

CHALLENGES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TO INCLUDE LEARNERS  
WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, 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.

.....

Student's signature

.....

Date

## STATEMENT BY THE SUPERVISOR

I, Dr N.S. Thuketana

As the Supervisor agree/do not agree to the submission of this dissertation.

.....

Supervisor's signature

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Date

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research to my loving husband Bednock for your willingness to spend countless hours without me during this undertaking. I will remain forever grateful for the support you offered despite your own tight and demanding schedule.

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## ABSTRACT

*A larger portion of learners with difficulties in South Africa were either not included in mainstream schools or could have been allowed into the schools unconsciously in the past. In a bid to provide a panacea to the obstacles faced by learners with learning difficulties this research aimed at examining challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties. The study used the social learning theory and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory to interpret the challenges faced by mainstream teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties. A qualitative research technique was employed in the study guided by an interpretivist paradigm. Purposive sampling was used to select a total of eight participants. In this study, eight participants were selected from two primary schools which cover Foundation Phase in Johannesburg Central Education District. In each school, four participants that is three teachers and one Head of Department were selected. Telephonic semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Data were analysed using thematic data analysis technique. The research findings showed that teachers in South Africa were regarded as less helpful when it comes to helping learners with learning difficulties. Some of the learners with learning challenges were removed from mainstream schools and this violates the key dictates of Inclusive Education (IE). The challenges faced by teachers were lack of parental involvement, lack of resources, poor background of learners, high teacher to learner ratio, social, behavioural and intellectual problems. Apart from that, lack of resources, poor support from the District Based Support Teams and School Based Support Systems (SBST) and absenteeism. In terms of policy recommendations, it is suggested that, community awareness programmes, teacher training programmes and resource mobilisation can be very helpful in solving teacher challenges.*

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**Keywords: Inclusive education, learning difficulties, curriculum, parental involvement, resources**

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorders
ADHD	Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder
DoE	Department of Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
EFA	Education for All
HOD	Head of Department
IE	Inclusive Education
SBST	School Based Support Teams
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SIAS	Screening Identification Assessment and Support

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



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### RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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**APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY**

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**DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

25 August 2021

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

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CHALLENGES OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TO INCLUDE  
LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

**Author: by Memory Ndlela**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Several learners with diverse learning difficulties such as physical, mental or cognitive challenges in South Africa were either not included in mainstream schools or could have been put into the schools unconsciously in the past (Mahomva, 2017). In terms of service delivery and overall administration, mainstream education was separated from special education (Hlaethwa, 2013). Furthermore, many learners with disabilities were enrolled in mainstream schools with teachers who lacked the necessary knowledge and/or teaching pedagogy to improve curriculum access for these students (Gutuza Khosa, Gazimbe & Mapolisa & 2015). This is due to the challenges that teachers faced, such as inadequate training and lack of skills to handle inclusive classrooms that resulted in massive dropouts. Reviews by earlier scholars such as Walton (2014); Ferry (2012); Selesho (2015); Walton and Nel (2014) sought to identify challenges in the whole education system. The aim of the current study was therefore twofold. Firstly, it sought to investigate the challenges faced by mainstream teachers located in Johannesburg South, Gauteng, in teaching learners with learning difficulties and secondly to suggest tailor-made solutions to address such challenges. According to Walton and Nel (2014), special schools received superior services in terms of support personnel, curriculum and management experts, and administrative experts, among other things.

According to Walton and Nel (2014), the education system and curriculum in its entirety appears to have failed to meet the diverse needs of South African learners. Some learners with learning difficulties, such as visual impairment, had the chance to get into mainstream education and progressed from one grade level to the other without stakeholders paying any attention to their learning needs (Khaoeane, 2015). Over 12 million learners in South Africa attend mainstream schools, with over 19 000 placed in separate classes within mainstream schools (Walton, 2014). Walton (2010) opines that if learners who experience barriers to learning do not receive the support they require from their teachers, it would amount to mainstream dumping.



At least 200 000 school-age learners and young people do not attend school due to disability-related factors (Walton & Nel, 2014). This exclusion of groups of learners, such as those with cerebral palsy and spina bifida still remain evident in the present-day education system in South Africa (Selesho, 2015). Walton and Nel (2014) concur with Selesho (2015) in noting that after ten years of efforts towards greater inclusivity, exclusion and marginalisation are still experienced by many learners. It means that learners with learning difficulties progress through the education system with their learning disabilities unaddressed (Udoba, 2014). It is pertinent to note that Majoko, Tawanda and Phasha (2018) assert that 70% of learners with barriers to learning are out-of-school entirely.

South Africa released the Department of Education (2001) Education White Paper 6 :Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system: and the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy (SIAS) policy in 2014 to build an inclusive education system and respond to learner diversity. Both documents provided guidelines for implementing Inclusive Education (IE) in schools (Makoelle & Malindi, 2015). White Paper 6 outlined the policies which advocated for a single, undivided education system for all diverse learners (Donohue & Bornmen, 2014). It was meant to redress the discriminatory practices that once existed in order to build an integrated system for all learners cognisant of the needs and abilities of these learners (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). The intention of these policies was that the teachers would be able to implement them to meet the envisaged goals of Inclusive Education (IE). However, practically, teachers have challenges in implementing inclusive practices and pedagogies. This study therefore aimed at identifying the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties and possibly recommend solutions to the challenges. According to a study conducted in South Africa, in-service, and pre-service teacher training in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes are critical for successful inclusive education (DBE, 2016).

Furthermore, reviews conducted by some scholars revealed that teachers teaching learners with disabilities in mainstream schools face numerous challenges such as how to deal with learners that have physical and mental impediments (Dube & Mulaudzi, 2016; Gutuza et al., 2015). Ferry (2012) points out that teachers who

teach learners with special needs face challenges with an estimated 75% of them leaving their jobs within ten years of starting. The current study examined the challenges faced by the mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties due to disability.

According to Walton (2014), Inclusive Education (IE) refers to the process of increasing access and participation while decreasing exclusionary practices and pressures in all aspects of teaching. This was endorsed by various countries around the world in 1994 in Jomtien, Thailand, through the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (Sesay, 2018).

According to Selesho (2015), IE was implemented in South Africa in response to the mandates of Act 108 of 1996 as well as the Education for All (EFA) movement, as outlined in the UNESCO Salamanca Statement alluded to above (UNESCO,1994). There is a need to address the barriers to learning, since a vast range of challenges adversely impact the teacher`s delivery of the prescribed curriculum for all learners in mainstream schools (Gutuza, et al, 2015). Some teachers do not have any form of teaching qualification to cope with the demands of learners with diverse educational needs (Roose, Vantieghem, Vanderlinde & Van Avermaet, 2019). Teachers are not academically trained to identify and teach students with learning disabilities (Gutuza et al., 2015). Some teachers believe that learners with physical disabilities such as challenges with walking, and are in wheelchairs, and those with mental challenges in failing to understand content can easily be integrated into the mainstream system. On the other hand, it appears that those directly involved in the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) are having difficulty including learners with disabilities (Ntombera, 2014; Khoaeane, 2015).

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Globally, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) compel all countries to adopt IE (UNESCO, 2005). Locally, four levels of support have been put in place in South Africa to assist learners and teachers in all schools including special schools. Policies are formulated at national level, and then implemented at the provincial level. The district level provides coordinated

professional services in teacher support, drawing expertise from specialised schools (McKenzie, 2020a). There is the organisational level generally known as the School Based Support Team (SBST) depending on the schools. That team directly supports teachers and learners (Chingwanangwana, 2015). The district and institutional support teams focus on differentiated teaching strategies, barriers overcoming, curriculum adaptation, flexible teaching methods, individualised learning support materials and concessions for evaluations (Education White Paper 6 DoE, 2001). Despite all these initiatives and policies, the teachers are still incapacitated to deliver the best service educationally to learners with learning difficulties (Thuketana, 2018).

Several schools admit learners with various learning disabilities into mainstream schools, but the implementation of IE is fraught with difficulties (Bornman & Rose, 2014). However, it appears that teachers in the mainstream schools do not have the skills to teach in such contexts. Inadequate training, heavy curriculum demands, a lack of support personnel, and limited financial and non-financial resources are cited by teachers as barriers to the successful inclusion of learners with learning disabilities in the mainstream schools. Handicapped learners need special equipment such as learning games and toys to stimulate them whether physically or mentally due to slow learning (Mwendwa, 2014). The goal of IE is to help learners to realise the constitutional value of the right to education for all, equality of access and freedom from discrimination by all learners (Bose & Heymann, 2020a). This research therefore sought to examine the challenges faced by teachers teaching learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream schools and suggested specific and tailor-made solutions to address the identified challenges.

### **1.3 RATIONALE**

Teachers face many challenges in teaching or supporting learners with learning difficulties. From my experience some of these learners, progress from one grade to another without achieving the outcomes of the previous grade. This can be attributed to a lack of expertise in the teachers to some extent. Some teachers ignore learners with difficulties in reading and they do not offer remedial lessons.

Apart from that, in some cases there is a larger teacher to pupil ratio and some schools in the district place learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools where no curriculum differentiation is offered. This homogeneity status of learner placement burdens the less skilled teachers in delivering exceptional educational services to learners. However, all learners are assessed in the same way at the end of the year. This study therefore sought to close the paucity in literature on the ways that can be implemented to improve the teachers' skills in dealing with learners with learning difficulties. This will be prolific too in helping other countries that face similar challenges such as Lesotho and Swaziland (Khoaeane, 2015; Zwane & Malale, 2018).

Furthermore, this study sought to offer recommendations for policy, practice and future research. This implies that this study will bring relief to some of the troubled teachers in the South African educational sector. The solutions and policy recommendations to be forwarded will help the teachers and the Department of Education (DoE) to review their current policies of IE and effect the needed changes. Apart from that, this will also help the parents of learners with learning difficulties. Once the teachers are well-trained, significant changes in terms of quality of educational and service delivery can be realised. Therefore, a study of this nature aimed at shedding light on what prevails in the IE classrooms in terms of what teachers grapple with and what they end up doing to assist learners with difficulties.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions are given next.

### **1.4.1 Main research question**

The main research question was:

What are the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties?

### **1.4.2 The sub-research questions**

The sub-research questions were:

- How do mainstream school teachers view Inclusive Education (IE)?

- What support do teachers in IE need to effectively support learners with learning difficulties?
- What are the current strategies that mainstream school teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties?

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The main aim was to investigate the challenges teachers face in mainstream schools when working with learners with difficulties and to suggest solutions and coping strategies to alleviate the problem.

The objectives were thus to:

- determine the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties;
- determine how mainstream school teachers view IE;
- establish what support teachers in IE need to effectively support learners with learning difficulties; and
- determine the current strategies that mainstream school teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties.

## **1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

According to Stephens (2013), concept clarification is the clarification of basic terms and concepts as well as the definition of the main words and concepts used in research. Definitions or phrases such as learning disabilities, learning barriers, and learning challenges are used interchangeably in special education vocabulary. With that in mind, the phrase "learning difficulties" was used or employed in this study. Other key concepts of the study that were defined are 'IE challenges' as well as 'mainstream school'.

### **1.6.1 Learning difficulties**

According to Miyazaki et al. (2020), learning difficulties are typically caused by a neurological disorder. It refers to a learner who encounters a learning barrier in standardised assessments and whose reading, Mathematics, or written expression is significantly below the age-appropriate standard. Despite average or above-average intelligence, it may cause difficulties with listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, and/or mathematics (Bornman & Rose, 2014).

Walker (2014) defines a learning difficulty as a mental challenge in comprehending concepts related to the learner's age. For the purposes of this study, learning difficulty was understood to have the same meaning as provided by Bornman and Rose (2014) and is used to denote a learner who has learning difficulties. From these definitions the researcher concluded that learning difficulties are disorders that affect learners' ability to cope well academically.

### **1.6.2 Inclusive Education (IE)**

According to Slee (2014), IE is defined as a means of responding to the diverse needs of all learners, with the aim of expanding learning, cultural, and community participation. Inclusion, according to Yada et al. (2018), advocates for every child's right to attend a mainstream school. Learners must not be allowed to "earn" their way into a classroom; instead, they should be treated as current members, even if they entail alterations, adaptations, and significantly growing.

Learners should not be permitted to "earn" their way into a classroom; instead, they should be treated as full members, even if modifications, adaptations, and extensive support are required.

According to Yada and Savolainen (2017), IE refers to an education system in which all learners are accepted and fully integrated, both educationally and socially. Henry and Namhla (2020) define IE as an education system that encompasses the involvement of all the stakeholders in ensuring that children receive basic education as enshrined by the Human rights and constitution of the country. In this study IE was understood to carry the same meaning as provided by Bornman and Rose (2014) and is also used to denote the inclusion of every learner despite their learning capabilities.

### **1.6.3 Mainstream school**

Ravet (2018) defines mainstream schools as an academic system that provides all learners with a high-quality education while satisfying their full variety of teaching needs in an equitable manner. Ordinary schools are also considered mainstream schools because they are uniquely equipped to address a wide range of learning barriers in IE settings. Gavaldá and Qinyi (2012) define mainstream schools as schools that provide educational service to learners regardless of their disability status. Government schools normally operate mainstream schools. For the purposes of this study, mainstream schools are defined as educational institutions that accommodate all learners regardless their learning needs, as proposed by Van der Straaten et al. (2020). It was also used in this study to denote the educational institutions that accommodate all learners regardless of their learning needs.

### **1.6.4 Challenges**

Lazzarin and Hermes (2017) define a challenge as something that is hard to accomplish, deal with or understand. William (2017) also defines a challenge as a state or condition of being difficult. The definition provided by Lazzarin and Hermes (2017) was used for the context of this research. A challenge was defined as something that makes a task difficult due to lack of knowledge or skills or both. A detailed discussion on the major aspects of this chapter will be provided under Chapter 2.

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section reviews previous literature to show its relationship to this study. This literature is relevant to unpack and understand challenges faced by mainstream teachers in handling inclusive classrooms. This will, together with findings from gathered data, generate new knowledge that may enable the researcher to make recommendations as to what can be done to address the challenges. The literature review was written based on: Challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with difficulties, how IE is viewed in mainstream schools, teacher support to effectively teach learners with learning difficulties and strategies to address the challenges in mainstream schools. Through investigating these issues,

the study sought to uncover the challenges faced by mainstream teachers. Literature was also used to uncover these challenges.

The teaching of learners with diverse backgrounds in mainstream schools has its own share of challenges globally (Singh, 2016). Adebayo (2015) conducted a qualitative study on the difficulties teachers face when managing inclusive classrooms in Swaziland. Most teachers, according to the study's results, were not trained on how to teach in an inclusive classroom. The progress of Inclusive Education (IE) began a few decades earlier on a global scale.

According to Henry and Namhla (2020), in many countries, special education arose from the belief that children with disabilities could and should receive some form of education. There was exclusion before IE, institutionalisation before IE, integration before IE, and finally inclusion after IE (Henry & Namhla, 2020).

The major aspects, such as school-based support staff, district-based support teams, and provincial department of teacher training support teams, will be detailed in Section 2.

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A theoretical framework can be thought of as a lens through which data will be viewed (Campbell, 2014). A theoretical framework, according to Eberlein (2017), aids in the clarification of a research problem. It guides the creation of a research project.

A framework is a platform that allows a researcher to confront a proposed study based on the pre ideas in the field, acting as a lens or perspective through which the specialised construct under investigative process can be understood (Maree, 2018). The researcher was guided in this study by the social learning theory and the socio-cultural theory.

The Social Learning Theory was propounded and developed by Albert Bandura (1977). Proctor and Niemeyer (2020) suggest that learning is influenced by several



environmental factors. The theory states that cognitive and behavioural learning takes place through imitation, reading and observation (Juffer, Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2017). On the other hand, the study was also grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. The theory focused on the interaction of individuals within their social and cultural context rather than on an isolated individual (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). The theory is anchored on the premise that individuals construct knowledge from what happens in the social environment (Schauer, 2018). There is co-construction of knowledge between the individual and the social processes that take place during teaching and learning. The theory explains the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The theoretical framework will be thoroughly explained in Chapter 2.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology refers to the way a researcher describes and rationalises the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data collection instruments, population, sample, and sampling procedures (Snyder, 2019). Research can be based on mixed methods, qualitative or quantitative techniques (Zhu, Sari & Lee, 2018). This study employed a qualitative research technique which allowed for the collection of high-quality data through interviews, thus enabling the researcher to find answers to the proposed research questions.

