

EDUCTORS' KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY FOR LEARNERS WHO ARE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Zanele Mpaku-Papu (student number 16257848), declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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

Zanele Mpaku-Papu

November 2020

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was three-fold. Firstly, to investigate the understanding of inclusive education policy among educators in schools in the ambit of Learners with Visual Impairment (LVI). Secondly, to ascertain educators' ways of implementing inclusive education policy in the classrooms. Finally, to enquire whether or not the level of training received is complementary to their classroom demands, especially regarding the growing population of learners losing vision. This study is part of a main study focusing on the teaching and learning field of Visual Impairment Studies.

The study explored what educators know about inclusive education policy on supporting and teaching LVI as well as the implementation of the policy. This study adopted a multiple case study research design. Data generation and documentation strategies included co-generation using Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA)-based workshops, observations, interviews and field notes. An inductive thematic analysis of data was applied using NVivo 12 Pro as a tool due to its grounding in the interpretivist paradigm.

The findings of the study indicate that educators teaching LVI are aware of and have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the inclusive education policy. Most of the educators teaching LVI have undergone training in inclusive education. However, educators teaching LVI have challenges in implementing an inclusive education policy and LVI are often at high risk of exclusion from inclusive classrooms. Most of the educators' pedagogical strategies excluded strategies for teaching LVI. In conclusion, educators teaching LVI do not have adequate support structures, some of which are supposed to be provided for by either the school authorities or officials from the Department of Basic Education. This study recommends that to implement inclusive education successfully in the case of LVI, resources have to be localized, depending on the prevailing circumstances and the environment in which LVI learn.

Keywords: Educators, Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Learners, Visual Impairments

DECLARATION – LANGUAGE EDITOR

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the master's dissertation titled **Educators' Knowledge and Understanding of Inclusive Education Policy for Learners Who Are Visually Impaired** by **Zanele Mpaku-Papu** has been edited.

It remains the responsibility of the candidate to effect the recommended changes.



Prof. Tinus Kühn

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the recent past – that is, twenty or about years – several special education policies and programmes were initiated, monitored or regulated, evaluated, and also critiqued from various circles sphere, including the public officials, parents and scholars alike interested in inclusive education (Maguvhe, 2015b; Maharajh et al., 2016). The South African Department of Education (DoE) White Paper 6 special needs education policy (DoE, 2001), that provides for inclusive education, is underpinned by six democratic proclamations. The proclamations are

“...1) all children and youth can learn under conducive learning circumstances and need unwavering, ongoing support; 2) there ought to be relevant support structures, ideal systems and methodologies that enable such support in the education system; 3) learners are different and the differences must be both acknowledged and respected; 4) learning does not only take place in the formal school, but also at home and in the community; 5) changes have to be made to attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curriculum and environment to meet the diverse and sometimes complex learning needs for all learners, and 6) all such efforts ought to be aimed at minimising barriers to learning while maximising the participation of all learners in the curriculum and culture of their educational institutions.” (DoE, 2001, p. 1).

However, at the moment educators teaching learners in inclusive classrooms, especially Learners with Visual Impairment (LVI) may have insufficient knowledge and comprehension of the inclusive education policy and the implementation thereof; especially, now that vision loss is considered a threatening disability. The focus on teaching LVI is deemed important due to the increasing number of people losing vision at an annual estimated rate of 0.75% (NDoH, 2015; Sacharowitz, 2006).

McConkey (2003, p. 37) argued that inclusive education has to promote “full participation and equality” by providing learners who have varying learning disabilities and from obstructive family circumstances an opportunity to intermingle with other

learners as well as to participate within their communities' activities. That way, inclusive education can be viewed as a means for transformation, human right, also, a democratic approach to comprehending what society values and form beliefs. In a way, inclusive education should welcome and celebrate human diversity (Engelbrecht, 2006; Maguvhe, 2015b). Such democratic assertions to justify for inclusive education often can be drawn from the operational parameters of the meaning of its philosophy. Thereby, the limits are defined for the possibility of policy implementation (Engelbrecht, 2006; Savolainen et al., 2012). Nonetheless, it still seems like the meaning attached to inclusive education amongst many educators and in society centres around those conventionally excluded, for example, like those with sensory, learning, and or physical disabilities. It has yet to be fully comprehended and conceived as to explicitly include learners who face barriers like poverty and low socio-economic status (Maguvhe, 2015b). As a result, this highlights the need to ascertain how much knowledge and the comprehension of inclusive education policy as well as its application among those educators teaching LVI. It is an important consideration for the growing population of learners at risk or that have already lost vision (Maharajh et al., 2016; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2018).

It was therefore vital to inquire on the educators' knowledge and comprehension of inclusive education policy statements for learners with visual impairments. In the next section, I discuss the background and context of inclusive education in South Africa. Thereafter, I highlight and present the problem statement, followed by the research questions, the purpose of the study and the clarification of key concepts adopted for the study. Then, I discuss the theoretical framework that was adopted, the summary of the research approach used, Quality criterion applied, and the dissertation layout conclude this chapter.

1.1 Background and context

In South Africa, inclusive education has been promoted as an educational strategy that should be used to foster and contribute towards a democratic society, and not just as another option for learners to attaining education. When the Apartheid era came to an end, the new democratic dispensation and the government sought to commit to the transformation of the then education systems. They developed key policy documents and legislation that would emphasize the principle of education as an elementary

human right that is hallowed in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, 2006). The effort resulted in the “White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System” as a framework for systemic change for the development of inclusive education and the need to address equal educational opportunity and access for all learners, including those with special educational needs (SENs). The inclusive education framework underscores every right for a child to equal education without discrimination, and mandates it as a school’s responsibility to accept every learner and in providing appropriate facilities and support that befits the needs of SEN learners (Engelbrecht, 2006). In the terms of philosophy, the inclusive education concept co-opted in and incorporated values like equality and equity, human rights, and recognition of diversity (Maguvhe, 2015b).

Nonetheless, some studies have indicated that with ever ongoing and complex multifaceted social changes – surrounding education reforms and circumstantial changes, including diversity management in schools – still continue to negatively impact on and influence the application of inclusive education policy (Bruwer et al., 2014; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). In addition, many years into democratic rule, the continuing tension between the ever-changing structure of education and its process still influences policy progress (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). This has made the achieving of goals set by inclusive education policies to be challenging, since most educators have been reportedly not readily trained to meet the needs of inclusive classroom practices (Asongu et al., 2019; Majoko, 2016; Pasha, 2012). Kern’s (2006, p.3) research states that “educators who are ill-prepared or uncomfortable with the concept of inclusion often pass that discontent onto the learners, which in turn undermines the confidence and success of learners with learning impediments”.

The implementation of inclusive education policy has remained a difficult task to achieve since classrooms remain full of learners sharing scarce and insufficient resources, particularly in rural settlements (World Bank, 2019). This has posed challenges for educators in implementing their knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy to benefit learners with special needs. This is due to the fact that when the class is overcrowded, it becomes difficult to identify learners with special needs, especially if the disability is not severe or visible to everyone (Majoko, 2016). The alternative way to know or identify such a learner is when a learner either tells of

her/his challenges or a screening process is conducted to this effect, which includes learners' background reports and communication with parents or caregivers (Majoko, 2016).

Given the reformation and reorganisation of education policy – sometimes, due to the response to both national and global requirements for developing inclusive education – it has been argued that the educators' individual interpretation and understanding can be a major stake in the positive execution and operation of the inclusive education. This includes educators' daily representation of inclusion in determining the way in which policy can be reformulated in the real life-world of practice (Sikes et al., 2007). Therefore, educators' attitudes towards inclusive education and their comprehension of its meaning thereof, hence the execution can be, if not are, the critical elements in the success of inclusive education implementation (Maphalala & Mpfu, 2018). As a result, the ways in which educators apply inclusive educational practices in the classrooms cannot, therefore, only likely be predisposed by universal contextual factors. For example, it may have to be taken into consideration factors like the educators' beliefs in their own schools in which they are teaching as well as the broader and extensive educational system's tactics for inclusive education to work (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Most notably, the educators' understanding and comprehension of inclusive education ought to be factored in.

1.2 Problem statement

Global statistics show that approximately 37 million individuals are blind, a staggering 0.7% annual global prevalence; approximately 217 to 246 million have low vision, of which 110 million experience severe reduced vision, posing the risk of becoming blind (Andrade et al., 2019). The World Health Organisation (Greenberg & Narang, 2016; WHO, 2019b) noted that roughly about 90% of individuals with vision loss are found in developing countries, such as South Africa. Many of these individuals may require sight restorative measures, such as spectacles and/or surgery to regain their vision (Gilbert & Ellwein, 2008). Children from disadvantaged backgrounds born with visual impairment or who become visually impaired during their developmental stages face a number of psychosocial and economic challenges (Gilbert & Foster, 2001). Hence it is important for educators to have knowledge of the inclusive education policy to be able to include and accommodate such learners in their classrooms. Visual impairment

may have an impact on a child's future and may reduce his or her ability to perform at school and his or her quality of life may be impacted too as he or she may have to depend on other people for assistance (Maake & Oduntan, 2015).

Sacharowitz (2006) estimates that South Africa has approximately 600 000 or 1,3% of the 2,3 million (5%) of children who have been found to be visually impaired, forming the primary disability group. The South African National Department of Health issued a national guideline to prevent vision loss in South Africa, which noted that the country had a 0,75% prevalence of vision loss (NDoH, 2015). This might be due to the fact that many South African disadvantaged families with children who are visually impaired lack access to facilities that offer better vision services, and to the deprivation of eye-care services and staff, or not being able to afford such services (Maake & Oduntan, 2015). A lack of educators' understanding of the physical and psychological effects of visual impairment creates negative or little social support at school. This is demonstrated by the under-estimation or over-estimation of visually impaired children's abilities and/or restrictions. Some educators at school feel that visually impaired children are helpless; this lack of understanding can lead to inadequate understanding of visually impaired children's desire for independences (Boerner & Cimarolli, 2005; Cimarolli et al., 2017; Cimarolli & Boerner, 2005).

Since LVI often need ongoing eye-care and other healthcare services throughout their school-going years, it is imperative that both the educators and LVI classmates hold and share an understanding of their conditions. When learners themselves have better understanding of their condition, it is believed to be easier for them to communicate and interact with their educators and classmates (Buchner et al., 2015). However, educators would make even better facilitators and mediators of this understanding in their classrooms if they had sufficient knowledge of inclusion (McLeskey et al., 2013). Learners should be permitted to be active participants in the academic and social activities of their classrooms and schools regardless of their disabilities (Rosenberg & McLeskey, 2013). Furthermore, Kern (2006) confirms that educators who support and have faith in the notion of inclusion can instil self-confidence in learners with special educational needs, including the creation of a comfortable learning environment. Most LVI are sent to full-service schools to attend the same class as learners without disabilities (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). With educators not willing to accommodate

these learners as per their needs, they run the risk of underperforming due to educators' inability to understand and accommodate them (Savolainen et al., 2012). Some educators lack knowledge on how to accommodate LVI as they are not trained in how to cater for these learners in their classrooms (Maphalala & Mpofo, 2018; Oswald, 2007).

Brown, Packer and Passmore (2013) found that the level of preservice training received by educators regarding inclusive classrooms is low. The training in classroom inclusion is not offered in all tertiary institutions and it appears that the majority of educators have not attended any further training in inclusive education except for the training they received from various agencies at the beginning of each academic year (Brown et al., 2013). It is imperative to contemplate on the local components and circumstances of learners as they can influence the policy and practice in certain context; he is not in favour of imposing solutions from different contexts. Rambla, Ferrer, Tarabini, and Verger (2008) and Acedo, Ferrer and Pàmies (2009) point out that inclusive education policies must be selected and applied at a local municipality scale, with national governments taking note of possible synergies of such policies. This means that when the national government implements these policies in local schools, they should be appropriated to accommodate the needs of each school. In this way it becomes easier for educators to relate to and own up the policies as per dictate of their settings (Artiles et al., 2006).

Nonetheless, it is increasingly reported in the extant literature that the attention on inclusive education through educator training programmes is still disjointed in a way, and very short-term fixated. Hence, lacking the much-needed in-depth and consistent knowledge content (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Training programmes for educators continue to focus more on the once 'deficit-oriented-like' approach to fundamental barriers to learning. The educators' training programmes, therefore, are yet to focus on the essential outcomes for inclusive education. For example, as highlighted by Engelbrecht et al.(2016), lacking "an in-depth understanding and comprehension of inclusive education and diversity; the knowledge and range of skills to collaborate widely with all stakeholders; engaging in inclusive instructional planning by being reasonably prepared to anticipate and responsive to high-priority needs in regular classrooms, and effective support for learners with diverse learning needs in general"

(Engelbrecht et al., 2016, p. 22) and LVI in particular as a growing formidable sub-group of disability to partake entirely in classroom activities; other than supporting them in separated and specialised classrooms or resource centres (Forlin et al., 2014; Watkins, 2012).

1.2.1 Research questions

In the effort to highlight educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy for learners who are visually impaired, the following was the primary and secondary research questions relevant in helping to answer the primary research question:

- 1) What is educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy for learners who are visually impaired?
 - a. How is inclusive education understood in full-service school classrooms?
 - b. How is inclusive education understood in special-needs school classrooms?

1.2.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy in the ambit of LVI.

1.3 Clarification of key concepts

1.3.1 Inclusive education

Inclusive education "refers to regular education programmes appropriate to the physical, curricular and social needs of all learners, including those with disabilities" (Brown et al., 2013, p. 44). Inclusive education declares that all learners should be given equal opportunities irrespective of their intellectual, physical, emotional, social or otherwise, conditions. Inclusive education means that all learners should be catered for in education regardless of their disabilities (DoE, 2001; Maguvhe, 2015b).

1.3.2 Inclusion

Inclusion refers to when a community or school generally accepts, understands and welcomes anyone, including children with special needs as members of the group

while treating them with respect (Chireshe, 2011). It means that the whole school needs to be ready and should be fully equipped with all the necessary facilities and strategies to accommodate learners with disabilities (Engelbrecht, 2006; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Loreman et al., 2010).

