A need analysis: Teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree **Magister Educationis** at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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31 August 2022

Ethical Clearance Certificate

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Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research.*

Dedication

I dedicate this research to my parents whom I absolutely respect for supporting me. My father always wanted the best for me and may his soul continue resting in peace. My mother never lost faith in me even when it was hard to keep believing in myself. I will forever be grateful for their support and sacrifices. Mom and Dad, I hope I keep making you proud.

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Abstract

Teachers are at the forefront of education, and this comes with the responsibility of including all learners irrespective of their learning disabilities. In South Africa, every child has the right to access basic education; however, there are still children with learning disabilities excluded from the curriculum. The challenge that educators encounter is supporting learners with learning barriers with limited or no training to equip them. This study addresses a gap in the current literature on in-service training and inclusive education in South Africa. While diverse literature has dealt with teachers' experiences of in-service training programmes and the conceptualisation of inclusive education, the majority of these studies show limited focus on in-service training programmes tailored according to identified classroom needs. In addition, very few studies have been conducted on inclusive education training programmes.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and describe teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education. The conceptual framework of the study was drawn from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. The purposive and conveniently selected participants enrolled in the BEd Honours (Learning Support) distance education programme participated in the study. Furthermore, the study's data collection process involved telephonic semi-structured interviews of eight participants. The study used a thematic data analysis method and the findings were presented according to the following four themes: inclusive education, classroom challenges, the positive impact of the BEd Honours, and challenges of the BEd Honours. Participants in this study indicated that the BEd Honours is informative and necessary for professional development; however, some participants shared concerns about the limited application material in the training programme. By identifying and uncovering teachers' needs to implement inclusive education, these findings can be used to improve in-service training programmes.

Key Terms: In-service training, teachers, inclusive education, learning disabilities, professional development, distance education

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18 August 2022

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform you that I have done language editing, proofreading and formatting of the references on the thesis

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All changes were indicated by Track Changes (MS Word) for the author to verify. As the editor I am not responsible for any changes not implemented, any plagiarism or unverified facts. The final document remains the responsibility of the author.

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List of Abbreviations

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DE	Distance Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
IE	Inclusive Education
LDs	Learning Disabilities
NCHE	National Commissions on Higher Education
ODeL	Open Distance e-Learning
ODL	Open Distance Learning
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UDE	Unit for Distance Education
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa

Chapter One: Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

The South African Education Constitution states that “everyone has the right to basic education” (Department of Education [DBE], 2001, p. 1). This amendment only guarantees that every learner’s basic learning needs are met which may result in many learners with learning disabilities (LDs) being omitted from basic education. Alongside the dissemination of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the South African government has moved toward the advocacy of equal rights for all learners (DBE, 2016). This implies that more policy formation and implementation have moved towards the issues of special needs and inclusive education over the years.

The Department of Education (DoE) has been implementing policies of inclusive education for several years; for instance, the Education White Paper (2001) advocates for creating an inclusive education and training system (Majoko & Phasha, 2018). This is also evident through the amalgamation of special needs and mainstream education into a converged system (DBE, 2016). Arguably, such a transformation has led to special needs learners not only in special education but also in mainstream education. Therefore, it is important that inclusive education is practised in all educational environments.

Despite the global awareness of the importance of inclusive education, there are many concerns about the difficulties of implementing it (Tyagi, 2016). The challenges mostly stem from a lack of professional development of educators’ skills and knowledge of inclusive education (de Clercq, 2013). In addition, teachers are at the forefront of the education system, and for this reason, they are not only important role players in academic progression but also in implementing inclusive education (Majoko & Phasha, 2018). Therefore, one can argue that the professional development training of teachers should include issues of inclusive education.

In 2018, a research report on inclusive education argued that with an estimated 80% of learners with learning barriers being excluded from the education system (Dalton et al., 2012). It is recommended that teacher training programmes be implemented by infusing both theoretical and practical training on inclusive education (Majoko & Phasha, 2018). In consideration of such an academic crisis, the DoE has amended policies aimed at enhancing the teaching profession to the standards of a democratic country in the 21st century (DoE, 2006). Furthermore, these policies advocate for further training and devel opment of teachers through active engagement in in-service training programmes (DoE, 2006). This has led to an increased establishment of various professional development programmes, with several programmes being administered in some of the academic institutions in South Africa, for example, the University of South Africa (Majoko & Phasha, 2018). These universities have mostly focused on various opportunities to enhance the professional development platforms, which are arguably achieved through the development of several distance education programmes (such as in-service training).

In addition, a study that focused on teacher professional development reported that in-service training programmes that have a specific focus and that also use face-to-face interactions, show a higher learning quality (Popova et al., 2019). However, some in-service training programmes have been critiqued for lack of strategic evaluation and further planning development (Huhtala & Vesalainen, 2017). For instance, strategic evaluation and planning may include identifying the classroom needs of teachers to establish the objectives of the training (Omar, 2014). Therefore, this study aimed to address this gap through an exploration of teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training programme at the University of Pretoria.

This Chapter 1 focuses on the problem statement, the rationale and the purpose of this study. Furthermore, research questions that were used to direct the research study are identified. Lastly, this chapter also briefly discusses the key concepts and the methodological outline of the study.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem most educators encounter is supporting learners with disabilities without the skills and training to equip them for classroom challenges. In circumstances where educators are provided with professional development training such as in-service training programmes, the main concern is the ineffectiveness of the training (Ayvaz et al., 2018). This may result in some teachers still lacking the skills and tools to address classroom needs. The implications of this gap may lead to an increased number of learners being excluded from the curriculum, and a significant drop in academic performance. For these reasons, this study is of importance to literature.

Teachers are required to complete a degree or diploma in education, which takes three to four years to complete. After their academic final year of study, the assumption is that they are ready for classroom challenges. In addition, the education system has pressurised teachers to effectively teach learners whose learning methods widely vary through the implementation of inclusive education (Dalton et al., 2012). Although the South African government has published a framework of inclusive education policies (DBE, 2014), studies argue that these policies are extremely complex to implement in classroom settings due to various factors (Mahlo, 2017; Tyagi, 2016). These factors may include overcrowded classrooms, teachers' limited skill sets and knowledge, lack of support from parents and limited academic resources (Mahlo, 2017). Therefore, it is arguable that the problems in inclusive education are not a question of policy formation, but rather the great concern is in implementing the policies. For this reason, teachers require professional development training programmes that are focused on the integration of an inclusive education model into classrooms.

In light of the transformative teaching profession, the crisis of teacher professional development is prioritised through the development of tools to advance teachers' skills and knowledge (Popova et al., 2019). The DoE has found a way to equip educators who have difficulties with teaching learners with LDs by amending policies on distance education (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2014). These policies include the expansion and implementation of distance learning to

challenge various issues at the forefront of the South African education system (DHET, 2014). Such expansions include many in-service training programmes that have been successfully established and administered over the years (Majoko & Phasha, 2018). Nonetheless, some research studies argue that some in-service training programmes do not adequately address classroom challenges (Ayvaz et al., 2018; Huhtala & Vesalainen, 2017; Omar, 2014). Omar (2014) argues that there seems to be a profound lack of planning before in-service training programmes are administered, leading to content that is irrelevant to teachers' needs. In addition, a study that aimed to explore the effective professional development of teachers found that training programmes that had limited opportunities to practice the new skills and limited follow-up on classroom changes after implementation showed less quality teaching (Popova et al., 2019). Therefore, in an attempt to enhance the standards of professional development of teachers, it is significant to ensure that the programmes provided are addressing teachers' classroom challenges. This study sought to explore some of the challenges teachers experience implementing inclusive education in their classroom contexts and to reflect on how these challenges can be addressed through the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic training programme.

1.3 The Rationale of the Study

This study was motivated by limited literature on the challenges teachers face in the course of receiving in-service training on inclusive education in South Africa, which spills over into inclusive education practices in the classroom. Therefore, this study explored various barriers teachers are faced with when implementing inclusive education in classroom settings and also reflected on how these barriers can be addressed through the BEd Honours (Learner Support) training programme.

The basic right to education merely opens the opportunity for all learners to access basic education (Dalton et al., 2012). However, it does not guarantee every learner's academic needs are met, especially those with LDs. A study indicated that learners in Africa encounter challenges when learning for multiple reasons and in the Southern African context; this has resulted in educational exclusion (Dalton et al., 2012). In realisation of this gap in the education system, inclusive education policies

have aimed to challenge some of these barriers in the school system. For instance, The DoE's framework on educational inclusivity explains how important it is to include all learners in classrooms and attempts to address the various learning needs through different amended policies (DoE, 2001). In 2014, The Department of Basic Education also published a framework introducing Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) to aid and assist learners who need learning support in classrooms (DoE, 2016). It is important to highlight that these policies have been amended over the years; however, the implementation of inclusive education remains one of the challenges some teachers still face in their classrooms (Tyagi, 2016). For instance, Adewumi et al. (2019) reported that many educators in South Africa are faced with the difficulties of implementing IE in classrooms due to a various factors hindering inclusion.

One of the significant issues extending the gap in IE is the lack of teachers' readiness skills to adapt to a variety of learning needs (Dalton et al., 2012). There is a profound need to empower and enhance teacher readiness and development to cater for various learning needs. The development of distance education not only challenges barriers to access to higher education but also makes way for the development of programmes such as in-service training and pre-service training that combat issues of teacher readiness (DHET, 2014). In 2014, the South African government released a framework on distance education for various developments in the education system, in which teacher professional development was at the forefront (DHET, 2014). Over the years, distance education has been recognised as a significant way of facilitating extended access, participation and reparation in higher education. For this reason, many in-service programmes have been established and have proven to be effective for some educators (Junejo et al., 2017). The specific distance education programme of interest in this study is known as BEd Honours specializing in learning support. This programme is offered at the University of Pretoria as a postgraduate qualification for students who completed a bachelor's degree and a teacher's diploma in Education.

It has been argued that some training programmes have proven to be ineffective (Ayvaz et al., 2018). According to a study, some teachers reported that the in-service training they received was irrelevant to their classroom needs; the emphasis is made

on how distance education programmes can be ineffective depending on how they are implemented (Omar, 2014). In addition, the author further argues that the lack of a needs analysis before an in-service training programme is administered may lead to content being irrelevant to classroom needs. Therefore, it is of great importance that more in-service training is introduced for different teaching and learning needs. In efforts to expand and extend more training programmes that enhance the professional development skills of teachers, it is also very significant to ensure that the programmes provided are addressing teachers' classroom challenges. Such in-service training programmes specific to teaching perspectives or needs can be achieved through careful planning before the in-service training is administered (Ayvaz-Tuncel & Cobanoglu, 2018). This requires a needs analysis that can be achieved through an open dialogue between researchers and teachers.

This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) distance education training programme at the University of Pretoria. This study also aimed to uncover student teachers' needs to cater for inclusive education in classrooms. These needs can be used to plan or improve in-service training programmes to address teachers' classroom needs. Furthermore, the study aimed to address the identified gap in the literature, which includes introducing in-service training programmes that are specific to classroom needs and adequately addressing challenges experienced by teachers when implementing inclusive education. Therefore, it is arguable that this study can contribute to the body of research and knowledge.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

Studies in literature are highly focused on the benefits of various in-service training programmes (Kang & Martin, 2018; Reinke et al., 2011; Tzivinikou, 2015). Limited research explores the factors that result in the ineffectiveness of some in-service training programmes (Ayvaz et al., 2018). For this reason, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe teachers' experiences with the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic training programme. Reinke et al. (2011) argue that dialogue between teachers and researchers makes way for the identification and addressing of challenges in the education system. This study accounts for teachers'

needs to implement inclusive education by exploring the content of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic training programme. Furthermore, this study was guided by the following objectives:

- Identify the challenges that teachers experience implementing inclusive education in the classroom context.
- Explore how the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training assisted teachers.
- Explore factors that could make the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training more effective.

1.5 Research Questions under Investigation

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1.5.1 Primary Research Question

What are teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training programme?

1.5.2 Secondary Research Questions

- What are the challenges that teachers experience in implementing inclusive education in their classroom contexts?
- To what extent has the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training programme assisted teachers?
- What are the factors that could make the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training programme more effective?

1.6 Key Theoretical Concepts

This study considers the following concepts important to the context and comprehension of the study. The theoretical key concepts of the study are inclusive

education, in-service training, distance education, needs analysis, LD, teachers and professional development.

1.6.1 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education (IE) is the consideration of diversity congruent to human rights and social justice (Hornby, 2015). Similarly, Larysa et al. (2020) argue that inclusion should be viewed as a response to human rights and a promotion of equality irrespective of gender, age, socio-economic status and all characteristics that form part of all spheres of life. Furthermore, the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001)[1], describes IE as learners' right to learn and to be supported in a classroom irrespective of their gender, race, HIV status, culture, language and disability. In this study, IE is defined according to Ford (2013), who defines IE as educating learners with learning difficulties alongside their peers in a generic classroom. This includes all disabilities that hinder learners' abilities to acquire knowledge at the same rate as their peers due to mental or cognitive factors.

1.6.2 Distance Education

Distance education (DE) is referred to as a mode of education that caters for non-conventional students from various geographical locations that may be employed and have family responsibilities (Fresen, 2018). It can also be defined as formalised learning when face-to-face learning is restricted (Junejo et al., 2017). In such instances, learning can be delivered through various online platforms; these include phones, applications, audio devices, CDs and the internet (Saykili, 2018). For this study, DE is defined as education aimed at overcoming spatial distance for students who have personal, social, occupational or other commitments and cannot access full-time contact education (DHET, 2014). Distance education (DE) has various programmes aimed at combating different education barriers. For the purpose of this study, the DE programme of significance was an in-service training programme.

[1] Primary source: Defining inclusive education within South African context

1.6.3 In-service Training

In-service training is referred to as “a training for professional or paraprofessional to obtain new knowledge and better methods” (Amadi, 2013, p. 174). According to Ayvaz et al. (2018), in-service training also involves having a specific professional career, adapting to the work environment and advancing a career by acquiring new skills. Günel and Tanriverdi (2014) also describe in-service training as training administered by professionals to help trainees adapt to change and develop their competency. In this study, in-service training is defined as a set of organised activities within an academic programme aimed at improving teacher performance or building new skills (Holtman et al., 2018). In-service training programmes can be administered in various forms such as workshops or institutionalised academic courses (DHET, 2014). The in-service training programme described in this study is known as the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic programme aimed at enhancing teachers’ professional development.

1.6.4 Needs Analysis

According to Pushpanathan (2013, p. 2), a needs analysis is referred to as a “gathering information process” of experiences. Similarly, Omar (2014, p. 4) defines a needs analysis as the “process of examining needs”. For the purpose of this study, a needs analysis will be defined as a process of exploring and understanding the classroom needs of teachers. This concept can be used to bridge the gap between teachers’ needs and the needed competencies (Omar, 2014). This process can also be achieved empirically during the data collection process. In this study, interviews were used as a pathway to a needs analysis. This is further discussed in Chapter Three.

1.6.5 Learning Disabilities

Learning barriers are broad and diverse and include various areas of need in educational settings (Ranjecta, 2018). Hornby (2015) defines LDs as cognitive, psychological, sensory, communication and social needs that learners experience as interfering with academic success. Learning disabilities (LDs) are often stressed based on neurological difficulties such as behavioural and emotional disorders from

a social or cultural context (Thomas & Whitten, 2012). In this study, LDs are defined according to Hornby (2015), who argues that LDs are specific areas of need that hinder academic progression.

1.6.6 Teachers

The conception of the teaching profession has evolved over the years as a result of history, politics and social context; for this reason, there are several definitions of a teacher (Demirkasimoglu, 2010). Steadman (2018) defines teachers as individuals that provide effective teaching practices which involve transformative change for both teachers and learners. To comprehensively conceptualise what is regarded as a teacher, it is important to discuss what is considered teaching practices. Rajagopalan (2019) describes teaching as an interpersonal practice aimed at delivering and receiving knowledge or skills. The author further categorises teaching according to six characteristics: an art of science; a skill of communication; suggestive; interactive; democratic; and effective planning. Considering Rajagopalan's (2019) description of a teaching profession, a teacher can be defined as a professional who receives and delivers knowledge or skills. This study defines teachers according to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2011). According to section 21 of the SACE Act 2000, educators are defined as any individual registered or provisionally registered with the council. Furthermore, this study uses the following terms interchangeably: teachers, educators, student teachers and research participants.

1.6.7 Professional Development

Professional development is a critical manner of supporting learners in receiving the needed academic support. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) define professional development as designed learning for qualified teachers that results in the conversion of knowledge and practices which improves learners' learning outcomes. Similarly, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) argue that the professional development of teachers benefits learners' academic growth. The authors further stress that this can be a continuous process which requires full individual and collective participation of teachers (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015). This study defined professional development according to Popova et al. (2019) who argue that professional

development involves tools and programmes used to enhance and develop new teaching skills.

1.7 Value of the Research

This research study may contribute to literature in the field of IE and DE within the South African context. The findings may provide insight into the impact of in-service training on addressing the challenges of implementing IE in classroom settings. This may also contribute to the knowledge of general teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE. By identifying and uncovering teachers' needs to implement IE, these needs can be used to improve in-service training programmes. In-service training programmes can be tailored according to the experiences of teachers and their need to cater for inclusion. The study may help to raise awareness of the need to develop more in-service training programmes in South Africa that are carefully planned according to relevant classroom needs. Furthermore, this research study's findings can also be used as secondary data to further develop and build on the study. Lastly, the findings of this study may be used as an evaluation report for the University of Pretoria to further support the development of the BEd Honours (Learning Support) course.

1.8 Researcher's Assumption

The current study's assumptions were directed by literature. The researcher assumed that teachers would explain how the BEd Honours (Learner Support) training programme has assisted them. This assumption was based on literature centred on the benefits of in-service training programmes (e.g. Kang & Martin, 2018; Reinke et al., 2011; Tzivinikou, 2015). The researcher also assumed that the teachers would state the factors that could make the BEd Honours (Learner Support) and other in-service training programmes on IE more effective. This assumption was derived from the literature indicating various ineffective in-service training programmes for teachers (Ayvaz et al., 2018; Huhtala & Vesalainen, 2017; Omar, 2014). Lastly, the researcher assumed that teachers would state their classroom challenges and needs to enhance inclusion. This assumption was guided by literature describing classroom challenges (Mahlo, 2017; Molbaek, 2018; Mpu & Adu, 2021). These assumptions are further discussed in Chapter Three.

1.9 Paradigmic Perspective

In this section, an overview of the epistemological and methodological paradigm that directed the study is discussed.

1.9.1 Epistemological Approach

The paradigm or the broad epistemology that steered this study is the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive perspectives hold the view that knowledge is relative to an individual's experience (Levers, 2013). Individuals have various assumptions, backgrounds and experiences, which shape their reality and how they interpret it (Wahyuni, 2012). This paradigm seeks to understand the meaning underlying an event by reflecting it in a wider context (Willig, 2013). The interpretivism paradigm was used for this study because it resonates with the focus of the study. The study aimed to explore teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in-service training programme and this paradigm was used to gain insight into the underlying meaning of the individualistic experiences of educators. This paradigm positioned the study at an advantage as it is concerned with human experiences and the meaning attached to them (Willig, 2013). However, this paradigm has been criticised for creating the space for reality to be constructed, which entails that researchers may influence the research process with their preconceived assumptions (Wahyuni, 2012). To control this, the researcher in this study kept a reflective journal to take note of her assumptions and beliefs throughout the research process. This is discussed in-depth in Chapter Three.

1.9.2 Methodological Approach

A qualitative methodological research approach was utilised for this study. The qualitative approach is concerned with understanding the meaning of a specific context (Willig, 2013). Qualitative research focuses on a phenomenon that takes place in a natural context and aims to study the phenomenon in its complexity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

The qualitative research approach was used because it provides in-depth descriptions, opinions and explanations (Rahman, 2016). This allowed for a detailed description of teachers' experiences. The approach also understands human

experience from a broader context (Rahman, 2016), which allowed the study to be presented in the broad context of DE and IE. For these reasons, a qualitative methodological approach resonated with the purpose of the study. However, the qualitative approach also has limitations and challenges. For instance, Willig (2013) argues that qualitative researchers run the risk of being biased during the data analysis and interpretation process. Silverman (2016) states that to control for the potential of bias, researchers will need to employ the process of reflectivity by acknowledging potential bias and how it may influence findings. Furthermore, qualitative researchers collect data from multiple sources which makes the process lengthy and time-consuming. The details of how the researcher addressed these limitations are fully discussed in Chapter Three.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

In this study, a theoretical framework was used to inform the study. The theoretical framework is centred on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)[2]. This theory focuses on the systematic influences on general development (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that individuals function within four identified ecological systems: the microsystem; mesosystem; exosystem; and macrosystem. In addition, these systems are continuously interacting with one another (Mahlo, 2017). In order to understand an individual's experiences, it is important to explore factors that occur in these different ecological systems. This theoretical framework was used because it allowed the researcher to understand teachers' perspectives and experiences from a broader lens. This theory is further discussed in-depth in the following chapter (Chapter Two).

1.11 Research Design and Approach

The research processes for this study involved a phenomenological research design, purposive sampling method, data collection conducted through interviews, data documentation and data analysed through thematic analysis. These processes are discussed and further in Chapter Three.

[2] Primary source reference

1.11.1 Phenomenological Research Design

A phenomenological research design was used to inform this study. This research design is defined as a design used to explore experiences of a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). It aims to understand human experiences of a shared phenomenon without the influence of a researcher's assumptions. In this study, an interpretative phenomenological approach was specifically used. This form of phenomenological design aims to uncover the meaning of underlying experiences (Vagle, 2018). Research participants may experience the same phenomenon; however, the meaning drawn from the experiences may differ from one participant to another. This research design was used in this study because it allowed the researcher to explore different experiences in-depth and also to understand the meaning drawn from those experiences. In addition, this in turn enabled the researcher to answer the primary and secondary research questions of this study. The interpretative phenomenological approach is further discussed in-depth in Chapter Three.

1.11.2 Sampling

The sampling methods used in this study are purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling is defined as a method used to select research participants according to the purpose of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). This implies that the method guides the researcher to select participants that are information-rich about the phenomenon under investigation. The second sampling method used is convenience sampling and it refers to a method used at the convenience of the researcher, for instance using participants that are easily accessible (Omona, 2013). These methods assisted the researcher to create a selection criterion that positioned this study at an advantage.

1.11.3 Data Collection and Documentation Procedure

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method. These interviews were done telephonically; this method was chosen because it eliminated the possibility of geographical challenges. In addition, data capturing was achieved through the use of an audio-recording device. This was used during the

interview process. Thereafter, the data was documented through the process of verbatim transcription.

1.11.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as a method of data analysis in this study. This method involves identifying and grouping common themes with the data set (Willig, 2013) and was guided by John Creswell's six steps of data analysis which include: data familiarity, generating initial codes, searching for ideas, reviewing themes, naming themes and reporting and interpretation (Creswell, 2009). These are further elaborated in Chapter Three. Table 1.1 illustrates the research methodology process and shows the framework of the research approaches and paradigms adopted for the study.

Table 1.1: Framework of the research process, approach and paradigm

Literature as the background of the study (Chapter Two)	
Theoretical Framework	**Research Topic**
➢ Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory.	➢ A need analysis: Teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education.
Research Questions	
Primary question ➢ What are teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training?	Secondary questions ➢ To what extent has the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training assisted teachers? ➢ What are the challenges teachers experience in the classroom context? ➢ What are the factors that could make the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in-service training more effective?

Table 1.2: Research methodologies and strategies

Paradigmatic assumptions	**Research design and sampling**	**Data collection strategies**	**Data documentation strategies**	**Data analysis and interpretation**	**Quality criteria**	**Strategies to ensure quality**	**Ethical considerations**
Interpretivism approach	Phenomenological research design	Semi-structured telephonic interviews Analysis of archived documents	Verbatim transcription Field notes Research journal	Interpretation of data using thematic data analysis Identification of themes, sub-themes and categories	Credibility Transferability Dependability Confirmability Authenticity	Member-checking Triangulation Audit trail Reflective journal	Permission by ethical committees at UP. Obtain informed consent and assent forms. Protection of confidentiality of data or information. Ensure research is not harmful and deceptive

1.12 Quality Criteria

In consideration of the ethical requirements of a qualitative study, this research study attempted to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. These methods were used to ensure that the study adhered to the research quality criterion. Furthermore, the study also used the following strategies to ensure the above-mentioned – member-checking, triangulation, audit trail and rich descriptions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Moreover, the research study adhered to other ethical aspects which were illustrated in Table1.1 and further discussed in-depth in Chapter Three.

1.13 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are important to ensure the quality of research. This study adhered to ethical considerations that included quality criteria of qualitative research. The research guidelines that this study had to adhere to included ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria to conduct this research study, obtaining informed consent from participants to conduct interviews and record the information, maintaining confidentiality and debriefing participants on what the study was about (Cohen et al., 2018). This study also had to ensure that there was no physical, emotional, professional or psychological harm and deception (Willig, 2013). The above-mentioned ethical principles are further discussed in Chapter Three.

1.14 The Overview Research Structure

This section provides an outline of each chapter in this dissertation:

- **Chapter One: Introduction**

Chapter One covered the background and rationale for the study. It also included the purpose of the study. The primary and secondary research questions were stated, followed by the working assumptions. The significance of the study was also discussed. An overview of the research process was given as well as a clarification of the concepts of the study.

- **Chapter Two: Literature review**

Chapter Two explores the literature on IE, in-service training and DE. The challenges of implementing IE, the positive impact of in-service training and the negative impact of ineffective in-service training are discussed. The chapter ends with an outline of the theoretical framework of the study, namely the ecological system theory.

- **Chapter Three: Research design and methodology**

Chapter Three covers the research methodology and design. Participant selection, data collection, documentation, data analysis and interpretation are discussed. Finally, the quality criteria and ethical considerations are explained in relation to the study.

- **Chapter Four: Findings of the study**

The findings of the study are presented in Chapter Four. Each theme concludes with a recursive literature review.

- **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this final chapter, the questions presented in Chapter One are answered using the results of the study. This is followed by a discussion of the contributions of the study, problems and limitations and recommendations for future research.

1.15 Conclusion

This Chapter 1 introduced the basis of the study, which included the research questions, the rationale, the problem statement and concept clarification. Furthermore, the above-mentioned topics outlined the purpose, objectives and significance of the study. This chapter also provided an overview of the research methodology, ethical principles and quality criteria. In addition, these subject matters introduced in this chapter are an outline of what is further discussed in Chapter Three. In the next chapter (Chapter Two), literature on IE, DE and in-

service training is discussed in-depth to elucidate how this current study fits into broader literature.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The education schooling system has evolved into a system that aims to cater for various learning needs in an effort to enhance optimal academic performance. The focus has gradually moved towards the advocacy for IE. A study conducted in Fort Beaufort District primary schools, stressed the importance of implementing IE policies in South African schools (Adewumi et al., 2019). Such policies focus on school transformation and improving education for children with LDs (Hornby, 2015). Although IE has gained global efforts, this is still an area of international development. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) plays an influential role in the reinforcement of IE in schools (Al-Shammari et al., 2019). For these reasons, it is of great importance to expand research studies on IE.

Teachers are the primary caretakers of learning needs in classrooms, and this has created a gap in professional development for teachers. Some teachers do not have the qualifications and training to implement inclusion (Adewumi et al., 2019). A study conducted in Gauteng, South Africa by Mahlo (2017), reported that most teachers stressed the need for extensive training on IE to cater for diverse learning needs. This illustrates a profound need to address the gap in the professional development of educators. In a world that is constantly evolving with various challenges and information, teachers require platforms to enhance existing knowledge and develop new skills. This gap can be addressed by DE programmes such as in-service training (Garbutt et al., 2018).

The South African education department has amended policies to expand distance learning which made way for the implementation of various in-service training programmes (DHET, 2014). However, the major concern in literature is the ineffectiveness of in-service training programmes (Ayvaz-Tuncel & Cobanoglu, 2018; Omar, 2014). Various challenges are evidently impacting the effectiveness of in-

service training programmes; these may include a lack of research-based planning and a lack of careful administration (Huhtala & Vesalainen, 2017). For these reasons, some in-service training programmes have resulted in content that is unrelated to the classroom needs of educators (Osamwonyi, 2016). This gap indicates a profound need to establish in-service training that is context-specific through research-based planning. This study explored and then describes teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in-service training course. The description of teachers' experiences could provide insight into the challenges teachers experience when implementing the content provided in the in-service training.

This chapter presents an in-depth review of the literature. The important elements of IE are discussed, highlighting the challenges of implementing inclusion. The focus is also on the role of DE and the benefits of in-service training in combating the challenges of inclusion. Lastly, the chapter focuses on the problems of in-service training programmes administered to teachers. The literature overview on the above-mentioned areas of interest is discussed and an argument is made on where this research study fits into the broader literary context.

2.2 Inclusive Education

A study conducted in South Africa argues that there are many learners with LDs in Africa (Hornby, 2015). Similarly, a study conducted in Kenya primary schools reported that about 95% of learners experienced some LDs (Garbutt et al., 2018). As a result, many learners are excluded from the curriculum and the education system (Dalton et al., 2012). Ramakrishnan (2020) also argues that a common challenge in many countries is children with disabilities not being educated. Therefore, it is arguable that IE is a central issue in Africa that needs to be addressed. This further highlights that despite all global efforts to promote the values of IE, there are still many learners excluded from full access to equal education opportunities in mainstream education. This study aimed to understand IE through the exploration of teachers' experiences. However, it is important to discuss the conceptualisation of IE to fully comprehend teachers' perspectives on classroom inclusivity.

2.2.1 Conceptualising Inclusive Education

There seems to be no agreement on the definition of inclusion, and this is evident because no definition has been universally agreed upon (Larysa et al., 2020). It can be very confusing and controversial to consider IE as a single value or process. For this reason, it is crucial to explore various ways in which IE is applied and defined.

According to the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001)[3], IE is described as the learners' right to learn and to be supported in a classroom environment irrespective of their gender, race, HIV status, culture, language and disability. Inclusive education (IE) positions learners at the forefront, where learning challenges are not viewed as learners' disabilities but instead as an education system that does not cater to all learning needs (Tyagi, 2016). Similarly, Larysa et al. (2020) argue that inclusion should be viewed as a response to human rights and a promotion of equality irrespective of gender, age, socio-economic status and all characteristics that form part of all spheres of life. The authors further emphasise that IE aims to support the rights of all children and develop platforms that address issues of educational inequality. The different scholars seem to conceptualise IE as a human rights movement and further highlight IE as a complex concept that celebrates diversity.