**TABLE 1.1: DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection	How data will be collected	Information the data will provide
<b>Telephone semi-structured Individual interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio recordings</li> <li>• Detailed notes written while interviewing</li> </ul>	Challenges faced by teachers in teaching learners with difficulties. The interviews also solicited information on the strategies that teachers use in their inclusive classes and why they use them and not the methods proposed by the DoE. It also sought to ascertain the types of training that teachers have undergone in line with Inclusive Education. Interviews with HODs will seek to find out how they are involved in the teaching of inclusive classes and what type of assistance and support they offer. Their qualifications will also be of great importance.

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

The above table shows that interviews were used for data collection. Audio recordings were used during the interviews. The interviews solicited information on the strategies that teachers use in their inclusive classes and why they use them and not the methods proposed by the DoE.

In terms of the research design, a case study was used. The case study allowed to test understanding of the challenges that mainstream teachers face in inclusive classrooms. The design also yielded very well substantiated findings about the phenomenon under investigation. In terms of the research paradigm, the study was guided by the interpretivism paradigm. This enabled me to comprehend the participants' behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to the challenges that

teachers in mainstream schools' face when teaching learners with learning disabilities (Cresswell, 2014).

The researcher was involved in the designing of the questions that were to be used during the 45-minute telephonic interview with each participant. Participants in this study referred to a group of individuals selected from a possible population for the study (Tichapondwa, 2013). This implies that the participants were simply a target group that represent a larger population. The study sample included six teachers and two Heads of Department (HODs), three teachers and two HODs selected from each of the two primary schools. Purposive sampling was used in this study to identify teachers who work with learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling refers to selecting participants who have specific characteristics or traits. Purposive sampling, according to Maree (2018), is an informant selection tool used to select a participant based on the qualities the participant possesses. Six of the participants were teachers from the two schools.

Interviews were held with school HODs and teachers telephonically due to COVID restrictions. The interviews aided in establishing teachers' attitudes and perceptions about teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools and classrooms in general. Thematic data analysis was chosen for data analysis because it allows for the application of theoretical and personal knowledge, which improves the quality of the research output (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Data trustworthiness of this research was based on the qualitative approach to data gathering as well as engaging teachers who are currently in practice and are familiar with challenges the mainstream teachers are facing. Regarding dependability in this study, the participants were provided with transcribed recordings of the data so that they satisfy themselves that the transcript closely approximates what they said. In terms of confirmability, this research was confirmable as the data and findings were collected from teachers and HODs currently employed in reputable mainstream schools and are in day-to-day contact with learners with difficulties. Strategies to ensure credibility such as prolonged engagement, triangulation and member-checking were used in this study. In terms of transferability, the results of this study were analysed and interpreted so that they could be generalised or transferred to other research contexts. Ethical wise, the main ethical issues that usually arise in

research are informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. A detailed discussion on the major aspects of this chapter will be provided in Chapter 3.

## **1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This section presents the chapter summary.

Chapter 1 focuses on the introduction as well as the background of the study. Apart from that, the key research objectives and research questions form part of Chapter 1. Chapter 2 is based on literature review. This is divided into two segments. The first segment is based on the theoretical aspects supporting the topic under observation. The second segment is based on empirical literature review.

Chapter 3 is based on the research methodology. Key aspects to be discussed are: sampling, research design, data collection methods, target population as well as ethical considerations. The fourth chapter focuses on data analysis and presentation. The fifth chapter is based on a study summary as well as the presentation of policy recommendations. The fifth chapter contains a summary of the study as well as policy recommendations.

## **1.11 CONCLUSION**

The key aspects of the study's background were presented in this chapter. The study's context was discussed. Aside from that, the key research questions and objectives were laid out. There was a summary of the theoretical literature provided. In terms of the problem statement, this research aims to investigate the challenges that teachers face when teaching learners with learning disabilities in mainstream schools, as well as to propose specific and tailor-made solutions to address the identified challenges. A detailed discussion on some of the major aspects of this chapter will be provided in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review. This section on theoretical framework is further discussed in Chapter 3 of the study. Chapter 3 is based on the research methodology.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the literature that supports the topic under consideration. The previous chapter focused on the study's introduction, research aims and objectives, and an outline of the problem statement. This literature review is important for unpacking and comprehending the challenges that mainstream teachers face when managing inclusive classrooms. This together with findings from gathered data assisted to generate new knowledge that could enable me as the researcher to make recommendations as to what can be done to address the challenges. Apart from that, key variables in the study are discussed, including the hurdles that teachers face in IE, teacher support for learners with learning disabilities in mainstream schools, and the South African learning support system. The research is founded on two major theories: the Social Learning Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory. Empirically, a review of other researchers will be presented, followed by the conclusion.

#### 2.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In inclusive classrooms, teachers' experiences vary. The section that follows discusses the challenges that teachers face, their conception of the strategy, and the support strategies that teachers receive to address the challenges in mainstream schools.

##### 2.2.1 Challenges faced by mainstream teachers without inclusive education training.

The teaching of learners with diverse backgrounds in mainstream schools has its own share of challenges globally (Singh, 2016). Thwala (2015) conducted a qualitative study on the difficulties teachers face when managing inclusive classrooms in Swaziland. According to the study's findings, the majority of teachers were not trained on how to teach in an IE classroom.

Gama and Slungile (2016) conducted a similar qualitative study in Swaziland, including learners with dyslexia, a type of learning difficulty. The difficulty highlighted

was that teachers failed to understand learners who did not achieve language proficiency. According to the findings, teachers face a slew of challenges as a result of the government's lack of inclusive education training, understanding, and financial support.

Rizki (2019) investigated on how English students who are slow learners are provided with instructional support services. During the study, the following challenges were discovered: difficulties in providing concrete material; process; time management, products; challenges in assessment and learning environment; large classes and non-specialised teachers without collaboration with special education (Rizki, 2019). Learners with intellectual learning difficulties can also pose challenges for teachers in mainstream schools. Adams (2017) conducted a quantitative study on teachers' experiences working with intellectually disabled students in South Africa's Limpopo district. The study's findings revealed that dealing with such students resulted in some positive feelings of fulfilment and contentment. However, key obstacles such as burn out, stigma and lack of parental involvement and government support were observed (Adams, 2017) .

### **2.2.2 Conceptualisation of Inclusive Education (IE)**

The development of IE began a few decades ago globally. Henry and Namhla, (2020) note that in many countries special education originated from the idea that learners with difficulties were able and should receive some form of education. Before IE there was exclusion, institutionalisation, integration and finally inclusion. For Henry and Namhla, (2020) IE was found to have better outcomes for all learners not just those experiencing a difficulty.

Much has been communicated on the challenges experienced in the implementation of IE in South Africa for education support services in schools and districts in an attempt to shift away from the conventional medical deficit method toward a more environmentally support approach, according to Kozleski, Artiles and Waitoller (2014). However, in the South African school system there is limited effort in the provision of educational support to learners with diverse educational needs.

### **2.2.3 Teacher support for learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools**

Many teachers around the world are careful of including learners with difficulties in mainstream schools. Despite the massive support for the strategy, teacher opinions differ (Lee, 2015). Despite increased advocacy for their inclusion, teachers' attitudes toward learners with learning difficulties vary.

Lee (2015) found in his study that in a Hong Kong early childhood education, teachers who had received extra training strongly advocated for the inclusion of visual, hearing, and speech disorders. Teachers opposed the inclusion of learners with physical disabilities, autism spectrum disorders (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), specific learning difficulties, and gifted and talented learners. Although inclusion has been modified, there is still segregation because teachers have preferences about which types of learner challenges should be included or not in mainstream classrooms.

The provision of a supportive learning environment in mainstream schools is also viewed as a positive factor in the teacher support given to these learners. A comparative study of South African and Finnish teachers conducted by Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela, and Okkolin (2017), maintain that, while perceptions of special needs in both countries are positive, teachers in South Africa have more concerns. Their anxieties include a perceived lack of efficacy regarding their teaching strategies in including learners with difficulties in inclusive classrooms. According to Pillay and Terlizzi (2016), some learners with special needs, such as social interaction, composition, handwriting, and reading, were transferred from a regular school to a special school because the regular teaching profession lacked valuable aspect resources to meet the learners' psychological, social, and school-related needs. This suggests that there is a lack of support for teachers in South Africa. In this regard, teachers continue to face difficulties in providing support for learners with learning disabilities in the mainstream classroom.

#### **2.2.4 Strategies to address the challenges in mainstream schools**

Several strategies and considerations are to address the challenges that mainstream teachers face in handling learners with learning difficulties. According to Freeman, Adams and Cummins (2017), workshops on effective coping strategies for teachers, as well as community-wide public awareness campaigns about intellectual learning disabilities are beneficial in addressing teacher challenges. In an Indonesian study, Rizki (2019) proposes this idea. The purpose of campaigns will be to empower communities and teachers with knowledge on issues centred on learners with learning difficulties thereby alleviating stigmatisation. Parents could benefit as they need to learn more on how to assist learners with different barriers at home. In as far as workshops are concerned, they will help teachers as they will be able to have a platform for cross-pollinating ideas on how to deal with learners` with learning difficulties (Rizki, 2019). Generally in mainstream schools a number of teachers were not exposed to inclusive education training nor have they attended any workshop in special needs education. The attendance in-service and pre-service workshops enhances positive attitude in teachers. Furthermore it enhances teacher-learner relationship.

According to Riziki (2019) and Chingwanangwana (2015), using the right tools, designing effective practice, working closely and collaborating with other teachers and/or cross-disciplinary professionals and receiving assistance from other schools and the surroundings, can benefit learners with learning difficulties significantly in the mainstream schools. This implies that, there is need for a holistic approach in addressing the challenges faced in mainstream schools. Mainstream teachers cannot include all learners without support from both home and school. Supported inclusion is or should be the priority if the success in teaching is to be realised. Such support includes, but is not limited to, curricular or instructional differentiation for these learners depending on their support needs.



## **2.3 LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This discussion is going to be based on the learning support systems in South Africa. Learning support systems encompass all mechanisms used in the educational sector to enhance learner performance. This support comes in the form of a national support team, provincial and district support services.

### **2.3.1 Department of Basic Education/national support teams**

According to the DoE (2001:45) one of the Ministry of Education's short-term objectives is the growth of the district and the institutional support structure for learning. The Ministry believes that improved education support services are the key to removing learning barriers in education and training. National support teams, regional support teams, district support teams, and institutional support teams have all lent a helping hand (DoE, 2001).

### **2.3.2 Provincial department of Education/regional support teams**

The provincial department has an oversight role of managing educational affairs in a province. The district teams report to the provincial board. The provincial department therefore has a duty of ensuring that district teams comply with their mandate of supporting teachers within their district among other duties.

### **2.3.3 District Based Support Team (DBST)**

The DoE (2001) commits to establishing the DBST to provide and coordinate professional support services aimed at schools and specialised settings.

**TABLE 2.1 DISTRICT EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT**

Level	Service rendered
District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist learner and teacher support workers currently working at local, national, or provincial level within the DoE include psychologists, therapists and social care practitioners hired by education departments are included.</li> <li>• Education support teachers, special needs professionals related to disabilities and other wellness programme experts who provide educators and educational organisations with general and relevant resume support also play a role.</li> <li>• Specialists in institutional growth aid educational institutions. They also form part of services rendered.</li> <li>• Management specialists provide resources for strategic and financial management.</li> <li>• Expert support personnel and trained special education teachers can also contribute.</li> </ul>

**(Source: Education White Paper 6, 2001:8)**

The authorised district director acts as the DBST's coordinator, with a significant responsibility to provide guidance and management to provide holistic and comprehensive service (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018). The sole objective of the team, according to the DoE (2001), is to improve the importance of effective teaching and learning, primarily by identifying and addressing learning barriers at every programme level.

One of the primary roles that serves this purpose is the creation of local learning institutions. However, teachers continue to face challenges, and it is concerning why the above structures do not carry out their responsibilities. DBST services are not provided to schools (Chingwanangwana, 2015).

The main areas of emphasis here are supporting institutions in building capability, recognising and prioritising learning needs and obstacles to learning in their local context, recognising and prioritising the resources required to resolve these challenges and addressing them within a system of strategic planning and management, and on-going monitoring and evaluation of all of these. Another focus is on connecting institutions with formal and informal support structures in the community around them to address needs and barriers. The team is also committed to providing learners with indirect support by assisting teachers and school administration with instructional supervision and institutional growth, as well as ensuring that the structure and atmosphere for teaching and learning are attentive to the full variety of learning needs (McCollow et al., 2013).

The White Paper on Education 6 (2001:29) states that education support workers are focused and equipped to provide support to all teachers. They are qualified to assist both learners and teachers in meeting a wide range of teaching and learning conditions, and concentrate on developing effective teaching strategies for all learners (Naranjo, 2014). DBST members play different roles and have different skills although certain skills are like all concerned (Chingwanangwana, 2015). Their specific responsibilities are dictated by the needs and tasks at hand, as well as the relevant available competences.

The DBST needs skills in identifying learning needs and obstacles at the learner, instructor, organisational, and wider programme levels (DoE, 2005). Teacher training plays a central role in measuring, recognising and overcoming obstacles to learning (DoE, 2001). The DBST should also be competent in research where resources are found inside and outside the schools and other educational institutions. They also track and analyse services inside and outside similar organisations, and increasingly enhance support provision.

Health and welfare staff members discuss particular psychological, financial, and physical health problems, and develop strategies for health promotion (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018). Learner-, teacher- and parent counsellors create therapy programmes for those who need their help. Educational trainers teach teachers and parents to develop their ability to help learners.

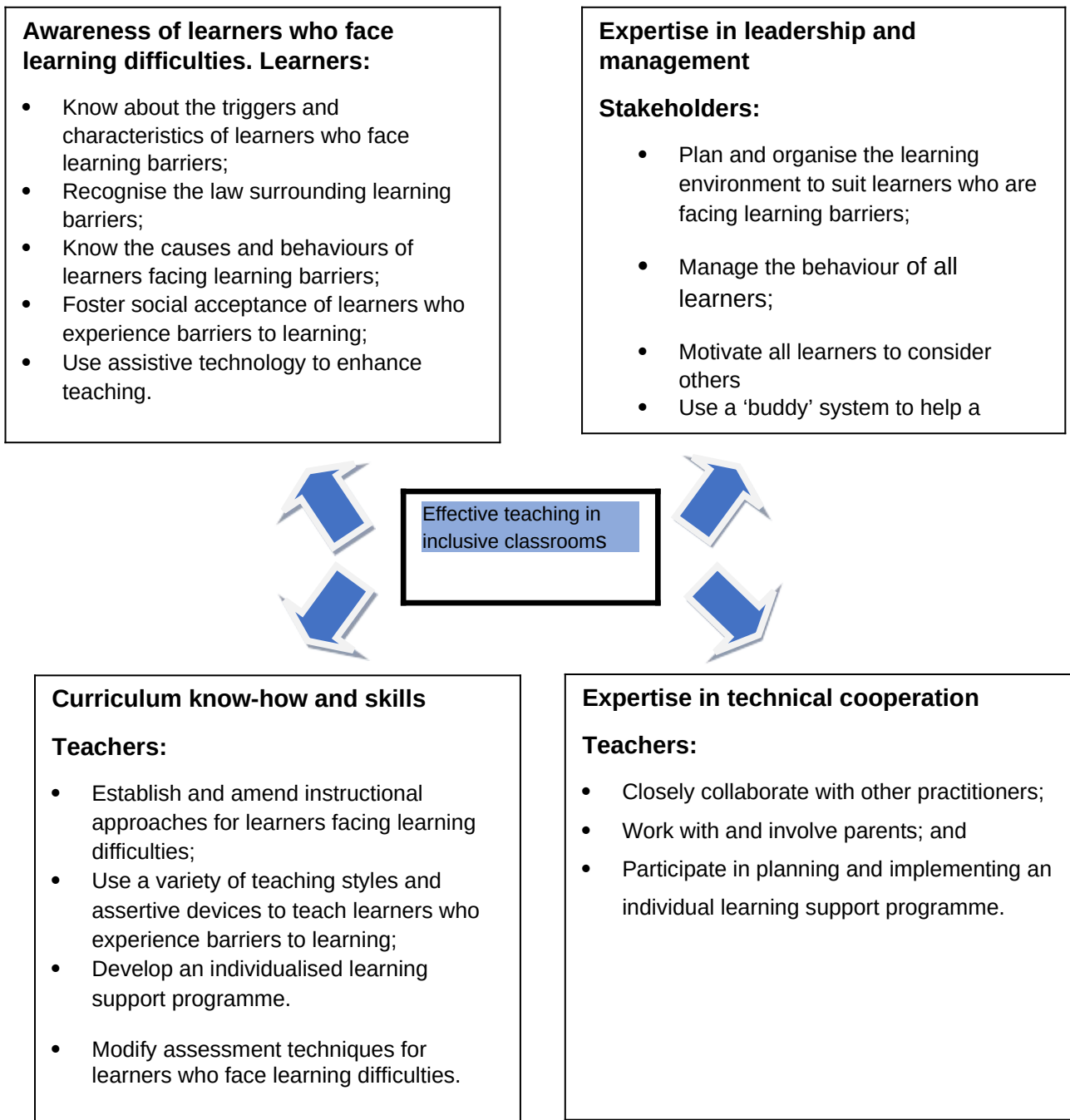
Curriculum consultant developers create learning system modifications to address individual needs and advise about the learning mediation process. Experts in organisational development enable schools and other educational institutions to build inclusive and efficient environments for teaching and learning (DoE, 2005: 22-23).

