charge of the LTSM in the SBST need equipment for the SBST to be able to instruct its members on their tasks and responsibilities. The current study's findings revealed a shortage of both material and human resources, which can be harmful for the implementation of inclusive education.

The majority of SBST members have admitted that they lack the necessary training to help other teachers recognise and support learners with special needs. The lack of SBST assistance for teachers was emphasised. This affirms that giving teachers access to pertinent resources will help vulnerable learners learn in the classroom. The difficulties teachers have due to a lack of pertinent materials could lead to the SBST's malfunction. The lack of enough human resources, such as speech therapists and occupational therapists, in their schools is another problem that could prevent them from adequately implementing inclusive education. The following suggestions were made in light of the facts presented.

5.2.2.1   Recommendations

The SMT must make sure that the SBST has access to the necessary resources to assist learners with special needs. The SBST should make sure to provide teachers

with training on how to recognise learners with special needs. The SBST must make sure that they supply teachers with pertinent learning resources after identifying learners who have learning difficulties. It is recommended that the SBST should ensure the needs of learners are catered during procurement of the LTSMs. The SBST committee should advice the SMT to procure relevant teaching aids and learning materials that will accommodate the learners with special needs like braille, wheelchairs etc. It is also recommended that the SBST should request funds from different companies to supplement resources that are needed by the school.

In order to attract more teachers to the positions, it is advised that freshly qualified, retired, but experienced teachers who have received training in inclusive education be hired on a higher status. It is also recommended that the school must encourage parents to volunteer in identifying, teaching, and supporting the learners with special needs.

5.2.3 Workshops are needed to capacitate the teachers on how to support learners with special educational needs

The SBST is tasked with determining the level of support required and creating initiatives for educators and parents. The SBST also offers training that teachers can use in their classrooms. However, the data analysis showed that teachers did not all have the same understanding of how to recognise and assist learners with special needs. Teachers also mentioned that there aren't any regular workshops help them serve learners with special needs early on. The need for seminar to identify and support learners with special educational needs was identified as a concern by the participants. Teachers also mentioned that no ongoing training are held to promote the early identification of learners with special needs.

5.2.3.1 Recommendations

The study has shown that the school and system may face additional difficulties. Some of these issues are brought on the dysfunctional SBST and inadequate training or assistance provided to teachers by SMT and DBST. More frequent workshops for teachers on how to implement inclusive education in the Foundation Phase should be

held by the Department of Education. The Department of Education can work with universities to ensure that inclusive education is a necessary module that must be covered every year of first through fourth year teacher preparation programs.

5.2.4 Lack of parental involvement

The critical component in the early detection of barriers is acknowledging the crucial role that parents play in education and training. Parents' observations and feedback could be used by teachers to pinpoint the specific challenges that their learners experience.

The identification and support of their children's education should always involve the parents. The research found that most parents are either uninvolved or disengaged in their children's schooling. This is in line with Mukhopadhyay's (2013) findings, which show that parental support was not very strong. Although SBST are present in classrooms, they only function in theory. The DoE (2005) emphasises that parents must assume responsibility for providing their children with support in the most inclusive environments possible.

5.2.4.1   Recommendations

It is advised that schools involve the community and parents in the implementation of inclusive education. It is recommended that a school must encourage the parents and the SGB to volunteer. In contemporary schooling, parent volunteers are crucial. Parent volunteers also show their children and others that school is important and worth the time and effort, in addition to providing resources for the teacher and strong community support for the school. They must help teachers with variety of tasks, such as creating teaching materials for learners with special educational needs. Additionally, they must support the educators in observing the Individual Support Programs for learners with special needs.

The Department of Education must also design a volunteer programme handbook which will guide both the school personnel and parent volunteers. Co-ordinators should be employed by the department who will facilitate parent volunteering at all levels.

5.2.5 Lack of training

This research found that most of the teachers who were interviewed had not received training in inclusive education while attending workshops, which explains why they currently take initiative to further their education. However, during their initial training, they were trained with one module or had not been taught it. Without a well-thought plan for teacher preparation. Avramidis and Norwich (2010) and Nel (2011) both agree that it will be challenging to include learners with special educational needs in the mainstream. According to Nguyet and Thuha (2010), inclusive education should ideally be a required subject for all teachers' candidates and a crucial component of the teacher training curriculum in nations that have a long- term goal of implementing it. For inclusive education to succeed, teachers must be trained during their initial teacher training before entering the classroom.