Inclusive education (IE) can also be defined as what to do and what not to do (Larysa et al., 2020). Hornby (2015) describes IE according to four principles that can be put into practice: a) creating an engaging classroom environment that challenges learners and the curriculum; b) embracing diversity irrespective of learners' strengths and weaknesses; c) using reflective strategies and a variety of instructive methods; d) expanding external support through the collaboration of stakeholders. These principles can also be viewed as a set of efforts aimed at eradicating the barriers that restrict the learning and participation of learners. Similarly, Rojo-Ramos et al. (2022) define IE according to three dimensions. The first dimension promotes creating inclusive cultures within communities; the second dimension encourages the development of inclusive policies which organise support for diversity in schools, and the third dimension aims to establish IE strategies

[3] Primary source reference

through the development of an inclusive curriculum. In consideration of these dimensions, one can argue that the conceptualisation of IE does not have to merely state a broad definition, but can also break down the definitions into practices of inclusion.

Historically, IE was defined as a process of addressing learning needs, with disabilities being the main focus of inclusion (Murungi, 2015). Prior to 1996, there was segregation between compensatory education and mainstream education in South Africa (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). The shift towards inclusive education became primarily about accommodating learners with disabilities in mainstream education and within society (Okong et al., 2015). In recent years, the value and aim of inclusive education has shifted towards ensuring that every learner is included in the education system, and the focus has moved away from what disabilities learners have. Murungi (2015) argues that this shift raises the issues around conceptualising IE. The author contends that broadening the focus of IE moves the focus away from disabilities, which may result in many learners with LDs being overlooked within the education system. In addition, it is also arguable that the narrow conceptualisation of IE that only focuses on LDs may also be limiting the overall goal to include all learners being excluded from the curriculum; for instance, learners experiencing racial discrimination at school. The Dorak Framework Statement (2000) states that the principles of IE should be broad enough to accommodate every learner within society, and prioritise each area of need (Murungi, 2015). There seems to be a debate on the implications of broadening or narrowing down the definition of IE. However, in this study, IE is referred to as supporting learners with remedial needs in a mainstream education system (Ford, 2013).

2.2.2 Learning Disabilities

A common pattern in most countries is the educational exclusion of children with disabilities. For instance, the DoE (2001) reported that 70% of children with disabilities in South Africa are not in schools. Similarly, Mpu and Adu (2021) also assert that many learners with disabilities have been historically excluded from mainstream education globally. This elucidates the global crisis of education

exclusion of LDs. In order to comprehend the global and local trends of LDs, it is crucial to discuss the history of LDs.

Hammill (1993) states that the field of LDs emerged in the 1800s to 1960s when most European researchers focused their research on brain injuries. This later led to the discovery of language disorders and the cultural evaluations of other specific LDs such as dyslexia (Hammill, 1993). The author further states that in the mid-19 century the likes of German neurologists Wernicke and Jackson highly contributed to the field through the literature on aphasia. After the 15th century, the idea to educate special needs children emerged (Ramakrishnan, 2020). This was the period between 1961– 1986 when the terminology of LDs was discovered and later revised and finalised by the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children (Agrawal et al., 2019). The education of special needs children came with a segregated education system in which special schools were developed only for children with LD. This segregation was criticised for moral concerns about special education and the disproportionate representation in the separate schooling systems (Mpu & Adu, 2021). Arguably, this may have led to a tumult of controversy on the segregation of schooling systems. In addition, Agrawal et al. (2019) argue that from 1976 to 1999 many students with LDs were identified and this increase in diagnosis was attributed to the misdiagnosis of many learners. The authors assert that for this reason, more resources were directed towards understanding LDs and IE shifted towards integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education. To this date, there are children in mainstream education with LDs, with very few being medically or psychologically diagnosed (Garbutt et al., 2018).

The term ‘learning disabilities’ is globally used, yet it is understood so differently. For instance, Ali and Rafi (2016) argue that LDs vary from one learner to another, and it is crucial to categorise them according to general characteristics. These characteristics include the following: language barriers; hyper activeness; limited attention span; motor coordination problems; social or emotional problems; inadequate spatial organisation; auditory challenges; and visual perception difficulties (Ali & Rafi, 2016). Arguably, such characteristics may be essential for educational specialists, teachers and parents as key indicators to identify children with LDs at the early stages of development. On the other hand, Grünke and

Cavendish (2016) contend that LDs range from disorders to average intelligence isolated from delayed developmental issues. For instance, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) defines LDs as a broad concept that includes numerous neurological disorders. Grünke and Cavendish (2016) further assert that in essence, LDs are commonly associated with learners that fail to meet the minimum academic standards; those that fail to develop knowledge, skills and self-regulation necessary for academic progression. There seems to be an inconsistency in terminology and meaning as other authors term LDs as special needs, learning barriers, learning difficulties and mental disorders (Agrawal et al., 2019; Grünke & Cavendish, 2016; Ranjeeta, 2018). For example, Hermanto (2022) argues that there is a significant distinction between special needs learners and children with disabilities. Special needs learners are children that experience challenges in learning due to physical, social or emotional difficulties; however, these children seem to have special talents that contribute to their educational strengths (Hermanto, 2022). On the other hand, the author describes those with LDs as children experiencing difficulties for a long period which result in an interference with academic participation.

Similarly, another author argues that LDs can also be viewed according to areas of need (Ranjeeta, 2018). These areas of need include communication and interaction; cognition and learning; behavioural, emotional and social development; and sensory and physical needs. It is important to note that a few decades ago, Special Educational Needs (SEN) were only categorised as physiological and psychological causes; however, since then, social and environmental factors have been accounted for as areas of need (Ranjeeta, 2018). Arguably, these categories of needs may be problematic as they continue to blur the conceptualisation of LDs. Grünke and Cavendish (2016) state that it is crucial to establish a global consensus on the conceptualisation of LDs. Therefore, there is a crucial need for more research on their conceptualisation. In this study, LDs encompass cognitive, psychological, sensory, communication and social needs that interfere with academic and social functioning.

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) argue that the shift towards IE has created a dilemma as more learners with LDs were welcomed into a mainstream education system that was not designed for diversity. This makes one wonder about the classroom dynamics of such a blend. It is easy to assume that the performance of learners with LDs will differ significantly from learners with non-disabilities. However, the National Down Syndrome Society research report argues the contrary (Okongo et al., 2015). The report found that the learning characteristics of learners with LDs were more similar to those with non-disabilities and an inclusive classroom does not cater to those with disabilities but to all learners (Okongo et al., 2015). Based on this notion, it is important to understand the classroom dynamics and the role of IE within a specific context.

2.2.3 Policies on Inclusive Education

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) published that about 150 million children are not granted access to education and other services due to their disabilities (Okongo et al., 2015). This resulted in the United Nations (UN) advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities, which triggered the concept of IE on a global scale. Furthermore, Larysa et al. (2020) argue that the UN compelled the education system globally to provide educational access and promote learning irrespective of any diversity. For this reason, IE is still the subject of discussion and research at a global level.

Haug (2017) states that UNICEF, the UN, the Council of Europe and the European Union show common trends of inclusion. The author further contends that they all advocate for the rights of education and adopt democratic ideologies such as fellowship, partnership, equality and justice in the school context. Therefore, IE should be viewed as a right, as part of educational policies and practices that support the right to learn irrespective of race, sexuality, disabilities or any other form of discriminatory elements. As a general policy, European countries are required to implement IE from a pre-school level (Larysa et al., 2020). However, it is crucial to state that the implementation of IE policies may vary from one country to another due to legal factors or pedagogical concepts. For the purpose of this study, IE policies in South Africa are discussed in-depth.

Prior to1994, South Africa was under an apartheid government in which people were segregated according to race (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). The systemic segregation also resulted in a segregated education system, not only racially but also according to educational needs (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). This implies that white people with disabilities were enrolled in well-funded schools, while black children with disabilities were not in school. The DoE reports that about 70% of children with disabilities were not in schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

Post-1994, the country abolished apartheid policies and adopted democratic governance in which social justice was placed as a priority (Murungi, 2015). These changes also included the establishment of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 which advocated for equal access to education without discrimination and the South African policy that follows the Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education (Majoko & Phasha, 2018). Furthermore, the Salamanca Statement and framework advocated for the awareness and actions to combat discrimination in education through advocating for equal education for all (Majoko & Phasha, 2018).

It seems that to begin the process of achieving an IE system, various policies had to be reviewed and changed. This also included challenging the issues of discrimination against learners with special needs in mainstream education by establishing new IE policies and transformative practices. One of the cornerstones of inclusive policies includes the Education White Paper 6's (DoE, 2001) six broad principles that made way for the implementation of IE. The six broad principles include improving established special schools, ensuring that nearly 300,000 children with disabilities who are not in schools are admitted to schools, converting mainstream schools to full-service schools, advocating for school staff to practice IE, establishing district-based support to assist school staff and implementing campaigns to teach South Africans the ideas of IE (DoE, 2001). In essence, the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) argues the need to successfully support learners with disabilities in government or public schools. This is not only to create an inclusive environment but to also ensure that learners with LDs succeed and contribute to the development of society.

Haug (2017) argues that no country has successfully created a schooling system that completely adheres to IE policies and practices. Similarly, Ramakrishnan (2020) also states that years after the Salamanca Statement, only 11% of urban children with disabilities were attending special schools in India. Effective IE seems to still be lacking in some countries. For instance, in India, a lack of resources, infrastructure, funding, professional development and negative beliefs about disabilities have been attributed to ineffective implementation of inclusive policies (Ramakrishnan, 2020). Nonetheless, IE policies have also been criticised for over-reaching and promising too much (Haug, 2017). This may result in impossible or very demanding actions to fulfil the promises made. Donohue and Bornman (2014) mention that South Africa, unlike other developing countries, has met some of its educational goals. However, the authors also argue that even though that is the case, the White Paper 6 lacks clarity with regard to how to achieve IE goals. In addition, Murungi (2015) states that the White Paper 6 argues that it is easier to implement inclusion for learners with intellectual disabilities because all that is needed is curriculum adaptation instead of medical support and structural changes. The author also argues that this type of reasoning undermines the level of support educational staff need to support learners with LDs. Consequently, this may arguably create a significant gap between policy and practice.

All things considered, the revision and establishment of IE policies in South Africa are important to promote equality for all and make way for full access to education. However, it is crucial to note that the limitations within policies pose a serious threat to the effectiveness of IE. It is essential that more policies are revised in an attempt to reduce the gap between policy and practice. This study may contribute to the evaluation of inclusive policies by exploring teachers' experiences of implementing such policies in the classroom context.

2.2.4 Role Players in Inclusive Education

Learners' grade progression and academic participation are highly dependent on teacher support (Garbutt et al., 2018). This means that teachers play a crucial role in promoting participation and the responsibility of ensuring academic success (Tyagi, 2016). Inclusive education (IE) laws and policies in South Africa have been amended

to encourage and support teachers to promote inclusiveness in classrooms; for example, the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) advocates for inclusive teaching approaches in classroom settings. This positions teachers as the primary agents to ensure IE in classroom settings. Their role includes identifying children with disabilities; referring them to professionals for further examination; placing children in classrooms according to academic benefits; preparing teaching aids to assist children with disabilities; and developing a positive attitude towards all learners (Tyagi, 2016). Similarly, Molbaek (2018) contends that teachers' responsibilities are, but are not limited to, academic inclusion and classroom management. This further emphasises the notion that teachers' roles and responsibilities are not limited to teaching school subjects.

However, this also poses a crucial question: are teachers the only role players in IE? There seems to be immense pressure on teachers to ensure IE. For example, Pérez et al. (2017) state that teachers carry out various actions to ensure active participation which include using diverse teaching styles and this can be overwhelming as they are required to carry out other academic responsibilities. For this reason, Nel et al. (2013) argue that there is a need for continuous collaboration of important role players in the education schooling system to achieve a sustainable IE structure. Similarly, Okongo et al. (2015) also assert that the success of IE is highly dependent on teacher collaboration with personnel resources such as community members and other stakeholders. Nel et al. (2013) further argue that to achieve this sense of partnership, transdisciplinary collaboration is needed; this refers to a group of professionals with specialised knowledge and practices who partner together with a common goal to develop effective support strategies. These professionals may include district-based support teams, educational psychologists, community role players, welfare professionals, governmental officials and management specialists (Mahlo, 2017; Nel et al., 2013). It seems that the success of IE relies on the responsibilities of each role player in the education system being accomplished – some of the responsibilities may include sharing resources, providing training, developing skills and networking to develop effective support strategies. This view point can be validated using the Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which argues that an individual's experiences are influenced by multiple

individuals in different ecological systems, hence, it is crucial to understand each role player's responsibility in implementing inclusivity, either on a micro-level or macro-level (Mahlo, 2017).

Correspondingly, Bhroin and King (2020) contend that collaborative approaches to IE should include the processes of decision-making and planning. The authors further assert that such collaborations should be prioritised because they may result in the successful implementation of innovative and learner-centred collaborative learning. Donohue and Bornman (2013) also support this notion and state that the success of IE is reliant on the decisions of education personnel to challenge rigid curricula and the overall schooling system. Therefore, it is arguable that IE needs to be viewed as a system that is integrated and complex; in this way, every role player's responsibility is accounted for. This study used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theoretical framework to understand IE in its complexity; this is further discussed in-depth.

2.2.5 Inclusive Strategies

Even though IE has been globally accepted, for some countries, this unfortunately does not translate within classroom settings (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). For example, Breyer et al. (2021) argue that most schools in developing countries still have not met the ideal standards of IE. In addition, Haug (2017) contends that even developed countries have not successfully created a completely IE school environment. It seems that the significant gap between policy and practice is a global crisis. However, this is not to undermine the role and significance of policy formation and does not entail that there are no successfully implemented IE practices.

Inclusive strategies or practices can be viewed as efforts to encourage the academic progression of learners, using cooperative methods, encouraging personal development and employing diverse teaching strategies (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2022). Inclusive education (IE) strategies date back to 1901 when scientists and education professionals discovered new pedagogies and methods to teach learners with disabilities, for instance, sign language for deaf people (Ramakrishnan, 2020). Over the years the goals of inclusive practices have gradually evolved. Pérez et al. (2017) view inclusive practices according to three generations: the first generation's goal

was to increase more learners with disabilities in a general classroom; the second generation focused on improving classroom practices in a general classroom, and the third generation aimed towards improving the quality of educational methods. On the other hand, Molbaek (2018) stresses the need for inclusive practices to shift the focus onto learners, and to open a broader understanding of learning needs. The author elucidates how inclusive practices continue to evolve depending on the context. For this reason, it may be challenging to narrow down specific inclusive practices.

There are no universal methods specifically classified as inclusive strategies; however, various authors have created their own categories of what is considered good inclusive practices. For instance, Pérez et al. (2017) argue that good inclusive practices include three elements: the first element involves good planning of diverse teaching-learning processes; the second element includes using globalisation and interdisciplinary content that applies to various learning traits; and the last element is centred on using alternative teaching methods to allow active participation. On the other hand, Larysa et al. (2020) contend that all inclusive practices should not only include methods that integrate children with disabilities into the mainstream education system but form a sense of belonging within the general society. Similarly, Mpu and Adu (2021) assert that the desired outcome of inclusivity is to ensure the personal and social functioning of learners with LDs. In essence, these authors argue that education is meant to prepare all learners for social and interpersonal functioning.

According to Molbaek (2018), effective inclusive teaching methods can be understood according to four dimensions which are the framing dimension, relational dimension, didactic dimension and organisational dimension. The framing dimension focuses on traditional classroom management which provides a sense of predictability for learners to take active control of their own learning processes, for instance, class routines. The relational dimension is highly dependent on teachers' pre-understanding and communication of learners' opportunities to actively participate academically and socially; this reflects teachers' understanding of learning and open communication. Didactic dimension views teaching as an interventional activity where various instructional methods are used for different

learning abilities. Lastly, the organisational dimension is centred on school norms and beliefs that highly reflect the role of school leaders in supporting teachers to implement IE. These various categories of inclusive strategies reflect the challenges of narrowing down inclusive practices. This may be a result of a broad conceptualisation of inclusive education and amending ambitious policies. This study aimed to address this gap by exploring teachers' experiences of implementing inclusive strategies in classroom settings.

Although the literature focuses on a broader perspective of inclusive strategies, there seems to be a significant focus on co-teaching and teacher assistants as forms of inclusive strategies (Larysa et al., 2020; Molbaek, 2018; Pérez et al., 2017; Ramakrishnan, 2020). For instance, a study in Texas, America reported that some teachers use co-teaching as a method of promoting inclusive learning for learners (Brendle, 2017). As opposed to separating learners with LDs from learners in mainstream education, co-teaching models encourage learning in mainstream education through collaborative teaching of special educators and general educators (Chitiyo, 2017). Similar to this viewpoint, Brendle (2017) defines co-teaching as collaboration between general education teachers and special teachers in supporting learners with disabilities in general education. This entails that teachers share skills sets in the best interest of supporting learners with learning difficulties. Furthermore, Ranjeeta (2018) contends that this strategy involves more than just teaching in the same classroom; educators will need to also co-plan for lessons and co-teach in the same classroom environment to cater for different learning abilities. The author further states that the intention is not only to support learners with special needs but also to enhance curriculum content available to all. Some of the benefits of collaborative teaching include improving teacher ethics, self-motivation and job satisfaction (Bhroin & King, 2020). Although co-teaching has been reported to be effective in enhancing teacher and learner support, Chitiyo (2017) argues that the method requires teaching resources and training. Arguably, this method of inclusion may be challenging for most developing countries to adopt, with limited resources being one of the challenges at the forefront of the education system.

Unlike co-teaching, teacher assistants have become a common practice in most countries (Cassim & Moen, 2020). For example, a study in Israel implemented a

policy on inclusion assistants which proved to be effective and essential (Moshe, 2017). The study further elucidates that about 58% of learners with special education needs were effectively included in a general classroom. Breyer et al. (2021) highlight that lack of personnel resources and potentially overburdening teachers resulted in many European schools employing teaching assistants. The role of teacher assistants or support teachers is to ensure active learning participation and academic progression without exception (Pérez et al., 2017). Contrary to co-teaching, the primary agent to ensure inclusive practices is a teaching assistant. Moshe (2017) contends that assistants are primarily responsible for ensuring inclusion in the classroom to enable educators to focus on other classroom demands such as academic administration. In South African schools, teaching assistants have only been recently adopted, with an increased demand for more teaching assistants still required in rural schools (Cassim & Moen, 2020). The growing demand for teaching assistants is proof of the crucial and significant role they play in inclusion. However, Pérez et al. (2017) seem to argue the contrary. The authors state that there is a concerning level of teachers' reliance on teacher assistants to cater for children with special needs which results in some teachers not interacting with special needs learners. Furthermore, Breyer et al. (2021) concur with the notion that teaching assistants come with limitations that also include unclear roles and responsibilities, which may result in limited collaboration with class teachers and restricted supervision. Nonetheless, it is difficult to dismiss that the need for teaching assistants is growing in demand in many countries including South Africa because they play such a significant role in developing a sustained IE system.

The effectiveness of inclusive strategies is highly dependent on several factors that foster the implementation of inclusion in educational settings. Majoko and Phasa (2018) argue that IE requires a culture of diversity promoted through a display of positive attitudes toward LDs. This highlights the importance and value of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Similarly, Tyagi (2016) argues that the success of every educational programme depends on teachers' attitudes towards inclusivity in the classroom. A study in Tran-Nzoia, Kenya, that sampled 351 teachers, showed that some teachers showed a good attitude towards IE by implementing various strategies to promote it (Garbutt et al., 2018). In addition, an average of 58.6% of

teachers always applied support strategies in their classrooms, which included special attention, extra time to complete a task at hand and classroom placement according to learning needs (Garbutt et al., 2018). This study elucidated how a positive attitude towards LDs encouraged the implementation of IE strategies. Furthermore, Boyle et al. (2020) argue that teachers who showed a positive attitude towards IE had a controlled classroom environment over the teachers who showed a negative attitude towards inclusivity. Similarly, a study conducted in Spain elucidated that teachers' attitudes were a good predictor of their actions (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2020). These studies validate the correlation between a positive teacher attitude towards IE and the implementation of IE. Therefore, it is critical to understand attitudes and beliefs teachers hold towards inclusion, to fully comprehend teachers' experiences of IE.

The importance of implementing IE is not only dependent on teachers' attitudes but is also dependent on teachers' ability to recognise their roles and responsibilities to cater for learners with learning difficulties (Reinke et al, 2011). Inclusion requires teachers to accept their responsibility to ensure that children learn and feel a sense of belonging regardless of their disability. This entails that teachers' understanding of their role in IE is essential and critical for the implementation of IE in classrooms. For instance, an online study focusing on the perspective of educators' needs, roles and barriers to supporting children's mental health was conducted in America (Reinke et al., 2011). The findings indicated that some educators showed acknowledgement and understanding of their roles and responsibilities to support learners with mental health problems (Reinke et al., 2011). This might be the case with some educators; however, some educators struggle to understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting learners with special needs because they feel incompetent to do so (Adewumi et al., 2019). As a result, they do not implement support strategies. Arguably, teachers may find it very challenging to assume this role as they lack the skills and abilities.

Therefore, inclusion should be seen in proximity to teachers' abilities to positively influence learners academically and socially (Molbaek, 2018). It is arguable that teachers, who adopt a positive attitude towards LDs, understand their responsibilities in inclusion and use strategies such as co-teaching. As possible as this may be, it is

also important to take note of challenges to supporting learners' diverse needs with little to no assistance. Some teachers argue that inclusive teaching strategies are inadequate to ensure academic participation (Ranjeeta, 2018). This inadequacy is not a matter of capabilities because teachers are capable of promoting inclusive teaching methods; however, the element of support from parents, communities and the government would go a long way to ensure their effectiveness (Mahlo, 2017).

2.2.6 Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

There are various methods and strategies to implement IE; however, it can be challenging to implement such strategies effectively. The concerns are centred on the various factors hindering the implementation of IE policies (Tyagi, 2016). A research study conducted in Trans-Nzoia, Kenya, contended that 58.9% of teachers were aware of the support strategies; however, they did not apply them (Garbutt et al., 2018). This study stated that more than 50% of teachers knew how to support learners but still showed limited support towards learners with learning difficulties. This indicates how IE goes beyond establishing inclusive strategies for classroom settings, but also highlights the concern of possible factors hindering the implementation of IE. Mahlo (2017) argues that several classroom challenges may contribute to the ineffectiveness of IE, which may include but is not limited to overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload, lack of assistance and a negative attitude towards IE (Mahlo, 2017). Although Ford (2013) argues that it is still possible to apply IE in such classrooms, it is arguable that this is not only a question of possibility and capability. It is important to explore and understand how these factors hinder inclusivity and how they can be addressed.

Educators in outlying rural areas are expected to teach in overcrowded classrooms and still support learners with learning difficulties with no assistance (Mahlo, 2017). Classrooms consist of learners with different learning needs; this creates pressure for teachers to attempt effective instructional methods to include all diverse learning needs (Chitiyo, 2017). For instance, Okongo et al. (2015) argue that there has been a significant increase in secondary education enrolment in Kenya since 2009 which has led to overcrowded classrooms. In South Africa, the average class size in primary schools is 35.5 learners per class, and generally higher at the high school

level (Maree, 2021). Arguably, some educators may find it challenging to attend to all learners in an overcrowded classroom and still create the time to implement an inclusive curriculum for learners with remedial needs. Moreover, many educators in South African schools have to teach in large classrooms that consist of an average number of 40 learners, with some experiencing learning difficulties (Mahlo, 2017). In such cases, limited instructional time and lack of resources form part of the factors hindering the implementation of IE. Mpu and Adu (2021) state that many schools in South Africa experience difficulties with completing the curriculum within the allocated instructional time. This raises a critical question; if it is already challenging to complete the curriculum within the given time frame, how will there be time for incorporating inclusive measures? Okongo et al. (2015) argue that learners with disabilities require extra instructional time, diverse learning methods and professional knowledge, which can be achieved through an increase in academic resources. This makes it very challenging as various governmental schools experience a profound lack of educational resources. For instance, Donohue and Bornman (2014) assert that the lack of resources within public schools is one of the concerns that have resulted in the ineffectiveness of IE. Resources can go a long way towards successful inclusion; however, is that enough? Okongo et al. (2015) argue that schools with adequate resources have been shown to have impeccable academic progression and an inclusive environment. This may not be enough to eradicate the issues of inclusivity; however, having adequate academic resources plays a significant role in the effectiveness of IE.

Adequate resources may also include academic personnel such as psychologists, social workers, government officials, community specialists and government district support teams (Okongo et al., 2015). A study that focused on the experiences of educators implementing inclusion was conducted in South Africa and the majority of educators expressed difficulties in implementing inclusion with limited or lack of assistance from the district, community and parents (Adewumi et al., 2019). This highlights the significance of collaborating with other professionals in order to achieve an inclusive schooling environment. Nel et al. (2013) argue that developing a long-term collaboration seems to be challenging in South Africa. The role players in IE do not only include educators but all educational personnel; this also entails

that there is a shared responsibility to develop inclusive strategies. In addition, Adewumi et al. (2019) argue that educators are also expected to be counsellors, parents and managers with little or no assistance. Arguably, limited support may make it overbearing for some teachers. There seems to be a misalignment between the expectations of inclusion and the daily teaching practices in classrooms (Molbaek, 2018). It is crucial to set realistic expectations of the teachers' role in IE. Bhroin and King (2020) state that the collaboration of educators and other stakeholders could be beneficial not only to learners' academic progression, but also to improve teacher morale, self-efficiency, teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

Donohue and Bornman (2014) contend that the barriers to inclusion are also a reflection of wider attitudes and beliefs about people with disabilities. The authors further argue that the success of inclusion depends on the attitudes of school personnel, most especially the principal. On the other hand, Adewumi et al. (2019) argue that teachers' negative attitude towards inclusion could stem from feelings of incompetency. For instance, an online study conducted in the United States of America reported that some educators were concerned about their lack of skills to identify and support pupils with various learning needs (Reinke et al., 2011). Arguably, the beliefs and attitudes of school personnel may reflect within a school environment. Therefore, relevant stakeholders and communities need to take an active role in developing an inclusive schooling system, most especially when considering the role of the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis on the education system, which foreshadows any future crises.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a disease caused by a recently discovered acute respiratory syndrome that shows symptoms of flu which include dry cough, tiredness, body aches, headache or shortness of breath (Mahaye, 2020). COVID-19 did not only impact the economy but largely impacted the schooling system. For instance, Maree (2021) states that learners struggled to find sufficient space in the classroom during the pandemic because learners were expected to maintain a 1-meter social distance at school. This entails that measures were put in place to ensure learners maintained social distancing which limited desk space. This largely resulted in daily or weekly learner attendance rotation, online learning and shortening of the curriculum (Maree, 2021). In addition, van der Berg et al. (2020) reported an

increase in school dropouts, absenteeism and curriculum repetition. This shows how the impact of COVID-19 further worsened some of the educational challenges South Africa was already facing. For these reasons, it is vital to understand that an education crisis is everyone's responsibility and various ways of support are needed, especially during and after the impact of any global crisis such as COVID-19.

2.3 Teacher Professional Development

Educators make certain decisions based on resources available in consideration of learners' skills and abilities to create a less restricting learning environment (Ford, 2013). However, this has proven to be insufficient to promote effective inclusive strategies in classrooms. Popova et al. (2019) state that 7% of educators in African countries have little knowledge and skills to cater for all learning needs. In addition, Garbutt et al. (2018) also argue that teachers who attempt to implement inclusive strategies in classrooms show a lack of consistency as a result of limited knowledge or skills. It is undeniable that there is a concerning gap between education quality and teacher quality. Teachers need a platform to learn new skills that can be integrated into classrooms; therefore, teacher quality should be placed as a priority as it has a direct influence on the quality of education.

The evolutionary elements in the education system require a profound transformation in curricula and instructional practices (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015). This entails needing to understand what is being taught and how it is being taught. As a result, many countries, including South Africa, have invested in creating platforms for teachers to learn (Al-Qahtani, 2015). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that in order to succeed in the 21st century there are complex skills learners need to learn through complex ways of teaching. This can be achieved through the global use of teacher professional development as a platform to improve skills and knowledge (Popova et al., 2019).

Teacher professional development continues to be an area of interest and as a result, there are multiple conceptualisations. For instance, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) define professional development as teachers learning to learn and enhancing their knowledge to the benefit of learners' academic success. The authors further emphasise that this process requires active participation emotionally and cognitively;

therefore, there should be a huge element of willingness to explore alternative ways to improve and challenge one's own beliefs and methods. Similary, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) define professional development as a structured professional learning platform that results in improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Additionally, Popova et al. (2019) argue that professional development can also be informal platforms such as mentorships or coaching. Essentially the common goal these authors elucidate is the need to enhance knowledge and develop new skills. The notion of enhancing knowledge implies that there is readily acquired knowledge or there is a continuous process of development, for example, in-service training. This is the common way in which most scholars define professional development (Al-Qahtani, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Popova et al., 2019). However, Niemi (2015) contends that teachers' educational journeys are part of their development; therefore, pre-service education should be considered professional development. In this study, professional development is considered an ongoing process of development.

Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) state that teacher professional development involves many processes, actions and methods which are highly influenced by political, economical, social and cultural factors. The authors further argue that this has resulted in a global consensus among researchers, policy makers and educators to promote professional development with the current goal of ensuring that the quality of education is not higher than the quality of teachers. Archibald et al. (2011) claim that to achieve this high-quality education, professional development needs to be delivered in a manner that directly impacts teacher practices. This poses a critical question; what is considered high-quality professional development? The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (2017) examined top-performing schools in South Africa and reported that most schools used school-based professional development which entails that training programmes were administered during school times as opposed to conducting them outside of school hours. This report further contended that this method produced quality training as teachers got to integrate the training within the classroom context daily with ongoing support. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2015) also argues that effective professional development involves continuous practices and a feedback system. In essence, the key elements

associated with high-quality and effective professional development are ongoing training practices and a follow-up support structure.

Teachers come from various backgrounds and beliefs and have different qualifications and experiences and as a platform to create shared understanding, the SACE created a set of professional teaching guidelines (Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018). However, social and political factors have resulted in a significant shift in the meaning of the teaching profession over time (DemirkasÕmoglu, 2010). One of the profound changes teachers had to navigate includes the global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus. It is in such instances that teacher professional development plays an essential role in the education system. This study discusses DE in-depth as a broader platform to facilitate teacher professional development.