1.3.3 Visual impairment

Visual impairment is when a person is unable to see clearly to the extent that common means such as corrective spectacles may not help; it can range from a mere low and partial vision to full blindness and has potential negative effect on all the spheres of development (Bourne et al., 2016; Gilbert & Foster, 2001). This is considered a disability and can impact a person's life, especially a child's negatively (Cimarolli et al., 2017).

1.3.4 Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN)

Learners with Special Educational Needs (SENs) refer to a practice that caters for learners with disabilities in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. This practice ensures that children with learning challenges or disabilities learn as quickly as their peers. To understand learning challenges that some children experience, the curriculum and learning environment provided for them has to be considered (Frederickson & Cline, 2002).

1.4 Theoretical framework

The Ecology of Developmental Interacted Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) that was adopted for the study is based on the Developmental Ecological Systems by Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998). Bronfenbrenner (1989) described the interacting systems in an ecological systems model holding a view that the child exists in a complex ecological context, which consists of several intrafamilial and extrafamilial systems impacting on a child's development. At inception, there were four interconnected systems explained. But later on, the model was modified to five by Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998), which comprised of the model (as seen in Figure 1-1). The first part of the ecological system is the microsystem. It entails the close family environmental surroundings in which the child lives. For example, the parents' and siblings' relations that have direct impact on the child. The second of the system is the

mesosystem, which denotes the inter-connections amid two or more settings or the interactions outside the family environment. This can be the school environment and peer influences (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). While the third is the exosystem, the community context for example, that a child may not directly and explicitly experience. But, most likely, influences the elements of the microsystems.

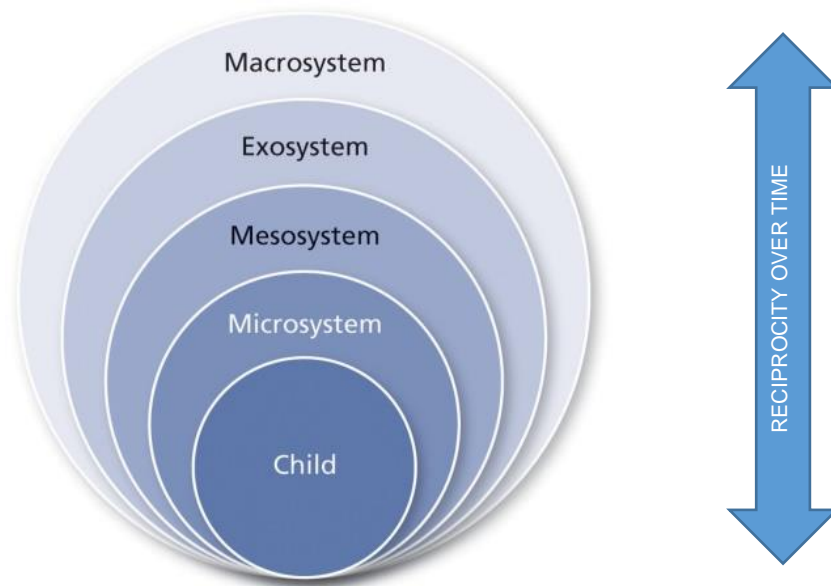


Figure 1-1. A visual illustration of the theoretical model

The fourth in the ecology systems is the macrosystem, which constitutes the broader social or community or society, cultural or traditions, and the legal context aspects. It likely can and encompasses all the other systems of the ecology. In an inclusive education perspective, an ecological system view suggests that children with or without disabilities form part and develop within the complex social world. It is, therefore, essential to perceive relations at a multilevel context, and thereafter, observe the changes across all the levels over a time period. However, to guarantee the achievement of inclusive education programming, it would then be vital to integrate individual and contextual processes in order to examine interrelations among the systems of the model (Noonan & McCormick, 2006). A look at Figure 1-1, amongst the multiple levels of influence within the global system, one can argue that the child's development is most impacted on directly by the close family environment. The family environment provides a linking between the child and the external world.

Berk (2006) stated that the structure of Bronfenbrenner's environment consists of five levels. The levels are 1) the microsystem that incorporates the relations and influences children have with immediate surroundings such as family, school or neighbourhood environment; 2) the mesosystem that provides interaction between structures of children's microsystem, for example, the connection between the child's educator and the parent; 3) the exosystem that impacts the child's development by connecting with the child's microsystem, such as family resources based on the community. The child may not be directly involved in this system, but the actions of the family do have an impact; 4) the macrosystem includes customs, laws and cultural values and is considered the outermost system in the child's development; 5) The fifth, the chronosystem – which was later added, encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to child's development for an example the timing of a parent's death (Berk, 2000).

Bronfenbrenner (1989) believed that schools and educators should work to support the child's primary relationships and to create an environment that accommodates and nurtures children and their families (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). It is in this respect that this theory was applied to understand the practices of educators teaching LVI. The way in which educators understand and implement inclusive education policy has a direct impact on LVI, which then influences their behaviours and attitudes to schooling, and probably, to the rest of their lives. Schools and educators form part of the microsystem level that is the crucial level according to this theory (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Children's interaction with parents as per mesosystem level as well as all other levels has the strongest influence and greatest impact. Hence it is important and necessary for schools and educators to provide supportive learning environments to their learners. This theory stresses the significance of children's individual differences during their development. This has influenced how people view and assist children with learning barriers. One of the disadvantages of this theory is that all factors then become mutually and systematically influential, even the smallest factor, which can make the theory very difficult to implement in practice (Nicolize, 2016). This challenge was overcome by delimiting the study to the theory's view on microsystemic and mesosystemic factors only.

1.5 Research approach

This study is qualitative in nature and exploratory (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Qualitative research is useful to understand underlying reasons, opinions and motivations for certain behaviours or attitudes in different situations. Creswell and Clark (2007) further state that a qualitative research method generates openness, encouraging participants to multiply on their responses and has the ability to open ideas for future research (Breakwell et al., 1995). They further state that qualitative research is used to expose thoughts and opinions, and looks deeper into the problem. I chose this method because I did not want to limit participants in sharing their lived experiences. Table 1-1 provides the summary of the research methodology and a detailed discussion is provided in Chapter 3.

Table 1-1. Summary of methodological approach

Summary of methodological approach	
Paradigm	Interpretive qualitative study (Creswell, 2014)
Research design	Multi-Case study design (Yin, 2013).
Sampling method	Purposive sampling was used in selecting 11 cases (schools) to participate in the study (details in Chapter 3).
Data collection	PRA-based workshops, Interviews, observations and reflective notes.
Documentation	Records and transcripts.
Data analysis	Inductive thematic analysis (Creswell, 2014). Used NVivo 12 Pro as a tool.
Ethics	Informed consent. Protection from harm. Anonymity and confidentiality. Safe keeping of data. Right of privacy.
Quality criteria	Credibility, dependability, transferability, authenticity and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In over all, this study adopted a multiple case study research design as explained by Yin(2013). Yin (2013) describes a multiple case study research design as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” (ibid, p.21). Purposive sampling was used to select participants grounded on specific characteristics of a population, including the

objective of the study (Tongco, 2007). Crossman (2018) points out that purposive sampling is used when a study requires one to capture knowledge based on a particular form of expertise. Data generation and documentation strategies included co-generation, using Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA)-based workshops, observations and interviews (Gill et al., 2008). Data was analysed using thematic analysis in NVivo Pro 12. Inductive thematic analysis means developing categories into a model or framework that reviews raw data and converts it into key themes and processes (Thomas, 2006).

1.6 Quality criteria

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that to establish trustworthiness in research, a variety of quality criteria must be adhered to. These criteria include credibility, dependability, transferability, conformability, and authenticity. In Chapter 3 (section 3.8) these criteria are discussed in detail.

1.7 Dissertation layout

The dissertation consists of five chapters (see Figure 1-2): Chapter 1: Introduction; this chapter includes an introduction, the background and reasons for undertaking this study. It covers aspects such as the problem statement, rationale, research questions, theoretical framework, concept clarification, and the aims and objectives of the study. In Chapter 2: Literature review and key theoretical concepts, I discuss and review the literature consulted for this study, including journal articles, books, the internet, web articles and other relevant sources. Several sources of literature were scrutinised to avoid using irrelevant and unverified sources. Thus, only literature that provided information about educators' knowledge and understanding of the inclusive education policy was consulted as part of the study.

Chapter 3: The research methodology and research design. This chapter discusses the method that was chosen and justifies the selection of this method. A qualitative method was chosen as it was appropriate to investigate the nature of the topic. Qualitative research methods have shown that a situation should be followed naturally without adding anything as it unfolds and that situations have to be seen from the participants' point of view. Since the researcher was interested in educators' hope-

experiences, a qualitative research method was the most relevant method to use for this study. Additionally, this chapter includes the way participants were selected to become part of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings, analysis and interpretation. In this chapter an explanation of how the information was collected from the participants is provided. It elaborates on the method used to collect data, such as face-to-face interviews and workshops. It provides information on how the analysis was conducted and which method was used to analyse the data. Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion. This chapter attempts to establish whether this study answered the research question that is the focus of the study. Educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education anchored on hope-experiences play a significant role in encouraging learners' hope in an inclusive context. Lastly, the recommendations as well as conclusion are included.

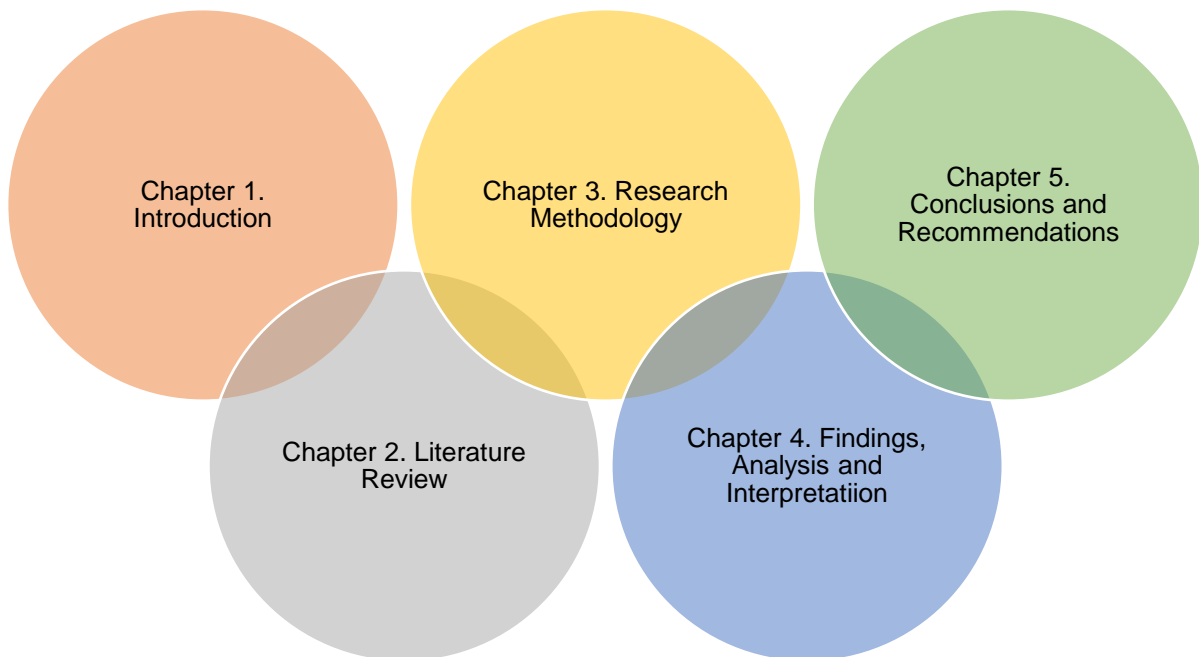


Figure 1-2. Dissertation layout

1.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an introductory overview for the study and the content in the dissertation, stating the research questions, problem statements, contextual background, and the study's purpose. The objective of this study was to highlight the current level of knowledge, understanding, and comprehension among educators of the inclusive education policy in respect of visually-impaired learners. The next chapter reviews the literature on inclusive education, its presupposed benefits, challenges experienced and the likely solutions to the problem.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The recent developments in the inclusive education policy, for example the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) adopted by the South African education system is said to have increased accountability of educators to meet the needs of all learners effectively. The restructuring of the education arose in response to persistent and acute inequalities and imbalances in the then education system, which had been institutionalised by the Apartheid-era government. In this chapter, a review of the current literature on inclusive education is undertaken, focusing on developments in the South African educational landscape, bearing in mind global trends. Firstly, the definition of inclusive education in the literature is reviewed in Section 2.2, followed by the history of inclusive education in Section 2.3, while Section 2.4 contains discussions on the international legal framework including South Africa. Section 2.5 reviews inclusive education developments in South Africa, including the benefits, challenges and constraints, the understanding of educators teaching LVI, solutions and resources. Section 2.6 explores hope as an instrument for achieving and sustaining learning of both learners and educators as beacons of hope. Section 2.7 focuses on and highlights the much-needed collaborative relationship between educators and parents in the delivery of inclusive education benefiting the LVI. Lastly, Section 2.8 summarises the content covered in the chapter.

The literature review centred on LVI rather than broad learning impairments because there are globally and in South Africa in particular an increasing number of people experiencing sight problems to the extent of losing vision.

2.2 Definition of inclusive education

There are widespread debates among scholars about the actual meaning of inclusive education. It is imperative to have a clear-cut definition and intention of any policy for it to be implemented successfully. The definition of inclusive education has two dimensions: a narrow and a broad sense (Murungi, 2015). In the narrow sense, inclusive education entails ensuring that schools accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, moral or social background (DoE, 2001; Maguvhe,

2015b). In the narrow sense inclusive education entails a formal integration of learners with disabilities in full-service schools. Inclusive education in a broad or substantive sense entails the access to good quality education for all children, including the disabled in full-service schools by ensuring that educators are trained and equipped with resources to enable them to teach all learners (Murungi, 2015). This means that a learning environment caters for both able-bodied and disabled learners and provides quality education for all learners at the same institution. This directly relates to the main objectives of this study in ascertaining educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education.