The findings revealed that few teachers had attended the training conducted by the DBST has a positive impact in responding to inclusive education and there is little improvement seen after training. Thus, it can be concluded that more training in inclusive education is needed. The implication of this finding is that teachers should be given an opportunity to obtain training in special education even before they enter the school.

5.2.5.1   Recommendations

It is advisable that teachers receive training on a variety of ways to improve the implementation of inclusive education during their teacher preparation. It is proposed that the SBST must train more SBST members rather than taking one person for training. The SBST members should refrain from sending one member for training for an extended length of time. Therefore, it is crucial that the DBST thoroughly train the SBST for them to be ready to offer support. Stephinah (2014) also revealed that

teachers were educated to identify and teach learners with special needs. It is advised that ECD and Foundation Phase teachers receive intensive training on intervention tactics to accommodate various learners in their course, as most teachers said that they did not know how to intervene even though they could recognise the problems of the learners. The schools should see to it that each teacher is familiar with the inclusive education policies, including the DoE White Paper 6 of 2001 and the SIAS policy, and that they have a copy of the policies in their possession. The teachers should be assisted in implementing inclusive education by the school's SBSTs and SMTs, and the presentation of lessons should be differentiated. This can be done by attending the monthly mini-workshops on inclusive education classroom improvement that SBST offers.

In-service teacher training must be made available and funded by the Basic Education Department so that educators can be empowered and have their attitudes about inclusive education changed. Teachers must be trained to identify learners with learning difficulties as early as possible due to the dangers of late identification of learning difficulties. Having identified the learning difficulties, teachers must be trained to support the learners. The DoE should identify the scarce skills in inclusive education and encourage teachers to further their studies. In order to fulfil their responsibility of empowering learners with special needs, the researcher advises that the educational system engage teachers who have experience in special education.

5.2.6 Inexperienced teachers to identify learners with learning difficulties

The study found that teachers are unable to recognise learners who are having learning challenges. In order to prevent learners from postponing receiving the necessary support to overcome learning obstacles, teacher must be able to recognise learners who are experiencing these obstacles. Du Toit (2014:185) suggests that observation be a core skill that teachers should acquire in order to identify learners who are having difficulty learning and offer the proper assistance. It appears to be a problem in schools to train teachers to recognise and serve learners with unique educational needs. After receiving training in inclusive education, teachers should be able to handle the diversity of many learners in their classrooms. They could be able to recognise and assist learners with particular educational needs.

5.2.6.1 *Recommendations*

It is recommended that the DoE must conduct regular training and workshops to capacitate educators with inclusive education. People competent and knowledgeable in inclusive education, experienced retired educators, curriculum implementers and trained educators must be hired to provide teachers with logical and intensive training. Such experts could train teachers during their initial training and during in-service programmes. It also recommended that the DoE should allocate funds that will assist teachers in furthering their formal education for them to improve their knowledge and skills in scares skills programme like inclusive education. The DoE should partner with other departments to provide with the necessary help that are needed in different schools. Additionally, it is advised that the DoE make sure that any educational system places a high focus on teachers' professional development by arranging for a DBST representative to visit the school and conduct monthly inspections.

5.2.7 Teachers support in the identification of learners with special educational needs

The findings of the current study indicated that some teachers are not getting full support of implementing inclusive education, either by the school, the circuit or the DoE. Those who are assisted have indicated that they receive insufficient support from the school and district levels. During the interviews with the teachers, they indicated that the various departments should work together in identifying and supporting the learners with special educational needs.

Teachers feel that in order to identify learners with special educational needs at an early stage, the SBST and other school leaders' cooperation is essential. Teachers attend workshops on specific topics, but not for inclusive education. Only a small number of them regularly attend these topic seminars on inclusive education is a concern in schools. Teachers contend that for inclusive education to succeed, there must be support structures in place. They can become familiar with it and encourage the learning process if they regularly attend workshop, study journals, books, and other sources they can familiarise themselves with it and stimulate the learning process (Smith, 2010).