The DBST is now working closely with institution-level support teams generally known in schools as School Based Support Teams (SBSTs) (Omodan, 2020). The DoE (2005) posits that the DBST's roles in this regard include assisting institutions – level support teams to improve their problem-solving abilities, providing expert advice and services, such as medical or psychological testing or specialised counselling, where appropriate, and helping institutions connect their needs to local resources that can meet these needs. The responsibilities of DBST leaders and team duties are well and clearly specified.

Chingwanangwana (2015:32) contends, “I am a special needs teacher who has been teaching at a special school for the learners who are severely intellectually impaired for the past five years, but I have never seen or heard about these people before. Yet I am one of those people whom they should be supporting.” This is only one of the teachers who communicated openly and there might be more teachers suffering. Teacher challenges must be addressed in the South African educational set-up.

#### **2.3.4 The School Based Support Team (SBST)**

The DoE (2005) states that each school must set up a an SBST that is responsible for providing learning support along with the teachers involved in the teaching and learning of the individual learner. Teachers must be creative, professional and inventive in their teaching techniques to meet the learners' various learning styles (Fourie, 2017). By having all the stakeholders on board, learning help can be provided in a comprehensive way. The following Figure 2.1 illustrates this position.



**FIGURE 2.1 EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (IE)**

(Source: Adapted from: Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (eds). 2011)

## 2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (IE)

Inclusive education (IE) perspectives vary according to regions or views of the countries. International and local contexts of IE are discussed in detail to provide the bigger picture.

### **2.4.1 International perspective of Inclusive Education (IE)**

Many countries are moving towards IE. Each and every country has its own perspective and definition of IE based on the history, economy, values, and traditions of the country, (MacKenzie, Bower & Owaineh, 2020). Providing a definition in South Africa incorporates a focus on human rights, non-discrimination, and support (Chingwanangwana, 2015). This is also consistent with the Constitution based on social justice. Learners with learning difficulties are no exception to this egalitarian approach. Learning difficulties vary among learners and as such this requires well-seasoned teachers who can offer the best educational service to them according to their diverse needs. This in the South African context is still lacking. The teachers are facing a myriad of challenges in handling learners with learning difficulties.

Bose and Heymann (2020b) assert that IE is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with various countries evolving in various directions. IE can be seen as constituting a global policy, and in practice it is strongly influenced by local belief systems. In the light of their own history, traditions, principles and institutions, each government eventually interprets the foreign guidelines to the point where the original policy of inclusion may become unrecognisable. As such approaches to address IE must be tailor made to meet the demands of a specific nation (Thuketana, 2018).

Every country has a distinct history of conceptualising and responding to learners with special educational needs. To understand contemporary deliberate processes to IE, it is necessary to consider previous mindsets and practices (Spörer et al., 2020). However, teacher support is very critical in addressing IE challenges (Shibambu, 2017). It means that the idea of IE mediates the cultural values and convictions, the degree of economic prosperity and history. IE therefore, has different definitions in various countries. (Yada et al., 2018).

Economic factors play a major role in deciding on equitable educational strategies. Nations such as Singapore treat individuals with disabilities as economic liabilities. In terms of education, they are put on the low priority list (Chingwanangwana, 2015). In Latin American countries, Fletcher and Articles in Mitchell (2005:35) point out an often-stated argument: "How can we afford to invest in social services for the small

population of people with disabilities when sizable segments of our non-disabled still have such deep needs?" This assertion implies that educational inequality exists, and IE may not be practised.

IE has been defined in some countries, such as the United States of America and Canada, as the mandatory positioning of learners with difficulties in inclusive classrooms and society (Burns & Dudley-Marling, 2014). In Japan and Singapore, there are two distinct educational programmes, with different placements in special schools for learners with special educational needs.

These learners follow a different programme with no limitations than their peers, and they frequently fall under different ministries and administrative bodies (Chingwanangwana, 2015). Voluntary service organisations in Singapore operate a special education programme for learners with moderate to serious or deep disabilities, while the Ministry of Education provides a normal education system for those without difficulties and those with milder difficulties (Antia, 2002).

Learners with severe and multiple impairments and those with minor impairments are also excluded in China and are not attending school Chingwanangwana (2015). Throughout Mexico, few learners with serious learning difficulties who obtain any education are put throughout multiple centres of care rather than daily classes (Mitchell in Mitchell, 2005). Haug cited in Booth, Nes and Stromstad (2003) that in Norway, all learners are enrolled in compulsory schools and teachers must be trained to accommodate, consider, and appreciate the various styles of learners, regardless of their differences.

England's government requires all learners to be enrolled in regular schools unless there are valid reasons for not doing so. Special schools have been abolished and specialist teachers transferred to standard classrooms (Dyson & Millward, 2000). Engelbrecht and Green (2007) argue that countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and South Africa are some of the countries in Southern Africa that seek to change their education system in order to eliminate obstacles to learning for their learners

## 2.4.2 Inclusive education (IE) in other African countries

The following discussion is going to be based on IE in other African countries. The World Bank (2018) provides informative information regarding IE in Africa. The following countries are involved.

- **Ethiopia:** Ethiopia Education Sector Development Program V served as a foundation for educational development in the country, and a plan was developed to support the establishment of many schools. The goal was to include IE and to cater for all learners, including those with disabilities. The project received a grant of \$100,000;
- **Gambia:** Government availed itself to support on-going work regarding the Special Education Unit to encourage learners with difficulties to attend school, stay in school and ensure learners with difficulties are supported in their learning. The idea was to launch a community engagement initiative that could benefit especially the physically and mentally challenged learners. The training of classroom teachers, itinerant teachers, and school directors was imperative to inform the stakeholders on how best to teach the physically challenged learners. Demands-based assistive devices were a primary focus and \$197,000 was allocated to help;
- **Ghana:** The initiative embraced the establishment of a framework to transform the special schools into a haven for learners. The focus was on IE resource centres and to train staff engaged in their new capacities and sensitise the community by strengthening networks. \$250,000 was allocated to support them;
- **Lesotho:** The government tried to increase stakeholder knowledge and inform the public about IE. They created an IE training module that included basic screening and teaching strategies. They also developed a policy note on challenged school-age learners, and information was disseminated to raise national awareness about how to support the physically challenged;



- **Senegal:** The aim was to identify challenged learners to improve data on learners with difficulties to be able to make informed decisions about how to teach them. They revised the Education Sector Policy Framework and investigated the economic conditions of the physically challenged learners. The project received \$190,000 (The World Bank, 2018).
- **Zambia:** The Ministry of General Education (MOGE) focused on technical support and provisioning of education for physically challenged learners in accordance with the 7<sup>th</sup> National Developmental Plan. Teachers' pedagogical skills were improved so that they could work with physically disabled learners (The World bank, 2018).

The activity promoted the development of teachers' pedagogical skills and knowledge to meet the learning needs of learners with difficulties. To make recommendations to the MOGE, the activity included an audit of the availability and use of inclusive teaching-learning materials in school. They concentrated on developing the capacity of education managers to assist management in carefully planning for community awareness. They were awarded \$250,000 (The World bank, 2018).

### 2.4.3 Inclusive Education (IE) in South Africa

As previously stated, the concept of IE in any country differs according to the country's context, beliefs, traditions and structures (Ofori, 2018). The history of education in South Africa modelled the concept and current practice of IE. Engelbrecht (2006) notes that the perception of inclusion and the social and political mechanisms by which it is implemented in the South African context is seen against the backdrop of historical occurrences that influenced the development of post-apartheid education policy.

The DoE (2001) posited that South African inclusive schooling is a constitutional requirement. Andriana and Evans (2020) perceive IE to respond to diversity. This also requires a strong dedication to recognise, question and contribute to the removal of inequalities in this mission. The principle of inclusion in education exists

as part of a 'right strategy' that stresses that all learners have the right to access education, hence the term 'education for all' (Andriana & Evans, 2020).

IE is also especially based on all those learners who are excluded from the “normal” education programme or the education system in its entirety (Szumski et al., 2020a). Magoge, Zimba, Shanda, Kelly, Hay and Kitching (2018) mention that the associated principles of equality, justice, social accountability and freedom from prejudice are popular reasons for South Africa's inclusive education. Walton, (2018) sees IE as a precondition for democratic education. This is a strategy that applies to individuals and society who respect diversity and transcend obstacles (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2018).

Inclusion includes paying attention to all facets of education including assistance with the curriculum, pedagogy, and encouragement. This also involves schools that meet all learners' needs within typical yet dynamic setting and activities (Yada et al., 2018). South Africa experienced significant changes after a Democratic government took over in 1994. The merger of the nineteen education departments into a new education ministry resulted in a revolution (Chingwanangwana, 2015). Inequalities and a lack of provision for primarily Black South Africans clearly demonstrated the need for extensive research to provide a service that could support all South Africans. South Africa adjusted the IE agenda, which reiterated the concept of IE and the value of moving towards schools for all (Majoko, Tawanda, & Phasha, 2018). The Salamanca Declaration was conceptualised in Spain in 1994 and signed by 92 governments and 25 foreign organisations across the world. According to the statement, all learners, regardless of their physical, mental, social, emotional, linguistic, or other difficulties, must be accommodated in regular schools (Stubbs, 2008).

Some of the ideas IE outlined in the Salamanca Declaration are as follows:

- Each child has a fundamental right to education, and the ability to attain and sustain an adequate learning standard must be granted;
- Each child has unique attributes, interests, abilities and needs for learning;
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs;

- The educational structure must be planned and educational programmes implemented to take into account the broad variety of these features and needs;
- Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs (Dishinger, Howard, Kiagler, Seabrooke, Tucker, 2015).

The Salamanca Declaration increasingly serves as a central text in international guidelines for sustainable growth. The new democratic South Africa gave the Salamanca Statement support in its Education (DoE, 2001). Although in many nations, inclusion is seen as synonymous with putting disabled learners in the general education classroom. Chingwanangwana (2015) points out that post-apartheid South Africa focuses on all disadvantaged individuals, including older learners, in custody, learners with language barriers, and obstacles such as fellow learners' behaviours, lack of parental acceptance and deprivation South Africa is one of the countries aiming to provide equal access to a single IE programme for all learners. This Education White Paper 6 directs "the government's efforts to integrate special needs education into the educational system" (DoE, 2001:4).

Inclusion in South Africa has resulted from both the rehabilitation of definitions of disability and the attempt to develop social and educational policies in the values of social justice and human rights, (McKenzie, 2020a). Donohue and Bornman (2014) note that IE is advocated not merely as an alternative for education, but as the most possible strategy for achieving a democratic society. It is about developing education for everyone in such a way that it is becoming 'natural' to accept variations rather than appear as exceptions.

IE is a suggested solution to take questions about how to teach for equality and justice in the twentieth century (Murungi, 2015). Baranauskienė and Saveikienė, (2018) argue that the change to IE moves the emphasis from learners having to conform to the system's demands to meet as inclusively as possible the diverse needs of all learners. This is because the Salamanca Declaration called on the

international community to support the approach of inclusive schools through realistic and strategic changes (Schuman & Montesano-Montessori, 2015).

According to Vila (2020), the focus in inclusive schools is on creating a sense of a community in which everyone's participation is welcomed, embraced and encouraged for all children by other members, and it can thrive effectively. In order to be equitable in an education system, it should be capable of addressing the diverse needs of every learner within schools as efficiently as possible. Barauskienė and Saveikienė (2018) clearly stress that there are four main elements of inclusion in practice: community-based, barrier-free, collaboration-fostering and equality-fostering. From the South African educational history it is clear that the IE policy of the new democratic government was focused on its history of discrimination and exclusion, especially disability learners (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018).

Professor Kader Asmal, former and late Minister of Education in South Africa wrote in the White Paper (DoE, 2001: 2001:3-4).

*“We make it clear that special schools will be strengthened rather than abolished. Following the completion of our audit of special schools, we will develop investment plans to improve the quality of education across all of them. Learners with severe disabilities will be accommodated in these vastly improved special schools as part of an inclusive system. Through this White Paper, the government is determined to create special needs education as a non-racial and integrated component of our education system.”*

In as much as there are promises to improve educational delivery in all schools from 2001 as from the above statement, it remains pellucid that there are challenges faced in the teaching of learners with learning difficulties. This research seeks to unearth more on this.

## **2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

A conceptual framework can be defined as is a tool that can be used by a researcher involved in forming original thought (Lindgreen, 2020). Learners have diverse learning difficulties, and they require education that fit their educational demands.

The integration of learners into the mainstream helps to reduce discrimination against such learners. This helps as such learners were initially isolated and put into special schools.

The conceptual framework is based on two theories: Albert Bandura's social learning theory and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory.

A theoretical framework serves as a lens through which data is viewed (Campbell, 2014). A theoretical framework, according to Eberlein (2017), aids in the clarification of a research problem. It guides the design of a research project. A template creates a forum for the researcher to view a proposed study based on ideas also now existing in the field, acting as a lens or insight through which the specific construct under investigation can be understood (Maree, 2018). I was guided in this study by social learning and socio-cultural theories.

### **2.5.1 The Social Learning Theory**

The Social Learning Theory was propounded and developed by Albert Bandura (1977). Proctor and Niemeyer (2020) suggest that learning is influenced by several environmental factors. The theory states that cognitive and behavioural learning takes place through imitation, reading and observation (Juffer et al., 2017). This theory is relevant to the current study as the teaching environment is not conducive as teachers lack sufficient expertise to teach learners with learning difficulties. As such, the challenges faced by teachers that make the learning environment futile must be addressed. However, the implications of this theory are that inclusive classroom teachers need to be good models and apply strategies that allow learners to observe and model from them as envisioned by Bandura. He further emphasises repetition and retention as important in social learning. This implies that the teacher should utilise strategies that will allow learners to repeat activities to enhance retention.

Proctor and Niemeyer (2020) argue that observational learning is when children learn behaviour through observing others in the environment. In mainstream schools, learners with learning difficulties can observe their peers and teachers, imitate, and learn. This enhances not only their behaviour but academic performance too (Proctor & Niemeyer, 2020b). Bandura (1986) points out that modelling occurs through

attention, retention, pronunciation, and motivation. All these can offer learners with learning difficulties role models and facilitate learning. One aspect that is central to the social learning theory is that of reciprocal causality where learners learn from each other and the people in their environment (Juffer et al., 2017).

### **2.5.2 Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory**

The study was also be grounded in Vygotsky's 1978 socio-cultural theory. The theory focuses on the interaction of individuals within their social and cultural context rather than on an isolated individual (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). The theory is anchored on the premise that an individual constructs knowledge from what happens in the social environment (Schauer, 2018). There is co-construction of knowledge between the individual and the social processes that take place during teaching and learning.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is explained in this theory. According to Smagorinsky (2018), the ZPD is the gap between a learner's actual development as determined by problem solving under adult supervision and the level of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult supervision or in collaboration with more capable peers. In this case, it is the teacher's responsibility to work with learners who have learning difficulties and support them to achieve optimally and be at par with their peers who are 'normal' (Kuusisaari, 2014). This theory is critical to this study because the ZPD is in disarray in South Africa, primarily due to a lack of relevant skills among teachers. This means that learners continue to face learning difficulties because the environment is not conducive. It can further be said that adult guidance of learners in South Africa is extremely poor as the teachers lack expertise in dealing with learners with learning difficulties (Thuketana, 2018). It is therefore very mandatory for teachers to have the necessary skills to improve the ZPD for learners with learning difficulties.