The distinction between the narrow and broad definitions of inclusive education is based on the question whether inclusive education is one and the same thing as the right of access to basic education. If the narrow approach to inclusive education is followed, the concept of inclusive education is a mere formality of simply placing learners with impairments in full-service schools, which creates a semblance of equality. It is, therefore, advocated in the literature that involving educators should ensure full understanding and enhanced capacity in the implementation of inclusive education. Inclusive education is equal to the right to basic education. Murungi (2015) equates the right to basic education of the able-bodied learners with the right to inclusive education of those with impairments.

2.3 Why inclusive education?

In order to understand the concept of inclusive education, one ought to place and view it in the historical context. It is important to understand the origins of the concept and its evolution to becoming what inclusive education means today. However, both the 'developed' and 'developing' nations have so far been progressing at different paces when implementing inclusive education (Buchner et al., 2015; Schwab et al., 2017). In the case of South Africa, ever since the advent of democracy, there has been introduction of several educational reforms into the system, such as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Adu & Ngibe, 2014; Chisholm, 2005). Such reforms were, partly, in the response to the inequalities and imbalances instituted in the education system. Most of the imbalances and inequalities in the education

system were created and instituted by the then apartheid government administration (DoE, 2001; Miles & Singal, 2010).

Following such educational reforms that were instituted, OBE impacted the teaching methods and practices, from an Educator-centred approach to Learner-centred (Maharajh et al., 2016). In such a context, the implementation of CAPS may have been considered an important step towards achieving the much-needed reforms in education systems. Specifically, in the previous schools – both well-facilitated and under-facilitated with resources to teach (Davies & Green, 1998). Ever since, the introduction of the CAPS programme there has been noteworthy and formidable changes regarding the approaches of evaluations, the time that learners spend in the classrooms, and novel instruction methods. Nevertheless, the CAPS programme became inundated with several difficulties and obstacles towards achieving its full potential, some of which included the ever-frustrated educators of the curricula changes due to their lack of clear technical expertise needed to teach and handle other responsibilities. Oftentimes, the educators were not well-capacitated with the theoretical knowledge and or had been familiarized with the principles that inform and enable effective implementation of curriculum and ensuing changes thereof (Chisholm, 2005; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013).

In entirety, the frequent changes in curriculum since the onset of the democratic dispensation in South Africa remains one of the most devastating experiences for many educators (Jansen, 1998; Maphalala, 2006). While some of the new changes emphasised a Learner-centred approach, to date, Educators seem still not well-trained and developed to handle teaching tasks as specified in the policy, and yet the latest changes in the curriculum policy have greatly changed and modified ways in which Educators instruct learners and the way in which learners learn in the classroom (Jansen, 1999; Maphalala, 2006; Maphalala & Mpofo, 2018). One of the issues that complicated the application of CAPS remains attributed to the scarcity of subject expatriates who would support educators in the primary schools, especially during the curriculum rollout and implementation. Also, the lack of Educators who are specialised in teaching subjects like Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Changes in the curriculum, therefore, dictated changes in the function of an Educator (Nathan & Scobell, 2012; Van der Nest, 2012). Yet, fewer studies focus the inquiry on the levels

of comprehension and understanding the experiences of Educators in the course of rolling out new curricula. On a worldwide scale and scope, such study inquiry and focus would be vital to alert educational authorities and experts on the consequences and inferences of policy change and execution in transitional societies. I conjure then that vital lessons can be learnt, especially for educational authorities around the world about the probable mistakes that arise in an inaccurately instigated education policy.

Some of the aforementioned flaws can be enlisted in a way and are evident in most of the educational reforms that have been instituted so far (Buchner et al., 2015; Schwab et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2016). Anyhow, there remains less meaningful focus to investigate and research, with first-hand knowledge, on how both Educators and parents deal with CAPS. The experiences of parents are most likely critical and complimentary when framing pertinent policies, including those meant for improving curriculum (Adams et al., 2016). Although there is an underlying assumption that educators and parents should work together to provide the child with the best education possible, in reality, many different ideas and beliefs amongst both Educators and parents often arise, resulting in disconnection of relationships and communication (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2018; Staples & Diliberto, 2010).

2.3.1 The international legal framework on inclusive education

Discrimination against people who are disabled has become a widespread issue of concern across the world. According to the World Health Organisation, there are 2.2 billion people suffering from visual impairment in the world (WHO, 2019a). Knowledge and understanding of such inclusion of learners suffering from visual impairment is very important for lifelong learning. As such an international intergovernmental organisation there had to be steps taken towards societal inclusion of people with disabilities. The United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 guarantees that everyone will be allowed to participate in all programmes that enhance their development in life and that the state will protect them from discrimination on the basis of race and disability, among others (Article 7 and 25 of the Declaration). The convention was broad and it aimed at protecting the rights of people in general. A foundation was laid for the idea of inclusive education in general and the specific understanding of inclusive education by educators of learners with visual impairment. In 1960, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

(UNESCO) Convention countering discrimination in education was agreed upon, and outlawed discrimination based on race, nationality and religion, among others, by educational institutions. This Convention did not outlaw discrimination based on disability by educational institutions. However, it achieved to set discrimination by educational institutions on the international agenda. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 followed the same line, ensuring that children are protected from discrimination on the basis of their disability, race and nationality. It also ensured that the state has the obligation to provide children with disabilities with access to education in special institutions (Article 7 and 23 respectively). The distinction between disabled and able-bodied learners could easily run counter to the principles of non-discrimination on the basis of disability set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

UNESCO has, finally, realised the need for an approach that meets the demands of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1994 following the Education for All Conference that guarantees the right to education regardless of physical differences, UNESCO published the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education. The Salamanca Statement calls on and urges governments to give priority and budgetary support towards improving respective education institutions with interest to enable the inclusion of all learners regardless of learner individual differences and challenges. For the first time, the notion of inclusive education was introduced in the global instruments as a means to address the widespread discrimination by educational institutions on the basis of disability. Ultimately the UN reached a resolution on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the year 2006, which called on all states and nations to ensure that there is inclusive education at and across all levels of institutions of education (Article 24). This convention ensures that signatory states comply with their obligation of ensuring that there is an inclusive education system at all levels of state education institutions.

2.3.2 Foreign national profiles on inclusive education

The United States of America (USA) were among the first nations to embrace the concept of inclusive education well ahead of the international instruments and convention on inclusive education. The USA Department of Health and Human Services reported 2,6 million people suffering from visual impairment by 2015 (HHS, 2016; Varma et al., 2016). The widespread challenge of visual impairment underscores the imperative that states should take the initiative to ensure that there is policy intervention to allow for equal access to quality education by both disabled and able-bodied citizens. In the USA, for example, some reports indicated and acknowledged that the state has a duty to provide free appropriate education for both disabled and able-bodied alike. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was later passed, which required the state to ensure that children with disabilities (including visual impairment) were accepted in full-service schools at the assistance of the state for the required facilities and personnel. The facilities include those that ensure that blind learners can read and write effectively through use of Braille machines (broad approach to inclusive education). The states had to promote equal access to education to comply with the constitutional mandate of equality and the obligation to promote equality in general as bestowed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2.4 The South African profile on inclusive education

South African education during the colonial era made a distinction not only between disabled and able-bodied learners but also between black and white learners (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008). In 1928 and 1931 the law was passed giving the Union of South Africa's Department of Education the authority to establish vocational and special schools (Christensen & Rizvi, 1996). The Special Education Act 9 of 1948 was passed, furnishing the Department of Education with the power to provide subsidisation of schools for visually impaired, deaf and crippled children. It was beneficial to the learners who were visually impaired because they were taught by educators who were well trained and understood the needs of visually impaired learners. Schools like Pioneer School for the Blind in Cape Town, Athlone School for the Blind in Cape Town and Arthur Blaxal School for the Blind in Pietermaritzburg were established to cater for people suffering from visual impairment (Bishop, 2003; Davis & Hopwood, 2004;

Dawkins, 1991). The aforementioned schools admitted only white, coloured and Indian learners. Most black visually impaired learners could not receive education despite their sight challenges (Dawkins, 1991).

Prior to the advent of democracy in South Africa, discrimination and segregation existed on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation and disability, among others. In the realm of education, people with visual impairment suffered segregation in three spheres: segregation based on disability (separated from full-service schools), race (black learners) and the type of disability (blind learners could attend only schools for blind learners) (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008). The Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 was passed to ensure that black people did not attend schools that were designated for white people, coloureds and Indians. This Act, among others, deepened discrimination and engrained immense inequalities among disabled learners (Christensen & Rizvi, 1996). It is because of this triple segregation that disabled people suffered that some non-governmental organisations took it upon themselves to fight not only against racial discrimination, sexual discrimination and discrimination of disabled people but to ensure that they were treated equally and guaranteed access to inclusive quality education (Clunies-Ross & Sharpe, 1995; Dawkins, 1991). It is held by some that the Apartheid education policy of discrimination on both race, disability and sex made the inclusive narrative even more appealing to the government and civil societies in the new democratic South Africa (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008).

2.4.1 Democratic South Africa

The advent of democracy in South Africa brought about a rights-based constitutional democracy, which also had an impact on reformations in both the full-service and special education systems. As a result, a new education system called inclusive education came into being. The system required changes in curriculum and materials used to support learning (DoE, 2001). The inclusive education policy was designed for implementation in three phases: the short-steps phase that stretched from 2001 to 2003, the medium-steps phase that stretched from 2004 to 2008, and the long-steps phase that started in 2009 and was expected to end in 2021 (DoE, 2001). The setting of a time frame for the progressive achievement of the implementation of inclusive education policy raised scepticism from some schools-of-thought, highlighting the infringement of the right to education for learners with impairments, given the 20 years'

timespan (Kruuse & Sloth-Nielsen, 2013). The criticism was plausible; however, it is not within the scope of this study to debate the human rights component of inclusive education. It is about analysing the educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy for visually impaired learners.

2.4.2 Benefits of inclusive education for learners with special needs and disabilities

The inclusive education policy is both praised and criticised. To begin with, those advocating for inclusive education suggest that learners with disabilities can benefit from its implementation – as in both the learning and social skills (Savolainen et al., 2012). In agreement, Mastropieri et al., (2006) stated that schools are social arenas and that the inclusion of learners with special needs and disabilities can allow such learners to be a part of the school community as well as identify themselves with peers from whom they would have been alienated (Mastropieri et al., 2009; Terrill et al., 2004). Another view is also held that inclusion gives the opportunity to people with disabilities to make friends and be accepted in the society in which they live (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). Their ability to feel accepted and in turn make friends has been found to increase in inclusion (Agosta et al., 2004; Hughes, 1998). Hence, inclusive education can help learners with impairments to be integrated into society as well as in making meaningful contribution to the development of a community.

2.4.3 Challenges of inclusive education to learners with disability

Inclusive education, however, is said to come with negative consequences in certain circumstances. Some scholars are of the view that inclusive education is not absolutely profitable to all learners with special needs (Mastropieri et al., 2006; Sukhraj-Ely, 2008). For example, some learners with mild disabilities are not provided with sufficient and specially designed instructions within the inclusive education settings (Agosta et al., 2004; Lloyd et al., 2000). This is an indication that, despite the fact inclusive education can be used to serve a legitimate cause where people with disabilities may be discriminated against basing on their disability, race, and gender, it is imperative to note that some disabled learners will need exceptional assistance, of which cannot be possible in some circumstance like those in inclusive full-service schools environments (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Riele, 2006).

2.4.4 Benefits of inclusive education for learners not having significant learning impairments

Learners without learning impairments may also benefit from the policy of inclusive education. This is because through studying together with learners with learning impairment, they become more tolerant and accommodating regarding those with learning impairments. The importance of such tolerant and accommodative skills may lead to an end to societal stereotypes of people with disabilities (Lederman et al., 2002). This seems to confirm that the attitude of learners to people with disabilities may be positively influenced by inclusive education. Some findings confirm that learners in inclusive education systems interact better with learners with disabilities by understanding their needs and befriending them with ease (Huebner et al., 2004; Willmott, 1993).

2.4.5 Benefits of inclusive education for educators

Inclusive education creates a diversified learning environment; as a result educators are able to gain experience that makes them able to teach different types of learners (T. J. Davis & Carter, 1992). Educators have the opportunity to enhance their conferencing skills and socialisation skills as they collaborate with and co-teach with educators of learners with special needs (Mastropieri et al., 2009). However, these findings by two authors have less direct application to South Africa, where there are few specialists to assist general educators with teaching learners with disabilities. The workshop training that is provided to equip educators with skills to teach learners with disabilities still attract poor participation (Brown et al., 2013). It must be taken into account that educators are central in the roll out of inclusive education policy since they are the de facto implementers (Maharajh et al., 2016).

2.5 Educators knowledge of inclusive education

The success or failure of any policy, inclusive education included, lies with those who are charged with the implementation of such policy. It is held that policies are not formulated or implemented in a vacuum; they involve various actors, organisations, bureaucrats and the general populace (Hill, 1990; Meier et al., 2004). The primary responsibility of implementing inclusive education lies with educators, since they are the ones charged with the delivery of inclusive education (Savolainen et al., 2012). As

such, educators' comprehension and knowledge on the notion of inclusive education is of paramount standing in its successful application. This study investigates educators' knowledge and understanding of the notion of inclusive education for learners with visual impairment (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008).

To do justice to the objective of this study, it is important that the meaning of the key words in the title of this dissertation is defined. To start with, the word knowledge entails the state of knowing or being familiar with something. The word understanding entails knowledge of the subject or of how something works. It is clear from the definitions above that the word knowledge relates to the mere state of being familiar with something while understanding relates to the operational dynamics of something. The relevance of this is that it is not enough for educators of learners who are visually impaired to know about the concept of inclusive education; they must also know how it works in practice for the betterment of visually impaired learners in their classes. Therefore, it is imperative for educators of learners who are visually impaired first have knowledge of the concept of inclusive education.