5.2.7.1   Recommendations

It is recommended that teachers must familiarise themselves with inclusive education through attending regular workshops, in-service training, reading journals, books and other sources, and access the technology available in the field of inclusive education. It is also recommended that teachers should have slots in their staff meetings whereby, they develop one another in matters pertaining inclusive educations. Teachers should familiarise themselves by reading the inclusive education policy documents, like SIAS policy, EWP6 and other inclusive education documents. It is also recommended that teachers collaborate to form clusters with other teachers from other schools so that they can support one another in the implementation of inclusive education. It is advised that the SBST incorporate some members into their commitment from other agencies, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development. The team should offer assistance when identifying and assisting learners with unique educational needs. This indicates that all parties involved in various departments should put the SIAS approach into action to help teachers identify and assist learners with special educational needs at an early stage of development.

5.2.8 Lack of support from relevant people such as the health department, social services, and parents (all stakeholders)

The findings indicated that most parents do not support their children's education, making it challenging to pinpoint learners who are struggling in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases. This implies that healthcare providers and other stakeholders do not offer aid to learners.

5.2.8.1   Recommendations

It is recommended that SBST should be made by members of different departments. They should collaborate and work together in assisting learners with special needs. If the SBST comprised all the stakeholders, intensive support would be easily provided to the child. For professional assistance, the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase teachers should keep in constant contact with the other department.

5.3 Critical evaluation of the study

The study's strengths and weaknesses are thoroughly examined by the researcher.

5.3.1 Strengths of the study

The researcher was able to gather information from the individual's experiences by using a phenomenological study, which helped him better comprehend the phenomenon.

Using interviews, the researcher was able to discover more about teachers' perspectives on learners in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases.

Limited research has been published about teachers' experiences in recognising learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases.

The research's objective was to provide foundational information for upcoming studies.

5.3.2 Limitations of the study

The Mpumalanga Province's very few schools and centres with certain educational backgrounds provided the data for the current study. The findings' generalizability is so constrained. It is important to acknowledge that the selected schools are not fully representatives of most schools in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit and Mpumalanga Province. It assumed that the data collected from selected schools do not fully represent the whole schools within the circuit. For the fact that the research was conducted during after school hours, the participants may not give full information to the study because they may be exhausted. In the fact that data was collected in one school and one ECD centre, the researcher might not obtain a complete understanding of what are other teachers' experiences in identifying learners with special educational needs within the circuit.

5.4   Conclusion

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, this chapter summarizes the research on identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phases. Additionally, it included the study's limitations, conclusion, and suggestions**.** In conclusion, the study's goals were to comprehend teachers' experiences in recognising and assisting learners with exceptional educational needs. The study's goals were attained, and the research questions were satisfactorily addressed**.**

If teachers were trained in inclusive education, early identification of learners with special needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase would be successful. In order to support the identified learners, schools should offer teachers with necessary resources. To develop inclusive education, educators should work together with the appropriate parties. The Department of Education should lead the way in promoting and supervising the implementation of inclusive education in the Foundation Phase classroom at the Pixely ka Isaka Seme circuit in the province of Mpumalanga.

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TYPE OF BOOKS USED are:

✓ Research at Grass Roots (For the social sciences and human service professions) Fourth edition. AS de Vos H Strydom CB Fouche CSL Delport.

✓ First Steps in Research 2 second edition Kobus Maree.

✓ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, (2010).

✓ Learner Support in diverse classroom2nd edition Mirna Nel (editor)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

Creating Opportunities

Office 206. Building 4. C/o R40 & D725. Private Bag X11283. Riverside Mbombela South Africa 1200.
Website: www.ump.ac.za | *Tel*: (013) 002 0196 | *Email*: Estelle.Boshoff@ump.ac.za

RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

Ref: UMP/Mazibuko/MEd/2022

Date: 27 September 2022

Name of Researcher: Fana Mduduzi Mazibuko

Student number: 220142416

Supervisor: Dr J Masalesa

School / Department: Department of Early Childhood Education

Faculty: Faculty of Education

RE: APPROVAL FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR THE STUDY:

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLYCHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE.

Reference is made to the above application.

I am pleased to inform you that the Chairperson has on behalf of the University of Mpumalanga's Research Ethics Committee, **approved ethical clearance of the above mentioned study**.

Please Note

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interviews Schedule, Informed Consent form, Title of the project, Location of the study, Research Approach and methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/ modification prior to its implementation.

Regards

Prof Estelle Boshoff
Chairperson: University of Mpumalanga's Research Ethics Committee.