2.4 Distance Education

In 2015, approximately 38.5% of students in South Africa enrolled in DE programmes from both private and public universities (Madiope & Mendy, 2021). Arguably, DE enrolments may have increased over the years as a result of COVID-19. Furthermore, different scholars argue that DE can be viewed as a prominent platform behind multi-dimensional transformations in many countries (Letseka, 2015; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017; Popova et al., 2019). This view elucidates how it is important to understand education in its complexities and review its role in transforming societies. Aluko (2021) states that DE not only opens educational access for all, but it also eradicates inequality and promotes inclusivity. In this section, DE definitions and policies are discussed, in addition to various DE advantages and disadvantages.

2.4.1 Conceptualising Distance Education

There are different global interpretations of DE concepts and definitions that are applied in various contexts. Wambua et al. (2019) define DE as a platform where lecturers are physically separated from their students in both time and distance. The authors further argue that learning through DE requires careful planning and preparation of different ways to deliver the education content. Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) refers to DE as ODL which is defined as a platform created for non-traditional

students who often cannot access higher education on a full-time basis. The author further states that this form of education bridges time, geographical, economical, social and communication limitations in higher education. Saykılı (2018) breaks down DE according to five elements of conceptualisation: separation between student and lecturer from physical contact in lecturing settings; the use of technology or media platforms for interactions; various ways of communication; occasional meetings for learning or socialisation; and lastly, an engagement in industrialised forms of education. Similarly, a literature review on the development of DE in South Africa also reported four characteristics of DE that scholars agreed upon (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2002). These characteristics include institutional accreditation such as learning certificates, the use of media, two-way communication and the possibilities of face-to-face interaction through peer support. These concept clarifications of DE show some similarities and distinctive differences. Madiope and Mendy (2021) argue that these differences may be due to how DE is conceptualised according to technology, societal norms and pedagogies of age. On the other hand, de Swardt (2013) sums up DE as a concept generally used to describe learners who are at a distance from their instructional base that uses an ODL philosophy which is centred on increasing accessible and equal education for all. In essence, ODL is aimed at overcoming spatial distance for students who have personal, social, occupational or other commitments and cannot access full-time contact education.

In consideration of the digital era, it is important to understand and define DE from a technological standpoint. The DHET (2014) published a guideline that explores DE in the digital era and reflects on a growing collaboration between digital technology and higher education which has resulted in various modes of DE. It is undeniable that digital technology plays a significant role in higher education. Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) classifies technology in DE as open distance e-learning (ODeL). The author further states that this is centred on a framework that assumes that every student's learning can be supported by the use of digital technology. Similarly, Letseka (2015) also argues that the use of digital technology has made way for many possibilities for ODL by challenging various barriers to learning and widening access to education. Although Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) acknowledges the role of technology in DE, the

author also argues that technology has shifted the conceptualisation of knowledge; before modern technology, lecturers were seen as the centre of knowledge as they were the providers of educational content – currently, students can source knowledge on digital platforms. This can also be seen as an advantage as students take an active role in their own learning process; however, the author raises a valuable concern which questions the role of teachers or lecturers in this digital era. Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) is not the only scholar concerned about the conceptualisation of DE. For instance, Madiope and Mendy (2021) argue that various technologies are emerging such as distance learning or open learning which makes it difficult to narrow down the concept. Although this might be a result of the interchangeable nature of researchers and practitioners in the field of education, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) argue the dangers of defining DE. The authors assert that this may result in establishing ambiguous programmes that lack clarity and depth. In consideration of these concerns, it is important to understand and define DE contextually.

2.4.2 The Evolution of Distance Education

Although DE continues to gain momentum in the 21st century, it is also important to understand the evolution of DE. Saykılı (2018) states that DE dates back to the 1800s when the Swedish broadcasted the opportunity to study through a part-time platform. Eventually, according to Saykılı (2018), in the 19th-century universities such as the University of Chicago, Edinburgh and University Correspondence College in London were regarded as pioneers of tertiary level education. The author further states that before the attempts to establish DE, higher education was primarily open to males. It is for this reason, that many countries advocated for an educational platform that provides equal access for all (Letseka, 2015). In South Africa, higher education was highly segregated not only according to gender but also racially, with numerous teachers excluded from access to higher education as a result of apartheid legislation (Mays, 2016).

Glennie (2007) states that the first democratic government in South Africa in 1994 demonstrated the beginning of policy changes in education including increased attention on DE. The author further states that the establishment of the National

Commissions on Higher Education (NCHE) in 1995 formulated visions and policies that would ensure the development of a high-quality integrated DE system. The NCHE aimed to review and address policies that were established during the apartheid era that were unjust and discriminatory (Glennie, 2007). In 2002 during the meeting of the World Education Forum in Dakar, six DE goals were discussed: expand and improve early childhood education; all children should have access to complete free and compulsory education by 2015; ensure all learning needs are met through access to appropriate learning; achieve 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015; eliminate gender discrimination in the schooling system by 2005; and improve quality of education (ADEA, 2002).

The critical question is, have these goals been achieved and where is South Africa today? While higher education in South Africa was historically exclusive, the current education system is open to all diverse students; for instance, the University of South Africa (UNISA) is one of the largest ODL institutions in South Africa with over 300 000 students (Queiros & de Villiers, 2016). Similarly, Madiope and Mendy (2021) also state that 379 732 students in 2015 were enrolled in a DE programme, with the majority being female students. According to Lumadi (2021), the transformation of the higher education curriculum was focused on addressing some of the past injustices that excluded black South Africans from education. The UNISA is viewed as one of the institutions in South Africa that was the foundation of a reformed higher education system. For example, the Former Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNISA stated that ODL in South Africa aims to provide an education system that challenges the ongoing issues of limited access to higher education (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). It is arguable that DE has achieved some of its goals and continues to take a democratic standpoint by challenging equality and increasing access to education for all students.

2.4.3 The Role of Distance Education

Distance education (DE) plays a significant role, not only within the South African context, but also globally. Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) argue that DE plays a crucial role in teaching practices and higher education, with the main role centred on affording access to a large population with no limitations of gender, age, disabilities,

race or socio-economic status. Similarly, Queiros and de Villiers (2016) also state that DE has created a platform for many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Providing access to all people that were historically marginalised in communities and excluded from higher education seems to be the main role identified in the literature (Mays, 2016; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017; Wambua et al., 2019). Arguably, DE seems to have taken on a democratic role to advocate for equality in the field of education. Holtman et al. (2018) report four identified roles of open-learning platforms within the South Africa context which include increasing the availability of places to reach a large population of students, meeting the learning needs of students who cannot access campus, providing continuous opportunities for graduates to meet demands of the economy by furthering their studies and increasing access for school leavers unable to find a place in higher education. In order to fully comprehend if these roles are being carried out, Saykılı (2018) argues the need to explore the benefits of DE.

Distance education (DE) programmes have been highly praised for being timeless, accessible and cost-effective (Queiros & de Villiers, 2016). For instance, students are given the freedom to manage their time to learn at their convenience. Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) contends that various educational delivery models challenge the limitations of access to higher education. This increasingly factors into the use of digital technology. The author further argues that historically, students were given hardcopies or written education material as opposed to using modern technology where students can self-regulate their own learning. It is undeniable that the digital era has come with many benefits for DE platforms. Online learning has created convenient modes of communication and interactive platforms; for instance, Mays (2016) argues that technology has developed new platforms for interactive learning experiences that were lacking from older visions of DE. Similarly, a study that aimed to explore students' perspectives of online learning reported that interactive learning technology tools such as video discussions and communication boards were essential connections for online distance learning (Queiros & de Villiers, 2016). The benefits of digital technology in DE play such a crucial role currently, especially in consideration of the impact of COVID-19. For example, COVID-19 safety protocols required students to socially distance which resulted in many students using digital platforms for learning purposes (Madiope & Mendy, 2021).

Distance education (DE) is also commended for being cost-effective. Wambua et al. (2019) argue that the revolutionary advancement of technology makes it much easier to offer various methods of study, and as a result, school fees are more affordable compared to campus-based learning. In addition, Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) also concurs and for this reason, many countries advocate for more DE programmes. It is arguable that bridging the distance with online interactive programmes cuts several costs, for example, creating lecturing spaces. In addition, Wambua et al. (2019) contend that programmes offered in DE institutions directly impact students' socio-economic status as they directly impact their career choices. Wambua et al. (2019) further elaborate that these programmes offered are usually directly linked to career advancement which can contribute to the needed competencies in South Africa. In essence, DE plays a significant role in the country as a whole.

Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) argues that many educators were excluded from higher education opportunities due to apartheid legislation; for this reason, ODL plays a crucial role in professional teacher development. Furthermore, Kimathi and Rusznyak (2018) state that under apartheid, teacher training was managed by 19 different government departments which had different requirements. The scholars further state that some training was administered at a low cognitive demand level where only classroom management pedagogies were addressed. Over two decades, four frameworks were established in efforts to further develop teacher training (Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018). The first framework was introduced by the DoE (2000) which outlines the roles of the educator and their associated competencies. Secondly, the SACE Code of Professional Ethics (2002) enhances the teaching profession through the development of ethics for all educators. Thirdly, the criteria for performance evaluation of teachers in the Integrated Quality Management System (2003) aimed at increasing productivity amongst teachers. Lastly, the Basic Competences of a Beginner Teacher which outlines the three mai competencies of teaching: designing and delivering instruction, classroom environment and culture, and professional organisation and collaboration (DHET, 2015). Aluko (2021) argues that for decades, DE has been used to train educators and enhance their skills in an evolving economy. The author further asserts that the continuous development of teachers not only improves their teaching standards but also impacts the learning

outcomes of learners. Therefore, it is arguable that DE played a fundamental role in establishing some of the key structures in teacher training, and it continues to further play a crucial role in teachers' professional development and learning outcomes.

2.4.4 The Limitations of Distance Education

Distance education (DE) enrolment has increased over the years and these higher rates of enrolment can be associated with the successful implementation of the programmes (Madiope & Mendy, 2021). However, Lumadi (2021) reports a higher success rate in conventional higher education which ranges from 66% to 90% pass rate, while DE ranges from 50% to 84%. This gap in performance draws concerns on the possible factors that contribute to low success rates of DE programmes.

One of the common factors identified contributing to lower success rates of DE is student support. For example, Lumadi (2021) views student support as a universal term used by most higher education institutions to describe various ways to assist students to achieve their learning goals. The author states that student support can be categorised into two ways of implementation; firstly, providing teaching methods that lead to the development of students' learning skills, and secondly, ensuring the availability of educational information such as online library resources. A study that explored support in a hybrid teacher education programme reported areas of need which included tutoring services, funding and tutor-student communication (Aluko, 2021). Similary, Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) contends that the ODL approach mostly depends on a functional and effective student support system. There seems to be a common voice in literature which emphasises the importance of student support. Wambua et al. (2019) also state that the academic performances of students are highly influenced by services such as academic advisory and administrative support. Therefore, it is arguable that students enrolled in DE programmes as opposed to traditional higher education institutions, may not have the luxury to access support easily because of the distance element; for this reason, student support services become the core in aiding successful learning outcomes.

Distance education (DE) drop-out rates are also associated with a higher enrolment rate. For instance, Queiros and de Villiers (2016) argue that due to higher enrolment rates, it is not shocking that there is a low success rate in DE as compared to

conventional education. In addition, Saykılı (2018) asserts that higher enrolment rates result in a lesser quality of education as compared to campus-based education. Queiros and de Villiers (2016) further argue that higher enrolment may lead to learner demotivation as a result of limited individual support. Distance education (DE) is highly praised for providing access to large populations and this attribute seems to also foster some concerns in the literature. However, it is critical to note that the influence of high enrolment is not independently influencing the drop-out rate and for this reason, it is crucial to understand the interconnectedness of different factors influencing the low success rate of DE.

Lastly, the role of digital technology has been commended for providing various methods to deliver education content (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). However, there seems to be concern about accessibility to digital tools. For example, Queiros and de Villiers (2016) argue that there is a fine line between the consideration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and also being tech-savvy without compromising the quality of learning. There is no doubt that technology has improved the quality of learning, but it is also important that this new quality of learning is accessible to all students. Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) states that online learning is based on the assumption that every student's learning can be supported by modern technology. In consideration of the role of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, Madiope and Mendy (2021) argue that limited access to digital tools and internet connection became a higher education crisis. In addition, Chetty (2021) reports that the South African government aimed at distributing 50 000 laptops to students from disadvantaged backgrounds that were experiencing challenges learning online with no digital tools. This may have assisted some students, however, it is also arguable that a much larger population may need such assistance and that this may require a lot of funding.

Despite the challenges within DE, this mode of higher education is necessary and continues to gain momentum even to this date. It is necessary that South Africa aims to encourage the success of higher education by exploring how these challenges can be eradicated. This study aimed to achieve this by exploring factors that could enable the BEd Honours (Learner Support) education programme to address inclusive classroom challenge.

2.5 In-Service Training

Over the last few decades in South Africa, the education system has gone through drastic changes which have demanded qualified and trained teachers (Junejo et al., 2017). Holtman et al. (2018) state that despite the educational reforms, inequality in the South African education system is still a challenge. The authors further argue that for this reason, it is essential that policy and practice on teacher development must be aligned. The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011–2025 aims to develop and enhance teacher education in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning (DHET, 2011). In addition, Holtman et al. (2018) stress that South African initiatives in place for in-service training of teachers and DoE policies that advocate for teacher development continue to play a significant role in establishing effective training programmes. Therefore, it is arguable that research on in-service training of teachers is crucial for the further enhancement of teacher education and should be prioritised. Previously a broader conceptualisation of DE was discussed; in this section, the focus is on understanding in-service teacher programmes globally and within the South African context.

2.5.1 Defining In-service Training

Günel and Tanrıverdi (2014) argue that different viewpoints of scholars through time have led to various definitions of in-service training; however, some researchers have established some common ground. The authors further state that due to many changes in the conceptualisation of in-service training, some scholars have renamed in-service training as professional development. In this study, professional development is viewed as a broader concept that includes various ways of enhancing one's profession, for instance, enrolling in a higher education qualification or participating in professional organisations. For this reason, in-service training is defined independently from professional development.

Amadi (2013) defines in-service training as training programmes that are administered to professional teachers to enhance competency. The author further explains that this training can be implemented in various ways, for example, workshops, conferences or through a formal accredited academic course. Similarly,

Günel and Tanrıverdi (2014) define in-service training as planned educational activities aimed at developing and improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals in the educational field. The role of in-service training programmes should not be overlooked; they are a very prominent aspect of establishing an educational system that is adaptable. Junejo et al. (2017) state that trained teachers are more competent and effective because they have enhanced educational practices; furthermore, they are also aware of certain educational responsibilities to be inclusive practitioners. This viewpoint emphasises the role of in-service training programmes in the development of teachers' skills, especially in the context of the evolving education curriculum and new academic challenges.

Training programmes vary according to different learning needs. For instance, a study on educators' needs for professional development was conducted in Saudi Arabia and the findings indicated that educators were faced with the difficulty of teaching from the new textbooks with no professional training (Al-Qahtani, 2015). It is within such a context that in-service training programmes are crucial. Similarly, Stroebel et al. (2019) argue that over the past two decades, the South African restructuring of the curriculum has resulted in unrealistic demands on Life Skills and Life Orientation teachers. The authors stress that teachers have been expected to deliver multidisciplinary concepts of subjects with no training. This undoubtedly illustrates the profound need for in-serving training programmes specific to classroom needs or teaching demands. Moreover, in South Africa, teaching difficulties are severe, especially in rural areas where there is a lack of school-based support (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). In an attempt to understand the role of in-service training in IE, it is crucial to explore both the positive and negative impacts of in-service training programmes in the literature. The following segment discusses the benefits and the problems of in-service training programmes.

2.4.2 The Benefits of In-service Training

Du Plessis (2013) asks a profound question: "Do teachers receive any in-service training, and if so, is it sufficient?" There is definitive evidence of various successfully implemented in-service training for teachers. For instance, a teacher in-service training programme was administered in Greece, and it was aimed at improving

teaching skills, increasing the quality of educational intervention for learners with SEN and improving teacher self-efficacy (Tzivinikou, 2015). Furthermore, this training was reported to be effective because it addressed some of the educational needs by improving self-efficacy. This training is only one among many successfully implemented training; for example, a study conducted in the Pakistan, Karachi Region reported that an in-service training programme offered to Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) teaching staff had a positive impact on the performance of teachers (Junejo et al., 2017). The key benefit that the TVET training achieved seemed to be a common goal for all training, improving teaching practices. Similarly, another study that examined the effectiveness of in-service training for gifted education was conducted and as a result of a one-week training, teachers showed a positive attitude towards self-efficacy for scientific research mentorship and gifted education (Said, 2014). Furthermore, the study highlighted the following as some of the benefits of in-service training: contributing to the field of effective mentoring ability, identifying effective pedagogical approaches and enhancing self-regulating learning. Some of the other benefits of teacher training included better job performance and an increase in academic progression and participation (Omar, 2014). These studies affirm that the development of effective in-service training continues to be a global effort and is crucial for quality teaching.

The pressing question is – is in-service training sufficient? A study that aimed to examine various teacher training programmes using the In-Service Teacher Training Survey Instrument reported that some training proved to be effective; however, there were fewer training incentives and limited programmes administered (Popova et al., 2019). There seems to be a concerning gap between demand for new teaching skills and limited in-service training administered. Therefore, the South African government's attention must be directed towards promoting and developing more training for different learning needs.

In-service training programmes for educators are fundamental to the inclusion of learners with special needs. This research study explored teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in-service training and aimed to understand the role of in-service training in teacher professional development and IE in the South African context.

2.4.3 The Problems of In-service Training

Despite the effectiveness of some training programmes, Dalton et al. (2012) argue that most of the implemented in-service training programmes do not appear to adequately address learning needs. In addition, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) also argue that every year countries invest money and funding in training opportunities such as seminars, talks, workshops and conferences. The authors stress that such platforms result in teachers being passive receivers of information with no active participation; this is referred to as a "style show". Popova et al. (2019) stress that although there is no favourable period training should last, there is empirical data that suggests that a sustained period is more effective as opposed to once-off workshops. Similarly, a study that investigated the problems of training teachers working at primary schools in North Cyprus reported inadequacy of application lessons in the teacher training system (Baskan & Ayda, 2018). There seems to be a lack of content application incorporated into teacher training. Moreover, some teachers argue that in-services training programmes that consist of theoretical materials provided in hardcopies with no further practical applications or demonstrations result in disinterest (Osamwnoyi, 2016). Arguably, interesting and memorable training will require more than just sharing theoretical material. Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017) assert that the most effective training consists of both theoretical and application content; in this way, educators can apply what they learnt in their everyday classrooms. When long hours and days are dedicated to training, teachers have enough time to learn about their own teaching practices, especially in cases where a feedback system is used. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that in-service training programmes are made practical and engaging.

The literature has stressed the implications of a negative teacher attitude towards IE (Boyle et al., 2020; Garbutt et al., 2018; Navarro-Mateu et al., 2020). It has been reported that educators show a negative attitude towards the implementation of IE in mainstream schools as a result of feeling incompetent to support learners with special needs; however, when training is introduced to enhance competency, the negative attitude towards the training seems evident. Galaterou and Antoniou (2017) argue that negative teacher attitude towards training programmes on inclusivity reflects school management beliefs and attitudes. In other words, if the school

leadership shows no support and participation in training programmes, teachers will mirror this negative attitude. Baskan and Ayda (2018) state that some of the problems in teacher training are a result of inadequate school management demonstrating the interest to learn. Moreover, a study that aimed to evaluate if the DBE could provide proper in-service training for teachers to comply with the challenges of the implementation of a new national curriculum, reported that school principals did not attend training (du Plessis, 2013). Actions are a demonstration of attitudes and opinions; therefore, school leaders will need to lead by example.

In-service training can also be ineffective depending on how they are planned and carried out. For instance, a study conducted in Turkey indicated that some teachers found the training administered ineffective because the content was redundant (Ayvaz et al., 2018). Similarly, Holtman et al. (2018) argue that teacher training has been criticised for decontextualised material that is not aligned with classroom challenges. Decontextualised material is a result of a lack of careful administration and planning before establishing an in-service training programme. Ayvaz et al. (2018) further argue that how the in-service training programmes are carried out can either have a positive or negative impact on teachers' experiences and for this reason, in-service training planning stages are critical. Omar (2014) adds to this argument by stating that it is imperative to determine what teachers' needs are in classrooms before training is carried out and administered. Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) refer to decontextualised training as "woefully inadequate" because they are academically inclined and are disassociated from realistic classroom needs or interests. Arguably, irrelevant content is a reflection of rushed planning which results in training on what is assumed to be the challenges in schools, instead of classroom needs teachers actually experience. This study aimed to uncover teachers' classroom needs by exploring teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) training.

Lastly, the most pressing issue with in-service training programmes is the lack of resources. Resources may include, but are not limited to, capital and facilities that come from formal structures such as the government district offices (Adewumi et al., 2019). Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) argue that many government districts spend so much funding investing in one-day programmes and the return of the funds is

"weak" training and outcomes. On the other hand, Tzivinikou (2015) argues that due to a lack of facilities, in-service training is usually administered over one or two days with content that requires a week to cover. There seems to be confusion on whether governmental resources are being wasted on one to two days of in-service training or if the few days of training are a result of limited resources. The South African policy briefing on DE states that the expansion and implementation of DE will move slowly and not drift due to pressure, to ensure that training programmes are designed carefully (DHET, 2014). In addition, Holtman et al. (2018) state that it is evident that the role of government officials plays a significant role in the implementation of in-service training for teachers. Therefore, it is arguable that governmental resources have an important role in the manner in which in-service training is administered. In consideration of the limited resources, the establishment of more carefully planned and well-invested in-service training programmes will take more time. Hence, it is very important to ensure that the few training programmes that are established, are adequately addressing important issues at the forefront of the basic education system. This study explored teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training programme to understand some of the challenges that teachers experience within the programme.

2.4.4 Factors That Can Enable Effective In-service Training

The debate on the quality versus the quantity of teacher education training continues (Baskan & Ayda, 2018). What should be considered more important – more in-service training or more high-quality training? This study argues for the importance of in-service training that effectively addresses teachers' classroom needs to implement IE. However, it is also critical to explore what is considered to be an effective and successful in-service training programme. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified six elements that make teacher training effective.

The first element Hammond et al. (2017) identified is content focus; the authors argue that training that shows focus on specific curriculum content provides more support to teachers' learning needs in the classroom context. Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) also concur with this viewpoint; they argue that successful training shows a focus on subject matter such as mathematics or history which provides

teachers with a complex and rich understanding of the subject matter. Likewise, Popova et al. (2019) state that a focused training programme equips teachers with subject pedagogy and is most likely to highly contribute to the learners' learning process. There are various challenges within the education system, hence the demand for teacher training. However, it is crucial that training does not juggle all subject matter, but rather focuses on one problem at a time, depending on the demand.

Secondly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that training should include active learning which encompasses opportunities for practical experiences that will improve teaching methods. The authors further state that active learning is not limited to real-life experiences but may also include demonstrations, observations, mock lessons and video or written case discussions. Correspondingly, du Plessis (2013) affirms that training should consist of varying activities that give teachers the opportunities to actively participate. It is a crucial part of learning to interact with the educational material as opposed to being a passive receiver of information (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015). In addition, Baskan and Ayda (2018) stress that the most concerning problem is providing teacher training that only consists of theoretical educational materials. Therefore, it is arguable that an effective training programme should consist both of theoretical and practical content.

Thirdly, successful in-service training supports collaborations and interactions. For instance, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that high-quality training creates the space for educators to interact with each other. Face-to-face is not the only platform of interaction; for example, Mays (2016) argues that technology has developed several platforms of collaboration. These may include discussion boards, video discussions and conference calls (Queiros & de Villiers, 2016). Furthermore, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) state that training should consist of collegial sharing opportunities which give the teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching strategies. For this reason, educators must have the platforms to share their experiences and draw knowledge from each other.

The fourth element identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) is coaching or support. The authors argue that it is crucial that training provides individual attention to specific areas of concern that are specific to each teacher's classroom. Furthermore, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) argue that such training programmes are achievable if they are tailored according to a specific need or a knowledge gap. Professionals and government districts play such an important role in demonstrating training support. For instance, Holtman et al. (2018) argue that many government districts in African countries have shown financial support by funding several in-service training programmes, however, few governmental officials attend such training. It seems that there are several ways to support educators through their training period; moreover, it is also essential that there are opportunities to be coached on classroom-specific matters.

High-quality teacher training programmes also consist of platforms to receive feedback. For example, Popova et al. (2019) point out that a good reflective opportunity can be achieved through formative assessment where educators can track their progress towards their teaching goals. On the other hand, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that reflection can be done through demonstrations or teaching instruction which gives teachers the opportunity to analyse their teaching practices and also receive input. In addition, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) state that it is crucial that the feedback is constructive and non-prescriptive.

Lastly, effective training is implemented for a sustained duration of time. For instance, du Plessis (2013) argues that longer duration training gives educators enough time to learn more about their teaching practices and includes a follow-up session to ensure every aspect of the subject matter has been covered. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) state that effective teacher training should occur for a few weeks, months or even academic years, as opposed to once-off training. Moreover, Baskan and Ayda (2018) argue that short duration training often results in rushed content with insufficient practical activities. In consideration of other elements mentioned previously, they can only be implemented if more time is allocated to the training. Therefore, it is arguable that longer sustained training leaves room for more peer interactive lessons, follow-up sessions, active learning and coaching sessions. Therefore, the literature seems to lean towards the quality of training over quantity

(Baskan & Ayda, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Holtman et al., 2018; Popova et al., 2019); the value is placed on in-service training that has proven to effectively address teachers' classroom needs.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The reviewed literature has contributed to the choice of theoretical framework for this study. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory served as a theoretical framework for exploring teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in-service training. This framework provided a comprehensive approach to understanding teachers' experiences of the academic in-service training programme on IE.

In 1979, Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory in relation to human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that all creatures can be apprehended and investigated through a continuous, connected and complex interplay between systems. He argued that every individual is rooted in various ingrained systems and that development is a product of complex interactions between the individual and multiple systemic factors or components that influence each other (Kamenopoulou, 2016). Du Plessis (2013) describes systems as configurations of parts that are interlinked and connected by a complex web of relationships. The author further states that systems are interdependent and continuously interact to form a whole. The ecological systems theory allows the exploration of a phenomenon in its context by focusing on both individual and contextual factors.

According to Mahlo (2017), there is interconnectedness between an individual's development and the general context in which they function. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stresses that the general context can be identified in four systems or layers. The four systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Mahlo, 2017). The microsystem is the innermost level that consists of immediate interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and the mesosystem is a link between two or more microsystems (Visser & Moleko, 2012). The exosystem is defined as two or more settings interacting with each other without the need for an individual's active participation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), while the macrosystem is a broader system that encompasses class, culture or race (Visser & Moleko, 2012). Bronfenbrenner's

(1979) ecological theory highlights that as individuals, we are influenced by a variety of factors that function in different systems, and in order to understand an individual's experience, such factors need to be considered.

These systems give a broader perspective of an individual and form a network of relationships which are in continuous interaction (Visser & Moleko, 2012). The major concern in the literature revolves around the lack of in-service training specific to teachers' needs (Ayvaz et al., 2018; Omar, 2014). Bronfenbrenner's theory explains that schools are at the micro-level of the system in education, where the policies of inclusion are practically implemented and therefore, if there are challenges in implementation, this will affect all levels (Mahlo, 2017).

By incorporating this theory into this study, different systems that interacted and influenced teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) training were considered to gain a broader in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE. Teachers do not exist in isolation, and all the systems determine whether they will be successful in implementing IE – this includes in-service training programmes specific to their classroom needs effectively planned and implemented at other levels of the system. This theory assisted the researcher in understanding teachers' perspectives from the broader lens of all factors that may have contributed to their experiences. Figure 2.1 shows the complexity and the interconnectedness of the four different systems or layers of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory.

In conceptualization of the below diagram (figure 2.1); the individuals in the context of this study can be regarded as learners with learning disability and the teachers would be placed at a microsystem level. This would entail that the implementers of the training on inclusive education would be in the mesosystem level and the University offering the training would be part of the exosystem. Lastly, the macrosystem would consist of government officials and educational specialist that have made way for in-service training programmes like the BEd Hons to be established through policy formation. This elucidates the interconnectedness of systems that needs to be considered in exploring the effectiveness of in-service training programmes on implementing IE.

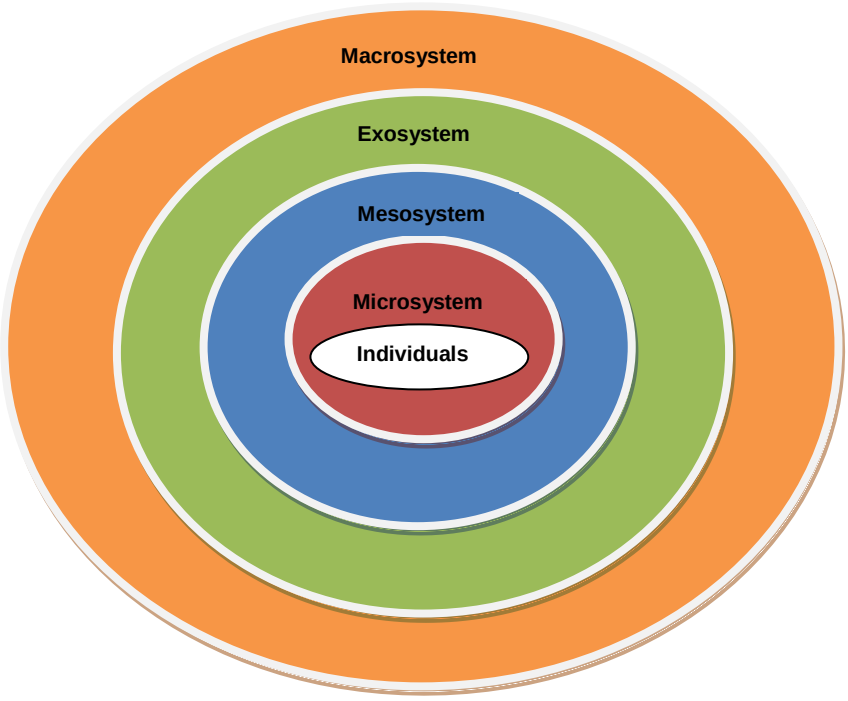

Figure 2.1: The illustration of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Visser & Moleko, 2012)

2.6 Summary

Inclusive education (IE) is still one of the challenges in the education system worldwide (Haug, 2017). This chapter discussed IE policies and practices. Furthermore, South Africa, alongside other African countries has amended policies to develop and implement in-service training (Dalton et al., 2012). These policies have resulted in several in-service training programmes administered nationally (Osamwonyi, 2016). This chapter also discussed DE policies, roles and limitations as a broader umbrella of in-service training programmes. In-service training programmes are important to the development of teachers, and they have several benefits which include increasing the academic participation of learners (Osamwonyi, 2016). Although there are benefits to these training programmes, there are several problems highlighted in the literature (Ayvaz-Tuncel & Cobanoglu, 2018; Omar, 2014; Osamwonyi, 2016). The main concern with in-service training programme administration is that the government does not consider the obtained knowledge and skills educators have, instead they train educators on what they

already know (Osamwonyi, 2016). This is due to a lack of a needs analysis done before in-service training programmes are administered (Ayvaz et al., 2018). In-service training programmes should be planned according to identified educational needs and more in-service training programmes need to be introduced to adequately address educators' needs in classrooms.