Generally, most educators in South Africa bear sufficient knowledge and comprehend the notion of inclusive education. Since the passing of White Paper 6 in 2001 the Department of Education and inter-governmental organisations like UNESCO have engaged educators and principals highlighting and making aware of the meaning of the notion of inclusive education. As defined above, educators understand inclusive education as the process of strengthening the capacity of full-service schools to enable them to teach learners with special needs (Mel, 2004). In the South African context, educators of learners who are visually impaired seldom receive training on how they should teach learners that are visually impaired. Brown, Packer, and Passmore (2013) observed that the pre-service training that educators undertake cannot be sufficient enough to enable them to handle learners with visual impairment.

2.5.1 Educators' understanding of inclusive education

From the definition of inclusive education aforementioned, understanding implies to have both knowledge of a subject and how it can be applied in practice. In the context of this study, it seeks to analyse whether educators have a practical knowledge of how the concept of inclusive education for learners with visually impaired works in

advancing the education of such learners. Training in inclusive education is not offered anywhere in South African tertiary institution that train educators. As such, educators who have an inadequate idea of how to help learners who are impaired are likely to develop a negative attitude to such learners and believe they will perform poorly (Shahid et al., 2018). This kind of negative attitude of educators of learners with disabilities is said to have a domino effect on the learners concerned, resulting in low self-esteem and poor performance (Savolainen et al., 2012)

2.5.2 External constraints towards inclusive education

Educators' practical experiences with LVI in South Africa include resource constraints and poor support from those with authority (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Letseka, 2016). Some scholars hold the view that for inclusive education of visually impaired to be successful, certain classroom environmental adjustments, including the role of school leadership are imperative, (Leithwood, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010). Some of the needed adjustments include issues like light settings in the class, seating positions, bold colour, white boards instead of chalkboards, enlargement of print books, tactile and audio aids (Brown et al, 2013). The lack of enough resources to support the inclusion of visually impaired learners in full-service schools weakens educators' will to help. As such the inclusive education policy becomes a mere wishful gesture in poorly resourced countries like South Africa, (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Thiessen, 2007, 2012).

2.6 Solutions to some of the challenges of inclusive education policy

The inclusive education policy, in the case of LVI, must start with the training of educators who want to ensure that they are capable of delivering the policy. Zimbabwe has a unique policy of inclusive education. In Zimbabwe studying special education needs is compulsory for every educator who enrolls for a teaching qualification (Mutepfa et al., 2007). The inclusion of training in inclusive education for educators at tertiary institutions is deemed to be a possible solution (Estes & Mintz, 2015; Phillips & Kelly, 2016). This helps educators to gain confidence in how they should handle learners with disabilities. The level of training educators receive on inclusive education will also help improve the negative attitudes. Shahid, Ehsaan and Khan (2018) state

that negative attitudes emanate from poor understanding of educators of how to help learners with disabilities.

Educators' pedagogical practices are the eminent means to widespread adoption of an inclusive education policy. This can be achieved through the instruction and learning approaches/models that educators adopt (Estes & Mintz, 2015). One of the approaches introduced in South Africa is the curriculum differentiation strategy. Since differentiation was introduced in South Africa as an alternative strategy in responding to the assorted needs of learners, including those with learning difficulties, its application requires teachers' full understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses (Estes & Mintz, 2015). This perspective posits an understanding that in instruction and learning there has to be a match between the teachers' expectations about the learner and outcomes preferred (Lerner & Johns, 2014).

Therefore, adjustment in lesson presentation and a varied level of challenge for learners at different levels are highly recommended because learners do not process information in the same way and have their preferred modes to demonstrate knowledge and skills acquired (Lerner & Johns, 2011, 2014). This suggests that learners' interest, ability and background should be taken into account during instruction and learning; hence pace adjustment may be required due to learners' level of functioning (DoE, 2011). Kelly and Phillips (2016) caution about pace adjustment during instruction, adding that in cases where learners with reading difficulties receive special education provision, such as pace adjustment during instruction, other learners may be disillusioned and bored, viewing the process as a waste of time. Moreover, disillusioned learners may be viewed as problematic learners or misjudged ones (Tanyi, 2016). Engaging learners individually or in flexible grouping in a wide variety of options using differentiated teaching prevents boredom as it caters for learners at different levels (DoE, 2014).

It should be noted that learners with difficulties in learning, including those with reading difficulties, often have different learning styles (Lerner & Johns, 2014); hence the best teaching strategy is to involve the use of two more or of the learners' senses, especially touch and kinaesthetic movement, which help the brain to connect to the word being written (Ureno, 2012). The Department of Education (DoE, 2014) draws particular

attention to instruction and learning support material, suggesting that learners' difficulties can be reduced through the use of learning material that caters for different abilities and styles. Likewise, Tanyi (2016) suggests the use of instruction and learning material, including the use of white boards, flip charts, models and technological equipment that is designed for free interaction and communication among learners.

2.6.1 Resourcing schools to afford learners with special needs

The rollout of inclusive education in South Africa has been, in many cases, challenged by a lack of sufficient resources (Bruwer et al., 2014; Ntombela, 2011). The inclusive education policy was divided into dimensions, dubbed: the immediate short-term, the medium-term, and long-term implementation (DoE, 2001). The immediate short-term implementation was originally intended to stretch from 2001 to 2003 but it was later extended to 2006 because of poor funding. The medium-term implementation planned for 2004 to 2008 and the long-term implementation from 2009 to 2021 were also delayed (DoE, 2001; Maguvhe, 2015b). One of the objectives of the short-term plan was to convert 30 ordinary schools into full-service schools (DoE, 2001). However, this failed as result of inadequate resources. The funding needed for the execution of the short-term phase was ZAR300 million. The funding was needed to upgrade ordinary schools, buy technological resources, develop the environment, provide a number of trained educators at schools, buy the necessary resources to accommodate both disabled and able-bodied learners and pay salaries for specialist educators (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Sukhraj-Ely, 2008; Yvonne, 2008). In poorly resourced schools the educators of learners with visual impairment could not fully help the learners without the necessary teaching media and enabling resources. The lack of specialist training robbed educators of the opportunity to enhance their understanding and experience of assisting learners with visual challenges.

The operation of an inclusive education policy has proved difficult at both the world-level and in South Africa, since the classrooms can be overcrowded and often have insufficient resources (World Bank, 2019). Overcrowded classes make it difficult for educators to identify learners whose visual impairment is only partial. This makes teaching all the more difficult since educators often have more learners who need their help (Majoko, 2016). Schools must be provided with enough resources like Braille machines, white boards and audio-visual teaching media to complement the

impairment of learners. The government must start to invest in the inclusive education of learners who are visually impaired. It is believed by some scholars that policy trade-offs occur in any policy implementation. Sometimes the government weighs the value of equity to efficiency; most of the time the government will prioritise efficiency to equity (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008).

2.6.2 Full-Service Schools

The Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001) initiated a new approach to supporting learners beheld with learning barriers or learners experiencing factors that hinder instruction and learning (DoE, 2001). The use of full-service schools was one of the strategies envisioned to address and develop new inclusive and supportive approaches for learners with learning impairments, such as LVI (DoE, 2001:18-19). The Department of Education (DoE, 2010) explains that support should not be provided according to the category of disability, rather based on the severity of need for the support. Therefore, a range of factors ought to be considered when determining the level of severity of need for support.

Full-service schools are therefore seen as a part of a wider range that provides educational sustenance to learners with moderate learning impairments (DoE, 2001). The Department explains that for a full-service school to provide the much-needed support to learners with learning impairments, the school should critically examine what can be done to address and get rid of barriers that hamper learning (DoE, 2001). Full-service schools should assist in promoting principles of inclusion by assisting and supporting neighbouring schools through interaction, exchanging knowledge and providing the necessary resources (DoE, 2010).

2.6.3 Special schools

In the past, there were fewer schools for learners with learning impairments(LVI) in South Africa and they were limited to admitting learners according to the rigidly applied categories of classification (DoE, 2001). Some of the learners with learning difficulties such as mild visual impairment would not qualify for educational sustenance. About only 20% of learners with disabilities were accommodated in special schools (DoE, 2001). Hence, in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), it was recommended that

the education and training system promotes education for all learners and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres for learning and enable all the learners to participate actively in the education process (DoE, 2001).

The White Paper 6 underlines the reputation of improving the quality of special schools and their phased conversion into special-schools resourced centres that provide professional support to neighbouring schools (DoE, 2001). The support included for mainstream and full-service schools, an important lever when establishing an inclusive education system. Special schools were, therefore, obligated to provide high level support for learners faced with learning impairments (DoE, 2010).

2.7 Hope in an inclusive classroom

It is propagated in the literature and widely agreed upon that hope has a positive effect on learners' ability to perform well academically, making it a significant aspect in the context of an inclusive classroom (Snyder, 2002). However, there is still a need to raise awareness of the importance of hope among educators through their experiences in inclusive classroom settings. Doing so is likely to provide direction on how to influence and improve academic performance among learners. It is also likely to offer an understanding of how educators perceive hope, and in the future, hope-fostering strategies within an inclusive classroom context. Snyder and Irving (1991, p. 198) describe hope in the inclusive classroom context as "a cognitive set that is composed of a reciprocally derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-directed determination); and (2) pathways (the planning of ways to meet goals)". The augmentation of hope in an educator as well as in the learner is certainly agreed upon to have an influence on learners' ability to engage in problem solving. Hence learners develop a belief in themselves that they can solve problems irrespective of limited resources or learning disabilities (Snyder, 2002). From this perspective I am convinced that the presence of hope in a resource-constrained inclusive classroom environment may contribute to satisfactory learning outcomes.

Educators should acknowledge learners' resourcefulness, capabilities and available strengths (Seligman & De Silva, 2011). Hope, as a future-oriented construct, can boost both educators' and learners' personal well-being (Seligman, 2002). Several studies on hope emphasise the importance of raising hope among educators that in turn can

be passed on to learners. Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, and Rehm, (1997) hope has the potential to boost an individual's self-esteem, improve school grades (Chang, 1998) and enhance sports performance (Curry et al., 1999). Snyder (2002) agrees that raising hope in learners will most likely lead to improved academic performance. Improved cognitive problem-solving capabilities as well as higher psychological well-being can also be achieved when one is hopeful (Ciarrochi et al., 2007). Rand and Cheavens (2009) offer insight into the way in which hopeful persons can cope with life's challenges, which in turn determines how well one adjusts to problems. In the subsequent Sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.2 I discuss hope in academic achievement and the view of educators as beacons of hope.

2.7.1 Hope and academic achievement

Ciarrochi, Heaven & Davies (2007) stated that for learners to succeed in an ever-increasingly competitive sphere, it was important for academic achievement to mirror the learners' distinctive abilities in addition to psychological resourcefulness to meet life's challenges. Unfortunately, it has not been the case, always. But instead it has somewhat led to the "waste and vast erosion of human potential" (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 557). Several scholars have focused research on identifying factors associated with learners' academic performance and positive adaptation in an academic setting (Smetana et al., 2006). Hope has been identified as a critical concept in a learner's academic progress and achievement (Curry et al., 1997). Other studies observed that school age learners with high hope developed positive social interactions, optimism, self-esteem, and academic achievement in their first year of schooling. In their study, Valle, Huebner and Suldo (2004) observed that hope and the global life satisfaction of learners are linked to successful academic achievement. The determination of hope in the incoming college freshmen has been used to predict the grade point averages, the dropout rates, and college graduation rates among university students after controlling the entry examination scores (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003). Hope can be used in underscoring the perceived learner ability to change and grow academically (Snyder et al., 2002).

2.7.2 Educators as beacons of hope

Educators play a significant role in creating a classroom environment conducive to learning that enables learner engagement, participation and contribution to the learners' academic achievement (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2014; Caprara et al., 2006; Hargreaves et al., 1998). Du, King, & Chi (2012) observed that educators who are psychologically well, especially with regard to the issues around their self-worth, could instil hope into learners that would assist them to feel confident and impart knowledge. It is when educators continuously maintain their sense of self-worth through self-regulation that their agency and pathways are enhanced. This, as Du, King and Chi (2012) point out, happens when educators believe in their own strengths. Hope can be taught and learnt and it is therefore central to an educational endeavour that both educators and learners achieve some degree of hope (Scioli & Biller, 2009). Subsequently Snyder and Lopez (2009) argue that hope can be borrowed and transferred to those without hope. For example, an educator with high hope may be able to instil hope into learners. Thus, teacher hope may have an important impact on the educational or academic outcomes of the learners. Exploring hope in an inclusive classroom through educators' experiences may contribute to a greater understanding and awareness of the role it plays in educators as well as learners pressured by the challenging demands of achieving good academic results. It is in this purview that this study has the objective of ascertaining how much educators understand about inclusive education policy (Pollard-Durodola, 2003).

High levels of hope have proved to make learners more adaptive when confronted with challenging situations, while learners with low levels of hope give up early when faced with similar challenges (Chang, 1998). It can be reasoned that educators should aim to help learners to increase their hope by including techniques that facilitate agency seeking and focus on developing pathways to specific personal goals (Snyder et al., 2002). In addition, educators may direct their teaching through using positive narratives. Hope underscores future expectations, which are vital for learners as they pursue progress and academic achievement. Bryant and Cvengros (2004) claim that hope is the most important concept in an academic setting. This is because hope can influence learners to perform to the best of their ability. Snyder (2002) elaborates that hope in educators may bring about positive change in learners' academic life. Thus,

hope can cause learners to perform better in their academic work (Bruwer et al., 2014; DoE, 2001).