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APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

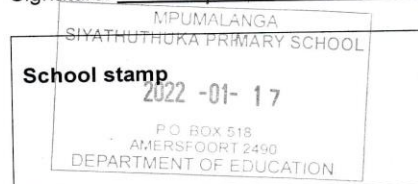Enquire: Makofane N.M

Telephone: 0820712741

17. January. 2022

Mr F.M Mazibuko

P.O Box 202

Elukwatini

1192

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY ON TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLYCHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE IN VOLSRUST CIRCUIT, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE.

1. Receipt of your letter dated 10. January. 2022 bearing on the above is hereby acknowledged

2. In response hereto, please be advised that: permission to conduct the research study on inclusive education in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase is hereby granted the subject to the following condition :
   - The interviews will be conducted during outsides school working hours and will not interfere with teaching and learning.
   - The interviews will also depend on the willingness of teachers to be interviewed

3. The school appreciates the contribution you want to make and wishes a success in your research.

School Principal
Signature: _____

School stamp

MPUMALANGA
SIYATHUTHUKA PRIMARY SCHOOL
2022 -01- 17
P.O BOX 518
AMERSFOORT 2490
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT (FOUNDATION PHASE EDUCATOR)

Foundation Phase educator

I am currently doing research for my M.Ed. Degree in Early Childhood Development. If you feel comfortable giving your consent to participate in this study, I need your help in getting information about the project and what your involvement will entail.

Kindly note the following before you give consent to participate in the project:

The aim of the research **is to investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and Foundation Phase classroom**. It also aims to determine the impact of identifying the learners with special educational needs in the early childhood and Foundation Phase towards learner performance and achievement. You were chosen to take part in the research with the help of your school's principal; nevertheless, you must provide your consent to do so. You could be observed while you participate on the one- to –one interview for data verification purposes. You will be asked some of Inclusive Education documents you use to identify learners with special education needs in your institution for data analysis purpose. The completion of the questionnaire together with the interview will be conducted after school hours and will not take place longer than 60 minutes.

You are not required to participate in the study and can stop at any point if it makes you uncomfortable. Your contributions will only be used for research reasons, and they will be kept private. However, the findings of the research may in future assist teachers, principals, circuit managers, curriculum implementers, policy designers, and policy developers. I will conduct the research personally, under the supervision of **Dr Masalesa** from the school of: **Early Childhood Development**, **University of Mpumalanga**. If you have any questions or queries you can contact my supervisor at **076 0601822 or Juliet.Masalesa@ump.ac.za**

Consent

_____ (full names) have read and understand the nature of my participation in the project and agree to participate.

1.	I confirm and understand what the researcher is about and have had an opportunity to ask questions	(Please initial)			
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw without a reason.	(Please initial)			
3.	I agree to take part in this research.	(Please initial)			
4.	I agree to my interview being audio recorded. (Please tick (√) selection.	YES		NO	
5.	I agree to the use of anonymised quotations and publications (Please tick selection.)	YES		NO	

Name of participants; _____Signature:_____ Date:_____

Interview's name: _____Signature:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP: INFORMED CONSENT (EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER)

Dear Early Childhood Development Practitioner

For my M.Ed. in Early Childhood Development, I am now conducting research. If you are willing to participate in this study, I need you to help me by giving me information about the project and what it will entail for you to be involved.

Kindly note the following before you give consent to participate in the project:

The aim of the research is **to investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and Foundation Phase classroom**. You were selected to take part in the research with the help of your school's principal; however, you must give your consent in order to do so. In addition, you could be observed while you participate the focus group interview for data verification purposes. You will be ask some of Inclusive Education documents you use to identify learners with special education needs in your institution for data analysis purpose .The interview will be conducted in a form of focus group during the school hours and will not take place longer than 2hours.

You are not required to participate in the study and can stop at any point if it makes you uncomfortable. Your contributions will only be used for research reasons, and they will be kept private. However, the research's conclusions might help educators, administrators, circuit managers, curriculum implementers, policy makers, and policy developers in the future. I'll be the one doing the research, under the supervision of **Dr Masalesa** from the school of Early Childhood Development, **University of Mpumalanga**. If you have any question or queries you can contact my supervisor at **076 0601822 or Juliet.Masalesa@ump.ac.za**

Consent

I _____ (full names) have read and understand the nature of my participation in the project and agree to participate.