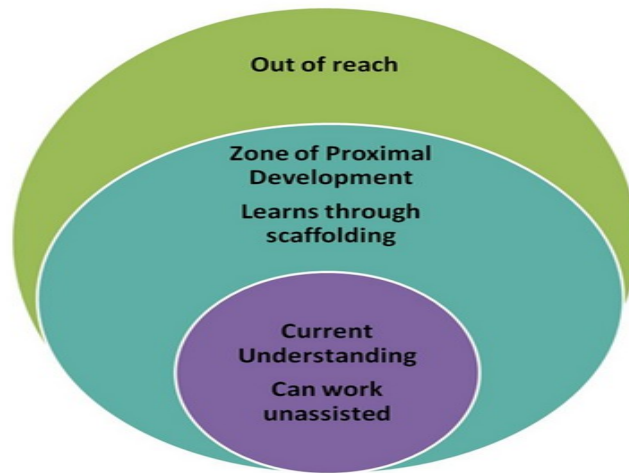
Researchers in South Africa cited above indicate that most of the teachers lack training in inclusive pedagogy. Bandura's theory suggests that the teacher should go that extra mile to be able to demonstrate and use teaching strategies that are effective to elucidate the curriculum so that learners with difficulties can understand

and participate (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). It is therefore important that these teachers are trained so that they can meet learners' diverse needs.

The teacher may use strategies that foster role playing and demonstrations as suggested by Miller (2014). Thus, in the inclusive classroom the teachers must be experts in their own right. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the expert novice relationship in the classroom where the teacher acts as the expert to model whatever it is that needs to be learnt while the learners are the novices who learn from the expert. By so doing the learners will be able to observe and imitate, for instance good pronunciation, good communication skills and correct procedures in academic work. This means that the teacher should be able to move learners from one ZPD to another level as emphasised by Vygotsky (1978). These two theories are important for the study as they will help in analysing the strategies used by the teachers in mainstream schools for the benefit of learners with learning difficulties. Furthermore, Vygotsky's (1978) theory is also relevant for the study in that the teacher, as the more knowledgeable other, is enabled to engage in the use of diverse teaching and learning styles. In an inclusive classroom, these teaching and learning styles will aid in meeting the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those with learning difficulties (Chaula, 2014). With this in mind I was able to investigate the difficulties that mainstream teachers face when providing such differentiated and individualised instruction to learners with varying learning difficulties.

FIGURE 2.2: ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

## Zone of Proximal Development



(Source: Researcher's Construct based on Vygotsky, 1978)

### Phase 1:

Outside of the learner's ZPD during this phase are tasks that cannot be completed even with the assistance of an expert (Lerch, Bilics & Colley, 2011). If the assignment is outside of the learner's ZPD, the expert may look to reduce the level of complexity and find tasks that are more appropriate given the learner's skill level (Frey, 2018). It emerged that those learners with different learning difficulties come to school without knowledge of the content. Thus, they need skilled teachers.

**Phase 2:** When learners are on the verge of understanding a skill set required for each activity, they still require the guidance of an expert. This phase indicates that they are still developing in accordance with their unique ZPD (Frey, 2018). In this case, an expert may implement several tactics to assist the learner in better understanding the strategies and principles required to complete a task on their own (Podolskij, 2017). With scaffolding that will be provided by the teacher, learners will be able to learn and perform better. It is for this reason that the present study will suggest possible strategies that teachers can use as scaffolding to support learners with special learning difficulties.

**Phase 3:** In this stage, the learners are capable of completing tasks on their own and have mastered the necessary skill set (Kuusisaari, 2014). The learners do not



require the assistance of an expert. When a learner reaches a stage, the expert may increase the task complexity level to help the learner find the next ZPD and start encouraging further learning (Frey, 2018). In this study, teachers who are struggling to teach learners with learning difficulties will be given strategies to use so that all learners can complete the activities without assistance.

## **2.6 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

Thuketana (2018) carried out research on how a meaningful educational environment can be created for children with cerebral palsy in South African rural areas. Research findings showed that poor governmental support and lack of sound, efficient and effective supporting structures as well as negative perceptions of teachers affect the creation of a fruitful learning environment for the learners in question (Thuketana, 2018). The research findings revealed that IE becomes a mammoth task to achieve if there are no collaborative efforts from key stakeholders such as teachers and the government. This implies that learners with cerebral palsy in rural areas may not fully enjoy education and as such there is little to mention about IE solutions if some of the learners in rural areas are adversely affected.

Magyar (2020) examined the teacher's perception on special educational needs in Hungary. From the study it was unearthed that teachers lacked the necessary skills and expertise to deal with learners with learning difficulties, (Magyar, 2020:10). It can therefore be deduced that IE is a global phenomenon as (Thuketana, 2018) found similar challenges in the South African context. However, the key question that remains unanswered is what can be done to address the teacher challenges in as far as learners with learning difficulties is concerned. This research sought to close this research gap with a specific focus on the South African context.

Chingwanangwana (2015) explored the challenges experienced and the types of support required by the Grade R teachers teaching learners with severe intellectual impairment in South Africa. The results from this qualitative research paradigm showed that teachers lack support from Districts Based Support Teams (DBST) as well as lack of appropriate resources. Chingwanangwana (2015) further posited that those teachers were getting support from their fellow colleagues at work. However,

given that all these teachers are at almost at the same level expertise wise, how can a visually impaired person lead another visually impaired person? This is just a calamity and disastrous to the educational sector at large and solutions must be designed with urgency.

The research findings are similar to those of Thuketana, (2018) and Magyar, (2020). These scholars share the same notion that lack of teacher support is a colossal obstacle in achieving inclusive education. Although, as stated in the previous discussions, that DBST are existent, it boggles the mind if such structures exist on paper only and they do not execute their duties. Teachers remain vulnerable on how they can deliver quality educational services to learners with learning difficulties.

Szumski et al. (2020b) carried out a study to investigate the learners' attitude towards people with difficulties and IE. The results revealed that the key factors such as non-random selection of learners, enabling school culture as well as good moral development as very crucial in ensuring that learners with difficulties cope well in mainstream educational set-up (Szumski et al., 2020b). This connotes that schools must create a conducive environment to promote inclusive education, teachers must be skilled enough to handle learners with learning difficulties. However, it becomes a mammoth task to create a conducive learning environment for learners with learning difficulties if the teachers are less skilled (Valeeva, 2015). Apart from that, the selection of learners to place into mainstream schools and special schools must be carefully done. This could translate to the fact that poor selection and placing of learners with learning difficulties will ultimately burden the less skilled teachers (Valeeva, 2015).

Baranauskienė and Saveikienė (2018) carried out research on inclusion of teachers in IE in Lithuania. The findings showed that there is need for Lithuania educational institutions to be restructured so that learners with learning difficulties are catered for (Baranauskienė & Saveikienė, 2018:2). It may therefore be concluded that although many countries ascribe to the Salamanca Declaration, the dictates of the Salamanca Declaration are not yet fully implemented.

McKenzie (2020b) also explored intellectual disabilities on IE in South Africa. The author suggested an inclusion policy deals as well as curriculum changes in order to address the challenges faced by learners in the South African educational context (McKenzie, 2020b). Several scholars have explored IE, however, there is a missing link on what can be done for teachers who deal with learners with learning difficulties. This is the contribution that this empirical study seeks to provide.

## **2.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter presented key concepts on IE both from an international, regional and South African context. Several challenges that affect teachers were observed. Although, the DBST and SBST exist, their relevance is not adequately felt as teachers do not receive enough support from them. From an empirical point of view, it has been observed that, solutions to address teacher challenges should be tailor-made according the specific obstacles they are facing. This requires a holistic approach and key stakeholders such as government, department of education, teachers, and civic organisations should play a part. In the next chapter, which is Chapter 3, the research methodology for the study will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methodology. The study's key aspects will be explained, including the research design, research paradigm, and research approach. Apart from that, a discussion on the sampling techniques used, the target population, and data collection instruments will be shared in this chapter. In addition, an explanation on the data analysis techniques to be employed in the study will be presented too. Ethical values to be observed in this research will be discussed and an overall conclusion is presented to conclude the chapter.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (2014), research design refers to research action plans ranging from broad assumptions to data will be subjected to analysis.

Relatedly, Maree (2018) propounds that, a research design is a plan or blueprint for collecting and analysing evidence that will allow the investigator to answer questions. To elaborate, a research design is a plan or strategy that specifies the selection of participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis to be used, beginning with the underlying philosophical assumptions, and ending with the data analysis (Omair, 2015). The present study took the case study design. The design also provides well validated and substantiated findings of the phenomenon under study.

##### 3.2.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a framework of philosophical assumptions that guide researchers (Chang, Chang & Liao, 2020). Research paradigms, according to Poni (2014), are a crucial component of research projects because they influence both approach and how researchers construct and understand the meaning of reality.

According to the interpretations above, a research paradigm is a model for conducting research or a study. Research paradigms can be positivist or interpretivism in nature. The interpretivism paradigm guided the research. This

enables one to comprehend the participants' behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to the challenges that teachers in mainstream schools' face when teaching learners with learning difficulties. Chang, Chang and Liao (2020) state that interpretivism is based on the idea that life realities are socially constructed based on the data gathered from participants. Interpretivism is concerned with deciphering the deeper meaning of what participants said (Creswell, 2014).

The focus of this study was on unearthing challenges faced by teachers teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The qualitative nature of the study enabled the soliciting of narratives directly from the teachers and thus interpretivism best suited the purpose of this study. The paradigm was relevant for the study since it enables many interpretations to be made and the analysis of what teachers say concerning the challenges they are facing in mainstream schools. This paradigm was adopted as there is no cause-and-effect relationship that positivism emphasises.

### **3.2.2 Research approach**

A research approach is a plan that includes steps ranging from broad assumptions to data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods (Costa, Soares & de Sousa, 2020). A research approach, according to Creswell (2014), is a plan or proposal for conducting research that includes the intention of philosophy, research designs, and specific methods. A qualitative research approach was used in this study.

Abrams et al. (2020) posit that qualitative research is a naturalistic approach that seeks to explain concepts in the context of specific settings such as real life and in which the researcher does not attempt to exploit the phenomena. Statistics are not employed to explain the phenomenon. The approach was appropriate for this study because it intended to focus on the challenges that teachers face in mainstream schools.

According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative research approach is based on the social and historical context to gain a deeper understanding. The qualitative research approach will allow the researchers to provide details that underpin the practices of inclusive education in mainstream schools with a view to making suggestions on the strategies to improve the challenges.

### **3.2.3 Research design**

A case study was used as the study's design to better understand the phenomena under investigation. A case study is a comprehensive examination of a specific topic, such as an individual, community, location, event, organisation, or phenomenon (Massey & Miller, 2018). Based on this definition, a case study is used in research to target a specific group of people to meet the research needs. The advantage of using a case study is that it allows quality data collection. This is justified by the fact that, the participants and the researcher both interact openly and this creates an enabling environment for probing questions to be asked (Heyeres, 2019). Apart from that, a case study was advantageous to this study, since such study could be carried out remotely (Wang, 2019). Given the current coronavirus pandemic, social distancing is key because data will be collected remotely using telephonic interviews.

Furthermore, Chang, Chang and Liao (2020) argue that one of the benefits of case studies is that they are grounded and can be completed by a single researcher. Moreover, a case study was used to investigate and comprehend the difficulties that mainstream teachers face in inclusive classrooms.

### **3.2.4 The role of the researcher**

The researcher was involved in the designing of the questions to be used during the 45-minute telephonic interview with each participant. Apart from that, the researcher interviewed the participants, recorded the data, transcribed these and analysed it using thematic data analysis method. In addition to that, a verification process was carried out by the researcher and key areas of concerns were reliability and validity of the research output.

## **3.3 RESEARCH METHODS**

Research can be carried out using qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods techniques, (Zhu, Sari & Lee, 2018). A qualitative research method is defined as a scientific way of collecting non-mathematical or non-numerical data for a specific research (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Examples of qualitative research ways of data collection are: focus groups, interviews, focus groups, and ethnography. Conversely, quantitative research is based on the collection of quantifiable data where mathematical, statistical, or computational methods can be performed on it (Lo et al., 2020). Questionnaires are normally used as research instruments as part of quantitative research. Mixed methods combine both the qualitative and quantitative research attributes (Akimowicz et al., 2018). This implies that data collection in mixed research can be done using a combination of interviews, questionnaires or surveys.

### **3.3.1 Selection of research sites**

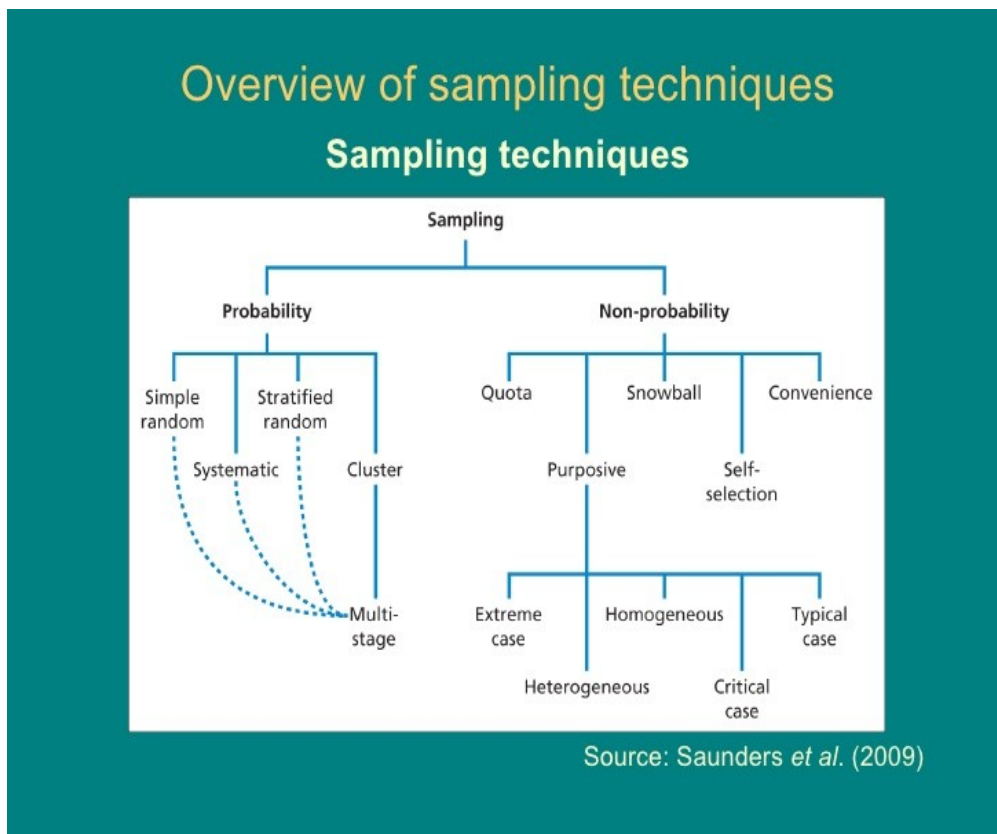
Participants in this research refer to a group of individuals selected from a possible population for the study (Tichapondwa, 2013). Participants therefore are simply a target group that represents a larger population. The participants of the study were six teachers and Heads of Department (HODs). These were three teachers and one HOD being selected from each of the two primary schools. These participants were selected from two (2) schools in Johannesburg Central Education District. This brings the total number of participants from both schools to eight (8). The researcher devised a manageable purposive sample that could be used to conduct an in-depth study at these selected schools.

The schools were chosen because they were close to the researcher and had a history of involvement in activities involving learners with learning difficulties, as well as having very active School Based Support Teams (SBST). For that reason, purposive sampling was adopted as the sampling technique for selecting the participants.

### **3.3.2 Selection of participant**

Research participants are obtained through a sampling technique. Sampling refers to the well-defined process of selecting participants from a given target population, (Polman et al., 2019). Sampling can be non-probabilistic or probabilistic (Lovreglio, Spearpoint & Girault, 2019). The figure below summarises some of the sampling techniques used in research.

**FIGURE 3.1 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**



**(Source : Saunders, 2009)**

Some examples of probabilistic sampling methods are shown in Figure 3.1, including simple random, stratified, systematic, and cluster sampling techniques (DeSalvo, 2017). Non-probabilistic sampling techniques include quota, purposive, and snowball sampling (Alonge et al., 2017).