Moreover, this study can be understood through a broad theoretical framework. The framework adopted from literature is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, which argues that individuals are influenced by a variety of factors that function in different systems, and in order to understand an individual's experience, such factors need to be considered (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This framework provided a comprehensive approach to understanding the teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE in a broader context. The next chapter will focus on the methodological approach of this study and the research processes used to carry out the study.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, the theoretical framework of the study was discussed alongside a literature review of the central concepts of the study. In this chapter, the study's research methods and procedures are discussed. The point of departure is the discussion of the underlying philosophical perspective driving the methodology of this study. This entails that the paradigmatic perspectives are discussed adjacent to the purpose of the study. Furthermore, a methodological choice is justified and discussed in-depth by exploring the strengths and limitations of qualitative research. This chapter also focuses on the process of research used to collect data, sample participants and analyse data. Lastly, ethical aspects of the study are also discussed in relation to the quality criteria and measures to control for credibility.

3.2 Paradigmatic Perspective

The term paradigm is derived from a Greek word that means patterns (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In educational research, a paradigm is referred to as the worldview or a set of beliefs that inform the interpretation of data; these beliefs are the lens that the researcher uses to view the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In this study, worldview and paradigm terminologies are used interchangeably. Paradigms have a significant influence on the research process; this includes making decisions about the methodological approach and research methods. There are four main paradigmatic perspectives: post-positivism, social constructivism, advocacy and pragmatism (Creswell, 2007). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that post-positivism represents more of the traditional methods of research that hold the assumptions that the truth cannot be proven but can be rejected. In addition, Creswell (2007) states that researchers that hold these assumptions seek to make claims that are refined, rejected, accepted or abandoned about the world. The second worldview is known as pragmatic and it holds the assumption that the truth works at the time and that reality is independent of the mind (Creswell, 2007). This paradigm gives researchers the freedom of choice because they are offered the space to not commit

to one reality. The third paradigm is known as advocacy or participatory which was formed by individuals who felt that post-positivism did not recognise marginalised people or social justice issues that needed to be addressed (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, the social constructivist worldview holds the assumption that individuals seek to understand the world they live in which results in subjective meanings of experiences (Creswell, 2007). This paradigm is used interchangeably with the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm was the selected paradigm perspective that directed this study, and for the purpose of this study, it is discussed in-depth.

The interpretive paradigm approach aims to gain insight into the underlying meaning behind a specific event (Willig, 2013). Creswell (2007) states that people develop a subjective meaning of their experiences or an event. This entails that there are multiple meanings to understanding a phenomenon. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that according to this worldview reality is socially constructed, unlike post-positivism which argues that reality is stable and measurable. The interpretative paradigm similar to postmodernism celebrates diversity in ideas, experiences and perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). What does this mean for researchers? Creswell (2007) argues that researchers that adopt this paradigm use it to understand experiences in their complexities, instead of generalising them across populations. This means that researchers must rely on participants' views or experiences.

The interpretive paradigm positioned this study at an advantage as it allowed a diverse way of experiencing participants' experiences in different contexts and cultures. The paradigm assisted the study with insight into the meaning attached to participants' experiences. Due to the uniqueness of participants, the study not only describes the experiences of participants but also shows an in-depth understanding of the experiences in a social context. Although the paradigm benefited the study, some limitations needed to be controlled. In an attempt to understand experiences in their complexities, the study could be subjected to biased data. In other words, researchers may influence the research process and the data with their preconceived assumptions (Wahyuni, 2012). This limitation was controlled by keeping a reflective journal to make notes on possible assumptions and beliefs held through the research process – this is illustrated in Figure 3.2. Furthermore, the

complexities of individual uniqueness that the researcher aims to understand not only leads to possible biased data but also makes it impossible to generalise data across other people and various contexts (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This leaves a question of validity and the usefulness of the research outcomes (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). To control this, the research processes are described in-depth to ensure the transferability of the study.

In efforts to gain a comprehensive understanding of paradigms, ontology, epistemology and axiology are discussed. These beliefs form part of paradigms.

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is a belief system that argues about the nature of the world; it informs us about the world and what we learn about it (Leavy, 2017). Terre et al. (2012) assert that ontology asks the question of what is considered to be real. The authors further state that ontology explains the nature of reality that needs to be studied. Interpretivism perspectives argue from a relativist ontological point of view, in which a single phenomenon has various interpretations (Hammersley, 2013). Individuals experience a phenomenon differently because every individual is unique in the way they make sense of experiences. This entails that individuals have various assumptions or beliefs that shape their reality (Levers, 2013). In essence, when researchers take an ontological stance, they need to understand that their perspectives on what is considered to be real may differ from what participants consider as their reality.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology forms the basis of what is considered to be knowledge. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) also state that epistemology can be described as the nature of knowledge. Daily, we continuously engage in constructing and reconstructing meaning – through such processes, we form the basis of knowledge (Leavy, 2017). When discussing knowledge it is crucial to identify the knower. Terre et al. (2012) argue that epistemology shows the relationship evident between the knower and what could be known. In this context, it is necessary to understand researchers as the knowers, who navigate through the research process of establishing what can be

known. Interpretivist perspectives argue that facts are not objective but are subjective (Leavy, 2017). Therefore, researchers that adopt an interpretivist approach must understand that what can be known is subjective interpretations.

3.2.3 Axiology

Axiology is a term that was derived from the Greek word '*axios*', which means worthy or logos referring to a study of values and judgement (Leavy, 2017). In summary, axiology can be viewed as values. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argue that axiology can also be referred to as the ethical issues that need to be considered during a research process – this includes making the "right" decisions. The authors further state that this process involves an in-depth understanding of right and wrong behaviour in research. Furthermore, Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2016) argue that a research study can either be value-bound or value-free. This study adopted an interpretivist approach, therefore, the study is value-bound. This entails that the researcher is viewed as an important part of research and plays a role in what is being researched.

3.3 Methodological Approach

There are three methodological research approaches – qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Quantitative research is an approach used for testing objectives and exploring the relationship amongst the variables (Creswell, 2014). Willig (2013) argues that quantitative research methods should not be viewed as the polar opposite of qualitative methods but rather as different ends of a continuum. Furthermore, the author defines qualitative research as an approach centred on understanding the meaning of a phenomenon. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define qualitative research as research methods directed at understanding how people make sense of the world through their experiences, beliefs and ideas. Lastly, the mixed-methods approach is an integration of both qualitative and quantitative research processes (Creswell, 2014). All these methods are important in research; however, they are used differently according to the purpose of the research study. In consideration of this study's objectives, the qualitative approach is discussed in-depth.

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

There are various definitions of the qualitative research approach according to a variety of academic disciplines and it is applied in various forms (Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) describes five features that distinguish qualitative research from other forms of social science research: studies the meaning of lived experiences; represents viewpoints in a study; accounts for real-world issues; provides insights that may assist in describing social behaviour, and does not rely on a single source but explores multiple sources of evidence. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified four characteristics of a qualitative research study: firstly, the qualitative approach focuses on the process of understanding and uncovering subjective meanings; secondly, researchers are viewed as the key instrument of data collection and analysis; thirdly, the approach works with an inductive process where small pieces of information are gathered into one; lastly, results are presented in a rich descriptive manner. These features cover various definitions of qualitative research.

Contrary to a quantitative research approach, the qualitative research approach explores the meaning of human experiences or problems that individuals ascribe to. This research approach aims to understand in-depth, individualised and contextualised experiences (Patton, 2014). The focus is on a phenomenon that takes place in a natural context with the aim to study the phenomenon in its complexity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Qualitative research has several advantages. This approach collects rich and holistic data through research that occurs in a naturalistic field (Tracy, 2013). This allows for a flexible structure to follow unexpected ideas during the research process (Mohajan, 2018). In addition, this approach studies context which provides insight into sensitive lived experiences (Willig, 2013). In this study, the context was teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learning Support). This methodological approached was chosen and guided by the theoretical framework of this study. The Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory allows the study to explore teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learning Support) from a broader interlinked perspective; hence, this methodological approach was most appreciated for the context of the study. Qualitative research gives a platform for researchers to interpret viewpoints or lived experiences in a third

voice (Rahman, 2016). This made way for the research study to explore individualised and contextualised experiences in-depth.

The qualitative approach also has potential challenges. The researcher's bias and experience may be evident in the interpretation of the data (Willig, 2013). To control the bias, a reflective journal was kept acknowledging potential biases and how they may influence findings (see Figure 3.2). Other factors threaten the reliability of a qualitative research study. The presence of the researcher may influence the responses of participants, which may alter the findings of the study (Mohajan, 2018). For this reason, this study debriefed participants to ensure that they were not intimidated by the presence of the researcher during data collection. Qualitative researchers collect data from multiple sources, which may result in a lengthy and time-consuming process (Rahman, 2016). However, this was not an issue because the study had a small selected sample. The issue of time sensitivity may also be evident during the process of data interpretation and data analysis (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research cannot statistically be representative, however, it can be transferred (Mohajan, 2018). Nonetheless, replicating the data can be very challenging.

3.4 Research Design

Creswell (2014) defines a research design as plans and measures of research that elucidate the broader underlying assumptions. The author further states that these plans determine and guide decisions regarding data collection and data analysis. There are various research designs unique to a specific research methodological approach. The qualitative research approach has six main research designs: ethnography, grounded theory, narrative research, case study, phenomenological research and action or participatory research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethnography design aims to understand cultural groups over a prolonged period, and grounded theory focuses on building a theory through meaning derived from data (Creswell, 2014). On the other hand, narrative research focuses on making sense of stories or natives, and case studies investigate cases in real-life contexts that may lack evidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, action research studies seek transformative changes through active participation in research and

phenomenological research focuses on exploring a specific phenomenon of interest (Leavy, 2017). As important as it is to consider the purpose of the research study to make a methodological choice, the same applies when making a research design decision. Creswell (2014) asserts that it is crucial to assess the nature of the study before making a research design choice. For these reasons, the research design used for this study is phenomenological.

3.4.1 Phenomenological Research Design

Wertz et al. (2011) state that phenomenological design emerged from Edmund Husserl's work which developed it from a philosophical perspective. Similarly, Shi (2011) argues that this design can be used in two contexts: philosophically or methodologically. Philosophically, this design provides an outlook on how to view the world and methodologically, it illustrates how to conduct a qualitative research study. In this study, the phenomenological research design is defined from a methodological perspective.

There are various definitions of phenomenological design. For instance, Creswell (2014) argues that phenomenological design is used to describe an individual's experiences of a specific phenomenon. On the other hand, Patton (2014) states that this design investigates how people experience the world. In essence, researchers that use this design illustrate how words and concepts can distort and give structure to individual experiences. The aim is to identify the human experiences of research participants and understand these experiences objectively from the researcher's assumptions (Creswell, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identify three strategies that are unique to phenomenological design. The first strategy is phenomenological reduction which is a process of revisiting the data to draw meaning. The second strategy is horizontalisation which includes the process of laying out all the data to treat it as equally important. Lastly, imaginative variation involves viewing data from various perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In essence, all three strategies bring focus on the description of research participants' experiences intending to objectively gain a deeper understanding of the nature of individual experiences.

There are various forms of phenomenological research design (Vagle, 2018), and for this study, the interpretative phenomenological approach is described in-depth. The

interpretative phenomenological design aims to uncover the meaning underlying experiences (Vagle, 2018). Different individuals may experience the same phenomenon; however, the meaning drawn from the experience may differ from one individual to another. This design illustrates how shared experiences are mutually understood and how there can be various meanings drawn from the same experience (Patton, 2014).

The phenomenological research design was used in this study for the following benefits: it allowed an exploration of teachers' experiences of the academic in-service training programme and also enabled the researcher to uncover the underlying meanings drawn from those experiences. It provided an opportunity for a systematic reflection on fundamental components of in-service training. This design also allowed the researcher to address the primary research question by exploring participants' experiences and perspectives (Willig, 2013). Although this design was beneficial to this study, some challenges could have compromised the validity and reliability of the study. One of the fundamental dilemmas in using phenomenological research is the issue of objectivity versus subjectivity. The researcher drawing meaning from participants' experiences raises ethical concerns of potential bias (Vagle, 2018). The controversial question is – can researchers avoid projecting their personal experience during data analysis? (Shi, 2011). To answer this question, Shi (2011) argues that the researcher can bracket their assumptions during data analysis to ensure that the phenomenology is a rigorous form of knowledge. In application to Shi's (2011) argument, a reflective journal was used during data analysis to reflect on possible assumptions that may have impacted the findings of the study.

3.5 Context of the Study

The present study was conducted online through telephonic interviews. For this reason, this study regards the University of Pretoria as the context of the study because the sample was drawn from this context. The University of Pretoria is one of the top universities in Africa. The university consists of seven campuses with the Groenkloof campus being the specific context of this study. Groenkloof campus is specifically for students enrolled within the Faculty of Education, and the participants

of this study were enrolled at the Unit for Distance Education for a BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme. The programme is offered with a minimum of one year and a maximum of four years of part-time study. The BEd Honours (Learner Support) offers the following subjects areas: educational research methodology, philosophy and social imperative of education, curriculum development, identification of learners 'needs, research proposal, learning support, research report, early intervention in numeracy and literacy. This training programme was selected as the area of focus because it covers certain aspects of inclusivity in classroom such as identification of learners 'needs and learning support. Therefore, it is arguable that a study that focuses on the BEd Honours (Learner Support) may contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of inclusive education.

3.6 Research Participants

3.6.1 Selection of Participants

There are two basic categories for selecting participants, non-probability and probability sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, non-probability purposive sampling was used to select research participants. Purposive sampling can be defined as selecting participants based on the purpose of their participation in the study and can only take on a small sample size (Guest et al., 2017). This sampling method reflects the purpose of the study and directs the researcher in identifying participants that are information-rich about the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The small number of individuals specific to the study was selected from a larger population size, and the findings become a representation of different perspectives on the phenomenon central to the study. There are different types of purposive sampling; typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience and snowball (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Convenience and unique purposive sampling were used in this study. Convenience sampling is referred to as a sample used for advantageous reasons, for example, convenient access to research sites (Omona, 2013). Sample selection solely based on this sampling does not produce rich information; hence, this study also used unique purposive sampling. Unique purposive sampling is based on the occurrence of a unique phenomenon of

interest; this determines the selection criterion of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

These methods of selection were suitable for this study because they guided the study to the selection criterion of relevant research participants. Unique participants enabled the researcher to generate rich information that addressed the research questions of this study. The convenient purposive sampling method also benefited the study because it reduced a large population size to a small sample size (Willig, 2013) and due to the small sample size, data collection and analysis were done effectively (Willig, 2013). The data collection was not only done effectively, but it was also time conscious.

The sample criterion for this study included: (1) qualified teachers enrolled in a DE programme known as the BEd Honours specializing in Learning Support at the University of Pretoria, (2) residing in Pretoria, Gauteng South Africa. There were no criterion based on age, gender, and years of teaching, as they were inapplicable to the study.

As soon as the sample was established using a convenient and unique sample, a letter of permission was submitted to the Dean of the Education Faculty, University of Pretoria. After the Dean approved the study, the Unit for Distance Education (UDE) reached out to teachers enrolled in the BEd Honours (Learning Support) to participate in the study. Teachers interested in participating in the research study further reached out to the Student Administration of the UDE to schedule the interviews.

3.6.2 Sample Size

The sample size is essential to a qualitative research study. The sample decision has a fundamental impact on the richness of data (Omona, 2013). The consideration of the sample size is determined by the information obtained during data collection (Omona, 2013). The primary criterion is to ensure limited redundancy; hence, new information can be terminated at any time during data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is also referred to as data saturation, when information has reached a

point of redundancy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In consideration of data saturation, the selected sample size in this study was eight participants.

Using a small sample size made it easier to analyse the data and also less time-consuming. However, a small sample size raises ethical issues on generalizability (Ormrod, 2014). Data findings of a study that uses a small sample cannot be generalised across a large population as compared to quantitative research studies. To control this, this study cannot be generalised, but it can be transferred by providing contextual features of the study, so the findings can be inferred from those that apply in another study (Willig, 2013). This study sampled from a large population of 2337 learners admitted in DE Education Faculty, University of Pretoria. Figure 3.1 below illustrates how convenient and unique purposive sampling narrowed down the large population size to a small size of eight research participants.

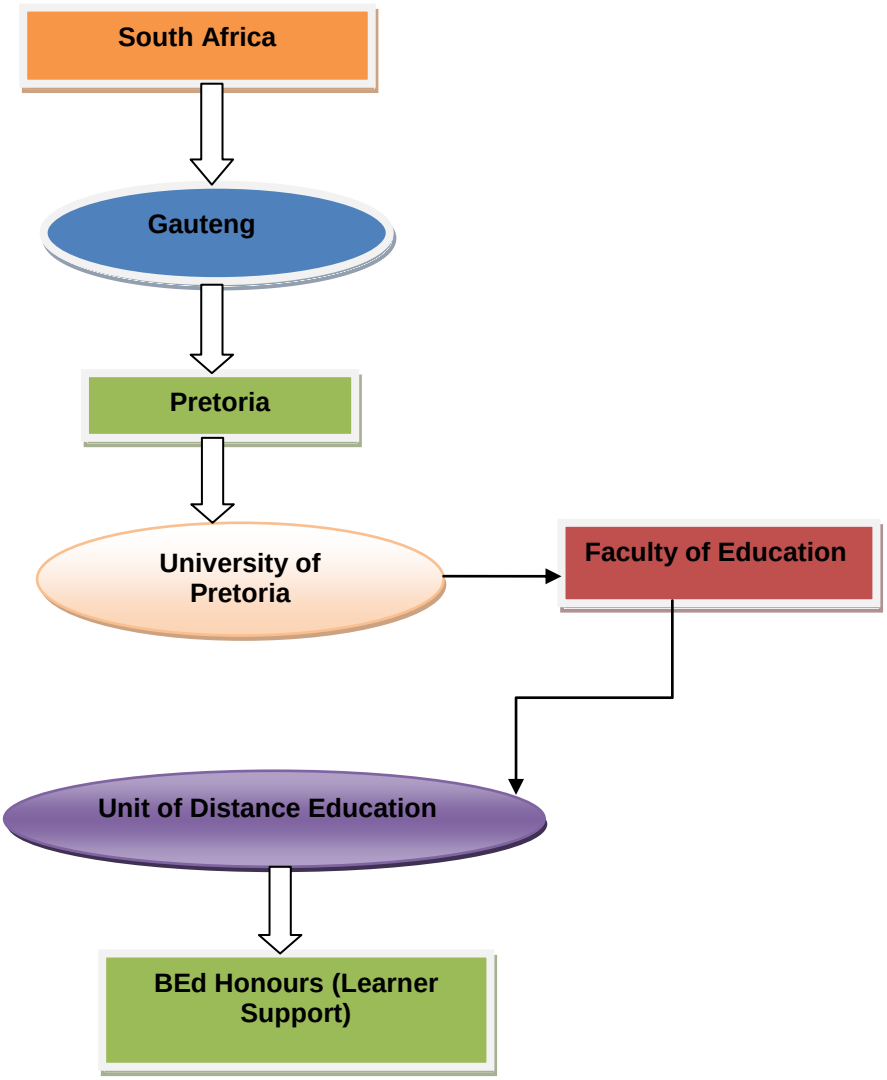

Figure 3.1: Sampling from a large population to a small sample size using convenience and unique purposive sampling

3.7 Data Collection and Documentation

In this study, interviews were used as the data collection strategy. Tracy (2013) defines interviews as questions and answers that demonstrate interaction amongst people. This method of data collection is used by most researchers for several benefits. Qualitative research interviews provide the opportunity to mutually understand the phenomenon (Willig, 2013). The researcher becomes proactive in seeking an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation; however, the respondents also gain more mindfulness and understanding from their own experience through the construction of meaning during the interview. Interviews also give participants the opportunity to account for events that cannot be observed (Willig, 2013). Contrary to diaries, interviews are uncomplicated, and this was beneficial because fewer participants withdrew from the study. Lastly, through interviews, researchers can clarify assumptions that they carry into the study (Tracy, 2013). However, this not only assists researchers with gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon but also accounts for their subjectivity.

Leavy (2017) argues that there are three common ways in which interviews can be conducted: structured, unstructured and semi-structured. The author argues that structured interviews involve planned questions that are addressed in the same order and wording. Leavy (2017) argues that structured interviews are criticised for lack of flexibility and depth. On the other hand, Patton (2014) defines unstructured interviews as the opposite of structured interviews, flexible and conversational. The author further asserts that these interviews encourage participation, creativity and adaptability. However, they are discouraged because they require one to have the skills to probe, understand social cues and display the art of active listening (Leavy, 2017). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used and they are further discussed in-depth.

3.7.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a combination of both structured and unstructured interviews, and they include guided questions that permit flexibility to ask follow-up questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In essence, the researcher uses questions that form the foundation of the interviews and probe other questions depending on the answers given. Semi-structured interviews were suitable for the study because they allowed the researcher to explore experiences that could not be observed (Patton, 2014), and to obtain more rich and detailed information. However, a potential challenge with this strategy is biased responses from participants due to the presence of the researcher (Creswell, 2009). To control this, rapport was built and a professional relationship with participants was maintained to ensure transparency.

Leavy (2017) argues that various scholars introduced different types of semi-interviews used according to various research goals; these include respondent interviews, narrative interviews, life story interviews, discursive interviews, deliberate naiveté, pedagogical interviews, friendship models and confrontational interviews. The semi-structured interviews in this study can be classified under respondent interviews because they were uniquely made for participants with the appropriate experiences aligned to the research objectives. In addition, the researcher and participants collaborated in creating a coherent narrative (Leavy, 2017).

Telephonic interviews were selected over face-to-face interviews for various reasons. Conducting the interviews telephonically eliminated the possibility of geographical constraints (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants of this study were geographically scattered over Pretoria, South Africa. Conducting the interviews allowed the participants to participate in the study in a convenient space. In consideration of the global COVID-19 pandemic, conducting the interviews telephonically was also a health measure to prevent possible exposure. Telephonic interviews are critiqued for possibly compromising confidentiality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was not an issue because participants were advised to participate in the interviews alone and the researcher's telephone was not compromised by any threats of confidentiality.

To conduct the semi-structured telephonic interviews, teachers enrolled in the BEd Honours programme were contacted by the Unit of Distance Education of the University of Pretoria to participate in this research study. The eight participants that were interested signed an informed consent form to agree to the interview. Thereafter, with allocated time and date availability, the telephonic interviews were conducted.

3.7.2 Audio Recording

The most commonly used form of data documentation is audio recording (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Audio-recording of interviews allows for data preservation which plays a role in data analysis. In this study, the interviews were audio-recorded with a smartphone to capture data. Participants agreed for the researcher to use an audio-recording device during the interviews by signing an informed consent form. Furthermore, the device was placed next to the phone during the telephonic interviews to ensure the voices were audible.

Audio recording has potential drawbacks, and these include technical problems with the recording device (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To control for this, an extra device was placed on standby to counteract any potential technical complications. Furthermore, recording may bring a sense of uneasiness to participants affecting their responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To mitigate this, participants were debriefed about the aim of the study, interview questions and the audio recording. This was done to ensure that participants were comfortable with the setup of the interview.

3.7.3 Field Notes

To complement the audio recording of the interviews, field notes were also taken to document the data. This process was done to take note of the fundamental questions to ask during the interviews and to note additional questions that might be asked during or at the end of the interview (Willig, 2013). Tracy (2013) argues that good field notes include the following: clarity, vividness, richness, tacit knowledge, individualistic interpretations and noting data. These notes may be informal; however, they are as important as transcribed data (Willig, 2013).

The notebook was also used to capture information that the recording could not capture. This included additional speech insights such as silence, pauses and emphasis. Although field notes are beneficial, there is a potential drawback: participants' uneasiness. Taking notes during the interviews can easily get distracting for interviewees. This was not a concern because the interviews were conducted telephonically; therefore, participants did not witness any field notes being taken. Although this was the case, participants were still briefed about the researcher's field notes. Figure 3.2 illustrates some of the field notes taken during the data collection stage.

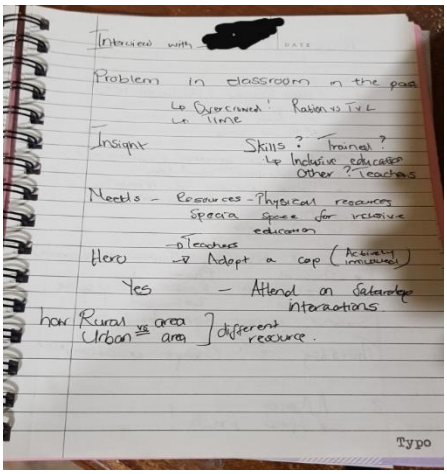

Figure 3.2: A picture showing field notes taken during the interview process

3.7.4 Researcher's Journal

This study came from an interpretative phenomenological viewpoint which makes the researchers' assumptions and prior knowledge potentially impactful to the findings of the study (Willig, 2013). To be mindful of these assumptions, a reflective journal was kept throughout the research process to take note of feelings and thoughts during and after interviews. The researcher's journal began with the process of jotting down raw records of the assumptions of the research study. This process allowed the researcher to re-enter the context and revisit previous and present assumptions of the study, and this assisted the researcher to reflect on the potential biasness of the findings.

3.7.5 Transcription

Transcribing is a practice that is prominent in qualitative research. Transcribing is referred to as a representational process of translating sound into text (Davidson, 2009). This also entails that researchers use a process of active listening where interactions are transcribed. Similarly, Flick (2014) argues that transcription is the representation of verbal and paralinguistic behaviour. Transcribing all features of the interactions in interviews is impossible, hence, researchers are faced with making informed decisions about what to include in the transcripts according to the purpose of the research study (Davidson, 2009). In this study, verbatim transcription was used. Verbatim transcription refers to the translation of sound to text word-for-word (Loubere, 2017). This method can be time-consuming; however, this allows researchers to familiarise themselves with the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This can be viewed as the first step of data analysis.

This study also used denaturalised transcription; this is defined as a form of transcription that eliminates elements of speech such as voice pitches, pauses or stutters (Davidson, 2009). Denaturalised transcription was used as an ethical measure to prevent psychological harm (Loubere, 2017). This was mostly suggested by participants through the method of member-checking. This involved giving participants completed transcripts to approve with commentaries (Rowley, 2012). Member-checking was insightful because the elements of speech used before member-checking made participants appear less articulate.

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is aimed at providing interpretations and contextual descriptions through a back-and-forth movement with data in an attempt to build in-depth understanding (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). The data analysis method used for this study is thematic data analysis.

3.8.1 Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is defined as a systemic process of searching for themes from the data set (Willig, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) also define this as a strategy to

identify and discuss themes that exist within collected data. This entails that the researcher identifies common threads from the information provided by participants, and this can be achieved through grouping information into themes. Thematic analysis design allows the researcher to collectively make sense of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The key word in thematic analysis is themes. Themes depend on whether the researcher captures something relevant to the research purpose and aim (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Thematic analysis benefited this study in several ways. It allowed for thick and rich descriptive information about the phenomenon under investigation (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). In other words, this method allowed the study to fully explore the teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learning Support) in-depth. Thematic analysis is a highly flexible approach (Nowell et al., 2017). This means that it can be adjusted according to the needs of the research study. It is also very easy to use, especially for new researchers (Nowell et al., 2017). The data is easy to handle because it summarises key components of large data. However, thematic analysis also has potential challenges which could compromise the validity of the study. Firstly, the method can be time-consuming (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). To control this, a systematic approach was used to analyse the data and an appropriate time frame was allocated to data analysis. Secondly, thematic analysis relies heavily on the researcher's insight to find the underlying meaning (Willig, 2013). To control this, notes were taken at every step of the analysis to ensure that the study could be replicated. Additional to this, a reflective diary was kept to take notes of any subjective assumptions. Thirdly, there is limited literature on thematic analysis, which may have created uncertainty on how to analyse data. To control this, the researcher used the thematic analysis steps provided by Braun and Clark (2013) as a guide to analysing the data.

3.8.2 Thematic Analysis Steps

Thematic analysis is widely used and there is no linear way of using it. For this reason, the data was analysed and interpreted according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic data analysis:

Step1: Data familiarity

This step involves the process of researchers immersing themselves in the data. The first step is the foundation of data analysis. Creswell (2009) explains this as a moment to get a sense of what kind of information is obtained. In agreement with Creswell (2009), Braun and Clark (2006) stress that verbal transcription is a good strategy to get a sense of what data is obtained. In application of this argument, the transcripts were read repeatedly while noting ideas.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

In this step, the researcher begins listing interesting ideas obtained from reading transcripts. Information is arranged into segments. Creswell (2009) defines this as coding. Coding allows the researcher to focus on the characteristics of the data set (Nowell et al., 2017). Coding was done using a data analysis application known as ATLAS.ti 8. This is a computer-based programme created in Germany that allows researchers to organise and code transcripts, text, pictures or findings of a specific project (Creswell, 2009).

Step 3: Searching for ideas

After coding is completed, it is important to start sorting and grouping the codes. Braun and Clarke (2013) describe this step as the initial attempt of forming themes. This process includes refocusing the codes at a broader level and this was achieved by using tables to group similar codes. Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) argue that forming themes requires the researcher to rely on analytic abilities to break down narratives into small segments related to specific social phenomena.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

Potential generated themes from the codes are then refined (Creswell, 2009). This is achieved by ensuring the themes form a consistent pattern (Nowell et al., 2017). This implies that themes that do not fit in or do not have enough information fall away. The remaining themes are then discussed in-depth to ensure they reflect the perspectives or experiences that actually exist within the data set.