2.8 Educator-parent collaboration relationship

The discussion of hope is such an important factor for possible detection of educators' comprehension of the policy on inclusive education. However, inclusive education policy asserts the need and reliance on a collaborative team approach as a model for addressing the curricular needs for an inclusive classroom. A collaborative approach – involving educators, learners, and parents – would be factored in because of its efficiency for decision-making and hence, the probable of producing high quality learner outcomes (Schwab et al., 2017). Educator-parent collaboration optimises the monitoring of the learners' progress in learning, and can result in the achieve their full potential (L. C. Lee et al., 2008). Some studies (e.g. Shin, Lee, & McKenna, 2016) suggest that educator-parent collaboration is essential for educators; it facilitates consultations amongst actors, the undertaking of joint efforts, and emphasizes sharing information in the quest to provide efficient and meaningful education to learners with visual impairments. It is certain that educators will often need to collaborate with parents in order to identify what areas of development LVI needed attention most on, and in determining together with parents the appropriate goals and objectives to achieve for the LVI (Carlisle et al., 2005; Dreamson et al., 2017). Dettmer, Thurston and Dyck (2002) outlined the need for a collaborative working team, stating its importance in the accomplishment of learning goals and inclusion. Whereas, Freeman (2018) referred to collaboration as the formation of teams that can be used to aid the development of effective education and support for LVI. Both Dettmer, Thurston and Dyck (2002) and Freeman (2018) underscored the need to create teams as on the basis that there might be shortage of human resources in most schools.

Friend and Cook (2010) went on to identify several key concepts that can be used to determine the success of inclusive education, *inter alia* voluntary collaboration, the sharing of resources, taking responsibility when making decisions, aiming for shared goals, the acknowledgment of both educators and parents' roles in working work together intuitively to plan a formal programme, and keeping the trust and respect. It is important for educators to understand inclusive education policy and the processes involved to deliver for the learner's sake (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018; Themane &

Thobejane, 2019). Inclusive education can be difficult to promote and maintain when educators are, either, inadequately informed, work as separate units, and or do not communicate amongst themselves regularly. To counters such challenges, first, educators ought to communicate with one another for the sake of shared decision-making and ideas as well as planning inclusive classroom programmes, and to discuss ways of improving learner performance (Zagona et al., 2017). Regular communication among educators would, therefore, have to be varied and not just one-dimensional in order to develop the necessary skillsets and awareness in handling learners with varied learning capabilities (L. W. Lee & Low, 2013; Suc et al., 2017). It would then become important and imperative that parents collaborate and share information concerning learners. For this to happen, both educators and parents will have to be honest and supportive of each other's responsibilities and roles. Some recent studies (e.g. Suc, Bukovec, & Karpljuk, 2017) have showed that educators will always have collaborate in order to adjust more effectively in their responsibilities, their roles and their actions towards the improvement of learners' developmental outcomes. So, both the parents and educators when in a collaborative relationship will often have to depend on each other – equally and reciprocally. This kind of process of *coming together* in an education process often will require continuous re-evaluation of existing roles, the recreation of roles when need arises, and the sharing of responsibilities and relationships. Educators are called upon to recognise that they carry shared interests and responsibilities in the learners development, and have to work collaboratively for the purposes of creating better learning opportunities (Wanat, 2010).

Robinson (2017) observed that, sound educational outcomes in educator-parent collaboration relies on the shared responsibilities while Dover and Rodríguez-Valls (2018) viewed educators as key role players, especially providing parents support and availing them with needed resources, both in the inside and outside of the classrooms. This is based the fact educators can actor as executors of the educational plans and the parents will forever need encouragement when carrying out their roles in the children's development and academic performance. Successful learner outcomes can be achieved with ease when both educators and parents know understand one another's roles in the collaboration effort and process. However, when there is unclear role definition or understanding between parents and educators, this in itself can become an impediment factor for the educator-parent collaboration process. The role

of parents remains an important discourse for effective inclusive education practices (Salter et al., 2017). Extant research has put forward indications and reasons for the need for the parents to be involved in the child's education, as well as suggested different ways parents can become involved, and provided evidence of how parental involvement improved learner outcomes (Adams et al., 2016; Wanat, 2010). Nevertheless, for effective collaboration between educators and parents' to be sustained, the preconceived ideas of one another's role ought to be put aside; and instead, everyone should jointly focus on the most important goal – that is, meeting the needs of LVI.

In conclusion, the main concern or objective of establishing an inclusive process would be achieving learner readiness – including LVI (Pocock & Miyahara, 2018; Salter et al., 2017). LVI often will need to undertake a transition from isolated special classrooms with low performance expectations into a likely more challenging inclusive classroom where outcome expectations could be very high. So, educators have to understand the role of and co-opt in parents, collaborate with parents on the basis as working partners, and build reliable and sustainable partnerships for the benefit of learners. It would be vital, therefore, that both parties (educators and parents) know what is expected of each other for a more effective collaborative endeavour. An effective educator-parent partnership requires patience, planning and structure in implementation. Factors in engaging educators in a collaborative partnership should therefore be clearly defined for successful SEN practice implementation (Adams et al., 2016). It has been noted so far in the extant literature that several factors such as the lack of clarity in role for and by educators can disrupt SEN educational practices. Some studies have gone on to outline educators' and parents' perspectives on their involvement in special education in an effort to clarify and delimit roles (Zagona et al., 2017), in the extent of the understanding of school-parent collaboration in special schools (Themane & Thobejane, 2019), educator-parent collaboration in vocational programmes for learning disabilities, and educator-parent collaboration in individualised education programmes (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018).

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the inclusive education policy in the perspective of supporting Learners with Visual Impairments – a subset of the Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) and the understanding thereof from the Educators' perspective. Notable though, the implementation of inclusive education policies still presents several challenges that includes a lack of resources, as well as poor understanding of the policy itself among educators. From the extant literature reviewed, it remains evident that the lack of adequate training of educators in inclusive classroom practices is likely the main hampering factor in the rollout and application of inclusive education policy. Also, it can be seemingly visible that the South African tertiary education institutions responsible for the development of training programmes for educators have often changed the curriculum, which may have introduced un-called-for inconsistencies in knowledge build-up, and in the understanding of inclusive classroom practices. The issue of lacking sufficient and appropriate resources remains featured high in the extant literature as an impediment to effective implementation of inclusive education policy for LVI. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methodology that was adopted for this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology that was chosen for this study and where needed, I have provided justifications taken into consideration for the methodological choices. In the proceeding sections of the chapter I have outlined in the discussion the chosen philosophical research paradigm adopted, the data collection methods, the research design, and modes of data analysis employed when conducting this research. Also included is the discussion regarding participant selection procedures, and contextual data regarding the cases as sources of data. In some sections I have explained the approach and techniques used to gather data and the documentation procedures that were followed, including the data analysis process, the overview of important quality assurance measures and ethical considerations that were undertaken.

3.2 Research paradigm

This study implemented an interpretive research paradigm and qualitative methods as it sought to explore educators' knowledge and understanding on the implementation of inclusive education policy, especially for LVI. An interpretivist paradigm is interested in the subjective meaning of a phenomenon from the participants' view. The interpretation is derived from rich stories recounted by participants. This allows for the uncovering of layers of concealed information that may be only obtained by in-depth probing and actively listening (Thorne, 2016).

An interpretivist paradigm argues that fundamental laws and observations cannot explain social realities (Blumberg et al., 2011). Hence, an interpretivist paradigm sets out from the belief that social realities are inherently meaningful and should be viewed through the participants' understanding as well as actions (Blaikie, 2009). Blaikie (2018) argues that what holds truth today will likely no longer hold truth in the future. Hence, the social context of research inquiry is very central in the understanding of a phenomenon investigated. Thus, reality should be understood from the context in which it was investigated – implying a subjective interpretation thereof.

Mason and Suri (2012) argued that if there is an inclination towards qualitative research – the root of an interpretivist paradigm which focuses on people’s lived experiences – it is most likely to inform a study by understanding the world from the participants’ point of view. Such an understanding of a phenomenon can then be related to the way in which the participants understood it at that point in time only (Blaikie, 2009). It was for this reason, that this study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm to focus on the lived experiences of educators’ knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy, especially, in the ambit of LVI. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm was deemed appropriate for this study since the study’s main objective was to understand educators’ perspective on LVI in relation to the inclusive education policy and its implementation.

3.3 Research approach

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is mainly exploratory (Creswell, 2014). It can be used to understand underlying reasons, opinions and motivation for certain behaviours or attitudes in different situations. Creswell (2014) states that a qualitative research method generates openness and encourages participants to multiply their responses, which may generate open ideas for future research (Breakwell et al., 2012).

Breakwell, Wright, and Smith (2012) state that qualitative research can be used to expose thoughts and opinions, and to look deeper into the problem at hand. I chose qualitative research methods because I did not want to limit participants in sharing their lived experiences. I wanted to find out exactly what they knew about inclusive education policy in supporting and teaching LVI as well as the implementation of the policy. One of the advantages of using qualitative methods is that they permit participants to express themselves in the way possible, they see fit, and gives participants an opportunity to reflect on their understanding and implementation of the inclusive education policy. However, there are disadvantages to qualitative methods, one being data rigidity, which makes it more difficult to assess and demonstrate as a person may remember things that he or she intentionally wants to remember (Creswell, 2014). This can be minimised by the use of audio-visual recording equipment.

3.4 Research design – multi-case study

I adopted a multiple case study research design for this study (Yin, 2013). Yin (2013, p. 23) describes a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence can be used”. Creswell (2014) points out that a case study implies “exploring a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information ... and reports a case description and case themes”.

Yin (2013) proposes three types of case study – exploratory, explanatory or descriptive in nature. This study adopted an exploratory case study as it sought to answer questions related to the what and how of the case (Cooper et al., 1986). When a study is exploratory in nature a case study is preferable (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010; Chaiklin, 1991). Rule and John (2011, p. 3) observed that a case may vary in “size and scope,” depending on how the researcher uses it and what investigation is intended. Rule and John (2011) further argued that case studies are often preferred because of their flexibility, versatility and the ability to elicit in-depth information. An exploratory case study was conducted with the aim of shedding light on LVI in an inclusive classroom, in particular, educators’ knowledge and understanding as well as the application of inclusive education policy. This has not been investigated yet and may pave the way for future research.

3.5 Research Methods

3.5.1 Sampling

I made use of purposive sampling technique in determining the sample of cases. A purposive sample is one that is selected basing on certain characteristics of a specific population and the objectives of the study (Tongco, 2007). Crossman (2018) explains that purposive sampling is used when a study requires one to capture knowledge based on a particular form of expertise. Although, purposive sampling allow for the researcher to choose what she needs to find out and decide on the participants who can and are keen to offer that information by virtue of their knowledge or experience(Bernard, 2002), for this study, I joined an existing project and the sampling

had already been done based on teaching qualifications and schools that had LVI. I preferred schools with LVI to meet the criterion of cases of interest; educators as participants of interest were those teaching inclusive classrooms having LVI. The sample of schools was therefore geographically located in different provinces, including Limpopo, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Free State, and Gauteng (Consult Table 3-1). Table 3-1 outlines the demographic details of schools, including the province in which they are located as well as whether the school is found in the rural, township or urban areas, the type of school (either full-service or special needs school), the grades in which LVI were found and observed, and the number of participants from that particular school.

Purposive sampling was preferred because it can be used to identify and select individuals or groups (educators in this case) that are knowledgeable about or experienced in inclusive education policy (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The disadvantage of purposive sampling is that it can be prone to researcher's bias (Patton, 2014). To minimise researcher's bias, specific criteria like teaching in full-service or special school with learners who are visually impaired were used to ensure that the sample represented what the study focused on.

Table 3-1 Cases selected using purposive sampling

<i>School Name</i>	<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Grade observed</i>	<i>Total number of participants per school</i>	<i>Locality</i>	<i>Province</i>
<i>School 1</i>	Full-service	Grade 4	10	Rural	Limpopo
<i>School 2</i>	Special Needs School	Grade 2	16	Rural	Limpopo
<i>School 3</i>	Full-service	Grade 1	19	Township	Gauteng
<i>School 4</i>	Full-service	Grade 1	24	Township	Gauteng
<i>School 5</i>	Full-service	Grade 3	47	Rural	KwaZulu Natal
<i>School 6</i>	Full-service	Grade 4	10	Rural	KwaZulu Natal
<i>School 7</i>	Full-service	Grade 3	24	Rural	Eastern Cape
<i>School 8</i>	Special Needs School	Grade 4	05	Rural	Eastern Cape
<i>School 9</i>	Full-service	Grade 6	13	Rural	Eastern Cape
<i>School 10</i>	Special Needs School	Grade 3	22	Rural	Free State
<i>School 11</i>	Full-service	Grade 6	09	Rural	Free State

3.5.2 Sample size

This study was limited to eleven schools, eight full-service and three special schools (Consult Table 3-1) from five different provinces whose educators participated in generating data. Educators involved in teaching learners in inclusive classrooms with LVI were the units of observation and analysis, as this was considered sufficient to demonstrate the understanding of inclusive education policy and its statement on LVI. Two schools were selected from Limpopo, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, Free State and three schools from the Eastern Cape. The total number of participants was one hundred and ninety-nine ($n = 199$).

3.5.3 Sampling strategy

Non-probability purposive sampling technique was applied because there was a need to describe the phenomena under investigation (Rossouw, 2000) and not an attempt to generalise the research results (Creswell, 2014). Unlike probability sampling, where each participant has the same chance of being selected, participants selected using the non-probability sampling technique are chosen because they meet pre-established criteria. Non-probability purposive sampling allowed the identification of participants who were deemed to have the characteristics that I was looking for – that is, teaching experience in full-service or special school with LVI – to provide a rich description of the topic under investigation (Ruane, 2016).

3.6 Data generation and documentation strategies

Data was generated using Participatory Reflection and Action-based (PRA) workshops, observations and interviews. Since I joined an existing project, some of the data used was collected by other researchers on the same project. The reason for the aforementioned techniques hinged on the fact that the study focused on educators' understanding and knowledge of inclusive education policy. Sections 3.6.1 through to Section 3.6.3 provide descriptions of each technique that was applied.