Purposive sampling was used to identify teachers who teach learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream schools. Purposive sampling refers to choosing participants who possess certain traits or qualities that suit the study's focus (Cresswell, 2014). Maree (2018) posits that purposive sampling is an informant selection tool to choose a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. HODs were also purposively selected based on their active involvement in dealing with learners with learning challenges. The approach was chosen as the researcher got to the bottom of the real classroom challenges faced by the practising mainstream teachers who teach learners with learning difficulties daily.



### **3.3.2.1 Teachers and HODs as participants**

Two schools were selected from Johannesburg Central Education District. For each school, a total of three (3) teachers took part in the telephonic semi-structured interviews. The interview process from each school lasted for two days. The teachers from both schools were asked fourteen (14) semi-structured questions. Thuketana (2018) posits that it is essential to include participants with living experience in the sample. This improves the quality of data collected, as the participants will be knowledgeable on the subject area. The selected teachers teach in the mainstream schools. Apart from that, the teachers have experience in dealing with learners with learning difficulties.

Two Heads of Department, (HODs) each representing their own school took part in the data collection process. HODs are directly involved in educational service delivery in mainstream schools. Their involvement added value in providing the required answers to the stipulated research gaps. They responded to 14 interview questions conducted in a two-day period. These research questions were structured to address the main research objectives and questions of the study.

### **3.3.2.2 Meeting with Circuit Manager**

District protocols in the Educational Department requires all researchers to be officially cleared to select schools for use in research (Thuketana, 2018). The circuit manager was contacted in person and permission was granted to carry out research.

### **3.3.2.3 Meeting with Principals**

Virtual meetings were conducted via Zoom with the principals of the concerned schools. These meetings were done after a telephonic preparatory meeting. This was done due to corona virus lockdown regulations. The principals were asked to help identify teachers and HODs willing to participate voluntarily. Permission was sought from them, and the supporting documents were delivered to them. The researcher was authorised to carry out research by the responsible authorities. This

shows that observing procedures creates prolific relations in the corporate world (Thuketana, 2018).

### 3.3.2.4 Meeting with Teachers

The selected teachers were contacted telephonically to explain purpose and direction of the research. The principal helped in the selection of the teachers. Future meetings were scheduled for the telephonic semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted 45 minutes per participant. The participants were well informed on their role and benefits of taking part in the study.

### 3.3.2.5 Meeting with HODs

The current Covid-19 pandemic has imposed numerous restrictions on physical meetings. The researcher wrote letters to the principals of the respective schools requesting permission to conduct research. Permission was granted, and data collection began.

## 3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Qualitative research relies on multiple sources of data such as interviews in various forms, observations (Kothari, 2014). Data collection can be based on primary or secondary techniques (Libaque-Sáenz, 2020).

**FIGURE 3.2: METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**



**(Source: Researcher's construct based on Libaque-Sáenz (2020))**

Figure 3.2 shows that the collection of data can be based on questionnaires, reports from databases, or interviews.

### 3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews in the form of telephone interviews were conducted with HODs and teachers. The interviews aided in determining teachers' attitudes and perceptions about teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools (Jones & Abdelfattah, 2020).

The researcher had planned to use observations as one of the data collection strategies. However, only telephonic interviews were conducted. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted to make up for the limitation. The interviews were telephonically semi-structured so as to allow flexibility and allow the researcher to collect data beyond the surface of challenges faced by mainstream teachers in mainstream schools in teaching learners with learning difficulties (Hill et al., 2020). Telephonic interviews were selected for this study as they do not only suit the research needs, but they allow the researcher to cut unnecessary travelling costs. In addition to that, telephonic interviews helped in reducing health risks during the Corona virus pandemic, and complying with the protocols as set out by the South African government (Tseng, 2020).

However, interviews may be characterised by bias and subjectivity that is associated with interviews (Murphy, Pattin, Sarver, Seegert Mertzand & Blashford, 2020). To overcome this, I ensured clear communication during the interview in the use of language which should not be ambiguous (Harvey, 2020). I was as objective as possible during the interview and analysis of data. During data collection, I avoided leading questions and respected the participants' views to get their honest responses without bias. Data was recorded using a recording device. Data transcribing was carried out and the audios were to be kept safe in an encrypted folder for a period of 3 years.

**TABLE 3.1: DATA COLLECTION**

The table below depicts the data collection strategies, how the data was collected and the information that the data provided,

Data collection	How data were collected	Information the data would provide
<b>Telephone semi-structured, individual interviews</b>	Audio recordings Detailed notes written while interviewing	Challenges faced by teachers in teaching learners with difficulties. The interviews also solicited for information on the strategies that teachers use in their inclusive classes and why they use them. Interviews with HODs sought to find out how they are involved in the teaching and learning process at school and what type of assistance and support they offer to the teachers. Apart from that, focus will be on aspects related to Continuous Professional Development.

(Source: Researcher's Construct)

### 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

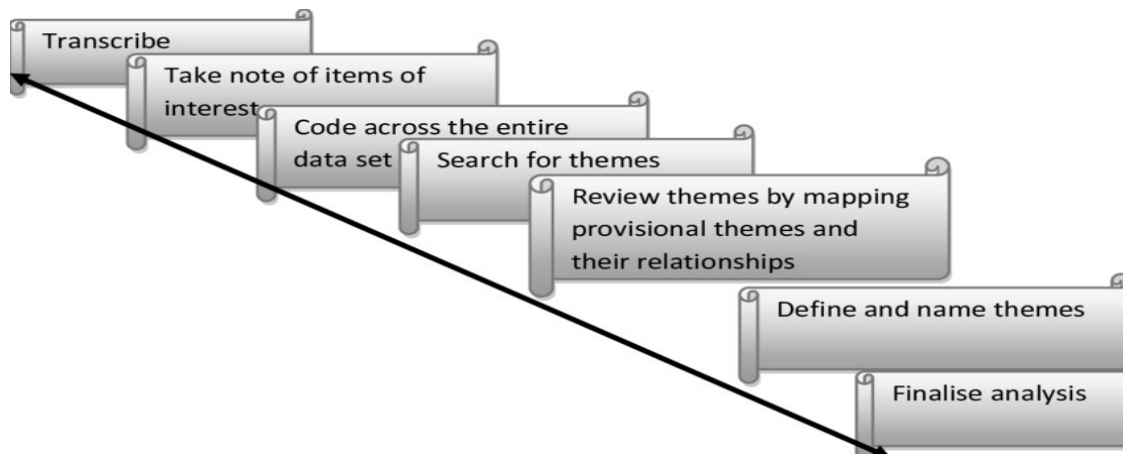
Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to a massive amount of data (Martin-Rodill, Panach, Gonzalez- Perez & Pastor, 2018). According to Creswell (2017), data analysis is defined as reading through all the data to get a general sense of the information and reflecting on its overall meaning. In this study, data were explained in terms of participants' views by tracking themes and patterns that emerge during the process of data collection. Data can be analysed manually or through the use of electronic software (Thuketana, 2018).

Grounded Theory analysis, Narrative analysis, Thematic data analysis and content analysis are some of the common methods used in qualitative research (Markey et

al., 2020). Grounded Theory is a method and methodology involving the development of a theory through data collection and analysis (Markey et al., 2020). On the other hand, Content analysis is based on the classification and description processes and procedures for the categorisation of text data. Narrative analysis is based on deducing meaning from narratives, (Smith & Monforte, 2020).

I used thematic data analysis in this study. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic data analysis was selected, because it allows one to apply theoretical and personal knowledge which improves the quality of the research output (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Apart from that, the technique was advantageous in that it allowed flexibility and the interpretation of the data (Aljerf, 2018). This made the thematic data analysis more useful in this study.

**FIGURE 3.4: THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS**



**(Source: Researcher's Construct)**

The first step, as shown in Figure 3.4, is to transcribe the data. Following that, one must make a note of key aspects of one's interests and do the necessary coding. Following that, a search for themes should be conducted, and these themes should be reviewed, defined, and named before the final analysis is completed. This is the procedure that was followed in this study.

**TABLE 3.2: RESEARCH STEPS**

Steps	Application in study
Transcribing data	This was the first step in analysing the collected data. The collected data was transcribed verbatim from the audio recorder.
Take note of key aspects of interests	Key areas of interest from the transcribed data were taken note of.
Code across the entire data set	The data set was coded.
Search for themes	A search for themes was carried out.
Review themes	Themes were reviewed.
Define and name themes	Themes were defined and named, and explained.
Final analysis	The final analysis was done.

**(Source: Researcher's Construct)**

### 3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Aspects pertaining to trustworthiness are discussed in this section.

#### 3.6.1 Transparency of conduct

The degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study is referred to as a study's trustworthiness (Amin et al., 2020). Amankwah (2016) states that a researcher should establish the procedure required for a study to be worthy of readers' consideration. Gunawan (2015) views trustworthiness as the transparency of the conduct of the study. The aspects considered under trustworthiness are dependability, credibility, transferability, and conformability. The trustworthiness of this research was based on the qualitative approach to data gathering as well as engaging teachers who are currently in practice and are familiar with challenges the mainstream teachers are facing. According to Cope (2014) trustworthiness in data is evaluated according to: validity, reliability, credibility and transferability.

### **3.6.2 Reliability**

Reliability is the consistency in methods, strategies in data collection and interpretation of data (Smith, 2015). This was accomplished in this study by conducting detailed interviews with recording devices and transcribing the digital files.

### **3.6.3 Credibility**

Credibility addresses the issue of truthfulness of the data and participants in relation to the research study (Smith, 2015). In this study, member-checking was used to ensure that credibility is achieved. Member-checking involved confirming participants' views and comparing the understanding of the questions asked.

### **3.6.4 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent that the results collected are transferred to other individuals or settings (Cope, 2014). In this study, all the processes of data collection were carefully followed, and this renders the results transferable to other individuals or settings. Similar results can be predicted in the case of transferability.

### **3.6.5 Validity**

Validity speaks to the research accuracy in the methods or measures of data collection in value, relevance, and usefulness in determining the quality and truthfulness of the research (Leung, 2015). In this research there was no personal bias, hence validity was achieved.

## **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This section seeks to present the key ethics of the research.

### **3.7.1 Process of getting access to participants**

Chimento et al. (2020b) state that research should be conducted ethically and in accordance with the rules and regulations of the academic institution which one is affiliated to. The University of Pretoria (UP) received an ethics application. After receiving permission from the University's Ethics Committee, I needed to obtain additional permission from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to gain access

to the schools. I thereafter approached the two principals at the schools where I conducted the interviews to ask for permission to conduct interviews with the identified teachers. I personally delivered the letters for permission to access the schools as obtained from the DBE. I delivered the letters directly to the two school principals to ask for permission to interview the teachers. I asked the principal to help me identify the participating teachers and then called them to ask for their participation consent before setting the time and date for the interviews. Data collection took place after the ethical clearance was granted. According to Chiumento, Rahman and Frith (2020), research ethics provide researchers with a set of moral guidelines for conducting research in a morally acceptable manner. Ethical considerations should be taken into account when conducting social research.

I adhered to the University of Pretoria's ethical standards and guidelines. The main ethical issues that usually arise in research are informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation (Mason, Crossley & Bond, 2019). Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all participants so as to get their full perspective of phenomenon under investigation, (Viswanath, 2018). A consent form was signed by all participants. An introductory letter and a detailed information sheet were made available to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), the district, and to the schools that participated in the study. Informed consent was sought from the participant teachers and they were assured that no harm would come to them during the research (Kelley & Weaver, 2020).

There was also no invasion of their privacy, their personal details and responses to the questions asked were kept confidential (Artal & Rubinfeld, 2017). The researcher was truthful in representing participants' responses. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could opt out at any time. They were given consent forms to sign as proof of their willingness to participate in the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured as a way of protecting their privacy (Mallia, 2018). Pseudonyms were used for the purpose of the study.



### **3.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter describes the research methodology used in the study. The following topics were covered in depth: research paradigm, research design, research strategies, and target population. Many topics were covered in this chapter, including the target population, sampling methods, and sample size. The sample size was formed by a total of eight participants. There were six teachers and two HODs from each school on the team.

The identified schools in Johannesburg Central District served as the study's target population, and two schools were chosen from among them. Purposive sampling was used, and data were gathered through telephonic semi-structured interviews. In this qualitative study, thematic data analysis was used. All research ethics were considered in the study. The next chapter deals with the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents analyses and interprets the generated data, being guided by the study's research methodology chapter and the research questions. The previous chapter described the data collection procedure and methods. This chapter provides a thorough examination of the data collected. The data collected in this empirical section of the study were properly analysed from a qualitative standpoint using thematic data analysis, as outlined in Chapter 3. This chapter includes analysis of the participant-teachers' perspectives on the various research questions. I explained the various emerging themes using the participants' views. The reactions of the participants were extracted and presented in a non-chronological order. The researcher's discretion was exercised in selecting the appropriate extracts to quote in this chapter. In this study, all demographic variables were analysed in the appropriate manner. Themes were extracted and a thorough debate is presented as well to provide a detailed description.

#### 4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

A total of eight participants took part in this study. In each school, four participants that is three teachers and one Head of Department were selected as outlined under Chapter 3. The inclusion criterion was that the participants were actively involved in the teaching of learners with learning difficulties.

##### 4.2.1 Biographical data: Teachers school A

Three female teachers participated in the data collection process. One female was an HOD. School A has 34 teachers. On average each class has 44 learners.

**TABLE 4.1: ASSIGNED CODES**

SCHOOL A	ASSIGNED CODE (assigned code stand for each teacher interviewed)
TEACHER	T1SA
TEACHER	T2SA
TEACHER	T3SA

(Source: Researcher's Construct)

#### 4.2.2 Biographical data: Teachers school A

A total of three female teachers participated in the data collection process. One female was an HOD.

#### 4.2.3 Biographical data: HOD school A

One HOD took part in the data collection exercise.

**TABLE 4.2: ASSIGNED CODES**

School	ASSIGNED CODE
Head Of Department	HOD1SA

Source: Researcher's Construct

#### 4.2.4 Biographical data: HOD school B

One (1) HOD formed part of the data collection process. School B has a total of 34 teachers. Each class has an average of 40 learners.

**TABLE 4.3: CODES FOR TEACHERS: SCHOOL B**

The table below shows the assigned codes for teachers at School B.

SCHOOL B	ASSIGNED CODE
TEACHERS	T4SB
TEACHERS	T5SB
TEACHERS	T6SB

(Source: Researcher's Construct)

#### 4.2.5 Head of departments

One HOD took part in the data collection exercise.

**TABLE 4.4 ASSIGNED CODES: HOD**

School A	ASSIGNED CODE
Head Of Department	HOD2SB

**Source: Researcher's Construct**

The demographical data for all the participants are presented below:

The participants for the data collection were carefully chosen using the sampling technique described in Chapter 3. The interview process included eight (8) participants. Participants in the study included six teachers and two administrators (heads of departments), with three teachers and one HOD chosen from each primary school.

### 4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed following the sequence of the questions as per interview guide.

#### 4.3.1 Interviews with teachers

Question 4: How many years of teaching experience do you have?

#### 4.3.2 Educators' experience

Experience plays a key role in as far as the execution of job responsibilities is concerned in the educational sector. Below is an extract of the responses of the participants.

Teacher's responses according to the questions asked

**T1SA** said:

*"I have 17 years' experience and learners face unique challenges such as slow learning, difficulty with remembering and understanding and even reading."*

**T2SA** said:

*"I have 2 years' experience; inclusive education needs attention in reality."*

**T3SA** said:

*"Fifteen (15) years' experience in the educational sector, inclusive education are diverse and thus must be addressed."*

**TR4SB** said:

*"I have 29 years' experience as an educator and all these learners have different coping mechanisms in as far as learning is concerned."*

**TR5SB** said:

*"Eleven (11) years' experience in the teaching field."*

**TR6SB** said:

*"Five (5) years' experience and if one must be qualified to deliver the best educational service"*

**HOD1SA** said:

*"I have 23 years' experience."*

**HOD2SB** said:

*"Thirty (30) years' experience and I have observed that solutions are needed to help learners with learning challenges."*

### **Response Implications**

The above responses show that the teaching experience of all the six (6) participating teachers ranged from two to thirty years in mainstream schools. This implies that the sample chosen was very useful for this research. This is useful, since the experience of these teachers in dealing with learners with learning difficulties was captured to answer the identified research problem. Their years of experience also gave them the experience to work with diverse groups of learners and they knew much about the needs of learners with learning difficulties.

From the literature review it was established that teachers who lack training on how to deal with learning difficulties may not offer the best educational service (Singh,

2016). Apart from that, it was also established that experienced teachers have better ways of understanding the needs of learners with learning difficulties (S`lungile, 2016). In terms of teaching experience, the research findings from the literature review and the primary study were consistent.