Step 5: Naming themes

Themes should be examined at least twice to be finalised (Nowell et al., 2017). In this phase, it is important to define and name the themes. Naming themes can be challenging; however, it is important to ensure the theme names capture the meaning of the data set. To finalise the theme names, peer briefing was done to ensure the names were a reflection of the data set.

Step 6: Reporting and interpretation

When there is sufficient evidence for the themes formed, the next step is to write up a report. This step does not only consist of reporting on the findings but also consists of building a valid argument (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) contend that interpretations involve making sense of the linguistics used in the transcripts. The authors further argue that the meaning behind the words highly reflects participants' viewpoints. This was achieved by connecting the literature to the findings; this is demonstrated in Chapter Four.

3.9 Quality Criteria

The most debated issue in qualitative research is truthfulness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Can qualitative research be trusted? Tracy (2013) argues that to ensure that it can be trusted; researchers strive for qualitative research to be objective. Rossman and Rallis (2003) define trustworthiness as a process of managing procedures during the research process to ensure credible outcomes are produced. The authors further assert that trustworthiness requires openness, transparency and ethical behaviour. For instance, the unethical behaviour of a researcher can definitely compromise the trustworthiness of the research findings. Furthermore, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that a research study that has thick descriptions elucidates openness and therefore accounts for trustworthiness. Another element that influences trustworthiness is objectivity; this entails that researchers take measures to ensure data is not compromised by subjective biases such as personal assumptions or beliefs (Tracy, 2013). These measures or strategies include credibility, transferability, dependability, authenticity and confirmability.

3.9.1 Credibility

Korstjens and Moser (2018) define credibility as the confidence that the research findings are true. Similarly, Tracy (2013) associates the word credibility with trustworthiness. This can be achieved through thick descriptions of the research process and expressions of more details on the study to better the readers' understanding (Tracy, 2013). This study used the four methods described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) to ensure credibility. Firstly, during data collection there was prolonged engagement; this implies that instead of only relying on the guided questions, participants were also asked follow-up questions to gain more clarity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Secondly, triangulation was used; this is defined as using multiple approaches (Tracy, 2013). Instead of only using semi-structured interviews, field notes were also considered to enhance the research process. Thirdly, there was persistent observation and a continuous process of revisiting data during the data analysis process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The transcripts were examined by constantly reading through them while taking notes of potential codes. Lastly, transcripts were sent back to the participants for member-checking to challenge potential inaccurate interpretations. All participants found no inaccurate statements.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is referred to as the extent to which data findings can be transferred to different settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Qualitative research cannot be generalised across the population; therefore, it is critical that readers can transfer the findings of the study to their context (Tracy, 2013). This is not the researcher's decision to make; however, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the study has thick descriptions. Rossman and Rallis (2003) argue that rich descriptions should account for time, context and participants' culture. In this study, the methodology and the research process are thoroughly described and explained with the use of diagrams.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability has to do with the aspect of consistency (Willig, 2013). This is defined as the stability and consistency of research findings over a long period (Korstjens &

Moser, 2018). In addition, Yin (2016) argues that according to the interpretative paradigm, a sense of change is expected but it should still be trackable. The author further states that this can be achieved by checking the appropriateness of the research process.

In this study, the researcher ensured checking if the data analysis process was in line with a specific design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the steps taken during research so that other researchers could assess the quality of the research.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with the maintenance of a neutral ground (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Similarly, Flick (2014) defines confirmability as the ability to reflect participants' responses independently from the researcher's assumptions. It is important that researchers do not report research findings according to their preferences and viewpoints; instead, they should maintain a reflective stance. Yin (2016) argues that it is crucial to avoid misinterpretation and judgement during data analysis.

This was achieved by maintaining a reflective journal, peer review and also following participants' leads during member-checking.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Adhering to ethical considerations is critical in research. Each research process phase has the risk of experiencing ethical dilemmas. Before conducting this research, the researcher adhered to the university's ethical requirements which included applying for ethical clearance from the Ethical Committee. This process involved rich descriptions of the proposed research study. This study was approved by the Ethical Committee and the Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Several key ethical factors were considered throughout the research process. These included maintaining confidentiality, debriefing, ensuring no harm, no deception, justice, integrity, beneficence and obtaining consent.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is the bedrock of research (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). This is a formal procedure researchers need to adhere to for participants to decide whether they want to participate in the study after they have received a description of what the study is about (Cohen et al., 2018). There are two important keywords, “informed” and “consent” (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). It is very critical that research participants are informed about the goals, purpose and research objectives. In addition, participants should agree or consent to participate voluntarily. This process requires researchers to be open books (Miles, 2014). Participants in this study were given informed consent forms that included information about the research, the right to withdraw at any time, assurance of keeping their information confidential, the right to ask questions regarding the study, permission to voice-record the interviews and lastly, the right to access their data.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

Participants’ identities must be kept confidential and anonymous (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). There is an important distinction between participant confidentiality and participant anonymity. Confidentiality entails that participants’ identities are known to the researcher; however, the data is de-identified and participants’ identities are kept confidential (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Contrary to this, anonymity means that the researcher is not knowledgeable about the identity of the participants (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). In this study, confidentiality was maintained for the participants, because anonymity was not an issue due to the low-risk nature of the study. The identity of participants was not anonymous to the researcher due to signed informed consent, hence only confidentiality was controlled. This was achieved by assuring participants that the information obtained would be secured, by storing data electronically with a protective password. Furthermore, the smartphone used as a recording device had a protective password only available to the researcher. Confidentiality was also maintained by ensuring that participants’ identity details were not written on the transcripts, instead, they were coded using numbers such as P1, which refers to “participant 1”.

3.10.3 Voluntary Participation

Obtaining informed consent not only forms a part of the agreement to participate in the study but also ensures that participants participate voluntarily (Yin, 2016). Every participant was given the opportunity to decline or accept to participate in the study. Research participants must understand that they have the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any moment (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Participants were permitted to withdraw from the study and those who continued participating were assured during the research process that they had the right to withdraw at any time. This was done to ensure that participants participated willingly in the research.

3.10.4 No Deception

Deception should be avoided at all times (Yin, 2016). Truthfulness should be maintained during and after the research process. Participants must not be misled to persuade them to participate in the research (Willig, 2013). No deception was used in this study and participants were given all relevant information about the study. This included a brief overview of the purpose of the research and also guided questions for the interviews. It is not a requirement to share the research information, but it is advised to be fully transparent (Miles, 2014).

3.10.5 Debriefing

Qualitative research demands disclosure (Yin, 2016). Debriefing is not only being transparent but is also an opportunity to build relationships with participants. This is an opportunity to alleviate any doubts participants may have about participating in the study (Miles, 2014). Yin (2016) argues that truthful debriefing may also require the researcher to share challenging moments during the research process with participants. This not only builds rapport and trust between researcher and participants but also brings integrity to qualitative research (Yin, 2016). In this study, participants were debriefed before data collection and also through the process of member-checking.

3.10.6 Protection from Harm

It is necessary to assess and consider potential harm to participants, researchers or institutions (Miles, 2014). Protection from harm includes physical, psychological and financial (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). In this study, participants did not have any potential physical harm because the interviews were done telephonically. However, there was potential psychological harm which could involve how data is represented. To control this, participants' transcripts were member-checked. Participants could also partake in the study for free and this was achieved by ensuring that the researcher made the interview calls and not the other way round.

3.10.7 Beneficence

This refers to providing benefits to participants for participating in the study (Townsend et al., 2010). The participants in this study did not receive direct benefits through their participation. Terre et al. (2012) argue that beneficence can also be achieved by trying to maximise the benefits of the research study, for example, access to better health care or gaining skills and knowledge on the topic. Participants in this study may have not gained any direct skills, however, it is arguable that they have gained a voice by expressing their classroom needs and challenges within the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme.

3.10.8 Justice

Justice can be defined as allowing access to the research process of the study (Townsend et al., 2010). To ensure full transparency, the findings of the study will be published as a research dissertation and the language used was culturally sensitive and inclusive. Although it is crucial to allow access, the audio recordings, transcripts and informed consent forms were stored in the University of Pretoria repository with restricted access for confidentiality reasons. However, participants were given the opportunity for member-checking to ensure the data was a true reflection of their responses.

3.10.9 Integrity

Townsend et al. (2010) define integrity as truthfully and accurately conducting research. In this study, integrity was achieved by not engaging in unethical behaviours such as cheating and lying. In addition, transcribed data was not edited; the transcripts are a true reflection of participants' responses. A very important element of ensuring integrity is transparency (Terre et al., 2012). Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, which was to explore the teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE. In addition, there was full disclosure about the data collection process. The informed consent covered the level of engagement needed by providing the duration of the interviews. All aspects of the research process were disclosed to participants to ensure the study was truthful.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research methodology used to explore teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) academic in-service training programme. The paradigm perspective of the study was discussed from an ontological, epistemological and axiological perspective. In addition, the methodological choice of the study was justified through the discussion of limitations and strengths. The research process was discussed in-depth by explaining phenomenological research design, sampling, data collection and thematic data analysis. Lastly, the ethical implications of the study were discussed through an exploration of quality criteria strategies. The next chapter covers the results and findings of the study.

Chapter Four: Findings of the Study

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE. The previous chapter (Chapter Three) discussed the methodological approach of the study; this also included the underlying paradigm assumption that directed the study. Furthermore, the previous chapter also discussed the research process followed to carry out this study.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the data was collected by exploring teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in-service training programme through telephonic interviews. In this chapter, teachers' experiences are discussed and presented as the findings of the study. The findings are also supported by literature and discussed in-depth.

4.2 The Findings of the Study

Four themes and 12 sub-themes were identified from the data set during data analysis. This was achieved through the use of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). These themes and sub-themes are illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Overview of themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Inclusive education	A. Learning barriers B. Inclusive education training
2. Classroom challenges	A. Instructional time B. Resources C. Support D. COVID-19

3. Positive impact of the BEd Honours training	A. Effectiveness
4. Challenges of the BEd Honours training	A. Interactive learning B. Content application

A description is provided of each theme and sub-theme supported by findings. Extracts from the interview transcripts are used to support the themes and sub-themes. Lastly, each theme is substantiated with a literature review.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Inclusive Education

The data set showed a common theme of IE. As discussed in Chapter two, IE is a broad concept that has various definitions. For instance; Education White Paper 6 (2001) describes IE as a broad umbrella that advocates for learners' rights to learn irrespective of any diversity. On the other hand, Rojo-Ramos et al. (2022) view IE as promoting inclusive culture in communities, encouraging inclusive policies, and developing inclusive practices through the curriculum. In this study, IE is defined as supporting learners with LDs in a mainstream schooling system (Ford, 2013).

This theme presents two sub-themes: learning barriers and IE training .The sub-themes are also illustrated in Table 4.1 and are discussed based on interview extracts. The following legends are used after the extracts, e.g. P1: L123-125 is participant 1, line 123-135 of the transcript.

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1a: Learning barriers

Participants in this study indicated that they have encountered learners with learning barriers; however, there seems to be a challenge in labelling the learning barriers. This is because some teachers do not know the correct diagnosis for the learning barrier. Nonetheless, they seem to agree that learning barriers are a challenge that needs to be addressed. To fully comprehend what learning barriers are, a working definition is provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Working definition of sub-theme 1A – learning barriers

Working definition
Learning barriers are cognitive, psychological, sensory, communication, and social needs that learners experience interfering with academic success (Hornby, 2015).

The data set shows that most participants have taught learners who experience learning difficulties. Participant 1 described various learning difficulties that learners experience in her classroom: "*Some have Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, some have Down syndrome and some have a slow development"* (P1: L75-76).

Furthermore, participant 2 described how LDs are not only found in mainstream education but also in the context of a special school: "*Some of our learners already have a disability, either visually impaired or blind. A lot of my children also have Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder or Attention-Deficit Disorder"* (P2: L115- 116).

Participant 2 further elaborated on the challenges of teaching learners who are experiencing learning barriers alongside physical disabilities:

> *Obviously, it makes it more difficult because they already have a main disability but they also have learning problems. Some of them have dyslexia, and then a lot of them have more minimal learning school problems like fine motor skills.* (P2: L117-121)

Even though participant 3 and 6 were aware of some learning barriers, others were not aware of the formal terminology and diagnosis for the learning barriers. For instance, participant 3 expressed that she does not know what the learning problems are called, however, she is aware of the signs or symptoms:

> *Most of the children do not know how to read. When you read for them they understand, but when they actually need to read for themselves they can't pronounce words. When you ask them to come speak they can listen and speak to you about the story they have been listening to. Some of kids they don't have confidence, they lack that confidence and also there are learners who only recognise only numbers, but not sentences, words and how to use*

> *them to form sentences. So I have never given the learning problem a name, I could only explain what I have realised so far with the learners that am teaching, because am not a doctor. I could say maybe a child has Autism spectrum because it includes a lot of things, but it not like that.* (P3: L90-101)

The data set also shows a common thread on the main challenge contributing to learning difficulties. Participant 6 and 8 brought forth concerns about educational transitions: "*All I can say is that most of the learners especially those who are transitioning experience learning problems. I am teaching grade 4, 5, 6, and 7"* (P3: L102-103).

Participant 6 agreed with participant 3's viewpoint by stating that some children are not school ready: "I *am in grade one. There are some learners that are not school ready, you know they are not ready for school"* (P6: L14-15). As vital as it is to take note of school readiness, participant 8 argued that the areas of difficulty are communication and behaviour:

> *I have a lot of kids who like... last year I had a child who came from Malawi and this year I have a child that came from Nigeria. So they struggle with English a lot; they do not understand what I am telling them. A lot of the kids from grade 3, when they come here they cannot read, they cannot spell, they can't sit still only for 10 minutes to do the work. They are very hyperactive, so it is difficult.* (P8: L58-65)

A study conducted in primary schools in Kenya indicated that 95% of learners in general education experience LDs (Garbutt et al., 2018). Similarly, Mahlo (2017) also reported that there is about 70% of children with disabilities in South African schools. Consistent with the above-mentioned statistic, participants in this study expressed that some learners experience learning barriers. It is crucial to note that most participants in this study teach in mainstream education; therefore, it is arguable that learning barriers exist not only in special education but also in mainstream education. Although learners with LDs were historically segregated from mainstream education, Mpu and Adu (2021) argue that this segregation was criticised for moral concerns. As a result, more scholars advocate for the inclusivity of students with disabilities in mainstream education (Hornby, 2015; Molbaek, 2018; Ranjeeta, 2018).

Participants in this study further expressed that learning barriers may occur in various areas of need. This viewpoint is similar to Ranjeeta's (2018) argument that highlights that every learner is unique and responds to different learning methods; moreover, learning barriers are broad and unique. The following are the areas of need that the participants in this study identified as unique according to their classroom context: communication, language, behavioural problems and academic transitions. Consistent with the data set, Ali and Rafi (2016) argue that LDs can be characterised according to the following general classifications: language barriers; hyperactiveness; limited attention span; motor coordination problems; social or emotional problems; inadequate spatial organisation; auditory challenges; and visual perception difficulties. One of the main characteristics that were commonly raised by participants was behavioural/emotional issues. According to Reinke et al. (2011), about 5% to 9% of children meet the criteria for mental health disorders in schools. Similarly, LDs are also defined according to the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) as an umbrella for various neurological disorders. Therefore, it is arguable that it is necessary to acknowledge and categorise behavioural issues in the classroom context as learning barriers.

Moreover, participants in this study highlighted the issue of school readiness. Some participants argued that learners are not academically ready for school and as a result; they fail to meet academic standards. Some participants associated school readiness with academic transitions. Grünke and Cavendish (2016) contend that learning barriers are highly linked to self-regulation skills that are necessary for academic progression. These may include the ability to adapt to new academic requirements or a transition from one school to another. For this reason, school readiness may play a significant role in understanding certain learning difficulties.

Although participants in this study indicated that they have experienced various learning difficulties unique to their classrooms, some indicated challenges of labelling learning barriers. This challenge may arguably tie into the issues of conceptualising LDs. For instance, various scholars conflate the term 'learning disabilities' with special needs, learning barriers, learning impairments and mental disorders (Agrawal et al., 2019; Grünke & Cavendish, 2016; Ranjeeta, 2018). However, the challenge of labelling the learning barriers may also show a gap in knowledge, skills and further

training. Although Ranjeeta (2018) argues that it is of great importance for teachers to have the ability to identify learning challenges and shortcomings of learners in classrooms. This may be easier said than done.

In summary, the data set showed various learning barriers that are unique to participants' experiences.

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme 1b: Inclusive education training

Another common thread in the data set is the need for more IE training. Participants explained the importance and the need for the government to provide IE training programmes. Some participants indicated that the benefits of the training would position learners at an advantage. Although some participants believed that they are already trained for IE, there seems to be a concern for other educators that have not yet been trained for IE. In consideration of this viewpoint, participants further argued the need for such training to be mandatory for all teaching practices. Below, Table 4.3 indicates the definition of sub-theme 1B.

Table 4.3: Working definition of sub-theme 1B – inclusive education training

Working definition
Inclusive education training is any form of an in-service training programme aimed at training teachers on inclusivity in classroom settings (Tyagi, 2016).

One participant in the study spoke for all professionals by indicating the need for all educators to be trained for IE:

> *I honestly think it's vital to let all professionals in education sector to be trained for inclusive education, so that all teachers and all professionals are able to assist all learners, irrespective of the barriers that they face.* (P5: L65-68)

She further indicated a gap in teachers' knowledge and skills on IE:

> *I feel teachers are a little bit sceptical, they are not really clued up on the White Paper 6, and they not clued up on how inclusion works. So I think there has to be a mass training for teachers.* (P5: L79-84)

Similar to this viewpoint, another participant indicated the need to make IE compulsory as a teaching requirement:

> *I think it must be a requirement, you know for entry into the education system. If you do not know anything about inclusion, actually it is like you don't know what you are going to do in the field. You will just implement everything as it is for every learner in your class.* (P6: L35-42)

There seems to be a need for more opportunities to be trained for IE; for instance, Participant 7 argued that the South African government does not provide training for teachers:

> *We didn't have the training from the Department of Education to deal with learners who experience those problems. We need to be trained and skilled enough to deal with those learners to be able to support them and to workshop the parents, to remove the concept that their learners have learning difficulties*. (P7: L76-80)

Participant 7 further highlighted the benefits that come with being trained for IE:

> *If the departments can train us on how to support those learners, we will accommodate them, support and view them as unique, and embrace diversity in the school. This way we will be able to create an environment which will accommodate every learner irrespective of their learning abilities or physical impairment. I think we need training on this, on how to implement inclusive education in our schools.* (P7: L83-89)

She stressed that although she has been trained, the concern is for other teachers and parents that have not received IE training: "*I feel I have been equipped enough, but what about other teachers? What about the parents?"* (P7: L94-95).

Participants in this study showed a general concern for the need for IE training. On the same note; Popova et al. (2019) state that 7% of educators in African countries have little knowledge and skills to cater for all learning needs. Furthermore, Garbutt et al. (2018) argue that educators show inconsistency in implementing inclusive strategies due to a significant gap in knowledge and skills. Some participants seemed to concur with this viewpoint and the main concern is for teachers that are currently not receiving any further training. Tyagi (2016) argues that there is a profound need for all teachers to be trained for IE. Furthermore, the author contends that the lack of knowledge and skills is largely due to a lack of training on learning barriers. Arguably, teacher training plays a significant role in teacher quality and IE.

Majority of the participants in this study also argued that with such a significant gap in skills and knowledge on inclusive policies and practices, IE training should be compulsory. In addition, some participants further argued that IE training has several benefits and the main advantage is creating a better learning environment for all learners. For instance, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) state that in order to include diverse learning needs, teachers would need to use complex and diverse teaching methods. Similarly, Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) assert that professional development not only improves teaching quality but also improves the learning outcomes of all learners. Therefore, IE training can be viewed not only as a professional development tool but also as a strategy to improve the learning outcomes for all learners.

The data set in this study also showed a common pattern of teachers receiving limited governmental training. Some teachers indicated that they did not receive any training from the government excluding the BEd Hons (Learner Support) training. Literature indicates that there are very few teacher professional development trainings for specific schooling needs that are implemented (Adewumi et al., 2019; Junejo et al., 2017; Popova et al., 2019). The government plays such a significant role in ensuring teacher readiness and teaching quality. For instance, a study in Beaufort District Primary School, South Africa indicated that most teachers that participated in the study expressed concerns with regard to support from the education government district (Adewumi et al., 2019). Junejo et al. (2017) argue that a trained teacher is an effective teacher that takes into account the importance of

implementing inclusivity in classroom settings. Therefore, IE training is arguably a crucial element in creating an inclusive learning environment.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Classroom Challenges

This theme discusses classroom challenges which the participants experienced. Classroom challenges may encompass of various factors that interfere with learning; however, in this study classroom challenges refer to factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive strategies (Tyagi, 2016). Furthermore, these challenges of implementing IE are highly dependent on unique factors that stem from the school environment (Mahlo, 2017).

As indicated in Table 4.1, theme 2 has four sub-themes: instructional time, support and lastly, COVID-19. These sub-themes will be further discussed using excerpts from the data set.

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme 2a: Instructional time

The data set showed a common pattern of instructional time as one of the main classroom challenges that most participants experience. Table 4.4 describes the working definition of sub-theme 2A.

Table 4.4: Working definition of sub-theme 2A – instructional time

Working Definition
Instructional time is defined as the time or duration allocated for learning and teaching in a classroom context (Osei-Owusu et al., 2018).

Different learners have various learning needs and this can be challenging for some teachers. Participant 7, 3, and 8 expressed that they experience challenges giving all learners the special attention they need within the given time at school:

> *Also time, we are expected as teachers to complete ATP which is Annual Teaching Plan according to circulated time from the district office. We don't have enough time to support learners according to my view and experience.* (P7, L45-49)

Participant 7 suggested that more individual interactions with the learners who need learning support would be more effective: "*I don't have enough time to support those learners; I think there needs to be a one-on-one engagement because it is difficult for me to support them according to time"* (P7: L49-51).

Furthermore, participant 3 also pointed out the need for special time allocated for remedial learners in the classroom:

> *You don't use the time that is put by the school and timetable, because one of the problems is that when the school set the table, they don't have time for remedial. We need 30 or 40 minutes for remedial and that is how it will be much better implemented.* (P3: L73-76)

Participant 8 further outlined how the element of time affects the implementation of IE:

> *If I talk about the time aspect and the admin maybe of having to do that, I will have to say is very difficult to get to them and then include all of them with all their separate disabilities or impairments that they have are struggling with.* (P8: L34-38)

Similarly, participant 2 also explained that every learner has unique needs and that it can be a challenge to cater for all learners' needs: "*It is difficult to give all of them the necessary attention because they are all different. They all actually require individual attention, and that for me is quite a challenge when it comes to inclusivity in the classroom"* (P2: L25-28).

Most participants showed the frustration that comes with a lack of time to attend to all learners' needs. In addition, another participant stressed the challenge of time that was highlighted by participant 4: "*It is really difficult to give all your attention to that child but still be able to teach the rest of the class. That's quite difficult to do especially like when you have 24 learners"* (P4: L30-32).

Literature indicates that many schools in South Africa experience challenges in completing the curriculum within the allocated instructional time (Chitiyo, 2017; Mahlo, 2017; Mpu & Adu, 2021). Participants in this study concurred with this notion.

However, they seemed to highlight the difficulties of attending to special needs learners. Okongo et al. (2015) argue that learners with LDs require diverse teaching methods that need extensive instructional time. Moreover, the majority of the participants in this study expressed the difficulties of attending to all the different learning needs during instructional time. It is important to note that different learning needs may require different teaching approaches. For instance, Ranjeeta (2018) argues that every learning need is unique to each learner. Therefore, it may be a challenge to accommodate all learning needs during the allocated instructional time. One participant argued that to address this, learners with LDs will need allocated time and individual sessions.

Various elements affect the classroom time to implement IE. For example, some participants expressed difficulties in attending to all learners, especially in a large classroom. Maree (2021) argues that in South Africa, the average class sizes are 35.5 learners per class. However, many government schools in South Africa average about 80 to 100 learners in one classroom (Mpu & Adu, 2021). As a result, there is an increased number of learners with diverse learning needs, and this has left some educators under pressure to include all learners with limited instructional time (Chitiyo, 2017). Teachers in this study found it overwhelming to attend to them or allocate the needed time for learners with special needs in a large class. Participants in this study further explained that remedial strategies need more time, and school allocated times might not be sufficient to implement inclusivity for all learners. In addition, some participants further stressed the difficulties of juggling other classroom tasks and attending to learners' classroom needs. It seems implementing inclusivity within the allocated classroom time is easier in theory than in practice.

4.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2b: Resources

Being a teacher that implements effective IE strategies requires resources and tools to enhance teaching practices. Resources to aid teaching and IE seemed to be a classroom need for most teachers. Seven out of the eight participants expressed the need for teaching resources specific to their class needs. Participants also explained that resources not only assist teachers in better implementing IE but also aid

learners to learn creatively. Table 4.5 illustrates the working definition of resources in this study.

Table 4.5: Working definition of resources

The working definition
Resources are referred to as teaching materials that enhance learning and teaching (Ranjeeta, 2018).

Participant 4 explained how a lack of resources creates difficulties in implementing inclusivity: "*In a school that lack resources it's very tough to implement inclusive education, because you need to give every child attention"* (P3: L16-17). She further mentioned specific resources she needs to implement IE*: "We need space, equipment and also money for toners and printers. You need to have material, resources and a lot of resources. It is what I can think of to make learning easier*" (P3: L128-134).

In addition, other participants also listed resources that are specific to their classroom needs.

> I *think I need technology, the computers to help the learners. Manipulator toys that they can use, like building blocks, beads, the shapes.* (P1: L89-92)
>
> *Writing tools and teaching aids.* (P6: L49)
>
> *Definitely resources like blocks, the kids can use to help them count or things like that*. (P4: L72-73)
>
> *Those learners are from poor families, they are not supported with expected resources that the schools need, maybe to top up stationery. I think they should consider enough resources in our school.* (P7: L36-38)

The resources each participant mentioned are unique to their own classroom needs. Participants 1 and 7 further stressed the role that these resources could play in IE:

> *I think some children still struggle with their small muscle development; you can see them when they are writing and how they hold their pencil. Even the play daw, there are some I was using it on them to train their muscle because they are not fully developed. Even those blocks they help them to think creatively, so I think it will help.* (P1: L103-107)

> *Enough resource in infrastructure to create classrooms for special needs, to accommodate learners with severe learning impairment, and to have enough teachers to assists those learners*. (P7: L103-106)

In essence, participants explained the need for resources and how these teaching resources would make IE much easier to implement:

> *In a school that lack resources it's very tough to implement inclusive education, because you need to give every child attention*. (P3: L16-17)

> *...more resources from the education department to assist in making inclusion implementable.* (P5: L73-74)

Classroom challenges are unique to each teacher and school environment, and so are the resources. According to Mpu and Adu (2021), the main challenge experienced by schools at the meso-level is a lack of resources. The authors further assert that in consideration of large classroom sizes in public schools, resources to accommodate all learners become unattainable. Concerning learning resources, participants in this study expressed that the lack of resources creates difficulty in implementing IE in the classroom. Some of the resources mentioned include printers, infrastructure, learning toys such as building blocks or beads and technical tools like computers. These resources seem to serve a specific learning purpose; for example, one participant argued that clay can be used to help learners develop fine motor skills. Another participant also argued that having functioning printers is time efficient as little classroom time is wasted writing notes on the board. It is important to note that these resources were specific to the educators' classroom challenge. Nonetheless, they seemed to be a common area of need to implement inclusivity.

In addition, some participants also identified the need for personnel resources. The issue of academic personnel seems to be a significant gap for most schools in South Africa. For instance, a study that focused on the experiences of educators implementing inclusion was conducted in South Africa and the majority of educators expressed the need for other education stakeholders to assist teachers (Adewumi et al., 2019). Furthermore, Okongo et al. (2015) identified the following as academic personnel: psychologists, social workers, government officials, community specialists and government district support teams. Not only did participants view academic resources as a need, but also viewed them as an investment toward an inclusive environment.

Okongo et al. (2015) argue that the education system has failed most learners with learning needs by not providing the resources for teaching and learning to include them within the curriculum. Furthermore, the implementation of IE heavily relies on teachers while there are potential opportunities to create a collaborative network of other educational stakeholders (Šiška et al., 2019). Although, Nel et al. (2013) argue that developing a long-term collaboration seems to be a challenge in South Africa; it is also arguable that it is crucial for inclusive practices.

4.2.2.3 Sub-theme 2c: Support

The data set shows that support comes in various ways. Each participant expressed how they best believed they could be supported according to their unique challenges in the classroom. Moreover, most participants indicated the need to be supported by parents, the community, teachers' assistants, colleagues and other stakeholders. Limited or no support was expressed as one of the challenges affecting the implementation of IE in classroom settings. Table 4.6 shows the working definition of support used in this study.

Table 4.6: Working definition of support

Working Definition
Support in this study refers to the collaboration of other role players to assist teachers to implement inclusive education (Bhroin & King, 2020).

The data set shows four types of support; the first type of support evident is the needed support from parents: "*Low parental involvement of parents of learners who need extra learning support is another challenge"* (P5: L20-22). Participant 3 also stressed the role and importance of parental involvement:

> *Parents are the first people before us teachers to realise that the child has a learning problem. The parent has already recognised it and instead of dealing with it, the parent will change the child from this school to another school, and then the child comes with a lengthy learner profile*. (P3: L27-32)

She further asked a fundamental question: "*If the parents do not give you full support, how are you as a teacher going to support that child?"* (P3: L40-42). Participant 3 posed the above rhetorical question to highlight the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents. In addition, participant 7 provided insight into some of the reasons why there is a lack of parental involvement: "*The most problem is that parents are in denial of learners' abilities. They don't support, when you call them to meeting about the performance of those learners they don't come"* (P7: L39-41).

She continued to highlight and link the impact of unemployment and illiteracy on the lack of parental involvement: "*They don't have that zeal to know about performance, maybe because they are not educated, and they have their own personal problems such as unemployment"* (P7: L41-44).

In essence, the majority of the participants agreed on the need for more parental involvement, and the difficulties of having limited parental support:

> *The parents are also not supporting us, because sometimes you call them and they don't answer the phone, or you ask them to come to school to talk about their child and they don't come, they have excuses. Even if you give the learner homework, they do not help the learner.* (P1: L40-44)

The second form of support some participants mentioned related to teaching support. Some participants indicated the need to cater for IE by hiring teacher assistants: "*Maybe actually assistant teacher would be a really good idea to help. I*

do not have an assistant teacher, but I am thinking having one would be like amazing" (P4: L73-76).