3.6.1 Participatory reflection and action-based (PRA) workshops

Participatory Reflection and Action-based (PRA) workshops were conducted in a collective with reflective activities that the researcher and participants mutually engaged in. PRA workshops often aim for the understanding and improvement of

practices that participants are part of (Gill et al., 2008). The reflective process that takes place during the workshop is linked to action, based on the understanding of the background, culture and context rooted in social relationships (Kindon et al., 2009). This method helped in the understanding of the knowledge as well as educators' understanding of inclusive education policy. Educators were provided with an opportunity to reflect on how they used inclusive education knowledge in their respective classrooms. Posters were distributed among participants, with prompts and pictures to respond to. Data was collected from the workshops across various provinces. Sample sessions from KZN are illustrated below in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3-1. PRA sessions in KwaZulu Natal

3.6.2 Participant observations

Some of the educators were observed in their natural environment delivering tuition in inclusive classrooms. Cohen and Crabtree (2014) state that participant observation "combines participation in the lives of the people being studied with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data". While observing the interactions of educators in an inclusive classroom, notes were taken (Consult Appendix A) using a template to guide the observation process, which enabled having better insight into educators' understanding of inclusive education policy and how they implement it in inclusive classrooms. To avoid bias, I was non-judgemental, sensitive, discreet and open-minded to any situation encountered while doing participatory observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

3.6.3 Reflective observation field notes

One of the most common techniques used in collecting data is when a researcher often makes observational notes when recording behaviours (often non-verbal) that could be observed only during the face-to-face interviews – in this case during the observation of teaching the learners in inclusive classrooms and workshops (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Observational notes include the context where the interview took place as well as the researcher's observations while collecting data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Observational field notes were taken (Consult Appendix A) during the inclusive classroom teaching sessions, which included participants' ways of teaching and the learners' behaviours. The observational notes were then discussed with the participants, which helped with their personal reflection; the researcher focused on moments when participants felt uncertain and when new information emerged during the teaching session.

Observational field notes helped to focus and structure the data gathered during the inclusive classroom teaching sessions. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that observational notes are an important tool to keep when conducting interviews.

3.6.4 Researcher's diary

It is natural for a researcher to be reflective during and after attending workshops (participatory reflective and action-based workshops) or interviews. Therefore reflective notes are important to report what the researcher thinks (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Several activities such as thoughts, feelings and my own perceptions after attending each participatory reflective and action-based workshops were recorded in a diary. These included challenges encountered before, during and after the workshop sessions. Creswell (2014) cautioned that a diary may be used optimally by recording personal thoughts, perception and feelings. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) further added to the list the way in which data was collected, how the researcher derived data categories and how research decisions were made.

3.6.5 Interviews

An interview is a method of communicating and obtaining information from a willing participant, often based on open-ended questions. Patton (2002) states that

interviews, participant observation, and documents are the main sources used in a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews can grant a researcher an opportunity to focus on specific elements he/she regards important to the study, while at the same time remaining open to other meaningful responses and directions in which the participants may venture. For semi-structured interviews, Green and Thorogood (2018) suggested the use of a comprehensive interview schedule to ensure that the interview remains focused. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with educators who worked directly with learners with diverse abilities in an inclusive classroom. Rowley (2012) mentioned that semi-structured interviews are most suitable for a qualitative study in that they may be adapted several times to accommodate the interviewees to include in-depth questions and probes for additional information from participants. Semi-structured interviews are therefore flexible and may be used as a basis with follow-up questions, which may or may not be part of the schedule. In Appendix B, you will find the interview schedule used in the current study.

Interview sessions were conducted at convenient and neutral venues within educators' school premises, and the participants had no interferences and freely expressed their opinions on the subject without being interrupted (Blaikie, 2018). The interviews were audio-recorded while observational notes were taken to ensure data quality. During the interviews, I applied active listening skills to understand the perception of educators and their experiences in implementing inclusive education policy. This is what Grobler, Schenk, and Du Toit (2003, p. 59) refer to as "entering the world of a client" that results in a relationship of trust with the participants.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Inductive thematic data analysis was applied due to its grounding in the interpretivist paradigm. This offered the opportunity to gain rich and meaningful insight from the data. The collected data was prepared for analysis by transcribing the semi-structured interviews, together with the typed field notes and observation notes, and then imported into NVivo 12 Pro software (Consult Figure 3-2). The imported data was repetitively perused and coded into nodes and cases for analysis. The relationships, relationship types and case classifications were determined to derive meaning from the textual data on how educators perceived inclusive education policy and its implementation.

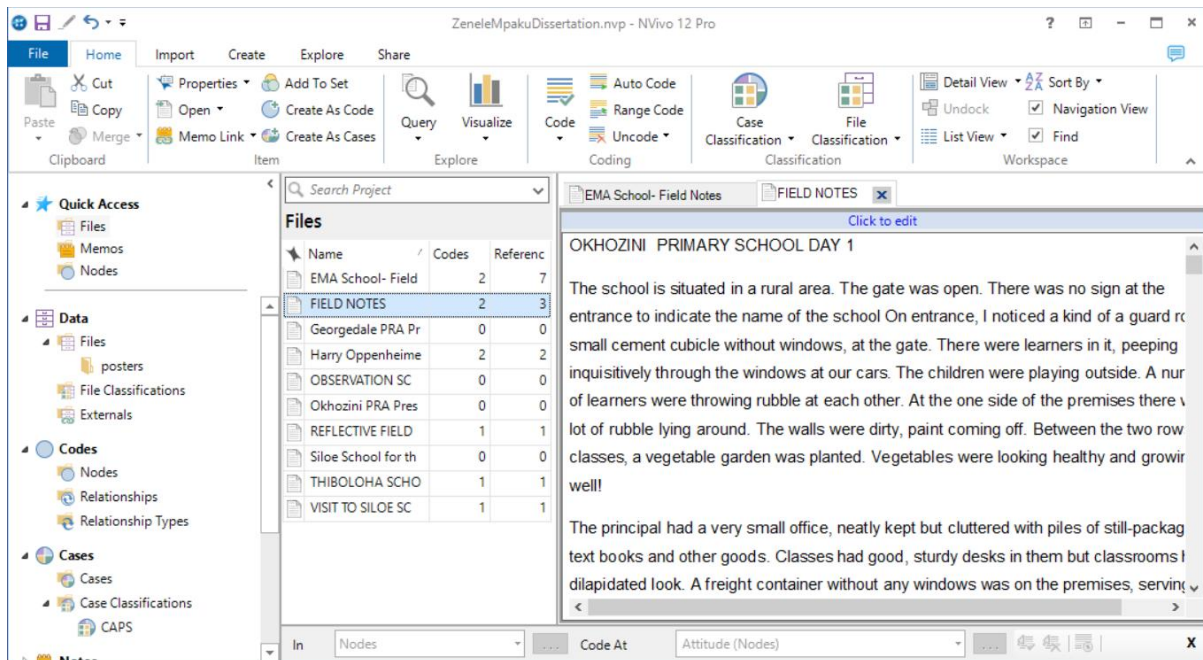


Figure 3-2 A screenshot of field notes imported into NVivo 12 Pro

The coded nodes were derived from a mind map on inclusive education shown in Figure 3-3, showing what inclusive education entails. As indicated in current literature (Maguvhe, 2015a), inclusive education entails policy, resources, impairments, amenities, special needs and full-service schools, training programmes, inclusive classrooms and support. The initial attributes of inclusive education when extended snowballed into diverse dimensions (Consult Figure 3-3). The mind map was converted into nodes, cases, relationships and case classifications for further analysis. After coding the data, text analysis was conducted applying *visual impairment* as a key search term, and yielded the results shown in Figure 3-4. Among educators, the understanding of education is synonymous with inclusive education, and inclusive education with education; this finding is strongly featured in the initial text analysis results. A further analysis of the findings applying *inclusive education* as a search term provided the results shown in Figure 3.5.

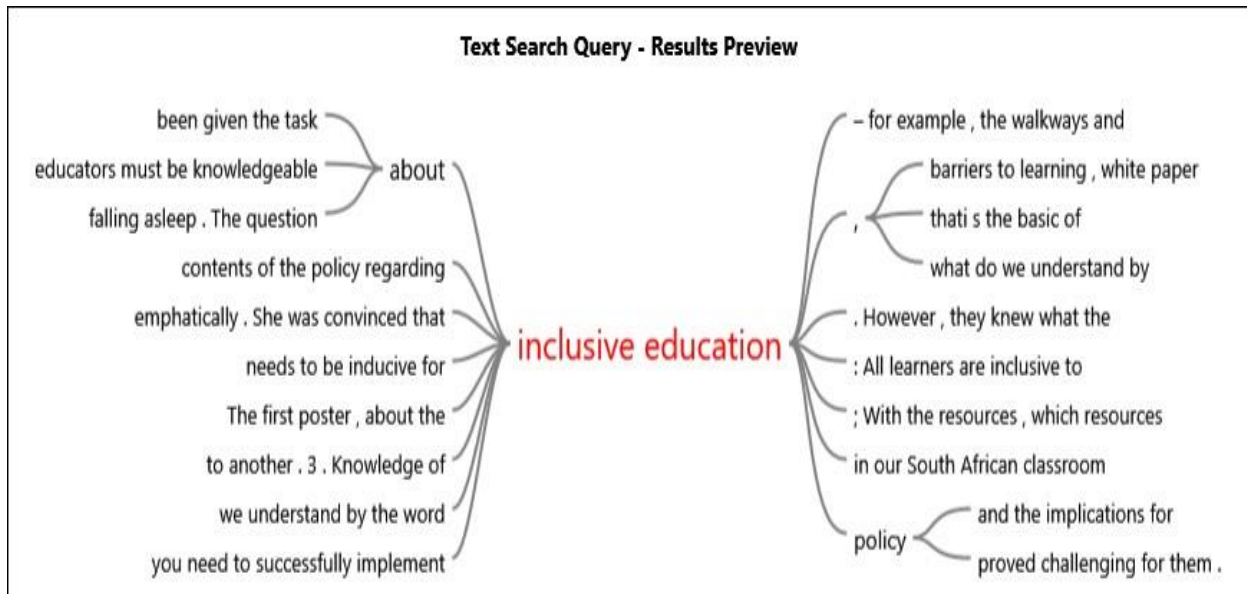


Figure 3-5. A word tree of a text search query for inclusive education

3.8 Quality Criteria

Qualitative research can hardly ever be rid of biasness completely. Nonetheless, researchers ought to ensure quality and trustworthiness in their qualitative research (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). Athanasou et al., 2012 explained that trustworthiness issues are concerned with the way in which verbal and textual data is collected, sorted, and classified. Lincoln & Guba (1985) proposed a four criteria model for ensuring trustworthiness in any qualitative research; which are credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability of findings. Later on, a fifth criterion termed authenticity was added (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth value of findings (Krefting, 1991). It is the extent to which the researcher, research participants, and readers have confidence in the accuracy of the findings (Thomsen et al., 2000). Prolonged engagement with data, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis are some ways of ensuring credibility (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). To ensure credibility for my study, I

read and re-read data scripts iteratively as a way to gain an in-depth understanding of data. Also, I used multi-methods to generate data as a means to meet triangulation – that is, I found evidence across the activities that answered my research question. At a broader scope, having been constituted part of the research team, my colleagues and I often met with the research supervisor for debriefing and validating/confirming the findings.

3.8.2 Transferability / applicability

Transferability refers to the extent to which results can be generalised to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A thick description of the features of the research study (including context and participants) enables one to judge its applicability/ transferability (Di Fabio & Maree, 2015). For my study I made detailed descriptions of all processes beginning with the rationale, methodology (Chapter 3) to reporting findings (Chapter 4) and I also offered a description of participants and the research site in Section 3.5.2 above.

3.8.3 Dependability/ Consistency

Dependability refers to the consistency or stability of research processes and data over the time and context (Polit & Beck, 2012). Dependability can be achieved by ensuring proper recording, accurate data transcription, using a variety of methods, and the provision of an audit trail (Kawulich & Holland, 2012; Thomsen et al., 2000). For my study this was ensured by my using different streams of data for each data generation activity. Proper transcription of data also was ensured.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Also, termed neutrality, confirmability refers to the extent to which the research data is bias-free and is a representation of participants' views (Thomsen et al., 2000). In qualitative research it may be difficult for a researcher not to have her/his own opinion but she/he needs to ensure that her/his opinions do not influence the data. For this reason, I detailed my assumptions and motivated my methodological choices (Harper & Cole, 2012)

3.8.5 Authenticity

Authenticity is the extent to which researchers exercise fairness and truthfulness in reporting participants' experiences of the phenomenon (Tobin & Begley, 2003). To ensure authenticity my colleagues clarified their observations, participants' responses, and noted whatever participants did not understand. They also summarised the participants' responses to enable them to reflect and further explain their responses. In my reporting of the findings, I was truthful and I reported only on the information given by the participants.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance (Protocol UP 17/06/01 Ferreira 17-003) was obtained from the University of Pretoria, granting me permission to conduct the research. Since this study formed part of a bigger project, permission was also obtained from the Department of Basic Education.

3.9.1 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Maintaining participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy is a crucial principle of every psychologist's work (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008). I provided information to the participants on how data would be utilised, stored and what I would do with posters. Photographs, audio and video recordings would be stored in my locked computer that only I would have access to for 15 years at the University of Pretoria's data management system. I informed them that some pictures or videos to the participants were to be published. However, since participants knew one another, anonymity could not be guaranteed. Participants were given pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality.

3.9.2 Voluntary participation

Participation was voluntary. No participant was coerced in any way into participating in the study. Rather, the participants were given all the information that might influence their willingness to participate, such as the fact that a representative from the Department of Basic Education would be present when they did their (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008). This was done in a manner that they could understand and comprehend, for example, in their mother tongue if need be. They signed an informed

consent form after everything had been explained to them and they were provided with the opportunity to ask further questions.