1.	I confirm and understand what the research is about and have had an opportunity to ask questions	(Please initial)			
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw without a reason.	(Please initial)			
3.	I agree to take part in this research.	(Please initial)			
4.	I agree to my interview being audio recorded. (Please tick (√) selection.	YES		NO	
5.	I agree to the use of anonymised quotations and publications (Please tick (√) selection.)	YES		NO	

Name of participants; _____ Signature: _____ Date:_____

Interview's name:
_____Signature:_____Date:_____

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED BY EDUCATORS/DH/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL, PRINCIPAL IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

A questionnaire to be filled by **educators /HOD/Deputy Principal, principal in the Foundation Phase**

General Direction

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to collect necessary data for my M.Ed. study on the topic entitled: **investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and Foundation Phase classroom**, and thereby to come up with some workable solutions to overcome the existing problems. The outcomes of this study will highly depend upon your responsible, sincere and timely response. Therefore, you are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire honestly and with great responsibility as per the instruction. Your responses will be read only by the researcher and used only for academic purpose. Moreover, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Please indicate your response by putting (√) next to the option that applies to you.

Part 1

School name: _____

Gender: Male (**) Female** ( )

1.   What is your teaching experience?

 (i)   0-5 years ( ) (ii) 9-10 years ( ) (iii) 11- 15 years ( )

(vi) 16-20 years ( ) (v) over 20 ( )

2.   What is your highest professional qualification?

    (i)   Untrained teacher teacher( ) (ii) ACE ( ) (iii) Diploma ( )

(vi) Bachelor degree ( ) (v) Honours Degree ( ) M.Ed. ( )

Other please specify, _____

3.　　Have you ever been trained to identify and teach pupil with special needs?

Yes		No	

4.　　**If your answer is yes** , in what level have you been trained/

　　　(i)　　In service training ( ) (ii) ACE ( ) (iii) Diploma ( )

(iv) Bachelor Degree ( ) (v) Hons Degree ( ) (vi) M.Ed. ( )

5.　　Your capacity

5.1.1.	Principal	
5.1.2.	Deputy principal	
5.1.3.	HOD	
5.1.4	Educator	

6. Type of school

6.1.	Mainstream school	
6.2.	Special school	
6.3.	Full Service School	
if other, please specify		

APPENDIX F: REQUISITION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Name of the centre:_____

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT AT KID CENTRE.

Title of my study: Investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase.

I, Fana Mduduzi Mazibuko is requesting authorization to carry out a study to identify methods for enhancing early identification of learners with special educational needs in early childhood and Foundation Phase.

The study is intended to be conducted in the Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit, Gert Sibande District Mpumalanga Province in **year 2022** Term**: 2**. If possible I will like to conduct the study between **11 and 22 April 202**2. If possible could you choose the date that will suits your practitioners. **The research will be conducted as follows**:

- I will need a focus group(practitioners)
- The research will not take more than 60minutes
- Lastly I would like to observe teaching and learning in one class in not more than 30minutes.

My supervisor is Dr. M.J. Masalesa, and this study is one of the requirements for me to earn my M.Ed. from the University of Mpumalanga. The study's objective is to identify the methods that can be applied to enhance the Foundation Phase and early childhood in early identification of learners with special educational needs. The purpose of the study is to investigate the **teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and Foundation Phase.**

The methods that will be employed to collect data include classroom observation, interviews with individual teachers, focus group interviews and document analysis. The process for providing feedback will involve generating a thorough report and sending it to you through email as needed. Should you have any questions regarding the research, my supervisor may be contacted on 076 0601822 or Juliet.Masalesa@ump.ac.za

Should my request be approve, please respond in written letter so that I will be able to submit the approval to the University to obtain the Ethical clearance.

Yours sincerely

F.M Mazibuko

Contact no: 0722233632 Email: mazibukomduduzi@gmail.com

APPENDIX G: REQUISITION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

School name: _____

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT AT YOUR SCHOOL.

Title of my study: Investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase classroom

I, Fana Mduduzi Mazibuko, therefore request authorization to carry out a research project in order to identify methods for enhancing early identification of learners with special educational needs in the Foundation phase and Early Childhood.