Participant 4 further indicated how having someone in her classroom could be of great help in attending to all learners in the classroom: "*In that way it ensures that maybe if you not giving your full attention to a specific child, maybe having an extra set of hands, eyes and ears will be helpful"* (P4: L76-78). Similarly, participant 8 also recognised the need for and importance of a teacher's assistant for classroom support:

> *I know there is a student doing her practical, but even having her in my class, having her like a type of assistant that can assist me, not in explaining the work to them and giving the work to learners, but if I may be busy with one child the assistant can maybe help another child.* (P8: L71-76)

Thirdly, the type of support also evident in the data set is teacher-on-teacher support. One participant explained how some teachers do not understand the value of collaborating to achieve the same objectives in their classrooms:

> *I see negative teacher attitude. Teachers necessarily do not have the time to assist colleagues; do not necessarily have the time to assist. They not expressing their eagerness to help the colleagues and other teachers, they keep their knowledge to themselves; they not necessarily want to help better the environment in some case.* (P5: L16-18)

Lastly, participant 7 also indicated the need for community support and the need to incorporate other stakeholders:

> *We need to incorporate some of the parents in the community to assist learners who need support, maybe assisting with homework. We need more empowerment to assist those learners in our schools as we have a large numbers of those learners. We need to corporate with different stakeholders or maybe social workers to be employed in the schools. Maybe the problems are socially or emotionally, so we need those social workers who are stable in our school.* (P7: L106-114)

Buttressing the above-mentioned areas of need, learners' academic success is dependent on a complex interactive network of teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the education system. Learners exist in a complex interactive system; therefore, learners need to have a support network of education role players (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Unfortunately, most teachers who participated in this study indicated they feel a lack of support which they believe affects the implementation of IE.

One of the commonly mentioned areas of support is parental involvement. Consistent with this view, Adewumi et al. (2019) indicate that the challenges experienced by some educators often include a lack of assistance from the parents. Most participants in this study asserted the negative impact of limited parental involvement. One participant argued that parents understand their children better and their understanding of the learners can contribute to the strategies of IE. Another participant argued that parents are the first point of interaction with learners and for this reason; they play a significant role in identifying some of the learning barriers. However, there seems to be no academic involvement of most parents. Some educators have attributed the lack of parental involvement to an act of denial. One participant argued that some parents seem to not believe that their children are struggling academically, and for this reason, they do not show up for school meetings about their children's academic progress. Some parents do not assist with basic academic demands such as homework, another participant argued.

Furthermore, some participants also expressed the need for teacher assistants. According to Breyer et al. (2021), the lack of personnel resources in schools led to the employment of teaching assistants. In South African schools, teaching assistants have only been recently adopted with an increased demand for more teaching assistants required in rural schools (Cassim & Moen, 2020). Consistent with this viewpoint, one participant expressed the need for a teaching assistant. The participant further argued that having an extra set of hands would assist her to manage certain classroom tasks through shared responsibilities. Another participant validated this argument by stating that her teaching assistant has been helpful in classroom time management. Even though teaching assistants have bridged the gap in classroom demand, one participant asserted that there is room for teachers to one

another support. The participant further stated that some teachers are not interested in sharing knowledge and collaborating with other educators. Nel et al. (2013) seem to concur with this viewpoint. The authors argue that at the school level, institutional-level support should include teacher-on-teacher collaboration strategies. In addition, Bhroin and King (2020) argue that some of the benefits of teacher-on-teacher collaboration strategies include improving teacher ethics, self-motivation and job satisfaction.

Lastly, participants in this study also expressed the necessity for community support. Promoting collaboration between teachers and other stakeholders enhances the learning experiences of learners with special needs (Bhroin & King, 2020). Some participants validated this viewpoint by asserting that the community can play a crucial role in empowering learners and assisting with afterschool programmes. In essence, the data set showed a consistent need for teacher support in IE.

4.2.2.4 Sub-theme 2d: Covid-19

There is no doubt that COVID-19 changed the way of living globally. This is evident in the manner some participants expressed the impact of the pandemic on education. Three out of the eight participants highlighted how the daily rotation of school attendance left some learners excluded, and most importantly, challenged the strategies of implementing IE. Table 4.7 defines the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Table 4.7: The working definition of sub-theme 2D – COVID-19

Working Definition
Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that is airborne that shows similar signs to a cold/flu (Landa et al., 2021).

Participant 3 explained how COVID-19 negatively affected the implementation of IE:

> *Right now with COVID, I have 25 learners in my class and they come in a rotation. When the child is coming to school every day, I have time to assess them and I see that this one need a remedial and I try to remedial the child.* (P3: L65-69)

The daily rotation regulation implemented as a COVID-19 safety measure left some teachers struggling. Participant 6 also mentioned how the new school regulations positioned learners at a disadvantage: "*It is this daily rotation that you are doing at school. Today the learner is here, tomorrow she is not, you know? When she comes back, you start from square one again"* (P6: L20-22).

The importance of learners attending school daily was further stressed: "*Now because of COVID, the learners are not coming to school every day, some are coming twice a week and some three times a week"* (P1: L146-148).

On the 15th of March 2020, the South African president announced that the country was under the Disaster Management Act of 2002 (Landa et al., 2021). According to these authors, this placed education and other sectors under restricted emergency protocols. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school year and the curriculum had to be shortened and this resulted in a higher drop-out rate, absenteeism and curriculum repetition (van der Berg et al., 2020). Participants in this study argued that the irregular attendance of learners created difficulties in implementing remedial interventions. The irregular attendance was described as daily rotation; this implies that learners attended classes on different days of the week to reduce their exposure to possible Covid-19 infections. This limited face-to-face interaction during the pandemic left many concerns about the impact on academic progression (Engzell et al., 2021). Some participants in this study reported that COVID-19 rotation had a negative impact on teaching and learning and that this left many learners experiencing learning difficulties at a disadvantage. This also left some teachers worried about learners that needed remedial attention.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Positive Impact of the BEd Honours Training

As indicated in the previous chapter (Chapter Three), the BEd Honours (Learning Support) programme (an academic in-service training programme) was the unit of study for this research. The programme offered at the University of Pretoria, South Africa is aimed at Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers. The academic course layout includes the research methodology, curriculum development, identification and assessment of children, learning support, early intervention in numeracy and literacy, and lastly, philosophy and social imperatives

of education. This theme discusses the positive impact of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme on the participants. As illustrated in Table 4.1, Theme 3 is comprised of one sub-theme: effectiveness.

42.3.1 Sub-theme 3a: Effectiveness of in-service training

Effective in-service training programmes aimed at improving teaching skills increase the quality of education and improve teacher self-efficacy. The common thread highlighted in the data set is the positive impact of the BEd Honours (Learner Support). All the participants interviewed expressed their positive experiences of the training programme. Table 4.8 explains the working definition of sub-theme 1 – effectiveness.

Table 4.8: Working definition of sub-theme 3A – effectiveness

Working Definition: Effectiveness
Effective in-service training is referred to as training that has contributed to the proficiency level of teachers (Said, 2014). Alternative synonyms used to describe effectiveness include: helpful, successful, productive, beneficial, informative etc.

Various participants showed a positive attitude towards the BEd Honours (Learning Support):

> *I find it very informative and exciting.* (P3: L3-4)
>
> *Learner support training has opened my eyes in a positive way.* (P1: L13)
>
> *My experience of it has been a great one, like a learning experience that enhances my practice.* (P6: L3-4)
>
> *I am much clearer now than before I enrolled, because I did not know anything about inclusion.* (P6: L30-32)
>
> *I am not a hundred percent done with it yet, we still doing a module but so far I have a good experience with the modules so far.* (P4: L5-7)

All of the eight participants found the programme helpful and necessary for their teaching practices. For example, participant 1 described the BEd Honours (Learning Support) as very helpful in the classroom context:

> *It has been really helpful because I love what I am doing. I wanted to help children, but I didn't know how to help them. I practice what I learn.* (P1: L3-5)

> *I didn't understand why she was the way she was until I learnt about ADHD [Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder] and children experiencing barriers in education. I started to monitor her and understand her behaviour.* (P1: L9-12)

Similarly, participant 5 expressed how the course has also assisted her to support learners in her classroom: "*It exposes me to new strategies, new knowledge and different ways on how teachers in a classroom can embrace diversity and offer the necessary support to all learners that are experiencing barriers to learning"* (P5: L10-13). She further explained how the training has equipped her with essential skills to practice IE in her classroom:

> *They have equipped me with some knowledge and relevant skills on how I can implement inclusion in class; as well as whom I can ask for greater support when needed, because, through this learning support honours degree, I have realised there is different procedure and help available.* (P5: L34-38)

The BEd Honours (Learning Support) also seems to provide the teachers with a positive outlook on special education. Three participants passionately stated how they have developed a positive attitude towards diversity:

> *It taught me that all children have the right to education irrespective of their gender, ethnicity or race.* (P1: L18-19)

> *It has assisted me to see a lot of things with a clear mind, not label, not call names and not be insensitive towards learners who have learning disabilities.* (P3: L80-82)

> *Learning support has developed my attitude to be positive towards learners who experience problems. I was able to view them as unique and important learners in my classroom. I am able to value them as learners who need support, who need my knowledge, who need guidance and assistance to perform according to their best levels.* (P7: L6-11)

Participant 7 further stressed how the training has trained her to ensure that the curriculum is available to all learners:

> *I was equipped on learners working in groups, cooperative learning was more important during teaching and learning, I learnt that studying this course. I also developed assessment strategies that exposes all learners to a curriculum needs according to different subjects. I was able to implement multi-level teaching and assessment practice in the classroom. I know how to differentiate activities according to abilities of learners and also support them.* (P7: L60-67)

Participants showed a common understanding of the importance of including learners within the curriculum and how the BEd programme has assisted them in ensuring every learner is included. For example, participant 7 also mentioned how the training has taught her strategies that ensure the curriculum is accessible to all: "*It trains me in a way that I am to identify those learners with barriers. I am able to implement classroom strategies that enhance those learners access to the curriculum"* (P6: L7-9).

Participants in this study identified a module they found very insightful and effective. Participants 2 and 3 made mention of philosophy and how they found it insightful:

> *Philosophy I find quite useful as in it really helps me understand people's perspective, view and outcome on their own lives as well as your own life. I found that has been exceptionally helpful.* (P2: L6-9)

> *When you look at the module that we started with, the one that speaks about philosophy, it made me realise that there a lot of things as a teacher such as*

> *your beliefs that determine how you are going to teach the children and what you willing to change.* (P3: L119-122)

In essence, participant 7 showed appreciation of how various modules have been effective in training her to implement IE:

> *Through different modules that I engage in, I was able to apply the knowledge from books or researchers in my classroom. For example, identify those learners in the early stages and plan according to the curriculum which will assist them to be fully engaged in the classroom.* (P7: L19-23)

Literature shows that in-service training programmes are profound to the professional development of teachers (Omar, 2014; Said, 2014; Tzivinikou, 2015). Some participants in this study stressed the importance and the necessity of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme. Furthermore, this training was mostly commended for being informative. For instance, one participant stated that the academic in-service training is helpful, and the training definitely enhances knowledge on inclusivity. Along similar lines, another participant also argued that the training is informative, especially with regard to LDs. Based on these viewpoints; it seems the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme has equipped most participants with theoretical knowledge of IE.

A study conducted in Pakistan, Karachi Region reported that the TVET teaching staff had a positive impact on the performance of learners (Junejo et al., 2017). In addition, Omar (2014) argues that effective in-service training should better the performance of the educators. The common thread in the data set is a positive attitude towards the training because of learnt skills that are being implemented in classroom settings. For instance, one educator mentioned that the training has taught her strategies on how to support learners in her classroom. Additionally, one participant stated that through the training she understood procedures were in place to assist teachers to support learners with learning barriers. Above all, most teachers seemed to show an appreciative attitude towards the programme for teaching educators for showing the importance of diversity and non-discriminatory practices.

It is highly acknowledged that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of in-service training; however, long-term in-service training can definitely change at least one aspect of teachers' teaching practices (Huhtala & Vesalainen, 2017). All things considered, the BEd Honours (Learning Support) programme seemed to have made a positive impact in equipping teachers for classroom needs, such as identifying learning barriers and implementing inclusive strategies.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Challenges of the BEd Training

Although the common thread in the data set was a positive outlook on the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme, some participants expressed some of the challenges they encountered. These challenges were also expressed as enablers that could better the experiences of the participants. This theme covers the challenges of the BEd Honours (Learning Support) programme.

Table 4.1 showed that theme four consists of two sub-themes: interactive learning and application.

4.2.4.1 Sub-theme 4a: Interactive learning

Distance education (DE) platforms have addressed some of the barriers at the forefront of higher education and further training. However, there are some shortcomings of some learning distance training programmes; for instance, participants in this study highlighted the need for more interactive learning platforms. Participants further indicated how collaborative lessons would assist them with enhancing their learning experience. The contact sessions that were suggested are explained as an opportunity to interact more with the lecturers and colleagues. Table 4.9 shows the definition of sub-theme 4A – interactive learning.

Table 4.9: Working definition of sub-theme 4A – interactive learning

Working Definition
Interactive learning is referred to as learning through dialogue, action, or active communication (Abykanova et al., 2016).

Participants explained the need for interactive learning methods to enhance learning. The concern was evident with regard to the challenge of completing tasks with no assistance: *"Doing the honours and doing it through distance learning where maybe you do not always have all the help you need"* (P8: L4-5). Although, the DE programmes at the university have contact sessions embedded in them, participants in this study were concerned about their frequency. Their comments are explained as an opportunity to interact more with the lecturers and colleagues:

> *The one thing that I have managed to pick up I think maybe for distance students like myself, a contact session maybe once a month where students meet with their lecturers discussing the challenges they experience in the modules; discussing the questions; discussion so type of feedback from the lecturers.* (P5: L94-101)

In addition, participant 7 further shed light on the downside of enrolling in a distance learning programme, and how this has created some challenges within the training:

> *I think we need to attend classes on Saturday, so we can interact with lecturers, so we can understand and clarity on assignments. The online learning is good but it has disadvantage. Yes, I am able to work independently and am able to use my laptop, but the disadvantage is that am working alone at home and I needing some colleagues to communicate and get clarity with the lecturers*. *According to me the data is expensive, so if I attend on Saturday I know I am going to see the lecturer I am able to prepare for questions. There is a need to interact with the lecturer frequently.* (P7: L126-135)

Similarly, participant 4 also pointed out the need to have more personal interactive lessons instead of only using non-engaging platforms:

> *Collaborative session recordings, maybe each unit can be a discussion for learning. I am doing the course via correspondence it kinder makes it more*

> *personal when the lecturer actually is speaking to you and you not just reading through something on click-up.* (P4: L89-93)

It seemed that the need for more interactive learning was a priority for some participants. For instance, participant 3 highlighted the need for more interactive learning to combat some of the difficulties of the training: "*Even though they put the recording, it is nice to listen to it when it comes from the horse's mouth, rather than hear it from somebody else"* (P3: L158-160).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that effective training has opportunities for collaboration and interaction. Similar to this view, the common need participants highlighted in the data set was interactive lessons. For example, one participant expressed that interactive lessons allow students to receive support for challenging tasks. Similarly, another participant indicated that platforms of interaction would assist with obtaining clarity for specific assessments or tasks. Moreover, most participants indicated that lecturers can use various methods to create an engaging learning environment. Queiros and de Villiers (2016) argue that technology has developed several platforms of collaboration and these may include discussion boards, video discussions and conference calls. DE programmes at the university have discussion boards accessible to students; however, there seems to be an issue of the ineffective use by tutors and students. Although some educators indicated that they would ideally want contact sessions more frequently, the key factor frequently mentioned was interactive lessons which could arguably also be achieved through other digital platforms. For example, one participant stressed that the use of pre-recorded lessons lacks personal interaction. Overall, participants in this study seemed to value the use of interactive platforms, most especially contact sessions.

Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) contend that for teachers, training should consist of sharing opportunities with colleagues which can offer teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching strategies. Some student teachers in this study found sharing teaching practices very useful and shared experiences to be insightful to their teaching practices. For instance, one participant mentioned that more interactive platforms would offer educators the opportunity to learn from one another. Similarly, one participant indicated that interactive lessons would be effective

because they give the student teachers the opportunity to create their own support system through conversing with one another about challenging tasks. Although the era of digital technology makes it possible for ODL to challenge the barriers to learning and increases access to education, participants in this study nonetheless argued that limited interactive lessons make learning challenging.

Ayvaz et al. (2018) claim that the effectiveness of in-service training programmes depends highly on how they are planned and carried out. In relation to this specific programme, participants argued that the BEd Honours (Learner Support) would be more effective if more contact sessions and interactive platforms were incorporated.

4.2.4.2 Sub-theme 4b: Content application

Participants in the study explained that the BEd Honours training should do more than train student teachers theoretically. Participants argued that there is a need for practical and realistic application material in the training. Table 4.10 states the working definition of sub-theme 4B – content application.

Table 4.10: Working definition of sub-theme 4B – content application

Working Definition
Application is referred to as gaining educational information by implementing it to enhance sensible expertise (Riyad et al., 2020).

Participant 3, 5, 8, and 1 expressed the difficulties of implementing training material from the BEd Honours (Learner Support) in their classrooms: "*I find the information, but to implement it in the classrooms it's very hard"* (P3: L13-14).

One participant made an important distinction between policy and implementation: "*I think what policy tells us and what is implemented in classrooms is totally different*" (P5: L78-79). Furthermore, participant 2 explained that the training would be more impactful with tangible examples or demonstrations of real-life experiences of IE:

> *I mean all the lecturers are excellent, but real people who are busy with these types of children in the moment would assist. Practical examples, resources*

> *for learners who have support problems. More real experiences, because the theory behind is great to know, but it is the practicality and implementation of it that makes it difficult after you have learnt all the theory.* (P2: L93-99)

She continued to explain that although she has obtained the knowledge on learner support, she is still not very clear how she should implement it in her classroom; hence, realistic scenarios should be part of the training:

> *I guess having a mock classroom or more realistic scenarios where they explain what exactly you should do and how you should implement it, how you could test it, you know. I took learning support at varsity for two years and I will still have a child in my class. I actually can't even pinpoint for you what exactly where the problem is. I do not even know where to start, so I guess more steps as to what to do. Have interviews where they show us with parents or teachers who have experienced these things as well*. (P2: L103-111)

Similarly, participant 8 also expressed that she does not feel trained for IE just yet. She further stated that the concern is not that IE is not covered in the modules, but the issue is that she does not think some essential parts of IE are covered: "*Not that inclusive education was not in my other modules; I don't think the important parts are covered. So for me thus far in my honours years, I don't feel like I have been trained as best as I can on inclusive education yet"* (P8: L12-16).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) state that training programmes should include active learning strategies that encompass opportunities for practical experiences that will improve teaching methods. Likewise, Ayvaz et al. (2018) argue that some in-service training programmes administered are ineffective because the content is redundant and not practical. Participants in this study expressed difficulties in implementing the content they learn in the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme due to limited exposure to practical learning. For instance, one participant argued that the training is informative; however, the theory is challenging to implement in the classroom context. On the other hand, one participant stressed that the policy of IE versus classroom implementation is very different.

Osamwonyi (2016) states that some in-services training programmes consist of theoretical learning materials provided in the form of hardcopies with no further practical applications or demonstrations. Du Plessis (2013) affirms that training should consist of varying activities that give teachers the opportunities to actively participate. This was also a critical point of discussion for most participants. For instance, one participant argued that for content to be implementable, student teachers need to be taught using application methods such as demonstrations. Some participants also added more methods that included the use of mock classrooms and guest speakers to enhance learning.

Some educators went to the extent of stating that they were not trained for IE. For example, one participant mentioned that she still could not identify learners with LDs. In addition, Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017) state that effective training programmes consist of theoretical and application content; in this way educators can apply the content learnt to their everyday classroom challenges. Similar to this viewpoint, most participants in essence argued that the content of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) training is informative but needs to also be implementable within the classroom context.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter outlined teachers' experiences of classroom challenges and the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme as identified through the analysis of data collected using semi-structured telephonic interviews. The experiences were discussed under the four themes and 11 sub-themes. The findings were thereafter discussed within the broader context of the literature. The following chapter (Chapter Five) discusses the answers to the research questions presented in Chapter One, the contributions and limitations of the study, and lastly, possible areas for further research.

Chapter Five: Conclusions And Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE. As discussed in Chapter Two, research trends in the field focus on various in-service training programmes implemented and their benefits (Ayvaz-Tuncel & Cobanoglu, 2018; Dalton et al., 2012; Holtman et al., 2018). However, limited research is on in-service training programmes showcasing teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE, exclusively in the South African context.

In this study, semi-structured telephonic interviews were used to explore teachers' experiences of the BEd Honours (Learning Support) programme (Chapter 3). The previous chapter (Chapter 4) presented the data found in the interview transcripts as the results of this study. The results provided insights into the unique experiences of teachers. This final chapter covers the answers to the primary and secondary research questions presented in Chapter One. The challenges and limitations of the study are also discussed followed by recommendations for future research.

5.2 Reflection on the Research Questions

The interview transcripts provided rich data and most of the information necessary to answer the research questions of this study. In answering the primary question of this study, it is important to first consider the secondary questions.

5.2.1 Secondary Questions

5.2.1.1 What are the challenges that teachers experience in their classroom context?

In answering the first secondary research question, it was evident that participants in this study had similar classroom challenges. The classroom challenges identified were limited instructional time, lack of resources, limited support and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teachers in this study expressed that the allocated classroom instructional time is limited for inclusive practices. As Okongo et al. (2015) argue that learners experiencing learning difficulties need extra time. Similarly, teachers in this study also indicated that attending to all learners' needs becomes difficult as there is limited time to cover all aspects of the curriculum. In addition, teachers also stressed that learners experience various learning difficulties; it then becomes a challenge to cater for various learning needs in the allocated instructional time. Most teachers teach in government schools where overcrowded classrooms worsen the aspect of time. Mahlo (2017) also claims that most South African schools have large classrooms that consist of an average number of 40 learners, with some experiencing learning difficulties. It is within such a context that most educators reported that limited instructional time and overcrowded classrooms make it even harder to implement IE. Mpu and Adu (2021) argue that it already a challenge for most eductors to complete the curriculum in the allocated instructional time. Therefore, it is arguable that there is a profound need to create more time for learner support.

Secondly, lack of resources was also reported as one of the classroom challenges limiting inclusivity. Literature indicates that adequate resources play a crucial role in classroom inclusivity (Adewumi et al., 2019; Nel et al., 2013; Okongo et al., 2015). However, Donohue and Bornman (2014) argue that most public school lack academic resources. Some teachers in this study validated this viewpoint by indicating the need for academic resources to enhance inclusivity. Some of the resources identified included learning materials such as, building blocks, beads, and computers. In addition, a research study by Okongo et al. (2015) reported that schools with adequate learning resources haven proven to have an inclusive environment. Teachers in this study stressed that academic resources not only help teachers implement methods of inclusion but also assist learners who need creative ways of learning.

One of the fundamental problematic factors contributing to classroom challenges identified by teachers was lack of support. Bhroin and King (2020) claim that the collaboration of educators and other stakeholders could be beneficial, not only to learners' academic progression, but also to improve teacher morale, self-efficiency,

teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Similarly, participants in this study often emphasised the lack of support from parents, teachers, the community, the DoE and school leadership. Evidently, learners' learning needs were expressed as highly influenced by every individual that plays a role in the education system. Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel, and Tlale (2013) claim that creating a collaborative schooling system seems to be challenge for schools in South Africa. Similarly, Bhroin and King (2020) state that collaborative prcatices in IE seem to be a global challenge. Teachers in this study further stressed that the lack of collaborative practices makes it challenging to cater for diverse learning needs in the classroom.

Lastly, COVID-19 brought forth new school regulations such as the daily rotation that made it challenging to attend to learners' learning needs. For instance, Maree (2021) states that learners struggled to find sufficient space in the classroom during the pandemic because they were required to maintain a 1-meter social distance at school. Due to irregular school attendance and other COVID-19 regulations, teachers reported that it was challenging to address some of the issues thereby limiting academic progression. Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 left teachers concerned for the learners with remedial needs.

5.2.1.2 To what extent has in-service training on inclusive education assisted teachers?

Teachers in this study found the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme very impactful and effective. According to the six identified elements that make teacher trainings effective; the BEd Honours (Learner Support) is arguably a high quality training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

For instance, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that an effective training is content specific. Teachers in this study found the training to be very informative. The BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme was also described as a good tool that enhances knowledge on IE. This further confirmed Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz's (2015) viewpoint that emphasises that successful training focuses on subject matter which provides teachers with complex and rich knowledge. For instance, Philosophy was one of the modules that was found interesting and insightful.

Secondly, an effective training is implemented for a sustained duration of time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As indicated in Chapter Three, the BEd Honours (Learner support) has a minimum duration of one year. Du Plessis (2013) argues that longer duration trainings give educators enough time to learn more about their teaching practices. Evidently, teachers in this study stressed on how the training improved their classroom teaching practices. The effectiveness of this training was further validated by teachers expressing that all teachers have to undergo such training programmes.

Although it may be challenging to measure the extent to which the training assisted; it is arguable that most teachers found the training to be informative, insightful and necessary for IE. All things considered, teachers showed a positive outlook towards the BEd Honours (Learner Support).

5.2.1.3 What are the factors that could make in-service training on inclusive education more effective?

Two identified factors could make the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme more effective – a) more interactive learning and b) learning through application.

Teachers in this study highlighted the challenges of being enrolled in a distance in-service training course. The BEd Honours (Learning Support) has been reported to lack interactive platforms. This is also confirmed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) who argue that high-quality training creates the space for educators to interact with each other. Furthermore, the lack of more interactive lessons and support left some teachers with academic challenges. These challenges were centred on the lack of opportunities to receive more interactive feedback from lecturers. Even though some teachers were aware that distance learning comes with limited contact sessions, they stressed the need for innovative ways of creating interactive lessons. Some of the suggested manners of interaction included Saturday face-to-face lessons and online video interactions with lecturers. These should be in addition to the contact sessions embedded in the programme. Student teachers in this study were confident that these platforms would form a support structure to assist them when they encountered academic and classroom challenges. These platforms can also be

viewed as elements of academic support and coaching which are arguably vital for academic progression (Aluko, 2021).

Participants in this study also expressed difficulties in implementing the content learnt in the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme. Correspondingly, du Plessis (2013) affirms that training should consist of varying activities that give teachers the opportunities to actively participate. Attention was drawn on the implementation of theoretical content in real classroom settings. Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017) claim that an effective training consists of theoretical and practical academic content that is implementable in classroom settings. On the same note, teachers in this study expressed that there are several ways to make the content implementable. Some of the suggestions included demonstrations, guest speakers and mock classrooms. Teachers stressed practical learning would provide the skills needed to include all learners in their classrooms.

5.2.2 Primary Question

In this section, the primary research question is answered as stated in Chapter One: What are teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education?

The findings indicated that the teachers in the study had several experiences related to the in-service training they are currently enrolled in. These experiences unearthed some of the teachers' classroom challenges that included lack of support, COVID-19, limited instructional time and limited resources. Along similar lines, literature identified similar factors that include, heavy work load, overcrowded classrooms, lack of support, and negative attitude towards inclusivity (Mahlo, 2017; Tyagi, 2016; Maree, 2021). In addition, teachers also shared their experiences with some of the learning barriers they have encountered in their classrooms. Based on these experiences, student teachers further stressed the need for every teacher to be trained for IE.

The teachers experienced the in-service training differently, however, most teachers found the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme to be effective. The findings indicated that teachers viewed the in-service training programme to be insightful and informative. They stressed that it improved their views on diversity and enhanced

their teaching practices. The BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme was experienced positively.

Although teachers had a positive outlook on the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme, they also experienced some challenges within the training. These difficulties included a lack of practical and interactive learning. Teachers suggested more interactive platforms to enhance learning such as regular contact sessions. They also suggested more application learning such as mock classrooms. In essence, the educators argued that these factors would make the training implementable within classroom settings.

5.3 Reviewing the Theoretical Framework

As stated in Chapter Two, this study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. This theoretical framework was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the research findings.

In line with the theory, the findings of this study confirmed the notion that every individual is embedded in multiple nested systems, and that development is the result of complex interactions between the individual and various systemic factors that influence each other (Kamenopoulou, 2016). For instance, an inclusive classroom highly depends on teachers' skills and their theoretical competency which are products of effective in-service training. In turn, these acquired skills then directly benefit the learners. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory highlights that as individuals, we are influenced by a variety of factors that function in different systems, and in order to understand an individual's experience, such factors need to be considered (Visser & Moleko, 2012). Therefore, the findings elucidated the complexities of various factors that are linked to creating an inclusive classroom.

Furthermore, the findings also validated the viewpoint that systems are interdependent and continuously interact to form a whole. For example, the transformation in educational policies due to COVID-19 had a massive impact on classroom interactions and may further broaden the conceptualisation of IE. This is also supported by van der Berg et al. (2020) who argue that political factors have resulted in a significant shift in the meaning of the teaching profession. Furthermore,

the findings elucidate that learners with LDs can be viewed from a micro-level system where their capacity to learn is highly depend on the continuous interaction of teachers' skills to implement IE, collaboration with stakeholders, and revision of inclusive policies. This solidifies the complexities of a network of relationships which are in continuous interaction (Visser & Moleko, 2012).

All things considered, the theoretical premise behind these findings supports the notion that teachers and learners do not exist in isolation and that all systems determine the success of IE. This includes in-service training programmes specific to their classroom needs that are effectively planned and implemented at other levels of the ecological system.

5.4 Contribution of the Study

This study provided insight into teachers' experiences of IE classroom challenges. The study showed some of the challenges that may hinder the implementation of IE in the classroom. These findings can contribute to the existing knowledge on factors hindering IE.

Valuable insight was gained into various learning barriers and how teachers make sense of them in classroom settings within the South African context, where research is limited. Furthermore, the shared experiences of the effectiveness of the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme can contribute to the existing literature on the benefits of in-service training programmes. This may help government officials to consider establishing more academic in-service training programmes in partnership with various South African DE institutes.

This study describes the factors that could improve the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme. This could assist the University of Pretoria to further develop the BEd Honours training programme. Moreover, these findings could be used to establish other IE programmes that prioritise application-based learning. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory theoretical framework used in this study highlighted the complex nature of individual experiences. This provided an alternative understanding of IE that acknowledges the influence of the broader system.