3.9.3 Protection from harm or non-maleficence

As a researcher I have a responsibility to protect participants from any harm that might be caused by my study and to respect their right to dignity (Kaiser, 2009). I ensured that participants were not at risk by not mentioning their school's name, the district location or anything that might risk participants' safety and security. Deception is to deliberately mislead others (Kaiser, 2009). Withholding information about the research from participants deprives them of making an informed decision about participating in the study. The purpose of this research as well as the expected duration and procedures was explained to participants. Participants were informed of their right to decline or withdraw from the research any time, should they feel uncomfortable without any negative consequences. During interviews, participants were informed individually of the nature of the workshops, and the activities that would take place, as well as how they would be allocated to groups. Participants were offered a light lunch since the data was collected after school.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter, the research methodology was discussed beginning with the paradigm adopted for the study followed by the research design, methods or techniques for both data generation and data analysis. A multi-case study research design was adopted in light of the qualitative nature of the study and the interpretivist paradigm. Purposive sampling was applied when identifying study cases and selecting research participants. The data generation techniques included participatory reflection and action-based workshops, interviews and participant observation when gathering data. Data analysis and interpretation implemented thematic analysis. The next chapter presents the analysis of data obtained from the participants as well as the findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the discussion of the findings of the study, in which an inductive thematic analysis approach was used. Two broad themes emerged from the data analysis on the topic of exploring educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education for learners with Visual Impairment (LVI). The themes include 1) information seeking and understanding through practice, and 2) educators' training, instruction practices and resources. In the subsequent sections, I present demographic details about the participants, cases and case classification.

4.2 Results of the study

This section and the subsequent subsections contain the findings of the study, including the discussions. Figure 4.1 illustrates the main themes. The findings are summarised into two broad themes: 1) Information seeking and understanding through practice – highlighting issues around knowledge and support of educators, and 2) Educator's training, instruction practices, and resources related to their pedagogical practices. The themes are discussed in detail in the subsequent sub-sections with four sub-themes, including their explanations, the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to decide/select data for analysis under these respective themes. Also included is the discussion of each theme in relation to the literature review.

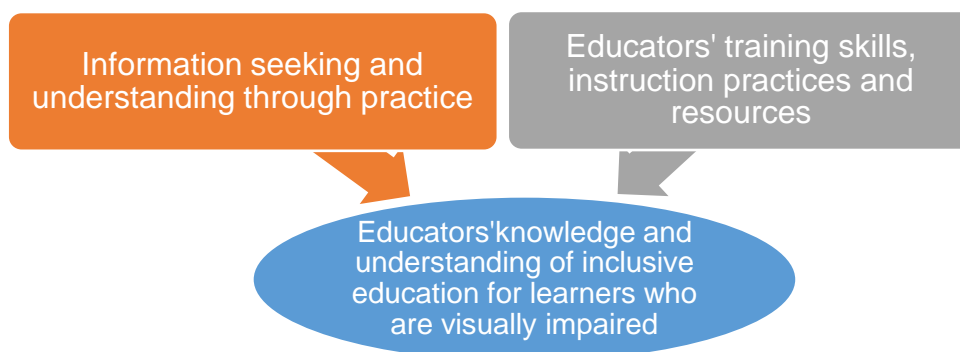


Figure 4-1 A visualisation of the themes derived from data analysis

Table 4.1 below shows the abbreviations that were used when quoting data from different sources. The schools are referred to as S1 to 11 and the PRA workshops are referred to as PRA 1 to 5, and participants as P + a number according to the number of participants in their respective workshops. For example, Participant 3 (P3) from PRA workshop 4 is referred to as PRA 4, P3. Provinces are referred to as cases and the five provinces are numbered Case 1 to 5. This according to the following arrangement: Limpopo (C1), Gauteng (C2), KwaZulu Natal (C3), Eastern Cape (C4) and Free State as C5. For example, if the school is in Gauteng it is referred to as S4 at C2.

Table 4-1 Abbreviations used

<i>Name of School</i>	<i>Abbreviation used</i>
School 1	S1
School 2	S2
School 3	S3
School 4	S4
School 5	S5
School 6	S6
School 7	S7
School 8	S8
School 9	S9
School 10	S10
School 11	S11
<i>PAR-based workshops</i>	
PRA-based workshop Limpopo	PRA 1 (n = 26)
PRA-based workshop Gauteng	PRA 2 (n = 43)
PRA-based workshop KwaZulu Natal	PRA 3 (n = 57)
PRA-based workshop Eastern cape	PRA 4 (n = 42)
PRA-based workshop Free State	PRA 5 (n = 31)
<i>Participant Observation</i>	
Participant Observation Session 1, Case 1	PO 1
Participant Observation Session 2, Case 2	PO 2
Participant Observation Session 3, Case 3	PO 3
<i>Participants</i>	
PRA based workshop Case 1, Participant 1	PRA 1, P1
PRA based workshop Case 2, Participant 2	PRA 2, P2
PRA based workshop Case 3, Participant 3	PRA 3, P3

PRA based workshop Case 4, Participant 4

PRA 4, P4

PRA based workshop Case 5, Participant 5

PRA 5, P5

4.2.1 Theme 1: Information seeking and understanding through practice

This theme explores Information seeking and understanding through practice and highlights the concerns around knowledge of inclusive education policy that educators have as it influences their understanding of the policy. This has a direct impact on their practice in an inclusive classroom, especially with the curriculum that they have to cover. The theme also covers the support that educators get from school authorities as well as from parents.

The sub-themes consider educators' knowledge of inclusive education that enables them to provide a classroom that caters and accommodates the needs of learners with visual impairment (LVI)

Table 4.2. Theme 1 and identified sub-themes, together with inclusion and exclusion criteria

Theme 1: Information seeking and understanding through practice

<i>Sub-themes</i>	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<i>Sub-theme 1.1: Knowledge and understanding of LVI needs</i>	Educators' knowledge that that enables them to provide a classroom that caters and accommodates the needs of visually impaired learners.	Educators' knowledge that does not contribute to an accommodating classroom for LVI.
<i>Sub-theme 1.2: Support from education authorities and parents</i>	Support that enhances educators' ability to deliver curriculum according to LVI needs.	Support that does not enhance educator's ability to deliver curriculum according to LVI needs.

A. Knowledge and understanding of learners with visual impairments' needs

Participants were asked to share their knowledge of inclusive education policy and what they thought it entailed. They were also asked how they thought this knowledge

could assist them to understand LVI in their respective classrooms. S7 from C4 province said the following¹:

Knowledge of how to take the history of each learner into account (medical history/eye conditions as well as home circumstances) ... other diseases and conditions that learners may have.

Participant P3 at C2 gave an impression of sharing the same sentiments as the previous participant on having knowledge and understanding of inclusive education. She mentioned the following:

Yah... may be another thing is to have a knowledge to understand that learners learn differently. Learners are different so that you can be able to... help to include them in your teaching, ja I think so. The knowledge of... that learners are different, are learning differently.

Another participant PRA 1, P1 at C1 commented, as if underscoring the experiences of participant S3 at C2:

This one is performing at a lower level, this one needs a high level of support hence his work is like this he is different to others, you know ...

Participant PRA 2, P2 at C2 elaborated on what the previous participants said and proceeded to add an example:

So now a teacher if you have that knowledge you can do curriculum, the curriculum straddling, a grade 4 learner who did not acquire the curriculum requirement in that phase in that current grade you can bring out that in the lower grade ja so that we avoid the one size fits all” and “...so the curriculum differentiation must be on board.

Participant S10 at C5 elaborated by saying the following:

We are given an opportunity to do the fast-tracking to do the backtracking, you know we are given an opportunity to do learner-base and learner pace.

¹ Participant responses are providing verbatim and have not been edited.

Figure 4.2 illustrates an analysis of the poster generated by the group during a PRA activity at C2. There were three categories that emerged during the presentation of the poster, namely knowledge that educators need to have when teaching LVI, skills that are imperative to have as well as resources that the schools need to cater for the needs of LVI.

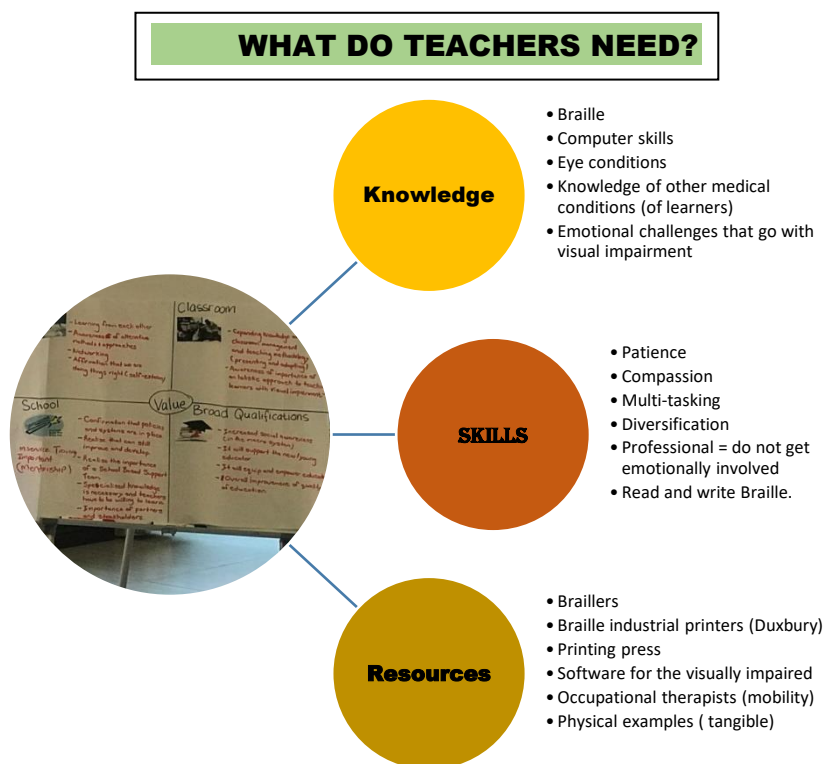


Figure 4-2 Poster from PRA workshop at C2

B. Support from education authorities and parents

Most participants seemed to point to the authorities such as the school management, district-based officials and parents who exerted pressure on them and somewhat influenced educators to focus mostly on curriculum coverage rather than inclusive education practices. This was highlighted when participant S2 from C1 remarked on the lack of support from the district officials:

When we do the follow up to find out why they do it like this ... you'll find that the curriculum they are supposed to or they are expected to fill the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) the way it is because when they come the officials,

they don't even ask who are the learners who experience barriers, they just take the examples randomly.

This participant further explained the frustration of having to be under pressure by ensuring that the curriculum is covered regardless of having to support LVI:

Yes, they focus more on curriculum coverage...; because they are putting pressure on teachers... Yes, ...the teachers they just run with the curriculum wabona (you see) ja and denying these ones that need additional time and additional resources you know and opportunity, they are being deprived, ... And we shouldn't be like that, akere(isn't)?

Participant PRA 4, P4 at C4 mentioned that due to the lack of support from school management, district officials and parents, some educators find ways to ensure the curriculum is covered by focusing on the learners that seem to understand better in class:

Mostly you'll find that they focus more on the learners that are performing very well.

Another participant PRA 5, P5 at C5 went on to mention the frustration they experienced as teachers when their management did not seem to understand differentiation as it impacted their ability to accommodate all learners in their classrooms directly:

You know that's the main problem, that's the main worry, ... you know when learners with learning challenges go back to their class you know they are treated exactly as other learners; you know they ignore the fact that the learners are not the same, you know that's our main worry, that's our main worry, ...

One of the participants, S2 at C1 explained that they spoke about these challenges as educators and they tried to motivate one another in terms of standing up for themselves against district officials:

We are telling them, even if the person is from the district, you must tell them about the SIAS, the policy. Explain, don't just be submissive and agree to anything, show them policies ...

Participant PRA 1, P2 at C1 seemed frustrated by the way in which district officials visited their schools for curriculum implementation but not so much for learners with special needs:

We need support from government in terms of knowledge and resources for differently abled learners, there are different forms that we still need to learn and know how to fill them like SNA 1,2 and 3 forms, concessions forms that address learners' barriers and be submitted ...

Another participant, PRA 4, P4 from C4 group elaborated on the number of learners they had in their classrooms that made it harder for them to focus on LVI:

Learners are overcrowded in our classrooms; the Dept. of Education should provide us with extra classes, make sure that there is enough space for them to move around ...

Another aspect of the challenges for an effective screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) process emanated from the relationship between educators and parents of learners, hence the inadequacies in attending to basic needs of LVI as illustrated in the participants' comments below. This seems to have led to difficulties of educators setting achievable goals for themselves and raising learners' expectations. The increasing number of learners with learning impairments poses added challenges to educators who faced other challenges, such as those from frequent changes in the curriculum and the lack of adequate support for learners with diverse needs. Here are what participants raised in this regard. Participant S4 at C2 shared the frustrations they went through with parents, especially those from disadvantaged communities:

Especially in township schools where parents ... doesn't have this knowledge, they don't understand their own children you know, they don't understand the barriers, the barriers that the learners are encountering, so us in the mainstream schools, you know we must have this information so that we can apply it to these learners ...

Participant S5 from C3 shared how they ended up being the ones educating the parents about their children's impairments as the parents not understand:

Most parents do not know their children, so usually what we do at the beginning of the year we would invite the parents ... and then we workshop them about eee differentiated curriculum what they could do with the learners at home.

Another participant, PRA 3, P3 agreed with the previous participant about parents' knowledge of their children's impairment:

The learner cannot acquire the skills that are needed here, so only the teachers are the only ones mainly the ones who are trying to teach these concepts to the learners, whereas at home its different, so the support is not enough.

Participant S5 from C3 commented as follows:

Some parents don't believe in those things [special needs education]. They just say their children are naughty, their children are disrespectful. So, there is just a lot of work to be done. We need to even educate their parents.

C. Discussion of Theme 1

Visual impairment impacts a child's future since it influences their ability to perform at school, which in turn, influences the quality of their lives and livelihoods as they will probably have to depend on others for assistance (Savolainen et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important for educators responsible for inclusive classrooms to have knowledge of various impairments that obstruct learning and how to handle such cases in light of the position taken from the inclusive education policy (Brown et al., 2013; Gilbert & Ellwein, 2008; Lupón et al., 2018). LVI are now considered a significant learning disability group and this study set out to ascertain and explain the knowledge and understanding of the experiences of educators teaching LVI.