Teaching qualifications could reveal much about their field of specialisation and the next question was asked:

Question: What teaching qualifications do you hold?

### **4.3.3 Type of qualifications**

All the educators must have relevant educational qualifications to offer excellent educational services to learners. Below is an extract of the views of the participants.

**T1SA** said:

*“I have a diploma in Higher Education and sometimes emotions come into play due to situations we come across.”*

### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** said:

*“I have an Honours Degree in Educational Policy, Master’s Degree in Curriculum Policy Evaluation. However, although I am qualified it can be overwhelming at work.”*

### **School HOD A**

**HOD1SA** said:

*“I have a diploma in education, honours in management, Primary Teacher’s Diploma, but anxieties and a negative attitude affect us due to lack of a supporting environment.”*

**HOD2SB** said:

*“I hold a BEd Honours in management, diploma in education, junior primary teacher’s diploma. Qualifications are important but some teachers do not give full attention to these learners due to their challenges.”*

The above responses show that all the educators have an academic qualification that matches the demands of the educational sector. In the educational sector, one should have a qualification that matches the job. In this context all the participants have qualifications that are related to the services they offer. This implies that, all the participants who were sampled were rightful participants who provided rich and appropriate data for closing the identified research gap.

Literature review findings showed that poor handling of these learners can be caused by the lack of a supportive learning environment (Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela, & Okkolin, 2017). Furthermore, it was discovered that some learners are placed in special schools due to learning difficulties, and some teachers develop a negative attitude towards them (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2016). The above responses are similar to the views expressed in the literature review. A need for a supporting learning environment is key and this shows the similarity in findings of the literature review and this primary research. Apart from that, under the literature review it was ascertained those emotions and the diverse attitudes of learners affect teaching of these learners. In this current study the same aspect was revealed. In summary, it can be asserted that there is coherence of ideas between the literature review findings and the primary research findings.

## 4.4 THEMES AND CATEGORIES

### 4.4.1 Theme Extraction Based on Interviews

**TABLE 4.5: THEME EXTRACTION**

Theme	Extracted Codes	Category
Theme 1: Challenges faced by learners during learning	Learner challenges faced in mainstream schools	Learning challenges.
Theme 2: Challenges faced by teachers during teaching	Teacher challenges faced in mainstream schools	Teaching Challenges
Theme 3: Participants' views on IE	Definitions provided by Teachers	Perceptions such as humiliation and rejection
Theme 4: Support System Assistance	Inadequate support from the District Based Support Team and the School Based Support Team	Educational Support
Theme 4: Teaching strategies used to support learners	Techniques used to help learners with learning difficulties	Learner Support
Theme 5: Differentiation of teaching strategies	Teaching methods used to meet the needs of different learners	Learner Support
Theme 6: Effectiveness of intervention strategies	Effectiveness of intervention strategies used by teachers in mainstream schools	Intervention strategies

**(Source: Researcher's Construct)**



## 4.5 DATA INTERPRETATION

Data analysis follows next.

### 4.5.1 Data analysis and interpretation with teachers

The purpose of this section is to present the data analysis. The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 of this study will be the primary focus when discussing the themes that emerged from the data.

**Research Objective 1:** Determine the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties. The extracted responses are presented in the table below.

#### 4.5.1.1 Challenges faced by mainstream school teachers regarding learners

**Question:** What type of learning challenges do **learners in your class face** during learning and teaching?

This section will be split into two parts. The first segment will focus on the difficulties that learners face and how they affect teachers. The second section will be based on the challenges faced by teachers.

**Theme1: Challenges faced by mainstream school learners as reported by teachers**

#### School A Participants

**T1SA** said:

*“Classes are overcrowded, and there is a lack of parental involvement; discipline levels differ. This leads to learners battling to receive the attention they deserve. Those learners who battle to read are sometimes ridiculed by others and they feel humiliated.”*

**T2SA** opined:

*“A lack of parental involvement, lack of resources, poor background of learners, and a higher teacher to learner ratio all cause hindrances. Some learners come from poor homes and need more assistance.”*

**T3SA** posited:

*“Difficulty in comprehending the taught subject can cause challenges to effective teaching.”*

### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** said:

*“Social, behavioural and intellectual problems affect these learners.”*

**TR5SB** said:

*“Poor reading skills, lack of parental involvement all contribute to the list of problems experienced.”*

**TR6SB** said:

*“Poor concentration and lack of vision.”*

### **Response Implication**

The above-mentioned responses show that participants in School A cited that the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers are: lack of parental involvement, lack of resources, poor background of learners, and teacher to learner ratio.

For School B it was discovered that, the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers are: social, behavioural and intellectual problems, poor reading skills as well as the inability to concentrate by learners during lesson delivery by the teacher. It can therefore be concluded that both the two schools in Johannesburg South suffer from diverse challenges and are ridiculed by peers. One common challenge that affects teachers from both schools is the lack of parental involvement. All in all, both of the two mainstream schools’ teachers in Johannesburg face different challenges in as far as educational service delivery is concerned. The first research objective was successfully met.

#### **4.5.1.2 Theme 2: Challenges faced by mainstream school teachers when performing their duties as teachers**

**Question:** What challenges are you facing when teaching learners with learning difficulties?

This section seeks to present data analysis based on the challenges faced by teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties.

##### **School A Participants**

**T1SA** said:

*“There is no time to teach the learners one on one.”*

**T2SA** said:

*“Challenges include poor support from the District Based Support Teams, difficulty in assessing learners’ learning challenging, and limited time to do individual assessments.”*

**T3SA** was of the view that:

*“Difficulty in comprehending the taught subject remains a challenge. In addition, learners have unique needs, and they need individual attention and explanation.”*

##### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** said:

*“Poor parental support, and absenteeism.”*

**TR5SB** said:

*“Poor reading skills, are a definite challenge. Some learners require individual attention and we need to be able to spend time to bond with the learners to win their trust and to understand their challenges. Learners’ self-confidence is affected if they cannot read fast.”*

**TR6SB** said:

*“Poor concentration, lack of resources, poor comprehension skills, and lack of skills to handle learners with learning difficulties cause challenges. Teachers are*

*informed about the academic work since they are qualified but special assistance is needed to equip them to be able to handle disabilities and learners' learning difficulties diplomatically and sensitively."*

The participant responses revealed that challenges faced in School A by mainstream teachers were: poor support from the District Based Support Teams, lack of time to offer personalised teaching and the inability of learners to master taught concepts. It was revealed that special training was needed to be able to help learners with diverse learning needs.

For School B the challenges faced were: poor parental support, absenteeism, poor concentration, lack of resources, poor comprehension skills and lack of skills to handle learners with learning difficulties. Although differences in challenges faced by School A and School B were identified, it remains obvious that teachers in the mainstream schools are exposed to many challenges and these challenges must be solved. The first research objective aimed to examine the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties. The above explanation suffices to answer the question on the demands of the first research objective.

Literature review findings showed that teachers face challenges such as lack of support from Districts Based Support Teams (DBST) as well as lack of appropriate resources as confirmed by Chingwanangwana (2015). Apart from that, it surfaced that the teachers' lacked the necessary skills and expertise to deal with learners with learning difficulties (Magyar, 2020:10). In the same vein, it was also discovered that adult guidance of learners in South Africa is lacking and learners often come from extremely poor families. Teachers also lack expertise on dealing with learners with learning difficulties and do not know how to assist them to overcome the individual challenges to master the academic work (Thuketana, 2018).

The above explanation revealed some of the challenges the teachers at two schools in Johannesburg faced. There are some similarities on the nature of the challenges the teachers faced and those views were also explained in Chapter 2 of this study.

#### 4.5.1.3 Theme 3: educator's views on inclusive education

**Question:** What is your understanding of Inclusive Education (IE)?

This section aimed to present the analysis based on the empirical study's second research objective. The second research goal is re-stated below:

**Research Objective 2:** Determine how mainstream school teachers view Inclusive Education (IE). The responses are presented in the table below.

##### **School A Participants**

**T1SA** said:

*"It is when you include slow learners and allow them to grasp the concepts."*

**T2SA** said:

*"Each learner should be given access to schooling and there should be no discrimination regardless of being disabled."*

**T3SA** posited:

*"I think it refers to the teaching of children with mixed abilities in the same classroom."*

##### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** opined:

*"Education that caters for all the types of learners, normal ones and those with special needs such as ADHD."*

**TR5SB** was of the view that:

*"Enrolling learners with learning challenges in mainstream schools form part of Inclusive Education (IE)."*

**TR6SB** was of the view that:

*"I think Inclusive education (IE) refers to the incorporation of all learners in mainstream schools."*

## Response Implication

The above responses from School A's participants show that teachers believe that IE is based on ensuring that all learners get equal educational opportunities regardless of any factor such as learning challenges.

Participants from School B cited that IE means the incorporation of learners with learning difficulties into mainstream schools. All the participants from both schools share similar sentiments on their understanding of IE. The second research objective of this qualitative research aimed to determine how mainstream school teachers view IE. The above explanation suffices the demand of this research objective. This research objective has been successfully met. The literature and many countries around the world define IE in different ways. The view of IE in the United States of America and Canada has been described as the mandatory placement of learners with disabilities in general education classrooms and society (Burns & Dudley-Marling, 2014). However, in this study Inclusive Education is about accommodating learners in their diversity and is not limited to any particular group of barriers or learning difficulties.

Haug cited in Booth, Nes and Stromstad (2003) states that in Norway, all students are enrolled in compulsory schools and teachers must be trained to accommodate, consider and appreciate the various styles of students, regardless of their differences. In line with Australia, PISA defined IE as a process of including slow learners to allow them to grasp the concepts. P2SB understood IE to be the teaching of children with mixed abilities in the same classroom. The differences in participant understanding of IE confirm the literature variables and influence how South African mainstream schools view IE. While this study acknowledges the differences in definitions of the concept, it also proposes that countries develop a shared understanding to improve the implementation process and support learners with learning difficulties.

#### 4.5.1.4 Theme 4: support system assistance

**Question:** Do you get any assistance from the School Based Support Teams?

This section seeks to present the nature of support that the teachers require in the teaching of learners with learning difficulties. The views of the participants will be quoted and analysed in line with research objective 3.

**Research Objective 3:** Establish what support teachers in IE need to effectively support learners with learning difficulties. The responses are presented below.

##### **School A Participants**

**T1SA said:**

*“There is a need for parental involvement.”*

**T2SA posited:**

*“The DBST must offer more support to the teachers, they often take long to solve problems. The School Based Support Teams are trying to offer help to us.”*

**T3SA said:**

*“More resources are needed to ensure that teachers offer the best educational service, The DBST takes 2 years to solve a case and The School Based Support Teams are not that effective, since the teachers who run them have their own classes.”*

##### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB said:**

*“More training is needed on the educators to handle learners with learning challenges. I don’t know the role of The School Based Support Teams, but it is there. We rarely do workshops with DBST.”*

**TR5SB believed:**

*“The curriculum must be redesigned to meet the needs for all learners. We have a support teacher in each grade.”*

**TR6SB** posited that:

*“I never got any support from DBST and I have never met any SBST. All needs of the students must be met at school through an enabling environment.”*

### **Response Implication**

The School A participants stated that the DBST and the SBST are ineffective in supporting teachers in mainstream schools. Participants in School B stated that the support provided by the DBST and the SBST are far from adequate in meeting the needs of teachers. Overall, it can be concluded that the DBST and SBST in both schools are ineffective in as far as helping teachers in mainstream schools in the teaching of learners with learning difficulties. In short, poor support from DBST and SBST is a challenge that affects teachers in both schools.

In terms of the support needed by the teacher, teachers in School A reported that they require more parental involvement; The DBST and SBST must resolve challenges in an amicable manner. Apart from that, more teaching resources must be provided to ensure that teachers carry out their duties effectively.

Literature review findings showed that, teachers lack support from the DBST as well as lack of appropriate resources (Chingwanangwana, 2015:128). Chingwanangwana (2015) further found in their study that teachers received support from their fellow colleagues at work. This shows that the primary research findings are on par with the findings from this current study. Thus, support systems must be put in place to ensure quality educational delivery for learners with learning difficulties.

In school B, the teachers require more training to be effective in teaching learners with learning difficulties. Apart from that, all the teachers must get access and information on the role of the DBST and SBST. In summary, there is a need for a conducive learning environment to ensure that IE is applicable to learners with learning difficulties. It can therefore be deduced that all the needs of the teachers in all the schools should be met through tailor made solutions. This assertion was supported in Chapter 2 by Chingwanangwana (2015) who argues that support systems should help teachers to offer the best educational services to all learners in an inclusive way. The third research objective was successfully met.



#### **4.5.1.5 Theme 5: teaching strategies used to support learners**

**Question:** Which teaching strategies do you employ to address learner challenges?

In this section, the focus will be based on the analysis of the views of the participants in line with the teaching strategies used to support learners.

**Research Objective 4:** Determine the current strategies that mainstream school teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties.

#### **School A Participants**

**T1SA** said:

*“Peer-learning and parental involvement can be a great help to teachers.”*

**T2SA** was of the view that:

*“The use of audios and visual aids can be conducive to effective learning.”*

**T3SA** said:

*“Learner-based methods that suit their needs can help to improve learning and even results.”*

#### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** said:

*“Grouping of learners, and diverse assessment techniques can help learners to perform at their best.”*

**TR5SB** averred:

*“I use the phonic approach as well as carpet teaching.”*

**TR6SB** said:

*“I use an individualised Education Plan.”*

## Response Implication

The above responses revealed that teachers in School A used teaching strategies such as peer learning and parental involvement. They believed that audios and visual aids as well as learner-based methods that suit learners' needs could help to solve the problems experienced when teaching learners with unique learning difficulties. This implies that the teachers vary strategies to enable the learners with learning difficulties to be accommodated. In short, the strategies used by teachers resemble the application of IE since they paid individual attention to assist with unique challenges.

In school B, it was discovered that grouping of learners, diverse assessment techniques as well as individualised Education plans were the techniques used. These strategies were used to ensure that learners with learning difficulties could benefit from educational service delivery. According to the literature review, teachers use peer support to cope with the demands of the IE classroom (Chingwanangwana, 2015). Apart from that, Freeman, Adams, and Cummins (2017) propose that workshops on effective coping strategies for teachers, as well as community-wide public awareness campaigns about intellectual learning difficulties, would be beneficial in addressing teacher chauvinism. Although the techniques used by teachers in these two schools differed slightly, it can be concluded that all teachers in their respective mainstream schools practised IE. The fourth research goal of this study was to determine how effective the current strategies were used by mainstream school teachers to support students with learning disabilities. These current strategies have been presented above and the research objective was successfully met.

### 4.5.1.6 Theme 6: differentiation of intervention strategies

**Question:** Do you differentiate these strategies depending on the learning difficulty?

Teaching strategies can be unique depending on the needs of the learners.

#### School A Participants

**T1SA** said:

*“Yes, I assess learning and emotional learning problems “*

**T2SA** opined:

*“I do according to the learning difficulties. Those who are slow readers receive individual attention. I also explain in detail to those who struggle to understand.”*

**T3SA** exclaimed:

*“I do, to ensure that all learners are accommodated. I apply scaffolding.”*

### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** said:

*“Yes, I differentiate and assist them individually.”*

**TR5SB** averred:

*“Yes I differentiate according to the needs of learners”*

**TR6SB** said:

*“I do.”*

### **Response Implication**

Literature review findings established that, Lee (2015) in Hong Kong early childhood education teachers who had been trained in special education strongly advocated for the inclusion of visual, hearing, speech and language impairment. This means that the teachers advocated for the use of intervention strategies. All the six participants from the two schools both agreed that they differentiate the teaching strategies they use. This shows that learners with learning difficulties are being accommodated in mainstream schools using diverse learning strategies. This shows that inclusive education is being applied. These teaching techniques can be effective or not. Overall, this study provides a deeper perspective in intervention strategies relative to the views established under literature review. The next discussion is going to be based on the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

#### 4.5.1.7 Theme 7: effectiveness of intervention strategies

**Question:** Do you think of the intervention strategies effective?

The teaching techniques used by educators must be effective. This will ensure that all the learners benefit fully for educational service delivery.