Lastly, this study elucidated the importance of a needs analysis. Through this research study, a dialogue between educators and the researcher was established where teachers' classroom needs were uncovered. This leaves room for creating research-based training that is specific to these learning gaps.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Several problems occurred in the implementation of the present research study, the first being the changes in the data collection method. This study initially attempted to collect data using face-to-face interviews after the student teachers annual contact session. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews became a matter of health concern. The data collection method was then changed to telephonic interviews.

The second problem concerned recruiting participants. After many attempts at recruiting teachers in the BEd Honours (Learner Support) programme, two teachers were unreachable telephonically and two participants withdrew from the study. Those who chose to remain in the study were fully committed to the interview process. However, due to COVID-19, some teachers struggled to commit to their interview schedules. This delayed the data collection process.

Thirdly, this study targeted population (BEd Honours students) was significantly small which risked the possibility of obtaining data that was not rich. However, the obtained sample size of eight participants was sufficient to obtain rich data and this was achieved by probing with more questions during the interviews to receive diverse data.

Furthermore, the fourth challenge experienced was in relation to the data interpretation. As a qualitative research study, data interpretation plays a crucial role. However, this process also risks the possibility of reporting findings that are not an accurate representation of the context of the data and are more of the reflective interactions between the researcher and the data. For this reason, a reflective journal was kept as an attempt to stay conscious of any assumptions that could influence the research findings. In addition, the researcher used member-checking activities to ensure that participants in this study were not misrepresented.

Lastly, as a qualitative researcher, there are various ways of risking researcher bias. This was a challenge because this study was inspired by the personal interpretation of various literature papers. However, this study was approached from an objective stance where the main goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences.

5.6 Recommendations

The following sections present recommendations for practice, training, and research.

5.6.1 Recommendations for Practice and Training

The following recommendations are for practice and training in the field of Distance Education and Educational Psychology:

- Further improvement of the BEd Honours training programme at the University of Pretoria, especially with regard to effective use of interactive online platforms.
- Establishing more evidence-based and government funded academic in-service training programmes on inclusive education.
- Creating opportunities for formal in-service trainings to include practical sessions and organisers to invite practitioners in the field.
- The incorporation of IE subject matter in early higher education training of aspiring educators.
- Creating more opportunities to broaden collaborations with relevant stakeholders in order to combat the challenges of IE.

5.6.2 Recommendations for Research

Based on the findings of this study, additional research is required to gain a better understanding of teachers' experiences of in-service training programmes on IE in South Africa. Further research should include the following:

- Additional methods of gathering data that are aligned with this phenomenological and exploratory study.

- An exploratory study aimed at evaluating the difference between implemented inclusive measures in private and government schools.
- Review studies on the conceptualisation of IE in consideration of the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic.
- A mixed-methods study in which the impact of several academic in-service training programmes on IE is investigated.
- An intervention study evaluating the effectiveness of a designed in-service training that is tailored to specific classroom needs.

5.7 Closing Remarks

Various trends emerged in this study that suggest the significance of understanding teachers' classroom needs. It is evident that they play a crucial role in implementing effective in-service training programmes. In this qualitative research study, the findings indicated that addressing inclusive classroom needs through training not only improves teacher quality but also impacts inclusive classroom practices. For this reason, it was reported that in-service training programmes on IE content need to be implementable.

In the application of meta-cognitive thinking, I also conclude with my reflective thoughts. The purpose of this case study was to explore teachers' experiences of in-service training on IE. During the methodological research process, I became more aware of the importance of considering classroom needs and experiences to understand how best student teachers can be trained for IE. This study contributed immensely to my personal growth and as a researcher and community activist, I am inspired to further contribute to the body of knowledge.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Approval Letter from the Dean

Appendix B:

Invitation and informed Consent for participants

Appendix C:

Interview Questions

Appendix D:

Transcripts of interviews

Appendix E:

Codes for data

Appendix F:

Researcher's journal

Appendix A: Approval Letter from the Dean

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Dean of Teaching and Learning Preliminary Approval

31 August 2020

Miss TA Nembambula
Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Dear Miss TA Nembambula

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH STUDY EDU094/20: A NEED ANALYSIS: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

I have perused the documents provided and approve the proposed research study.

I have no objection to the research team requesting the researchers from the Faculty of Education to participate in this research project, **subject to ethics approval by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee**.

Kind regards

Professor CT Sehoole
Dean: Teaching and Learning
Faculty of Education

Appendix B: Invitation and Informed Consent for Participants

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently enrolled as a Masters student in Educational Psychology (Learning Support, Guidance and Counselling) at the University of Pretoria. My degree is a research degree and as part of the requirements I need to conduct a research study. I hereby request and invite you to participate in this study. The topic I am conducting my research on is:

A need analysis: Teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe teachers' experiences of BEd Honours (Learning Support) in-service training. One of the biggest challenges in the education system is the need to cater for inclusive education in classrooms. The South African government has seen the need to develop more distance education learning programmes that effectively target the enhancement of inclusive education policies. However, it has been argued that distance education programmes can be ineffective depending on how it is implemented. There seems to be a profound lack of needs analysis done before in-service training programmes are administered, leading to the ineffectiveness of the training. This study aims to explore teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education to uncover teachers' needs to cater for inclusive education in classrooms.

This research study will be in the form of an individual; interview that will be voice-recorded. The questions which will be addressed during the interview are attached to this invitation for you to review. The interview will be arranged at the time that is most convenient to you. The duration of the interview will be approximately 30 minutes. The semi-structured interview will not interfere with tuition time.

Your identity will be protected in the dissemination of the results as your name will be removed from transcripts and you will be given a pseudonym. Only my supervisor and I will know your identity and this information will be treated as confidential. The information you give will only be used for academic purposes, in my dissertation and in any other academic communication. Collected data will be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes. The opportunity for member-checking will be granted as an additional activity to promote rigour and trustworthiness. After completion of the study, the material will be stored at the University's Educational Psychology's department according to the policy requirements.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage if you wish to do so. Please do so by informing the researcher timorously. The data collected from you up until the point of withdrawal will be incorporated into the overall findings of the study.

If you are interested in participation of this study, please complete the form below. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TEACHERS

Title of research project: *A need analysis: Teachers' experiences of in-service training on inclusive education*

I, _____ the undersigned,

In my capacity as a teacher at _____

(Name of school) hereby agree to participate in the above-mentioned research study. I furthermore give my permission for the research session to be voice-recorded. I understand that my contribution will be treated as confidential and anonymous within the limitations discussed above. I would / would not like to use a pseudonym to be linked to my responses once the results of the study have been disseminated. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time if I wish to do so and will inform the researcher in a timeous manner of this decision.

Signed at _____ on _____2021.

_____ _____

Participant Researcher

Appendix C: Interview Questions

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

THE TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this interview is for the teacher to describe their experience of BEd Honours (Learning Support) training.

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Maximum duration: 40 minutes

Interviewer: Tshililo Annah Nembambula

Interviewees: _____

QUESTIONS

1. Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?
2. How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?
3. What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in classroom?
4. How did BEd Honours (Learning Support) training assist you to implement inclusive education in classrooms?
5. Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?
6. What is your classroom needs to implement inclusive education?
7. Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately trained you on inclusive education?
8. What enablers do you think can assist improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

Appendix D: Transcripts of Interviews

Interviewee: P1

Interviewed by:
Tshililo Nembambula

Date: May 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P1: It has been really helpful because I love what I am doing. I wanted to help children but I didn't know how to help them. I practice what I learn, I remember this one time there was this child. I didn't know she had problems, but she would go up and down; she couldn't spend 5 minutes sitting still. When I am out of the class, I will find her outside the class door waiting for me and she would also make a lot of noise etc. I didn't understand why she was the way she was, until I learnt about ADHD and children experiencing barriers in education. I started to monitor her and understand her behavior. That is the exciting part, because learner support training has opened my eyes in a positive way. Every day when I go to work I have plans on what I am going to do with them, so it is exciting. I love it.

Interviewer: How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?

P1: It taught me that all children have the right to education irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, or race. Every child has the right to education, no matter the family background, disability or anything. When I learnt about diversity, that each child is unique, one child is not the same as the other, and that you can't compare the child with everyone because they not the same. You can't say one size fits all, you have to apply inclusive education to every learner when you are teaching, modify the lessons for the learners who are struggling. Sometimes when you give them the activities, there are others who finish first and others who will take an hour long to finish. You have to give them time to finish the activity.

Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in classrooms?

P1: Time, the lack of parental involvement, and heavy work load. Every day you have to do activities with the learners and for those experiencing barriers it's a challenge because they don't finish the work on time. I have learnt that if I give those who are performing well 5 sentences to complete and the ones who are experiencing barriers I give them 2 sentences because they are trying their best. Sometimes I have to give them time in the morning at least 20 minutes to complete their work. Time is a challenge. The parents are also not supporting us, because sometimes you call them and they don't answer the phone, or you ask them to come to school to talk about their child and they don't come, they have excuses. Even if you give the learner homework, they do not help the learner. There are some parents who are willing to help, they not same, but majority of the parents are not willing to cooperate. The department and the workload is a lot.

Interviewer: How has the training assist you to implement inclusive education in your current classroom?

P1: It taught me to love the learners as they are mine, to treat them with respect and diversity. They also taught me about extrinsic factors impacting the learners. The socio-economic factors at home, the school environment and home situations can also affect the learning of the child. They are also intrinsic factors that can factor the learning process of the learners. I have learnt a lot about those, I didn't know them. I use to take them for granted, but ever since this training, I am learning a lot. I am grateful for it.

Interviewer: Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P1: Yes, it is very important because I was teaching in another school, but when I came to this school, it was a different situation. I saw that half of the learners need my help, and I didn't know how to help them. I didn't understand why some behaved the way they did, some when you give them work they are quick to finish and others take their time or need me to point at the board so they can write. Some couldn't write from the board, so I needed to move them from the back to the front and point from one word to another. Within 3 weeks they started improving, they were better, I am so proud, because they were not able to write clearly along the lines. They much better, so I am proud about the progress, that it why I feel it is very important to be trained for inclusive education. When you have learners who experience barriers in education, you won't have to stress.

Interviewer: What are some of the barriers you mentioned that you have experienced?

P1: Some have ADHD, some have Down syndrome and some have a slow development. The other ones had special cases. I just found out that one learner's parents separated due to this the child's performance has dropped, and I wanted to know why because I know the learner from her previous grade. I phoned the mother and I asked what happened to the learner because she was able to do this and that. The mother explained that she separated with the father and this had an impact on the child's performance, so she is not copping at home. I started to treat her well and gave her time, because I know that she knows how to write, but ever this incidence she not doing well.

Interviewer: What is your current classroom needs to implement inclusive education currently?

P1: I think I need technology, the computers to help the learners. I started teaching grade R for 6 years since 2016, so in grade R they a have everything. They have the small computers, the manipulators toys that they can use, like building blocks, beads, the shapes. They have hands on experiences that can be used for children, they can build houses. They even the visual stimulus and radio, we could put the CD listen to music, and it was nice. I think even in grade 2 we need those visual things, the computers, and the hands on experience such as the bin bag, the shapes, and the building blocks for the learners; especially for those who are struggling. In grade R they have all those things and I love that, even the physical movement; they have all the resources there.

Interviewer: How do you think this technological assistants and hands on experiences would help learners with learning barriers?

P1: I think some children still struggle with their small muscle development; you can see them when they are writing and how they hold their pencil. Even the play daw, there are some I was using it on them to train their muscle because they are not fully developed. Even those blocks they help them to think creatively, so I think it will help. I use to take my laptop to school and I would put something for them to watch, and you can see them when they are watching they are also participating. They would sing along, play along and do whatever is done .It is exciting to see them happy and do what they like. I also realised that the children experiencing barriers in education, they don't like writing too much, if I give them an activity to draw and I say draw you and your friends. They are going to draw, and even if you give them an

activity they like to draw, they like physical activities, they love those things, even watching and imitating, that what they do best. I think computers will help, maybe the board games, because they get bored easily. They don't want to do the same thing, they want variety.

Interviewer: Do you think you have been adequately trained on inclusive education?

P1: Yes I have. I am still learning, but I am happy, proud and I have dignity. Even the other teachers heard that am doing inclusive education training, now they bring their children to my class. On Tuesday, there is this teacher teaching grade 1, she came to my class and said "Mam I heard that you doing inclusive education, so I am interested. I also have this learner who can't write and she can't do anything". I told her I will come see her during break time. Lunch time I went to her and she showed me the learner, I went to the learner and I ask "how are you?" and the she said "am fine and how am you?" and I said "I am fine". I asked her about her father, her mother and her family members and she told me. I then told her to draw a picture of her mother and then I give her a blank page. I told her I want see your mothers' face and your father's face, and to my amazement that girl drew her mother and everything in fine details like eyes and hand bag. She drew it beautiful and I took the picture to her teacher, and asked her what she thinks. She said there is something missing, so I took the crayons and I told the learner to colour. She did that and I took it to the teacher again and she was like she can't even draw herself but look at this. The teacher was very appreciative.

Interviewer: What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P1: Longer time. Learning support takes time because you have to assess the learners. Now because of COVID, the learners are not coming to school every day, some are coming twice a week and some three times a week. When you have to identify the barrier or what they are struggling with, you just have to look at the learner in the morning because you have other learners. I found out that within 30 minutes of coming to school, this learner is sleeping. So I started getting worried and called the mother, the mother said he doesn't sleep late. So I started to realize that the learner has a problem and I will let him sleep for 15 minutes and wake him up for the toilet break. When I see he is tired I send him to fetch water or something, so that he is busy. The time for me is not enough. Maybe if there is an extend deadlines with 5 days, because it is not easy, there is a lot of work.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else to add on that I did not touch on?

P1: I think I found what I needed, something to fulfil me. I had a space in my heart, but now am happy am living my dream to see a learner being able to write.

Interviewer: Thank you for participating.

Interviewee: P2

Interviewed by:
Tshililo Nembambula

Date: 14 May 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P2: Ok, so my experience feels very limited as I am only in first year honours, and we only recently started on the 1st of April. But so far the two modules I have got is research methodology and philosophy. Philosophy I find quite useful as in it really helps me understand people's perspective, view, and outcome on their own lives as well as your own life. I found that has been exceptionally helpful. As for research obviously it is difficult to apply research to everyday life, especially even in a classroom, but the research methodology tutors and lecturers are extremely organized and up to date which helps a lot. Where else I find philosophy not as organised and up to date, so it is difficult to manage both when they are complete polar opposite, but otherwise this far so good, the education department for distance education seem very well organized.

Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in classrooms?

P2: Luckily at the moment I have quite an inclusive education classroom, because at the moment I have got English, Afrikaans for blindly and partially sighted learners. Our classroom is relatively inclusive but my biggest complication with inclusive education at the moment is the children themselves even though they are in an inclusive classroom they don't always feel included. It is difficult to give all of them the necessary attention because they are all different. They all actually require individual attention, and that for me is quite a challenge when comes to inclusivity in the classroom.

Interviewer: Alright, understood. How did BEd Honours (Learning Support) training assist you to implement inclusive education in your classrooms? In your situation how do you expect the material to assist you to implement inclusive education?

P2: Well at this point I do feel that philosophy helps me to understand the different views points and the way they express themselves. Each child is going to be different; at least it prepares you mentally and emotionally for those view points and different ways of dealing with that.

Interviewer: What is the one view point that you resonate with from philosophy?

P2: It is not a specific one, it is the openness that one should have to the different viewpoints, which I find Philosophy emphasises on you to be very open minded and to really listen to every viewpoint separately to try understanding it as a whole, holistically in everything which I quite like.

Interviewer: Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P2: Definitely, I think it is very important.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on your answer?

P2: I think it is very important because firstly in a country like South Africa we have such a diverse culture such as diverse traditions and languages. It really means that every child you have in front of you is going to be different. Something about them is different, whether it is socio-economic or political, or language based, or culture based. Everyone is different which means even in a mainstream schooling system you need to understand inclusive education, and inclusivity in a classroom. Because at the

end of the day, all your children are actually different, so they need to be included regardless of where they differ.

Interviewer: What is your current classroom needs to implement inclusive education?

P2: That is a difficult question, the biggest thing for me in inclusivity in a classroom is that you need to make each child feel like they are included or they are comfortable where they are. That would be differentiation in workbooks, or differentiation in the way they learn. The biggest thing I guess I can say is really needed is caps document itself actually needs to lead for more inclusivity in classroom. It is so structured and strict as in, what you need and what they want you to have in a classroom. I think they need to be a way to include inclusivity in the classrooms.

Interviewer: Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately train you for inclusive education or do you feel it will adequately train you for inclusive education?

P2: At this point it is very difficult for me to give you a definitive answer, because I am still quite early in the programme. I still feel probably now and at the end of my studies, they can be a lot more specific on certain things. Like at the moment all the honours programmes are very generalised, so as much as we are all separate into learning support, management, law, maths; we all actually start in exactly in the same place. It is not specified enough, I feel. I can't work out of this and say I know exactly how to work with all children with learning support problems, which is why I feel it needs to be more specific in what we are learning, and not make it so generalised.

Interviewer: what expectation did you have going into the programme?

P2: So I already work at a school for special needs, so obviously my goal or the outcome that I would have liked after finishing the learning support honours is to be a lot more qualified to help learners who have learning problems.

Interviewer: What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P2: I think maybe a lot of guest speakers, or guest lecturers, who have actual experience. I mean all the lecturers are excellent, but real people who are busy with these types of children in the moment would assist. Practical examples, resources for learners who have support problems. More real experiences, because the theory behind is great to know, but it is the practicality and implementation of it that makes it difficult after you have learned all the theory.

Interviewer: What would make it so practical; let's say for example what could be incorporated in the programme to make it more practical in classroom setting?

P2: I guess having a mock classroom or more realistic scenarios where they explain what exactly you should do and how you should implement it , how you could test it, you know. I took learning support at varsity for two years and I will still have a child in my class. I actually can't even pin point for you what exactly where the problem is. I do not even know where to start, so I guess more steps as to what to do. Have interviews where they show us with parents or teachers who have experienced these things as well.

Interviewer: You said you are already in an inclusive school, I was just curious as to what kind of learning difficulties have you come across in your classroom?

P2: So our learners already have a disability, either visually impaired or blind. A lot of my children also have ADHD or ADD. Obviously it makes it more difficult because they already have a main disability but they also have learning problems. Most have ADHD and ADD, some of them have dyslexia, and then a lot of them have more minimal learning school problems like fine motor skills those kinds of things, either behind or slow. I mean some of our learners have not been in school for years and then they come to us and they are starting at grade 1 but they already 10 years old.

Interviewer: That must be difficult.

P2: Yes it is very difficult, or they were in a school where they never learnt English and then they come to us and they have to do home language English.

Interviewer: That's everything on my side; did I leave out anything that perhaps you wanted to tell me?

P2: Am happy with everything, thank you.

Interviewee: P3

Interviewed by:
Tshililo Nembambula

Date: 16 May 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P3: It's been a tough year for me doing the honours. I find it very informative and exciting; and at the same time it's very difficult. The way they planned it for us to do, especially when they say we must submit, we submit the same things. Maybe for example I am doing two modules, and then they say submit maybe the modules on the same day. So it's very difficult, you find that you doing two things at the same time and you juggle work; and life. I find it very tough, but it's very informative and great.

Interviewer: How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?

P3: About that, I find the information, but to implement it in the classrooms it's very hard. We do have learners who have difficulties and who have a very high adoption of information, they just grab information. In a school that lack resources it's very tough to implement inclusive education, because you need to give every child attention. In the private schools where they have resource it might be better. Where you have limited resources, and you need to do copies and set up assessment for different learners in the same time, it is very tough. If a school can have adequate resource, I think it can be done.

Interviewer: I think you already included some of the aspects on the following question, but you can elaborate more. What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education?

P3: The challenge that I have noticed so far are parents. Parents are the first people before us teachers to realize that the child has a learning problem .The parent has already recognise it and

instead of dealing with it , the parent will change the child from this school to another school, and then the child comes with a lengthy learner profile. Then when you check it, you will see that the child has been experiencing difficulties for quite a number of years. When you call the parents and sit them down and try to explain, some they want to help and be involved. When you see the child can't read and you start teaching sounds from the beginning. They will cooperate, they will sign the book, and they also help the child match sounds. But some they can be aggressive and defensive, and they withhold information. This makes a teacher to stable and to see a stop sign. If the parent does not give you full support, how are you as a teacher going to support that child. It's like a chair with three legs, the child, the parent, and the educators in the school. If one of the legs is broken, we can't go forward. The other thing is the learners themselves, even though you do not show them that you are teaching them the same thing with the hierarchy of questioning. You see those who have the low cognitive and higher cognition. You need to step up the activities in the classroom according to their cognitive level and their understanding, then when you do that you remove the child, maybe you want to put them in their group that has the equal mindset with them. Sometimes you will find that they do not want to be move, until maybe you take the child aside and you sit them down and you talk to him/her and that's where the child will "say ok , I agree". But when you out loudly say it "today Sipho may you sit on the blue area", then Sipho will say "oh because am stupid". You see? The child needs to understand maybe before go through with the child, you need to make the child understand the reason why you are taking him

to the blue colour or orange colour or yellow colour according to their understanding. Some children are very sensitive, children they sense before you can even tell them. They have that intuition to know that maybe "me i don't belong here". As a teacher I need to make the child feel like they belong. Usually when I see a child who struggling and maybe I want give them extra jobs, because we have more learners in the classroom. Right now with COVID I have 25 learners in my class and they come in a rotation. When the child is coming to school every day I have time to assess them and I see that this one need a remedial and I try to remedial the child. However, now you tell the child that today you are sitting there or come see me at break time to give them more time, because we do not have time. We just go to the classrooms and when there is a child that is lacking you need to have to use your own personal time to help that child. You don't use the time that is put by the school and timetable, because one of the problems that when the school set the table they don't have time for remedial. We need 30 or 40 minutes for remedial and that is how it will be much better implemented.

Interviewer: How did BEd Honours (Learning Support) training assist you to implement inclusive education in your classrooms?

P3: It has assisted me to see a lot of things with a clear mind, not label, not call names and not be insensitive towards learners who have learning disabilities. It has also taught me that even if the child does not grab the curriculum there are other things that the child can do very well, such as sports, or music. If the child doesn't grasp the curriculum, you can encourage the child through music; or maybe to integrate the curriculum together so that the child can have a better chance.

Interviewer: What are some of the learning challenges that you have witnessed in classrooms?

P3: Most of the children do not know how to read, they can hear when you read for them and understand, but when they actually need to read for themselves they can't pronounce words. When you ask them to come speak they can listen and speak to you about the story they have been listening to. Some of kids they don't have confidence, they lack that confidence and also there are learners who only recognise only numbers, but not sentences, words and how to use them to form sentences. So I have never given the learning problem a name, I could only explain what I have realized so far with the learners that am teaching, because am not a doctor. I could say maybe a child has Autism spectrum because it includes a lot of things, but it not like that. All I can say is that, most of the learners especially those who are transitioning experience learning problems. I am teaching grade 4, 5, 6, and 7. Those who are transitioning, they have a barrier of learning with regards to reading .They don't know how to read until you start reading lessons from the beginning where you start with the sound, and then they come along by March. If you started with then in January, by March they are better. When they close they start again, but when the year ends most of them have picked up, but those who really do suffer barriers, they are still where they have started.

Interviewer: Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P3: It is important to be trained. Most teachers they are bias, so inclusive education will tell you that you must leave everything and look at the child. Some of us it is the philosophies that we

grow up with, it is not the environment in the school, it is the things we have been learning when we grow up. When you look at the module that we started with, the one that speaks about philosophy, it made me realize that there a lot of things as a teacher such as your beliefs that determine how you are going to teach the children and what you willing to change. If you are a teacher who is innovative, you will change when you see the things that are in the programs of the BEd. They will make you focus more on the learner, not yourself.

Interviewer: What is your classroom needs to implement inclusive education in the current school you're working in?

P3: Space, equipment, and also money for toners and printers. If you have to plan for four groups in your class, four different grades in your class, you cannot use the book everything. You need to have worksheets, you need to have notes, and you cannot always write on the board, because you writing for different grades in the same class. You need to have material, resources, a lot of resources. It is what I can think of to make learning easier.

Interviewer: Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately trained you for inclusive education?

P3: I believe it has, because even when I do the formal activities last year and this year, I heard my HOD telling me that she sees something in the way I have been are things. She knows that am studying BEd and she keeps telling me that she can see that it has taught me something I did not know when I started teaching. I also think that it taught me to be patient, to be emphatic and to have understanding towards the learners. Not to feel like they need to know everything now. It has taught me that information

is built on top of what you know and if you can take the learners back to their grade 1 foundation phase, start there again. I think we can prosper and improve the learner support when doing inclusive education.

Interviewer: What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P3: Planning, their planning. The people who have compile it together, when they plan things for us as learners, they should not plan it on one day and allocate two sessions on the same day. We are not only doing the BEd remember, they are other things we are doing and they tell you that today we have a double session. They put them on the same time, and on the same day, and even though they put the recording, it is nice to listen to it when it comes from the horse's mouth, rather than hear it from somebody else. Also the due dates, it would be easier if they space them out or have gaps in between submissions, because we literally submit two things on the same day. One module will lack the attention, and you find that you have given more to that one module, and the other one when you do the work it is not a100% , everything is done simultaneously.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that maybe I did not touch on, that you would like to tell me about the course?

P3: The course is very good, it is very informative, and there is nothing I would like to add so far.

Interviewer: Thank you

Interviewee: P4

Interviewed by: Tshililo Nembambula

Date: 16 May 2021

Interviewer: Alright, can you please describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P4: So far it has been very good. I feel like it is a lot better than when I was doing my BEd foundation phase because I did a module with learning support in foundation phase. I am not a hundred percent done with it yet, we still doing a module but so far I have a good experience with the modules so far.

Interviewer: What modules are you doing currently?

P4: Am doing NQM 74 and then LSG.

Interviewer: Ok. How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?

P4: So I won't lie, it actually taught me a lot of different things. When you think about it, you don't actually have a good understanding until you hear other people's point of views. Looking at the discussion board seeing other people's opinion of it is helps you get a better understanding, if anything it has taught me to have a better understanding in that kind of way. It definitely has helped me understand what it is.

Interviewer: Do you mind telling me what you do understand of inclusive education?

P4: So, it is basically to ensure that in a classroom every child learning needs is met, whether they have a learning disability, whether they are extremely academically strong. Every child has needs in the class, so it's important to address them without leaving any child behind.

Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education?

P4: So being a teacher myself, it's very difficult when you have a child who is, let's say they have Down syndrome and they are in

your class right? It's really difficult to give all your attention to that child but still be able to teach the rest of the class. That's quite difficult to do especially like when you have 24 learners. However, many children in my class I kinder have to spread myself amongst every single child and it is quite difficult.

Interviewer: Is it fair to say time is one of the challenges?

P4: Yes, definitely time.

Interviewer: How did BEd Honours (Learning Support) training assist you to implement inclusive education in your classrooms?

P4: So it has basically made me understand all the different learning disabilities. It has helped me understand what learning disabilities are, because we still busy doing the modules, there is still a few things I know am going to learn. Let me think what else, it has taught me like different things you can do or like different strategies you can maybe do help you teach all the children.

Interviewer: How do you apply that understanding, maybe you can give me an example of how you have applied the understanding from what you have learnt?

P4: what I have done is I have taken what I have learnt like for example, I have a little girl in my class who is extremely far behind; I am a grade 2 teacher. She should be in grade 1 but she is in grade 2 and she needs a lot more of my attention. What I have done is I will get the class an activity to do, while they doing it she will be standing with me while I do it together with her. It has taught me to like kinder give everyone something else to do and I still have time to go and do something else with the people in my class that need help, you know?

Interviewer: Yes, alright. Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P4: Yes a 100%.

Interviewer: Can you please elaborate on your answer?

P4: Especially now, so I am a new teacher right? I have been teaching for two years. When you studying education you are not really taught a lot about inclusive education. I don't think you actually expect that when you are teaching that there is going to be a child in your class who has learning disabilities like quit server ones. So I think once you actually there in the class and you find that you have a child with a learning disability in your class , then it's easier when you know more about it and how to deal with, you know ?

Interviewer: Yes. What is your classroom needs to implement inclusive education in your current school?

P4: Time and resources, definitely resources like blocks the kids can use to help them count or things like that. Maybe actually even assistant teacher would be a really good idea to help. I do not have an assistant teacher, but I am thinking having one would be like amazing. In that way it ensure that maybe if you not giving your full attention to a specific child , maybe having an extra set of hands, eyes and ears will be helpful.

Interviewer: Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately trained you so far on inclusive education?

P4: I think so, yes.

Interviewer: Do you want to elaborate on that?

P4: Just basically what I said earlier, I am more aware of what to do in a classroom, like how to make sure that every child is included and you know the learning environment and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Ok. What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P4: I am actually not sure, maybe more like collaborative session recordings, maybe each unit can be a discuss for learning. I am doing the course via correspondence it kinder makes it more personal when the lecturer actually is speaking to you and you not just reading through something on click-up.

Interviewer: Is there anything that maybe I did not touch on you would like to tell me about the BEd honour training or inclusive education?

P4: Not that I can think of, no.

Interviewee: P5

Interviewed by:
Tshililo Nembambula

Date: 28 May 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P5: Ok, it is very informative, exciting, challenging and a learning experience for me being in my honours degree.

Interviewer: So very informative you say?

P5: Very, very informative. I have actually learnt to a lot from degree and honours level.

Interviewer: Ok. How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?

P5: Ok. It exposes me to new strategies, new knowledge and a different ways on how teachers in a classroom can embrace diversity and offer the necessary support to all learners that are experiencing barriers to learning.

Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in your classroom?

P5: Ok, within my school environment I see negative teacher attitude. Teachers necessarily do not have the time to assist colleagues; do not necessarily have the time to assist. Inadequate resources, inadequate physical resources; like extra tables and chairs accommodation for the children. Low parental involvement of parents of learners who need extra learning support is another challenge.

Interviewer: Ok, with regards to the teacher support, what kind of support is specifically lacking?

P5: I think when there are more teachers that have a vast knowledge of information, necessary to help the child. I think some teachers are very limited in helping. They not expressing their eagerness to help the colleagues and other teachers, they

keep their knowledge to themselves; they not necessarily want to help better the environment in some case.

Interviewer: Ok, I understand. How did BEd Honours (Learning Support) training assist you to implement inclusive education in your current classrooms?