The study is intended to be conducted in Pixely ka Isaka Seme Circuit, Gert Sibande District Mpumalanga Province. This study forms part of the requirement for the completion of my M.Ed. degree at the University of Mpumalanga and my supervisor is Dr M.J Masalesa.

The techniques that will be used to gather data include document analysis, focus group interviews, individual teacher interviews, and classroom observations. Classrooms in the ECD and Foundation Phase are where I want to concentrate. Throughout the endeavour, I promise that there won't be any disruptions in the classroom. The interviews will take place following class. The process for providing feedback will involve generating a thorough report and sending it to you through email as needed.

Should you have any questions regarding the research, my supervisor may be contacted on 076 0601822 or Juliet.Masalesa@ump.ac.za

Yours sincerely

F.M Mazibuko

Contact no: 0722233632 Email: mazibukomduduzi@gmail.com

APPENDIX H: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Researcher: Fana Mduduzi Mazibuko

TOPIC**: Investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and Foundation Phase classroom**.

Supervisor: Dr Masalesa

Participant: _____

Date : _____

Time : _____

Interview Questions (**Foundation Phase Educators)**

1. What is your opinion about identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase?

2. What factors affect the practice of identification of learner with special needs in your school?

3. What kind of support do you think will be given to teachers in the early childhood and Foundation Phase in identifying learners with special needs?

4. Have you had any training in inclusive education? What kind of training have you had? Did it gives you the skills of identifying learners with special educational needs in the early childhood and Foundation Phase?

5. What challenges if any are there in identifying learners with special educational needs?

6. Do you think your school has provided sufficient guidance regarding the identification of learners with special needs?

7. If your school admitted a child with barriers to learning, how would you ensure that he/she is supported?

8. Which tool(s) do you use to identify learners with barriers to learning?

9. What type of support do you receive from school/circuit and district level?

10. What are your experience of parent involvement with learners who experience barriers to learning from your school extended?

11. What is your role and responsibilities in identifying learners with special educational needs in the Foundation Phase?

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP

TOPIC: Investigating teachers' experience in identifying learners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and Foundation Phase classroom,

Focus group (**Early Childhood Development educators)**

Interviews questions

1. What do you think are the reason for identification of learner with special educational needs in the Early Childhood Development?

2. What is the tool you use to record learners with barriers to learning and its importance?

3. What is the importance of implementing Inclusive Education in the Early Childhood Development?

4. Do you personally believe that children with special educational needs should be placed in mainstream schools? (Explain your answer)

5. What support do you receive from your District and Circuit office in respect of collaborative support for identifying learners with special educational needs?

6 What are the benefits or success of identifying learners with special educational needs in the Early Childhood Development?

7. What are the challenges of identifying learners with special needs?

8. What do you think prevents teachers from identifying learners with barriers to learning?

APPENDIX J: PRACTITIONER DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

Research on the effects of identifying learners with exceptional educational needs in Early Childhood and the Foundation Phase on learners' performance and attainment is being done by myself, Mduduzi Mazibuko, at the University of Mpumalanga. All responses and information will be kept private and used only for study. During the focus group discussion, the participants are urged to be honest in their responses.

Supervisor: Dr.Masalesa

Participant/ Group: _____

Place of focus group discussion: _____

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Participants:

ECD Practitioner /s	parents

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Participants	AGE	GENDER	Educational level	Occupation
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Interview's name: _____ Signature: _____Date:_____

APPENDIX K: PERMISSION FROM THE CENTRE

JOYRIDE KIDS CENTRE

57 HS Amersfoort Townlands
AMERSFOORT
2490
MPUMALANGA

P O Box 407
AMERSFOORT
2490
MPUMALANGA

\# Fax: 086 510 0074
\# Cell: 083 735 9508 / 082 935 1148
\# E-mail: banli@lantic.net

14 February 2022

Attention: Mr. F M Mazibuko

Dear Mr. Mazibuko

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT AT JOYRIDE KIDS CENTRE

Your undated letter is acknowledged. We sincerely apologies for this late response.

In response to your request of getting permission to conduct research project at Joyride Kids Centre; the management structure of the organization is granting you the permission. The management is requesting that you furnish it with your findings, if that will not be in contravention of the purpose of the research. You have been allocated the 3rd May 2022 to come and do your research.

Wish you all the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely.