##### **School A Participants**

**T1SA** said:

*“My approach is partially effective, in some instances when working with the learners.”*

**T2SA** reported:

*“Yes, they are effective though these strategies need to be managed efficiently “*

**T3SA** said:

*“Yes, they are because learners are supported according to their needs.”*

##### **School B Participants**

**TR4SB** said:

*“Yes, because some learners are passing due to these strategies.”*

**TR5SB** opined:

*“Yes they are effective.”*

**TR6SB** said:

*“No, learners are too many and the curriculum is too demanding and covers too much work.”*

##### **Response Implication**

The participants from School A depicted above demonstrate that the teaching strategies used were effective to a greater extent. However, these strategies must be implemented in an appropriate manner to ensure that all learners with learning disabilities benefit fully. According to the literature review, effective teaching

strategies can be beneficial in promoting inclusive education (Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela, & Okkolin, 2010; 2017).

These sentiments have been established as well in this research. For school B it was realised that two participants out of three agreed to the notion that the teaching strategies are effective. This is supported by the fact that the participants cited that some of the learners with learning challenges are performing very well due to these teaching strategies. Moreover, it can be summed up that, in both the two schools in Johannesburg teaching strategies were reported to be effective although more should be done to improve the effectiveness. The next discussion is going to be based on the analysis of the views of the two heads of department from the two schools in Johannesburg.

## 4.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: INTERVIEWS WITH HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS (HODS)

Two school Heads of Department (HOD) were interviewed. The data were analysed to yield the following themes. These themes were derived from the questions posed to two HODs.

**TABLE: 4.6: THEME EXTRACTION**

THEMES	EXTRACTED CODES	CATEGORY
Inclusive Education (IE) in mainstream schools	HOD perception of inclusive education in mainstream schools	Inclusive Education (IE)
Learning difficulties and support given	Support offered to learners with learning difficulties	Learning environment
Staff development programmes	Intervals at which Staff development programs are carried out	Learning environment
Parental involvement	Parental involvement	Educational support mechanisms
Strategies used by teachers	Awareness of strategies used by teachers in teaching learners	Learning environment
Assistance offered to teachers by HOD	HOD assistance is provided to teachers who work with students who have learning disabilities.	Learning environment
Support offered by District Based Support Team	Nature of support District Based Support Team	Learning environment

(Source: Researcher's Construct)

### 4.6.1 Theme1: Inclusive Education in mainstream schools

**Question:** How do you view inclusive education?

When it comes to meeting the needs of students who have learning challenges, IE is critical. The following is an excerpt from the responses:

**HOD1SA** said:

*“It is tough to implement and learners with learning challenges are not fully catered for.”*

**HOD 2SB** posited:

*“It is very important considering the number of children who need support.”*

### **Response Implication**

All two HODs cited the importance of IE in addressing the needs of the learners with learning difficulties. From the literature review it was established that, IE is meant to address the challenges of learners with learning difficulties and promote equity and equality (Burns & Dudley-Marling, 2014). However, from this primary research it was also noted that IE is not easy to implement in the educational sector. This implies that more needs to be done to ensure that IE is implemented properly so that teachers can effectively address the challenges of learners with learning difficulties.

#### **4.6.2 Theme 2: Learning difficulties and support given**

**Question:** Are there any learners with learning difficulties in your subject area? Explain the type and how learners are supported.

The two schools in Johannesburg both have learners with learning difficulties. Below is an extract of the views of the participants:

**HOD1SA** said:

*“Teachers give them individual attention and we refer the learners to support teachers.”*

**HOD 2SB** opined:

*“Extra lessons and other forms of academic support such as explanatory notes and summaries. We engage with them one-on-one.”*

### **Response Implication**

Both HOD's cited that they render support to learners with learning challenges. This support is in the form of academic support and individual attention from their

respective teachers. This implies that there is a form of assistance available from HODs to also help teachers on the challenges they face with learners who have learning difficulties. However, from the literature review it surfaced that DBST and SBST must work collaboratively to support teachers, (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018). Primary research findings have shown that HODs were the ones offering support to teachers.

#### **4.6.3 Theme 3: Staff development programmes**

**Question:** Do you sometimes have staff development programmes at your school?

Staff development programmes help the educators to develop panaceas to address the challenges they face in mainstream schools in dealing with learners with learning difficulties.

**HOD1SA** opined:

*“Yes we have Staff development programmes and as HODs we often have sessions to develop the staff after we have attended workshops, but more needs to be done to solve challenges educators face.”*

**HOD2SB** was of the view:

*“Yes, we do, and we often get help from experts who visit our school but this is not sufficient to solve teacher challenges.”*

#### **Response Implication**

The above responses show that both schools offer staff development programmes. However, from these responses it was observed that staff development programmes alone are not sufficient to solve the teachers' challenges they face.

#### **4.6.4 Parental involvement**

**Question:** Do you consult or involve parents in supporting learners with learning difficulties?

**HOD1SA** said:

*“Yes, we consult parents and discuss best ways of supporting the children and this helps teachers, but the degree of parental involvement is low.”*



**HOD2SB** was of the view that:

*“Yes, we have meetings with parents to discuss crucial challenges affecting learners, but some parents are not supportive.”*

### **Response Implication**

The above responses show that both schools involve parents on issues to do with learner challenges. However, it is clear that the degree of parental involvement is low. This research finding is influenced in part by the teachers' perspectives. Both teachers and the HOD agree that the lack of parental involvement is a significant challenge for teachers. According to the findings of a literature review, key obstacles such as burnout, stigma, and a lack of parental involvement and government support impede the proper implementation of IE (Adams, 2017). One key factor that emerged from both primary research and the literature review is lack of parental involvement.

#### **4.6.5 Strategies used by teachers**

**Question:** Are you aware of the strategies employed by teachers you supervise in supporting learners with learning difficulties? If you do, mention a few.

The teachers use different strategies to help learners with learning challenges.

**HOD1SA** said:

*“Yes, individual, use of support class, and the involvement of the school psychologist.”*

**HOD2SB** said:

*“Parental involvement and extra lessons.”*

### **Response Implication**

The responses above demonstrate that the two HODs are aware of the teaching strategies employed by teachers. This demonstrates that teachers at these two schools are attempting to implement solutions to the problems they face when dealing with students who have learning difficulties.

#### 4.6.6 Assistance offered to teachers by HOD

**Question:** How do you assist teachers who have challenges in teaching learners with learning difficulties?

The HODs in the two schools reported that they offered different types of support to the teachers.

**HOD1SA** said:

*“We encourage the teachers to complete the forms of testing learners and be tested by the school psychologist. However, there is need for more solutions to solve teacher challenges.”*

**HOD2SB** opined:

*“We give them ideas on how to help these learners, but our support is not sufficient to solve all their challenges.”*

#### Response Implication

Both HODs from the two schools offer support to their respective teachers who educate the learners with learning difficulties. However, it was discovered that, the support offered by HODs is insufficient to solve the challenges faced by teachers. This implies that SBSTs are useful and this correlates with the views of Chingwanangwana (2015) who underscores the importance of these structures in the implementation of IE.

#### 4.6.7 Support offered by District Based Support Team (SBST)

**Question:** Do you get any support from the DBSTs in managing learners with learning difficulties? If yes, clarify.

The DBST has a key role of ensuring that the teachers are fully supported in the execution of their educational job responsibilities. Below is an extract of the views of the participants on this theme.

**HOD1SA** was of the view that:

*“Yes they help us with placement of learners but they should increase the type of support they offer”*

**HOD2SB** said:

*“Yes, they help in solving some cases, but they take long to respond.”*

### **Response Implication**

Apart from that, teachers in the two mainstream schools reported that use a variety of teaching methods. Peer learning and parental involvement, as well as the use of audio and visual aids and learner-centred methods, are examples of these. Furthermore, some current teaching strategies include grouping of students, various assessment techniques, and individualised Education Plans.

### **4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter sought to present the data analysis and presentation. Eight participants took part in the data collection. Data were analysed thematically. Different codes were created for the teachers and the HODs. There are numerous challenges faced by mainstream school teachers. These incorporate, lack of parental involvement, lack of resources, poor background of learners, higher teacher to learner ratio, social, behavioural and intellectual problems. Apart from that, lack of resources, poor support from the DBST and SBST and absenteeism. About the view of IE of the teachers, it was established that, all the teachers agreed to the notion that, IE is based on ensuring that all learners receive equal educational opportunities regardless of any factor such as learning challenges. Apart from that, teachers in the two mainstream schools employ a variety of teaching strategies. These include peer learning and parental involvement, the use of audio and visual aids, and learner-centred methods. Furthermore, some of the current teaching strategies used include grouping of learners, various assessment techniques, and individualised Education Plans.

Concerning the differentiation of intervention strategies, it was established that all six participants from the two schools both agreed that they differentiate the teaching strategies they use. However, for both the two schools in Johannesburg their teaching strategies are effective although more must be done to improve the effectiveness. The effectiveness of intervention strategies was examined in this

study. Overall, it can be summed up that, for both schools in Johannesburg their teaching strategies are effective although more must be done to improve the effectiveness. Both schools HODs provide some support to the teachers, but it is insufficient to address the educator challenges. In this study, all of the research objectives were met, and the research gap was successfully closed. The following chapter will be based on the policy recommendations and study summary.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the final conclusion and it contains the research summary, answers to research questions, and recommendations. It is important to note, however, that the recommendations were based on research findings and participants' views. This chapter also includes a summary of the findings from the literature and empirical data. Furthermore, research conclusions would be drawn based on the research questions posed in the study. Apart from that, key policy recommendations, research limitations, and future study suggestions will be discussed. Finally, at the end, an overall conclusion would be presented.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

##### 5.2.1 Summary of literature findings

This study was premised on two theories: Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory. The Social Learning Theory's main conclusion was that learning is influenced by the environment. This theory was used to support research questions about the existence of a conducive teaching environment for teachers in mainstream schools who teach learners with learning disabilities.

Thus, the theory helps in identifying teaching challenges associated with creation of conducive learning environment for learners with difficulties. In some context, the theory supports IE (See section 2.6).

Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory is based on the notion that an individual constructs knowledge from what happens in the surrounding environment (Schauer, 2018). The environment includes legal, social support, economy, technology, and political factors. These factors shape the knowledge of an individual. The development of schools follows different legal development shapes. For instance, the theory makes a special reference to the ZPD which affects learning outcomes for learners with learning difficulties. Findings indicate that teachers are not trained to identify the

learners' ZPD. Therefore, they can use teaching strategies such as scaffolding and co-operative learning. Vygotsky (1978) also found that it is important for teachers to note that learners differ in their ZPD as some learners can do best without assistance or guidance while other learners need some assistance to master skills. Teachers must therefore be able to identify the readiness of each learner so as to benefit from the instruction presented. This will guide learners into the upper cognitive level (Donald 2014). In addition, the legal factor can provide constitutional requirements for IE. Yada et al. (2018) advocate for IE in which schools meet learners' needs in a changing environment.

Recognition of IE in the legislation realm helps in developing social and educational policies which augment the social, justice and human rights (McKenzie, 2020a). Donohue and Bornman (2014) note that IE is advocated not merely as alternative for education but as the most viable strategy for achieving a democratic society. Thus, having IE in South Africa entails development leading to a better society.

Lastly, from the literature there was a discussion on how the challenges that are faced in mainstream schools can be turned into opportunities to ensure that IE becomes a reality. The challenges identified included limited support from stakeholders such as parents, District, HODs, lack of adequate teachers' skills and lack of appropriate materials, among others. To address the challenges, it was realised that workshops on effective coping strategies for teachers as well as public awareness campaigns in communities can be useful. Furthermore, the support from other schools and the environment was identified to be beneficial to teachers teaching learners with difficulties in mainstream schools.

### **5.2.2 Summary of empirical findings**

This section presents the empirical findings derived from the research methodology segment presented in Chapter 3 of this qualitative research. Apart from that, reference is made to the data analysis and interpretation carried out under chapter 4.

The research findings revealed the challenges faced by teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were used for data collection. The headings used below are derived from the themes used under chapter 4 of this research (Refer to section 4.6). From an

empirical point of view, it was also observed that, interventions to address teacher challenges should be tailor-made according to the specific obstacles they are facing. This requires a holistic approach and key stakeholders such as government, Department of Education, teachers, and civic organisations should play a part.

### **5.2.2.1 Challenges faced by mainstream school teachers**

The data analysis section (Refer to section 4.5.1.2) showed that teachers from School A and B are exposed to different challenges. The challenges faced by these teachers affect service delivery to the learners with learning difficulties. These challenges were: inadequate support from the DBST, HODs, lack of time to offer personalised teaching and the inability of learners to master taught concepts, because of weak foundational base, poor parental support, absenteeism, poor concentration by learners, lack of resources, and lack of skills to handle learners with learning difficulties by mainstream teachers.

These findings tally with the literature discussed under Chapter 2 of this study. (Refer to Section 2.2.1-2.2.3). This implies that all teacher challenges need attention to ensure that learners with learning difficulties benefit from educational service delivery in mainstream schools.

### **5.2.2.2 View of Inclusive Education (IE)**

Findings on the views of educators revealed that teachers believed that IE was based on ensuring that all learners get equal educational opportunities. That is both learners with difficulties and those without. Despite the learning challenges on the ground, educational access should be equal. Furthermore, the research established that IE meant the incorporation of learners with learning difficulties into mainstream schools (See section 4.9). The findings concur with literature that IE was a legal right enshrined in the legal provisions of the country (McKenzie, 2020a; Yada et al., 2018). For instance, in South Africa inclusive schooling is a constitutional requirement as per Department of Education's policy (See 2.4.3). It can therefore be summed up that, participants agreed on the relevance of IE in South Africa, but there are challenges centred on its implementation and effectiveness (teacher challenges) with interventions needed.

### **5.2.2.3 Support offered in schools**

According to Section 4.10 of Chapter 4 it was established that, teachers require more parental involvement; the DBST and SBST must resolve challenges in a timeous manner. The DBST must ensure schools and teachers have access to appropriate additional support programmes and assess learners with difficulties so that they may be given proper support. The SBST will assess the additional support needed and develop a programme for the teacher, learner and parents. This tallies with the views of Chingwanangwana (2015) who cites the importance of these teams in the delivery of quality education to learners.

Apart from that, more teaching resources are required, more teacher training programmes must be rolled out, and that information asymmetry on the duties of the District Based Support Team and it is crucial that the SBST must be addressed. Section 2.2.3 of Chapter 2 outlined the importance of having a supportive learning environment. It surfaced that, the support needed by teachers will create a supportive and conducive learning environment in South Africa. This is at par with the views of Nel, Koskela, and Okkolin (2017) who emphasise the need for a supportive learning environment.

### **5.2.2.4 Teaching strategies used to support learners**

Empirical research findings showed that, teaching strategies such as peer learning and parental involvement, use of audios and visuals aids as well as learner- based methods that suit learners' needs are used (See section 4.11). Apart from that, it was discovered that, grouping of learners, diverse assessment techniques as well as individualised Education Plans were some of the techniques used by teachers to support learners with learning difficulties (See section 4.11).

On the other hand, Chapter 2 established that, teacher support to learners with learning difficulties is limited due to lack of knowledge and expertise (See Section 2.2.3). This implies that research findings agree with the literature, meaning that interventions are needed at Ministerial or Government level. Teachers in South Africa still face challenges in addressing the needs of learners with learning difficulties.



### **5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

The key research questions of the study were:

- How do mainstream school teachers view Inclusive Education (IE)?
- What support do teachers in IE need to effectively support learners with learning difficulties?
- What are the current strategies that mainstream school teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties?

#### **5.3.1 Sub-research questions**

##### **5.3.1.1 How do mainstream school teachers view Inclusive Education (IE)?**

The answer to this research question was obtained from Chapter 4. It was discovered that, the teachers believe that IE is based on ensuring that all learners get equal educational opportunities regardless of any factor such as learning challenges. In addition to that, it was also realised that IE meant the incorporation of learners with learning difficulties into mainstream schools. Thus, the first research question was successfully answered.

##### **5.3.1.2 What support do teachers in IE need to effectively support learners with learning difficulties?**

The answer to this research question was derived from Chapters 2 and 4. It was realised that teachers require more parental involvement; the DBST and SBST must effectively and timeously resolve challenges. An increased supply of teaching resources and teacher training programmes is also important. The research findings suffice to answer the demands of the second research question. The findings are in agreement with Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela and Okkolin, (2017) who mention, that lack of a supportive learning environment in mainstream schools is also seen as a contributing factor to poor handling of learners with difficulties.