P5: Ok, they have equipped me with some knowledge and relevant skills on how I can implement inclusion in class; as well as whom I can ask for greater support when needed, because through this learning support honours degree, I have realized there is different procedure and help available. For example, you can go to your HOD, from you HOD go to the SBCP, and then go to your district support services. I really did not know that DDSP was available and they had necessary information, resources, the education personnel, people that can assist us. So now with this it has equipped me with knowledge, so now I know how I can go a little bit further.

Interviewer: Have you ever have to go a little further in your classroom?

P5: Not really, not in my class. I haven't had that experience thus far.

Interviewer: Ok, have you had any experience with learners who needed a bit of inclusion?

P5: We do have asylum class in our school for the children that need a little bit extra support .Obviously there are many children but the ones who need really extra support, experiencing challenges, experiencing their barriers, there is a form we fill in and then we send to our HOD from our HOD it goes on to the school management team and so forth. And then after that there is asylum support class where the children after psychological

testing is awarded and given the necessary support in asylum class.

Interviewer: Ok.

P5: We have specialized teachers who do that, we actually have four specialized teachers.

Interviewer: Alright. Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P5: I honestly think it's vital to let all professionals in education sector to be trained for inclusive education, so that all teachers and all professionals are able to assist all learners, irrespective of the barriers that they face.

Interviewer: Yes, what is your classroom needs to implement inclusive education?

P5: The sitting arrangements, I believe it suits all learners with needs, extra support, guidance and inclusion, training on how to help diverse learners, and more resources from the education department to assist in making inclusion implementable.

Interviewer: You said training to help diverse learners, is that something that would probably be a different training from the one you are receiving?

P5: Yes, I think what policy tells us and what is implemented in classrooms is totally different. I feel teachers are a little bit sceptical, they are not really clued up on the white paper 6, and they not clued up on how inclusion works. I think sometimes the teachers put a blind eye , some of them saying "arg you know what, this child next year is not with me, the child is moving on to become another teachers problem". So I think there has to be amerced training for teachers

Interviewer: Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately trained you so far on inclusive education?

P5: I believe it did, I really believe it has equipped me with all the relevant knowledge. I am able to accommodate lessons, able to accommodate learners that experience barriers to learning. I honestly believe it did.

Interviewer: What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P5: The one thing that I have managed to pick-up I think maybe for distance students like myself, a contact session maybe once a month where students meet with their lecturers discussing the challenges they experience in the modules; discussing the questions; discussion so type of feedback from the lecturers. What we get now is basically not really thorough when it comes to assignments, so you don't know how to improve on what you have done already. So maybe a contact session once a month will actually help people like us who cannot come every day for classes but we can make the effort to come maybe once a month on a Saturday or so.

Interviewer: That's about everything on the questions; do you have anything else that you feel you would like to add about inclusive education or the training?

P5: No, but thank you for the platform, I hope it helps your research in anyways.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: P6-Thuli Kunene
Interviewed by Tshililo Nembambula
Date: 28 May 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P6: Ok, my experience of has been a great one, like a learning experience that enhances my practice.

Interviewer: Ok, how does the course you are enrolled in now train you to implement inclusive education?

P6: It trains me in a way that I am to identify those learners with barriers. I am able to implement classroom strategies that enhance those learners access to the curriculum.

Interviewer: Have you experienced any learners who needed support in your classroom?

P6: Yes I have

Interviewer: Ok, Can you give me an example?

P6: I am in grade one, there are some learners that are not school ready, you know they are not ready for school.

Interviewer: Yes

P6: Yes, I am able to assist them and assist them.

Interviewer: Ok, What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in your classroom?

P6: It is this daily rotation that you doing at school. Today the learner is here, tomorrow she is not, you know? When she comes back, you start from square one again.

Interviewer: Ok, this rotation is place because of the COVID?

P6: Yes

Interviewer: Ok, I understand you now.

Interviewer: How did BEd Honours (Learning Support) training assist you to implement inclusive education in your current classrooms?

P6: It has assisted me in a way that I understand how to implement inclusion, and understanding of the values. I am much clearer now than before I enrolled, because I did not know anything about inclusion

Interviewer: Ok, do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P6: It is important that's why actually I think it must be a requirement, you know for entry into the education system.

Interviewer: Why do you think it should be a requirement to the entry?

P6: Because, you know, if you do not know anything about inclusion, actually it is like you don't know what you are going to do in the field. You will just implement everything as it is for every learner in your class.

Interviewer: Yes?

P6: While you understand inclusion, understanding the values, the practice, you will be a much better teacher, you know?

Interviewer: Yes, I understand.

Interviewer: What is your classroom needs to implement inclusive education?

P6: Writing tools; teaching aids; and the curriculum of course.

Interviewer: Ok, Can you explain more about the curriculum?

P6: I think the curriculum, it's not straightforward, you know it restrict me as a teacher on how to implement it; it is not flexible enough to adapt it in order to implement inclusion.

Interviewer: Alright. Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately trained you so far on inclusive education?

P6: I can't say so far I understand it fully, because am still on block three, so there is still a lot more to learn. But what I have learnt so far I think it has maximised my knowledge.

Interviewer: Ok. What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P6: I think more information sharing at schools, you know? I think teachers are not knowledgeable enough about this degree. I think if it can be shared using the district to encourage people to enrol for it.

Interviewer: Ok?

P6: Yes, because in-service training is too limited, there is nothing you get from it. And after that workshop there is no sharing of information from it. I can just go to the workshop and come back to stay in my class and not share with anyone.

Interviewer: Do you think this course makes it better than the workshop you received as in-service training?

P6: Yes, Yes!

Interviewer: Is there any challenges you have experienced during this course?

P6: Yes, time. I do not have time.

Interviewer: Ok, I hear you. That's all the questions I have, but if you feel you have something toad about course you can let me know now.

P6: Yes, there is, for the research proposal course, or is it not relevant?

Interviewer: No, it is relevant.

P6: The course is too much and it is not clear on how to complete the proposal. There is a lot of information at once. I think they should scaffold it, you know?

Interviewer: Yes.

P6: Yes, they should scaffold it a bit by bit, heading by heading. It is too much .I for one I am not copping with the proposal, NMQ 735 am not copping at all. Yes, it's too much, there is too much at once. They do not cater for other learning needs for slow people like me.

Interviewer: Ok, how would you prefer it to be, in your learning way? How would you prefer to learn?

P6: Weekly introduction of the topic, maybe weekly topic. Complete an informal assessment, they correct you, you submit it, and rectify it; and then you move on to the next aspect. You know? But now everything is there, they just throw everything there, all of it, it's too much.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing everything with me

Interviewee: P7

Interviewed by:
Tshililo Nembambula

Date: 02 June 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P7: Learning support is a course that I am interested in, because I experienced problems in the past in my classroom. I decided to enrol at UP for learning support to get knowledge on learners who experience barriers so I can support them. Learning support has developed my attitude to be positive towards learners who experience problems. I was able to view them as unique and important learners in my classroom. I am able to value them as learners who need support, who need my knowledge, who need guidance and assistance to perform according to their best levels. In the past I didn't have that knowledge to assist them, I would just view them as learners who cause problems in my classroom, because they don't behave well and they don't grasp things. I disregarded them in the past, so now my attitude has changed a lot towards them.

Interviewer: How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?

P7: It has trained me a lot through different modules that I engage in. I was able to apply the knowledge from books or researchers in my classroom. For example, identify those learners in the early stages and plan according to the curriculum which will assist them to be fully engaged in the classroom. During my planning, I am able to plan according to different learners, to accommodate those learners who experience learning problems. My classroom has changed a lot because I have developed an inclusive environment where every learner with different learning abilities is accommodated in the classroom. I know every learners

abilities, intrinsic barriers and their learning problems in the classroom.

Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in classrooms?

P7: The bigger problems overcrowded classrooms. Learner-teacher ratio has not been considered in my area, because the number of learners is more according to what is expected according to learner ratio. The other thing is, those learners are from poor families, they are not supported with expected resources that the schools need, maybe to top up stationary. The most problem is that parents are in denial of learners abilities. They don't support, when you call them to meeting about the performance of those learners they don't come. They don't have that zeal to know about performance, maybe because they are not educated and they have their own personal problems such as unemployment. It is difficult for me to implement inclusive education in my classroom properly. Also time, we are expected as teachers to complete ATP which is annual teaching plan according to circulated time from the district office. We don't have enough time to support learners according to my view and experience. I don't have enough time to support those learners; I think there needs to be a one-on-one engagement, because it is difficult for me to support them according to time. We don't have time, after school they go home, some use transport, so you can't help them at that time. What I usually do is give them homework, so that when they return tomorrow that home is not attended by the parents, because parents don't support their children. It is difficult but am trying to implement it although it is not 100%.

Interviewer: How did the BEd Honours assist you to implement inclusive education in your classroom?

P7: It has assisted me, because I am able to identify learners with learning problems in my classroom. I was equipped on learners working in groups, cooperative learning was more important during teaching and learning, I learnt that studying this course. I also developed assessment strategies that exposes all learners to a curriculum needs according to different subjects. I was able to implement multi-level teaching and assessment practice in the classroom. I know how to differentiate activities according to abilities of learners and also support them. I was able to know all my learners, curriculum wise, how they perform in my classroom and different abilities and how to deal with those different abilities. I was equipped with the knowledge of accommodating different learning needs of the learners and support them considering the curriculum that is circulated amongst us as educators.

Interviewer: Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P7: Yes, because as teachers we still have that attitude of saying those learners don't belong here, they belong in special school because we don't have the skills. We didn't have the training from the department of education to deal with learners who experience those problems. We need to be trained and skilled enough to deal with those learners to be able to support them and to workshop the parents, to remove the concept that their learners have learning difficulties. If the departments can train us on how to support those learners, we will accommodate them, support and view them as unique, and embrace diversity in the

school. This way we will be able to create an environment which will accommodate every learner irrespective of their learning abilities or physical impairment. I think we need training on this, on how to implement inclusive education in our schools.

Interviewer: You mentioned that only if the department of education could train and help teachers with the skills to implement inclusive education, do you also feel that you are not skilled or trained even though you are enrolled in this training?

P7: No, I feel I have been equipped enough, but what about other teachers? What about the parents? I think in the past the principal had a workshop with the parents on dealing with bulling, but I think they should consider the parents when it comes to inclusive education. They should workshop them to accommodate their children and support them, but on my side I think I have been well equipped.

Interviewer: What is your current classroom needs to implement inclusive education currently?

P7: I think they should consider enough resources in our school. Enough resource in infrastructure to create classrooms for special needs, to accommodate learners with server learning impairment, and to have enough teachers to assists those learners. We need to incorporate some of the parents in the community to assist learners who need support, maybe assisting with homework. We need more empowerment to assist those learners in our schools as we have a large numbers of those learners. We need to corporate with different stakeholders or maybe social workers to be employed in the schools. Maybe the problems are socially or emotionally, so we need those social workers who are stable in our school. We have "adopt a cop" in our school, I don't think

they actively involved because when we had a rape issue, and there was confusion on who to help. But I referred the principal to the police station to get a cop who helps our school.

Interviewer: Looking at the positives or maybe some of the challenges you have experienced with BEd honours (Learning support), do you think you have been adequately trained on inclusive education?

P7: Yes, I have been trained though I have online issue I think so far I have acquired more knowledge.

Interviewer: What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P7: I think we need to attend classes on Saturday, so we can interact with lecturers, so we can understand and clarity on assignments. The online learning is good but it has disadvantage. Yes, I am able to work independently and am able to use my laptop, but the disadvantage is that am working alone at home and I needing some colleagues to communicate and get clarity with the lecturers. According to me the data is expensive, so if I attend on Saturday I know I am going to see the lecturer I am able to prepare for questions. There is a need to interact with the lecturer frequently.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else to add on that I did not touch on?

P7: My concern is how to support learners in a rural area and urban areas. I need clarity because there are different areas with different resources. I need to get more knowledge on that.

Interviewee: P8

Interviewed by:
Tshililo Nembambula

Date: 01 June 2021

Interviewer: Describe your experience of the BEd Honours (Learning Support)?

P8: I do not know if I can say am enjoying, or I am not enjoying it. It's been hard especially working and doing the honours and also doing it through distance learning where maybe you do not always have all the help you need.

Interviewer: Alright. How does Bed Honours (Learning Support) train you to implement inclusive education?

P8: I must say at the moment if am being honest with you, I am not that trained at it if I must say, from the modules I have yet, maybe we going to get to it. I see now with LSG that I am busy with that maybe it will bring the aspect of inclusive education. Not that inclusive education was not in my other modules; I don't think the important parts are not covered. So for me thus far in my honours years, I don't feel like I have been trained as best as I can on inclusive education yet.

Interviewer: Ok, I hear you. What are some of the challenges you have experienced implementing inclusive education in classrooms?

P8: If I look at my classroom now, we have a classroom with 30 learners and maybe 5 or 6 learners are struggling .When you give the classroom instruction and you tell them to do something, let's say you write something on the board then you need to explain it some more to those 5 learners, but we also do not have the time to call them one by one and try explaining it them, because explaining to them take an extra 10 minutes. 10 minutes for each child is 50 minutes if I take 5 of my children now. You see that makes it a lot difficult because you cannot explain it to them and then all the other kids are done they want you to mark their

books, let's say the child is much faster than the other, now I need to mark that kid's book and I need to explain it to this child while this child needs to sit and work, at the same time I lost 10 minutes of the time I gave to them, then we can't get to the other work. You see, it's a bit difficult. So if I talk about the time aspect and the admin maybe of having to do that, I will have to say is very difficult to get to them and then include all of them with all their separate disabilities or impairments that they have struggling with.

Interviewer: Do you think it is important to be trained for inclusive education?

P8: Yes, yes of course. Today much more, if what I see now we have so many learners that must go to a special school but they can't get in for 2 or 3 years because of the full capacity in special schools. So now we need to keep them in our school, we still need to give them education if you understand what I mean. So I cannot just neglect the child and say sorry the child needs to go to a special school am just not going to do anything. Your conscious doesn't let you, you understand. It's very important because all the kids in our school they also deserve it, they don't deserve to be stereotyped by saying they must be in special schools if they have a little impairment like ADHD maybe. They are also allowed in the environment, so we need to include them as well. So definitely, especially in South Africa today where more and more parents take them to normal schools, it is very important, if not the most important thing to be trained in today.

Interviewer: What is your current classroom needs to implement inclusive education?

P8: I have a lot of kids who like, last year I had a child who came from Malawi and this year I have a child that came from Nigeria. So they struggle with English a lot, they do not understand what am telling them, they can't tell me something because of the language barrier, you understand? A lot of the kids from grade 3, when they come here they cannot read, they cannot spell, they can't sit still only for 10 minutes to do the work. They very hyperactive, so it is difficult, because now you have those kids, and the kids who can't understand English in your class, it's quite difficult then to have to implement inclusive education and get to everyone in your class.

Interviewer: What could possible help with you with the needs that you experiencing right now?

P8: If I think about just looking at my classroom I know there is a student doing her practical, but even having her in my class, having her like a type of assistant that can assess me , not in explaining the work to them and giving the work to learners, but if I may be busy with one child the assistant can maybe help another child .If you have someone to helping your class , if you have a little smaller class like now with COVID , it is a dream to only have 15 kids in my class because now I actually have the capacity to get to them and help all of those kids. Where else in a class where you have 30 learners, you cannot get to all of them. Now when we have smaller classes and an assistant in my class, it's much easier to help those kids and I can really see it is helping them. They are much better, they flourishing in the class because it is not all those kids that are talking at the same time or need help at the same time, they see that the teacher actually get to them.

Interviewer: Has BEd Honours (Learning Support) training adequately trained you for inclusive education or do you feel it will adequately train you for inclusive education?

P8: That I feel I can only tell you when am done with. I know I have responsibility on my part to do research but as of yet, I cannot say am fully trained .I definitely know a few thing I can do with a bit more knowledge of what I can do. But I think only at the end my masters I will have good knowledge to implement in my classroom. I can see a difference in how I help my kids, so I would say that thus far I am a little bit trained. I think there is much more the programme can do to train inclusive education, maybe do a bit more research upon it and much more assignments about inclusive education, and go out there and go explore. Go to classes and see what the needs are and then research and see what we can do about it.

Interviewer: The next question you have already touched on it, but maybe you can elaborate a bit further. What enablers do you think can assist to improve BEd Honours (Learning Support) training?

P8: Tell us where to go look. Give us a bit more communication, you understand. Give sites of where we can read about inclusive education, what works and what hasn't worked for inclusive education. Most of the time we are, and I understand we at honours level we are suppose to be doing research on our own. I think just helping us and leading in a way, just say maybe where you can go, because most of the time we do not receive communication or in adequate supply of articles and books that we can read about. More communication on their part on where to go and look would help us and stir us in the right direction.

Interviewer: You welcome to let me know on anything I did not touch on.

P8: Like I said, doing this and teaching at the same time is difficult. But I haven't had many issues with lecturers and things like that. Really the communication needs to be bettered maybe, just more communication, getting back to us quicker when we ask questions and more time to give in our assignments.

Appendix E: Codes for Data

Codes for data

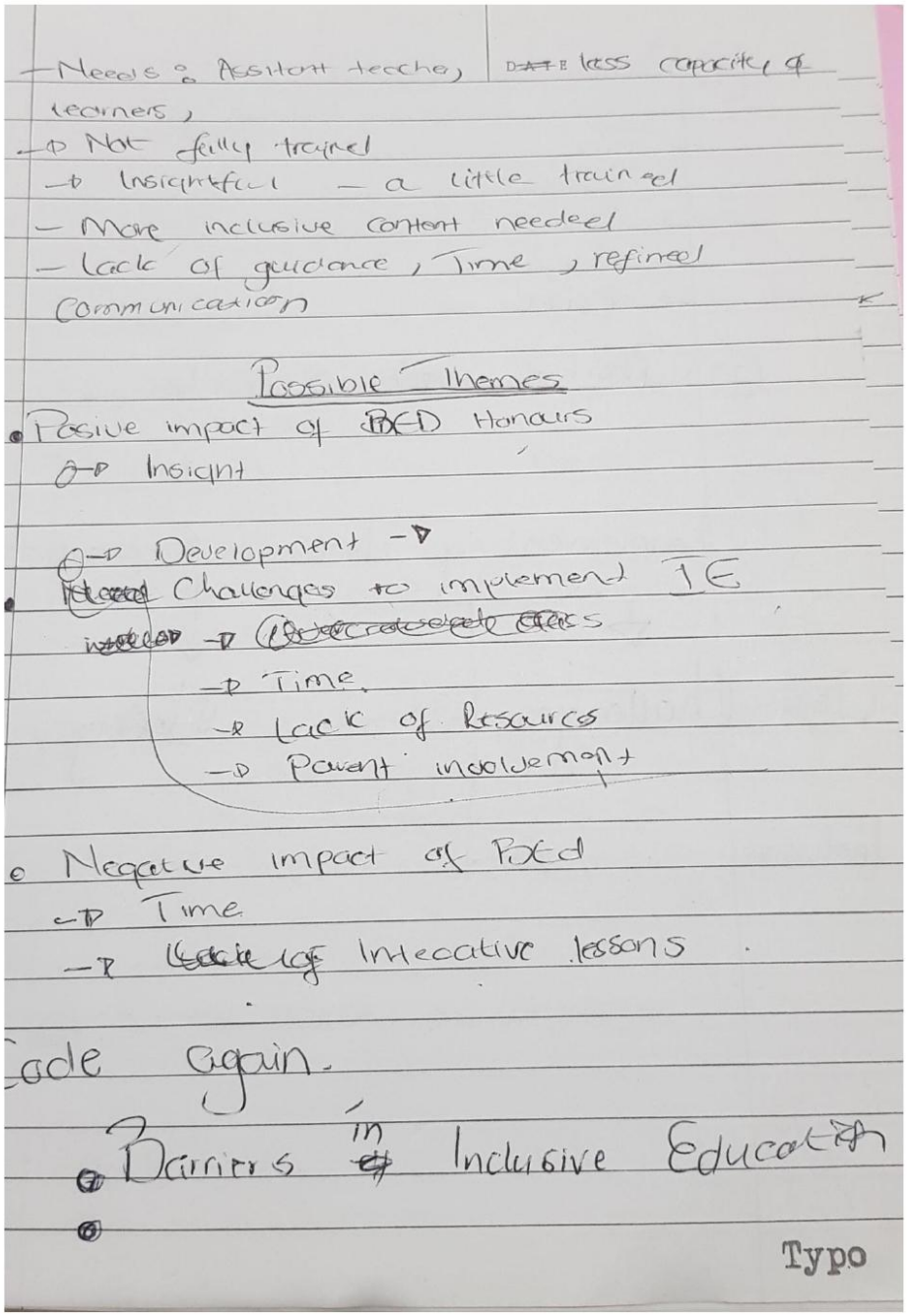
Transcripts were broken into smaller sections

Participant	Codes
P1	Training : was helpful No prior knowledge Taught diversity Lack of time Heavy work load Lack of parental involvement Affect- socio-economic school environment Improvement on performance LDs: ADHD and Down syndrome Performance affected by family factors Need for technology e.g. computers Training inspired colleagues Covid-19 barriers, more time needed
P2	Limited experience Useful training Insight on viewpoints Helpful Some modules disorganized Well organized department Work in inclusive classroom Children still not included Difficulty in attending to all SA is diverse in language and culture Mainstream schools need to understand inclusivity Inclusive curriculum needed Still a lot to learn Training not specific enough Want to be more qualified

	Need for quest lecturers Have previous knowledge but still do not know how to implement IE LDs: ADHD, Dyslexia, physical impairment and language barriers
P3	Training: informative, difficult, not planned properly IE: hard I have learners with LDs School with no resources= difficulty to implement Parents: no involvement : need to work with teachers Learners don't understand IE strategies COVID difficulties Lack of time for inclusion Training: insightful Cant label LDs but can explain them Transactional issues Needs: space, equipment, and resources HOD sees progress and impact of training Interactive lessons needed Lack of time
P4	Training: good experience better than prior degree Taught me a lot, better understanding Difficulty splitting attention Time challenges Taught me strategies to implement Learning to manage time Needs: time, resources, TAs Collaborative lessons
P5	Training- challenging, and informative Taught me new strategies Needs: negative attitude, resources, low parental involvement

	Teacher collaborations needed Training equipped me with skills needs: support, guidance, and more training Policy implementation not the same as IE in classrooms Interactive learning needed
P6	Training: good experience : insightful Helpful identifying learners with LDs COVID rotations- challenge Needs: curriculum, and teaching aids There is room to still learn
P7	Problems in the past= training helped Developed positive attitude Able to apply knowledge Overcrowded classrooms- learner to teacher ratio Lack of resources due to poverty Parents are in denial IE difficulty to implement No time for IE Learnt inclusivity strategies Needs: resources, support: community and parents Attend class and interactive learning
P8	Bad experience of training ODL makes it difficult Not well trained: NB parts not covered yet No time and lack of organized administration Needs: TAs, less capacity of learners Not fully trained More inclusive content needed Lack of guidance, time and good communication

These codes were further developed into themes:



- Needs ~~o~~ Assistant teacher, ~~DATE~~ less capacity of learners,
- Not fully trained
- Insightful — a little trained
- More inclusive content needed
- Lack of guidance, Time, refined Communication

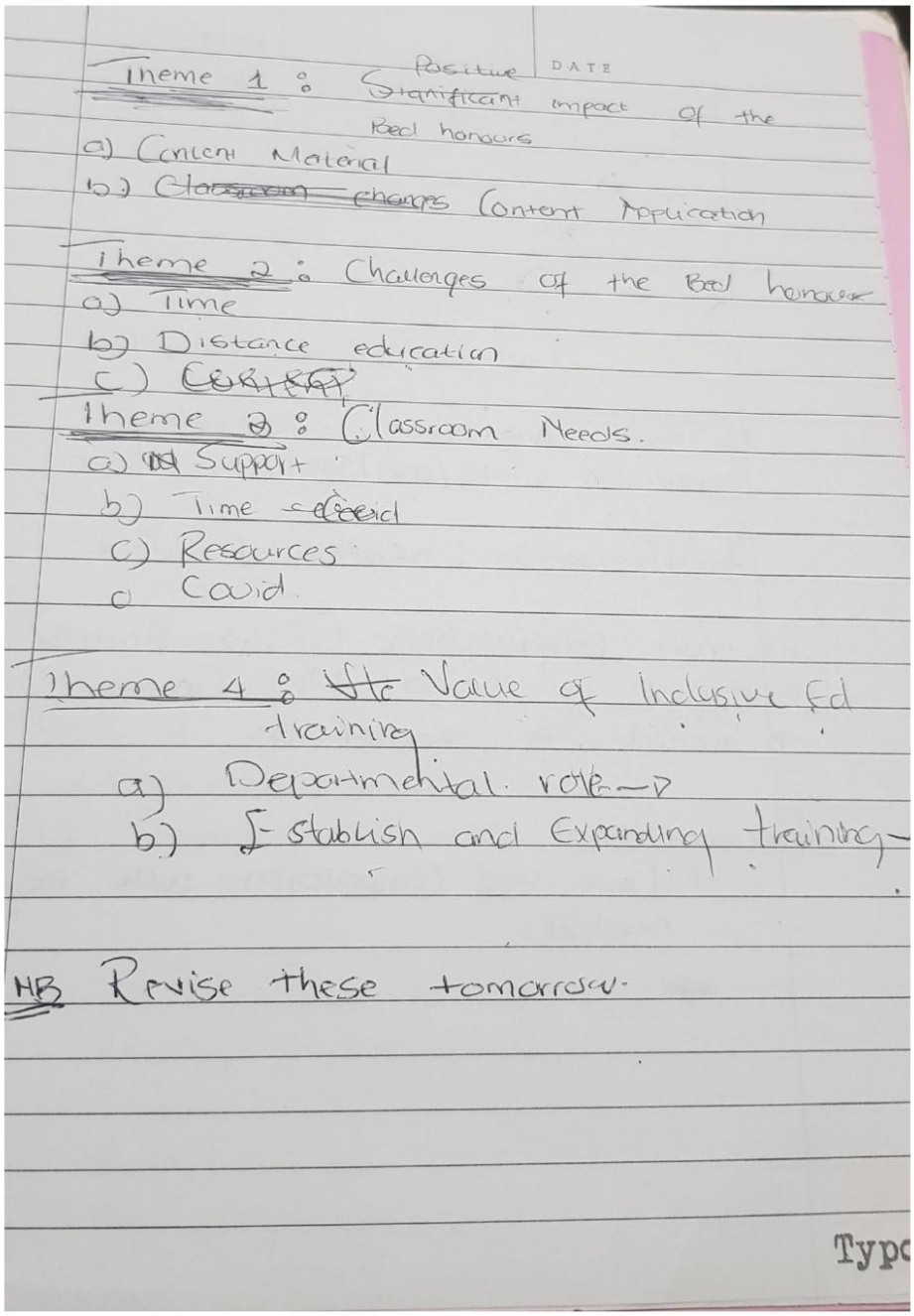
Possible Themes

- Posive impact of ~~BXED~~ Honours
  - Insight
  - Development
  - ~~Related~~ Challenges to implement IE
    - ~~increased~~ ~~Overcrowded~~ classes
    - Time.
    - Lack of Resources
    - Parent involvement
- Negative impact of PXEd
  - Time
  - ~~Lack of~~ Interactive lessons

Code Again.

- Barriers in Inclusive Education
-

Typo



Positive DATE

Theme 1 : Significant impact of the Bed honours

a) Content Material

b) ~~Classroom~~ changes Content Application

Theme 2 : Challenges of the Bed honours

a) Time

b) Distance education

c) ~~Content~~

Theme 3 : Classroom Needs.

a) ~~Old~~ Support

b) Time ~~Covid~~

c) Resources

d Covid

Theme 4 : ~~Ito~~ Value of Inclusive Ed training

a) Departmental role →

b) Establish and Expanding training

NB Revise these tomorrow.

Typ

Appendix F: Researcher's Journal

Researchers' Journal

Participants	
	Reflective Notes
P1	• She sounds like an experienced teacher. • There is a genuine desire to want to learn more on inclusivity. • Key point: Diversity. • The participant seems to already have tried implementing inclusive strategies. • There is a sense of frustration with lack of parental involvement. • The transition from one school to another opened the reality to learning barriers and the importance of inclusive education. • Do family issues form part of learning barriers if they are affecting the learners' behaviour or performance? • What are manipulators? • So much appreciation for the BEd for enhancing knowledge • Can time management be attributed to the BEd or is this an individualistic experience • Wow! The participant is very passionate about inclusivity
P2	• 1st year experience: could this be limiting to data? • No direct knowledge on inclusive education as yet, this may threaten the data • She seems to have the classroom experiences with implementing inclusivity • The participant can still relate the little acquired knowledge to the role of the

	training in classroom inclusivity • She seems to struggle identifying some of her classroom needs • Can't measure the impact of the training just yet • However, the training is interpreted as being too general • Special need school, explains the interest in the training • Goal: the participant wants a sense of competence in dealing with special needs • Physical disability learners with learning disability, I wonder what's the classroom dynamic.
P3	• She sounds overwhelmed with the workload of the programme • Juggling work and training: Distance education difficulty • Sigma on learning difficulties, could this be based on the community views of learning barriers? • She feels responsible to create a sense of belonging • In cooperating learners interest to induce learning? • Could reading difficulties be attributed to language? • She is really knowledgeable on learning disabilities although she is struggling to label them • There is so much passion in her voice

P4	• There seems to be an openness to learn from others • The training is implementable? • The degree does not add inclusive education into the curriculum • She is reflecting a bit of redundancy in my questions
P5	• Negative teacher attitude? • She seems to value collaboration • I wonder if other schools has structures in place to assist teachers in dealing with learners with barriers • The school sounds well resourced, it sounds very inclusive • More government allocated training needed
P6	• She sounds expressive but language seem to a challenge • She seems to be frustrated with the impact of COVID-19 • There seems to be a repetitive cycle that teacher have no prior knowledge on inclusive after the completed an education degree • Is the impact of the training measureable?
P7	• This teacher actively made the decision to enrol for this programme, it explains her excitement • She seems to have years of experience in teaching

	• Is it fair to teachers to be expected to identify learning disabilities with no diagnostic knowledge or skills?
P8	• She sounds overwhelmed, is it possible that she is overworked? • I should have explored possibilities of interviewing teachers who completed the training • She sounds frustrated with the responsibility to juggle all teaching responsibility and implementing inclusivity • Language seems to be one of the key barriers to learning for learners who do not have an English language background.