Luke Hadebe
Chairperson of the Management Committee
Signature: _____

School/Centre stamp JOYRIDE KIDS CENTRE
AMERSFOORT
2490
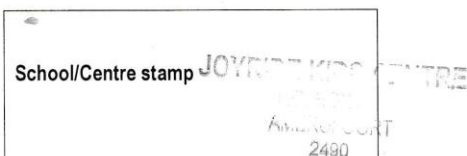
Management: Mr L Hadebe (Chairperson), Mrs J Dhladhla (Vice Chairpeson), Ms T A Maseko (Secretary), Mrs T Ndhlovu (Vice Secretary), Ms L E Nkosi (Treasurer), Mr M S Vilakazi, Ms T E Mpanza **(Registration Number: 174-380 NPO) (PBO Number: 930068566) (Income Tax Number: 9234789239)**

APPENDIX L: PERMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT (TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS)

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhamanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo   Departement van Onderwys   Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Mr Fana Mduduzi Mazibuko
PO Box 1202
Elukwatini, 1192
Tel: 0722233632
Email: mazibukomduduzi@gmail.com

RE: "TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEANERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE"

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The tittle of your research project reads: **"Teachers' experience in identifying leaners with barriers to learning in the early childhood and foundation phase".** I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and COVID -19 regulations to observed. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5124/5148 Or n.madihlaba@mpuedu.gov.za
The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

_____
MRS LH MOYANE
HEAD: EDUCATION

12 / 01 / 2022
DATE

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

APPENDIX M: TECHNICAL EDITING LETTER

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Technical Editing

This letter serves to inform you that the Master dissertation for Mr Mduduzi Fana Mazubuko, title: **"TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLYCHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE"**, was technically edited and formatted.

Regard

Rinnie Matlou

APPENDIX N: LESSON PLAN

Foundation Phase Lesson Plan Template for Life Skills

GRADE: 2   TERM: 4   WEEK: 3   DATE: 24-28/10/2024

TOPIC: NATIONAL SYMBOLS

STUDY AREA	BEGINNING KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL SOCIAL WELL-BEING	CREATIVE ARTS		PHYSICAL EDUCATION
		PERFORMING ARTS	VISUAL ARTS	
CONCEPTS AND SKILLS TO TEACH Communicate Research Compare Observe	NATIONAL SYMBOLS MEANING IMPORTANCE of using HAVING NATIONAL SYMBOLS Different ways of Communication	Feelings & Emotions Role plays.	Make drawing and paintings of the theme topic. Discuss Shape, Colour texture.	Creative game
INTRODUCTION	Talk about their school Amblem. The pictures on their school Amblem.	Show the feelings with your face, hands face.	Ask learners about the pictures of Money, Elephant Lion, Buffalo leopard, Rhino Big five.	Introduce cricket bowl bat field rules of cricket
ACTIVITIES	Complete the sentences. Discuss different ways of Communication.	Role play about feelings Sing a happy birthday song.	Make painting of these symbols national symbols. Write a caption	Choose a game and play. Assessment.
CONSOLIDATION	Feelings. Take turns	Sing a song that reveals sad or	Choose one symbol, draw Paint it draws Colour.	Let play soccer, cricket

APPENDIX O: SNA FORM

- The learner's ability to understand what other people are saying as well as to express him/herself in a way that other people understand – receptive and expressive language

Strengths	Needs/At risk factors	Support needed
she tells if something is not right	she responds negative to questions asked	more support needed

2.2 Learning:

- The learner's ability to participate satisfactorily on grade level regarding subject content and assessment

Strengths	Needs/At risk factors	Support needed
	she need special attention	special task arrangement

2.3 Behaviour and social competence:

- The learner's ability to interact and work with other learners, as well as follow classroom routines

Strengths	Needs/At risk factors	Support needed
	Give her bright colour pictures	social and behaviour al support

APPENDIX P: EDITOR CERTIFICATE

Barbara Shaw

Editing/proofreading services

18 Balvicar Road, Blairgowrie, 2194

Tel: 011 888 4788 Cell: 072 1233 881

Email: barbarashaw16@gmail.com

Full member of The Professional Editors' Guild

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform you that I have done language editing, reference checking and formatting on the thesis

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FOUNDATION PHASE

By

MAZIBUKO FANA MDUDUZI

Barbara Shaw

30/11/2022

APPENDIX Q: TURNITIN REPORT

Thesis

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