### **5.3.1.3 What are the current strategies that mainstream school teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties?**

The data analysis section showed that, teaching strategies such as peer learning and parental involvement, use of audios and visuals aids as well as learner-based methods that suit learners' needs were used by teachers. In addition to that, it was discovered that, grouping of learners, diverse assessment techniques as well as individualised Education Plans were some of the techniques used by teachers to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. The findings also agree with those of Riziki (2019) who states that workshops on effective coping strategies as well as public awareness campaigns about intellectual learning difficulties are useful in addressing teacher challenges despite the interventions in place. Teachers are still struggling to offer quality education to the learners with difficulties. This can be attributed to the need to have a holistic approach to addressing the challenges. Since addressing one only will not deal with the entirety of challenges. This fully answers the third research question of this study.

### **5.3.2 Main research question**

What are the challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties?

This main research question was answered in Chapter 4 and partially under Chapter 2. It was discovered that, poor support from the DBST, inadequate aid to teachers by HODs, lack of time to offer personalised teaching and the inability of learners to master taught concepts due to weak foundational support, poor parental support, absenteeism, poor concentration by learners with learning difficulties, lack of resources, and lack of skills to handle learners with learning difficulties were the main challenges. All the research questions were answered, and the research gap was closed.

## 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are therefore suggested. These are tailor made to address teacher challenges from a national, provincial, district and even grassroots levels. These recommendations were deduced basing on the themes that were used under the data analysis chapter.

### 5.4.1 Recommendation 1: Increased support from District Based Support Teams (DBST) and the School Based Support Teams (SBST)

The DBST and SBST must be fully empowered by the DoE and by the School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Empowering the teams will result in the offering of best services to the teachers who teach learners with learning difficulties. The effectiveness of the DSBT and SBST will have a direct impact on teacher and learner performance. An improvement in school results and attainment of desired outcomes will be recorded for learners. When teachers receive ample support, they are obligated to provide exceptional educational services to learners with learning difficulties. The effectiveness of the DBST and SBST will have a direct impact on teacher and learner performance. An improvement in school results and attainment of desired outcomes will be recorded for students. When teachers receive complete support, they are obligated to provide exceptional educational services to learners with learning difficulties.

The teams must be given enough resources, constant training and upskilling to support the work being done by teachers. It is imperative to note that when these support teams are well trained in their supportive role that they must offer to the teachers it becomes easier for them to appreciate the teacher challenges in mainstream schools. The efficiency of the DBST and SBST will have a direct impact on the performance of the teachers and learners. As for the learners, an improvement in the school results and the attainment of desired outcomes will be recorded. When teachers receive full support they are bound to offer exceptional educational services to the learners with learning difficulties. Thus, it will result in the enhancement of the full realisation of IE in the South African educational sector.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendation 2: Parental Involvement**

School authorities such as Principals, Senior Teachers and Heads of Departments in liaison with School Governing Bodies (SGBs) must convince parents to be involved in key activities and programmes relating to learners with learning difficulties.

Ideally, it will be recommended to ensure that a committee is set up to address the welfare and learning aspects of learners with learning difficulties. To achieve this, there may be a need for educational sessions with parents of learners with learning difficulties. This may go a long way in fighting the stigma towards teachers associated with parents who have learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendation 3: Resources mobilisation**

The Ministry of Education should advocate for increased financial resources from the National Treasury. The goal is to benefit students who are having learning difficulties. These funds can be used to purchase much-needed educational resources. To harness these financial resources the DBE can source such funds from civic society as well as other non-governmental organisations. Availability of resources can enhance the teaching ability of teachers in mainstream schools teaching learners with learning difficulties.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendation 4: Teacher training programmes**

There are three levels of support in the South African Education System. The National DoE should provide a national policy and a broad management framework for supporting the training of teachers. The provincial DoE should coordinate implementation of national framework of support, in relation to provincial needs, and finally the district-based support teams should provide integrated support to education institutions to support the development of effective teaching and learning. This will enable the teachers to gain more expertise on ways of teaching learners with learning difficulties (DBST, 2005).

#### **5.4.5 Recommendation 6: Increased collaboration between Department of Basic Education and Schools**

There is a need for a strong and effective collaboration between the DBE and schools. The schools should be able to communicate the challenges teachers face to the Department. On the other hand, the DBST should be able to develop effective teaching and learning workshops in collaboration with the Principals, HODs, SBSTs and teachers to develop good teaching strategies that will benefit the teachers and learners with difficulties. The district should train and mentor the HODs and teachers at different schools. According to the findings, the HODs are in charge of staff development programmes that include training and classroom support for teachers so that they can address diverse needs and barriers to learning in the classrooms.

Apart from that, the DBE should be able to create and implement educational policies in consultation with HODs and teachers on issues centred on the subject matter.

#### **5.4.6 Recommendation 7: Improved Co-operation between inter-disciplinary services and Inter-departmental service**

The study recommends that there should be improved co-operation between inter-disciplinary services and inter-departmental services. Some of the relevant departments are Social Development, Health and Transport and Department of education. These organs must work together and ensure that professional experts are deployed to various schools to meet the needs of teachers who face teaching challenges.

#### **5.4.7 Recommendation 8: Community awareness programmes**

There is need for community awareness programmes to educate the community on the challenges teachers face. This can be fostered by the DBST, SGBs, principals, social workers, health workers, educational psychologist, universities and NGOs. This will help in removing stigma and discrimination that affect some teachers who end up disheartened and summarily leaving their jobs. Community support will therefore ensure that challenges faced by teachers are drastically reduced and difficulties are addressed in a holistic approach.

#### **5.4.8 Recommendation 9: Policies to fight stigma**

Failure to address the challenges faced by teachers can easily expose them to stigma in the community as was discussed under the literature review (Adams, 2017). This affects their teaching process and efficiency. Resultantly, parents and donors can follow suit affecting the teaching output for learners with learning difficulties.

There is therefore a need for the government and other human rights groups to develop robust policies that tackle any form of stigma against the teachers teaching learners with learning difficulties. This will help to ensure that the success of IE in South Africa materialises. Thus, such stigma and negative bias towards teachers should be addressed at grassroots level.

It should be policy therefore that the community should be made aware of ways of how to accommodate the teachers facing teaching challenges. This can be achieved through using influential role models or world-renowned figures can stand to clear the stigma in the society. Soccer stars, educational gurus for instance Panyaza Lesufi (Gauteng MEC for education), or other influential personalities can be used to fight the stigma. This will be a holistic approach that deals with stigma on a bigger scale.

### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This section seeks to present the recommendations for further research. The research was conducted using qualitative techniques. For future research, it would be advisable for other researchers to use a different research approach, such as the quantitative approach or even mixed methods. This would help to compensate for the inherent limitations of the qualitative techniques used in this empirical research.

Apart from that, the research used eight participants only. It may be more prolific for future research studies to be carried out using a larger sample identified from a larger population. This can enable more research findings to be unearthed on the subject matter. To add more, using different data collection strategies to allow for triangulation can be very prolific for future research.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS**

The study only looked at two schools in Johannesburg. As a result, the research findings may not be applicable to other schools in different South African provinces with different operating environments. Aside from that, the perspectives of learners with learning difficulties could have been incorporated into the study to strengthen the research findings and conclusions.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, information gathering could not be completed as planned. The researcher was unable to interact with participants one-on-one. Importantly, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the researcher was unable to collect data through observation.

Observations could have given a better understanding of the actual challenges teachers in mainstream schools' face from both the teacher and learner's perspective.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

The researcher summarised the research findings and linked them with literature findings. Bearing in mind the findings, recommendations, and areas of further study were discussed. The study revealed that teachers need to be trained continuously to meet the challenges they encounter. Every improvement should be made by teacher training institutions in the professional training of teachers.

Workshops, conferences, courses, and seminars can all be used for in-service training. According to the study's findings, there were numerous challenges in the South African education system when it came to teachers teaching learners with learning difficulties. These findings imply that a comprehensive approach is required to address these issues. A study which involved learners with learning difficulties would have come up with more conclusive findings. However, the study provides a foundation to offer appropriate interventions and contributes to the body of literature.

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## **Annexure 1: Consent Form: Principals**

9 July 2020

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Memory Ndlela. I am a Master's student in the Department of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at the University of Pretoria. In order to complete my degree titled: **The challenges faced by mainstream schoolteachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties**, I am required to telephonically interview teachers in the Mainstream School

It is anticipated that teachers participating in this study will benefit from the opportunity of narrating their own challenges and experiences thus contribute to their professional development. Data will be collected using telephone semi-structured interviews. The interviews will last for 30 minutes and they will take place at teachers' convenient time that will not interfere with the school activities. The following research protocols will be observed;

- Voluntary participation is ensured and teachers can withdraw their participation at any time without any consequences.
- Participating teachers will not in any way be subjected to harm during the data collection process.

The data and information collected at the school will be managed confidentially. The name of your school will not be disclosed and participating teachers will remain anonymous. I will use numbers, abbreviations and/or pseudonyms for data collection and collation. I will provide a written summary of my findings and share them with yourselves and the participating teachers in order to satisfy yourselves that I have

not manipulated the data I have obtained at your school. Furthermore, the school may use the strategies to support learners with learning difficulties at the school.

I also would like to request your permission to use the data for academic purposes at the University of Pretoria. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will also be binding on future research studies. Furthermore, research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes.

To that end may I request that you sign the attached form that you give permission for the research to be conducted at the school under your jurisdiction with the identified teachers.

Yours sincerely,

*M Ndlela*

Researcher: Memory Ndlela  
0787692960  
[memoryndlela@gmail.com](mailto:memoryndlela@gmail.com)



Supervisor: Dr NS Thuketana  
Department of Early Childhood Education  
[susan.thuketana.ac.za](mailto:susan.thuketana.ac.za)

**PERMISSION SLIP FOR RESEARCH**

I, ....., hereby give permission to  
Memory

Ndlela to telephonically interview teachers for her master's research study entitled  
**The challenges faced by mainstream teachers in teaching learners with  
learning difficulties.**

Signature: .....

(School Principal)

Date: .....

## Annexure 1.2: Consent Form: Teachers

9 July 2020

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Memory Ndlela. I am a Master's student in the Department of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at the University of Pretoria. In order to complete my degree titled: **The challenges faced by mainstream schoolteachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties**, I am required to telephonically interview teachers in the Mainstream School.

It is anticipated that teachers participating in this study will benefit from the opportunity of narrating their own challenges and experiences thus contribute to their professional development. Data will be collected using telephone semi-structured interviews. The interviews will last for 30 minutes and they will take place at teachers' convenient time that will not interfere with the school activities. The following research protocols will be observed;

- Voluntary participation is ensured and teachers can withdraw their participation at any time without any consequences.
- Participating teachers will not in any way be subjected to harm during the data collection process.

The data and information collected at the school will be managed confidentially. The name of your school will not be disclosed and participating teachers will remain anonymous. I will use numbers, abbreviations and/or pseudonyms for data collection and collation. I will provide a written summary of my findings and share them with yourselves and the participating teachers in order to satisfy yourselves that I have not manipulated the data I have obtained at your school. Furthermore, the school may use the strategies to support learners with learning difficulties at the school.

I also would like to request your permission to use the data for academic purposes at the University of Pretoria. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will also be binding on future research studies. Furthermore, research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes.

To that end may I request that you sign the attached form that you give permission for the research to be conducted at the school under your jurisdiction with the identified teachers.

Yours sincerely,



Researcher: Memory Ndlela  
0787692960  
[\\_memoryndlela@gmail.com](mailto:_memoryndlela@gmail.com)



Supervisor: Dr NS Thuketana  
Department of Early Childhood Education  
[susan.thuketana.ac.za](mailto:susan.thuketana.ac.za)

### **PERMISSION SLIP FOR RESEARCH**

I, ....., hereby give permission to  
Memory

Ndlela to telephonically interview teachers for her master's research study entitled  
**The challenges faced by mainstream teachers in teaching learners with  
learning difficulties.**

Signature: .....

(School Principal)

Date: .....



## Annexure 1.3 HOD Letter

9 July 2020

The Head of the Department

Johannesburg South

Gauteng

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT TWO SCHOOLS IN GAUTENG**

Your permission is hereby requested to conduct a research study entitled, **the challenges faced by mainstream teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties**, in two schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng. The reason for conducting the study is based on the realisation that even though South Africa has made provision for a right to education for all through various policy interventions like CAPS and the Education White Paper 6, teachers in mainstream schools still face an array of challenges in teaching learners with learning difficulties. I therefore aim to investigate the challenges that the teachers face to recommend strategies on how they may assist these learners.

I will employ telephone semi-structured interviews with three teachers and the head of the department in each identified school in Johannesburg South, Gauteng. The interviews will last 45 minutes. The researcher will try as much as possible to interview the identified teachers at a time that will not disrupt learning and the administration of the schools. The ethical protocols below will be observed:

- Participants will partake on a voluntary basis and can withdraw participation at any time without consequences.
- Assurance will be given to participants that they will not be harmed in any way during the data collection process.
- Participating schools and teachers will remain anonymous, numbers and/or pseudonyms will be used to identify both.

I also would like to request your permission to use the data collected from different schools for academic purposes at the University of Pretoria. The confidentiality and

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privacy applicable to this study will also be binding on future research studies. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes.

To that end may I please request that you sign the attached form that you give permission and are aware as well as giving permission for the research to be conducted at the two school with the specified teachers. For any queries and further clarifications, please use the contact details below:

Researcher: Memory Ndlela

Supervisor: Dr. N.S Thuketana



0787692960

083 6757899

memoryndlela@gmail.com

Department of Early Childhood Education

susan.thuketana@up.ac.za

### PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby grant/do not grant permission to Memory Ndlela permission to use two schools as research sites to collect data for her Masters' research study titled; **The challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with difficulties.**

The Head of the Department,

Gauteng Province

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

#### **Annexure 1.4: District Permission Letter**

The Co-ordinator  
Department of Education  
Johannesburg Central District (D14)  
Corner Morola & Chis Hani Roads  
Pimville, Soweto  
1809

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS ON TWO  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN JOHANNESBURG CENTRAL DISTRICT 14 FOR  
ACADEMIC RESEARCH PURPOSES**

My name is Memory Ndlela an SBST teacher at Park Senior Primary School and a Master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on challenges faced by mainstream school teachers in teaching learners with learning difficulties. To that end and in pursuing the fulfilment of the research requirement, I have to gather data through telephonic interviews from two Heads of Departments from two primary schools and six teachers (three from each school) from two primary schools. I therefore, kindly request for permission to carry out data collection.

Each telephonic semi structured interview will last for 30 minutes and all data collected will be used for academic purposes only and all ethical values regarding this exercise will be adhered to. Interviews take place at teachers' convenient time that will not interfere with the school activities.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Memory Ndlela  
0787692960  
memoryndlela@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr NS Thuketana  
Department of Early Childhood Education  
susan.thuketana@up.ac.za

PERMISSION SLIP FOR RESEARCH

I \_\_\_\_\_, being the District co coordinator of Johannesburg Central 14 District hereby give/ do not give consent to Ms Memory Ndlela to undertake interviews at the following schools.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Annexure 2: Interview questions – Teachers**

- What type of school do you think your school is?
- Which position do you hold at school?
- How many years of teaching experience do you have?
- What teaching qualifications do you hold?
- How many learners are in your classroom this year (IE)?
- Are you familiar with the concept of Inclusive Education (IE)?
- What is your understanding of Inclusive Education (IE)?
- What type of learning challenges do learners in your class face during learning and teaching?
- What challenges are you facing when teaching learners with learning difficulties?
- Do you get any assistance from the School Based Support Teams?
- Do you have a School Based Support Team at the school? Do the School Based Support Team (SBST) meet to discuss and find solutions to various problems which learners with difficulties may be experiencing?
- Which teaching strategies do you employ to address learner challenges?
- Do you differentiate these strategies depending on the learning difficulty?
- Do you think the intervention strategies effective? Explain your answer.

### **Annexure 3: Interview questions – HOD**

- What type of school do you think your school is?
- Which position do you hold at your school?
- How many years of teaching experience do you have?
- What teaching qualifications do you hold? Does it in any way include teaching learners with learning difficulties?
- What are your responsibilities as the Head of the Department?
- How many teachers do you supervise?
- How do you view Inclusive Education?
- Are there any learners with difficulties in your subject area? Explain the type and how the learners are supported.
- Do you sometimes have staff development programmes at your school?
- Do you consult or involve parents in supporting learners with learning difficulties??
- Is there a school improvement plan at your school?
- Are you aware of the strategies employed by teachers you supervise in supporting learners with difficulties? If you do, mention a few.
- How do you assist teachers who have challenges in teaching learners with difficulties?
- Do you get any assistance from the District Based Support Team (DBST) in managing learners with learning difficulties?
- If yes, clarify.