In overall, the findings of this theme were tangential with the discourse in extant literature. For example, the success or failure of any policy, inclusive education included, lies with those who are charged with the implementation of such policy, be it educators, parents, school authorities, or educational officials, especially at the district

level mandated with the supervision of the implementation of inclusive education policy (Maharajh et al., 2016). As Hill (1990) and Meier et al., (2004) observed, policies are neither formulated nor implemented in a vacuum; they involve various actors, organisations, bureaucrats, and the general populace. Although, the primary responsibility of implementing inclusive education lies with educators, since they are the ones charged with the delivery of inclusive education (Savolainen et al., 2012), the sole provision of insight on a learners' impairments ought to stem from their families (Adams et al., 2016). As such, educators' comprehension and knowledge on the notion of inclusive education may be a paramount standing for its successful application; the same applies to the notion of inclusive education for learners with visual impairment (Sukhraj-Ely, 2008), but as Adams et al., (2016) observed, it can be better with appropriate parental collaboration.

This study confirms that most educators handling LVI espouse sufficient knowledge and comprehend the notion of inclusive education (as discussed in section 4.2.2, hereafter), and comprehend inclusive education as the process of strengthening the capacity of full-service schools to enable them to teach learners with special needs (Mel, 2004). Nonetheless, the findings somewhat indicate some significant move away from Brown, Packer and Passmore (2013) observation that educators of LVI seldom received training on how they should teach this kind of learners. Educators of LVI are generally trained to deal with any learning impediments, though the challenge may be around refresher training programmes. On the other hand, this study agrees with Brown, Packer, and Passmore's (2013) observation that the pre-service training programmes that educators undertake seem still not adequate in enabling the effectiveness of SIAS policy, and the subsequent handling of potential LVIs. This could be true because training in inclusive education has yet to be widely offered in the South African tertiary institutions training general educators. As a result, general educators have inadequate idea of how to identify and help LVIs, and oftentimes, unintentionally held a negative attitude towards LVIs (Shahid et al., 2018). In hindsight, this study confirms Savolainen et al., (2018) assertion that the potential kind of negative attitude of educators towards LVIs can have a domino effect on them, consequentially causing low self-esteem and poor performance (Savolainen et al., 2012).

Lastly, this study confirms that educators with appropriate understanding of inclusive education did afford LVIs a diversified learning environment as a result of having acquired experience teaching different types of learners (T. J. Davis & Carter, 1992). In this regard, the findings agreed with Mastropieri et al., (2009) observation that educators have the opportunity to enhance their conferencing skills and socialisation skills as they collaborate and co-teach with educators of learners with special needs. However, this was true only in those cases where there were specialists teachers, the Learner Support Teachers, who assisted general educators with teaching LSEs (Brown et al., 2013; Maharajh et al., 2016).

4.2.2 Theme 2: Skills, instructional practises and resources

Skills, instruction practices and resources characterise the pedagogical practices that educators use in the classroom. These are factors considered as criteria in determining certain practices when teaching, especially, for compliance with the inclusive policy statements on an inclusive classroom. Educators should have an understanding of learner strengths and weaknesses; they adjust lesson presentation to cater for varied levels of challenged learners during instruction and learning and take into account learners' interests, abilities and background.

Table 4-2 Theme 2 and identified sub-themes, together with inclusion and exclusion criteria

<i>Theme 2: Skills, instruction practices and resources</i>		
<i>Sub-themes</i>	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<i>Sub-theme 2.1: Educators skills and instruction style</i>	Educators' skills and instruction style, taking into consideration the needs of learners with LVI.	Educators' skills and instruction style that do not take into account LVI needs.
<i>Sub-theme 2.2: Scholastic resources</i>	A learning environment that takes into account inclusive practices as prescribed in the inclusive education policy and SIAS.	A learning environment that does not take into account inclusive practices as prescribed in the inclusive education policy and SIAS.

A. Educators' skills and instructional styles

Participants were asked about the most crucial skills they thought they needed to have when delivering curriculum in an inclusive classroom when catering and accommodating LVI. Participant PRA 5, P2 said the following:

Coping with multi-challenged learner such as those we're teaching, you should have patience, unconditional love for the children, willingness to go the extra mile, the willingness to provide pastoral care.

Participant S9 at C4 mentioned that it did not only end with the curriculum but they sometimes needed to extend their learners' daily living skills since it affected their performance in the classroom:

Skills and knowledge of different barriers to learner that learners have, knowledge of diagnostic measures, knowing how to teach learners activities of daily living, know how to teach skills that learners may need in life outside school ... focusing on the development and progress of learners even if is slow progress helped them to overcome stress which come as a result of their work.

Other participants in the PRA workshop sessions were consistent in their views, stating that it was important to demonstrate certain values when teaching learners who are visually impaired like PRA3, P4 at C3:

Teachers should not discriminate against learners with visual impairment and teach other learners to respect them ...

PRA 5, P5 at C5 shared the same sentiments with the previous participant:

Learners to be treated equally ... have compassion for learners with visual impairment; ... to respect and understand learners with disabilities.

In reminiscing on the experiences while teaching at a full-service school, a participant S1 from C1 offered in hindsight difficulties in a classroom with a learner who was suffering from epilepsy due to her lack of training and skills, which directly impacted how she was delivering the curriculum to her learners:

Before I could get experience on how to work with learners with diverse needs, ... I've encountered a problem at the mainstream, I have a one child who was attacked by epilepsy, this kind of epilepsy without fitting ... that child will just disengage and switch off then I could not understand that, I thought that this child was spoilt, I thought this child did not want to work, wabona (you see). Each time the child would say "ma'am I've switched off" "while you supposed to be doing your work you always say, you've switched off" Only to find that when I start with my course of knowing about inclusive education, I realized that no I deprived that child, I denied that child an opportunity, I did not have the knowledge, the knowledge and skills that I've got now, I've acquired now as an inclusive education specialist I could have applied there, cause most of the learners are now being labelled as being you know, misbehaving, they are you know being given all these kinds of names , only to find its us.

Notable were comments by participant PRA 4, P5 at C4 that happened to be special school:

We are driven by passion of working with children experiencing learning impairments.

Participant S2 at C1 from a special school said:

Focusing on the development and progress of learners even if is slow progress helped me to overcome stress which come as a result of my work.

In contrast were the educators' attitudes when it comes to skills in full-service schools; they did not share the same sentiments towards LVI. Participant S6 at C3 said the following:

We are in a full-service school, the full-Service School strategies, the Full-Service School model is only applied by the Learning Support Educator when we are doing pull-out ...

She continued to say:

You've got your teachers there, plus the fact that we are pulling them out of the class they think eee that even their assessment tasks must be planned by us. You know there's still a confusion. It's like now we are doing the exclusion. These learners with barriers to learning it's like ... they've got their own teachers, you know, we are still you know we are worried.

Another participant, S7 from C4, a full-service school was in agreement with S6:

It is hard to receive quality because we have large numbers in a class, which makes it difficult for the teacher to manage ...

B. Scholastic resources

School resources were identified as making a major contribution to the educators' ability to deliver curriculum in an inclusive classroom. Personal reflection by P5 on Case 5 during PRA 5 captured succinctly challenges he experienced from both the educators and learners' perspective:

The number one challenge was interaction – how to interact socially with sighted people, having been in a school for the blind all my life ...the pace at which the work at university is presented was very challenging. Teachers at a school for the blind adapt to the pace their learners can manage, whereas no such a thing happens at university or full-service schools, ... having used a slate and stylus at school to write with, I got to know computers only when I started to go to university and that proved to be a huge challenge.

Participant PRA 3, P3 at C3 was exasperated at how difficult it was for them in schools to identify the extent of a learner's visual disability before referring him or her due to lack of resources:

We must give them materials to read so that they can be easily identified, colourful materials and the notes given to them should be in bold letters, Braille should be used if needed ... we do not have any resources in the school, that is zero.

One participant PRA 4, P4 from C4 mentioned similar challenges when learners have already been placed in schools:

We don't have enough facilities to cater for such learners, e.g., school yard is not proper and learning equipment.... there is lack of resources.

Participant PRA 5, P5 from C5 went on to indicate resources needed by learners:

Painted windows for sunlight not to affect them, books, assessment papers and teaching slides ...

S11 from C5 had this to say about resources:

Every child has a right to learn, regardless of their physical disability, e.g. wheel chair learners, or poor sighted learners ... we need relevant resources, like Braille, overhead projector; bold font readers etc. use of tactile resources ... you know specialists, conducive and friendly environment, e.g. walkways must be flat ...



Figure 4-3 Braille machine. Photograph taken during school visits at C2

PRA 1, P1 at C1 mentioned the need for educators to be trained to acquire the relevant skills needed in an inclusive classroom:

Teachers should acquire different skills, e.g. How to operate certain devices.

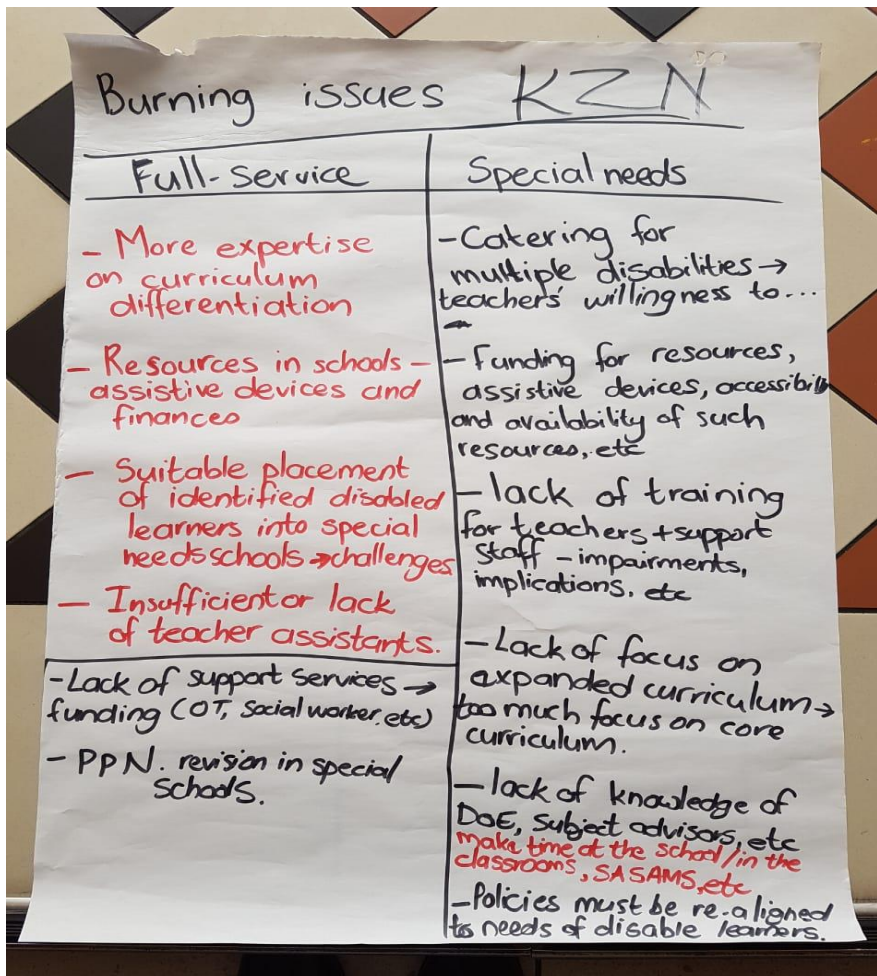
At C3 one of the participants PRA 3, P3 shared the same sentiments as P1 in Case 1 as she mentioned the following:

Teachers should be equipped with skills that will allow them to cater for all the needs of the child through workshops and training ... they should also be equipped in such a manner that they can be able to turn ordinary school into one having the potential to cater for all learners of different social and economic background ...

Participant PRA 2, P2 at C2 shared this view:

Teachers must be prepared/ trained to achieve relevant qualifications to deal with the barriers of learning and infrastructure in the school must be improved to accommodate learners with special needs ...

During a workshop in KwaZulu Natal, a presentation on resources needed was made by one of the groups. Figure 4.4 below indicates the resources that educators need in schools to be able to accommodate and cater for the needs of LVI in their inclusive classrooms.



Full-service	Special needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More expertise on curriculum differentiation - Resources in schools - assistive devices and finances - Suitable placement of identified disabled learners into special needs schools → challenges - Insufficient or lack of teacher assistants. - Lack of support services → funding (OT, social worker, etc) - PPN. revision in special schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Catering for multiple disabilities → teachers' willingness to... - Funding for resources, assistive devices, accessibility and availability of such resources, etc - lack of training for teachers + support staff - impairments, implications, etc - Lack of focus on expanded curriculum → too much focus on core curriculum. - lack of knowledge of DoE, subject advisors, etc make time at the school/in the classrooms, SASAMS, etc - Policies must be re-aligned to needs of disabled learners.

Figure 4-4 PRA discussion on resources presented by participants

C. Discussion of theme 2

In ascertaining the educators' abilities and skills level, generally, participants seemed passionate about teaching learners in an inclusive context regardless of the conditions in which they found themselves as implied in the inclusive education policy, and readily shared experiences. Implicitly, their experiences seemed hopeful for learners with varying degrees of learning impairment. The participants, especially those responsible

for learners in inclusive classrooms, pointed out that in the past there were attempts to use available platforms to share inclusive classroom experiences as a way to encourage and motivate other educators to remain hopeful despite the challenges they faced. This was an indication that, despite shortfalls highlighted in the extant literature (e.g., Maharajh et al., 2016) on policy implementation, LVI educators undertake own initiatives in handling learning impediments encountered (Adams et al., 2016). This is commendable effort on the behalf of educators striving at all possibilities to ensure LVIs stay and succeed in school through their pedagogical strategies (Engelbrecht et al., 2016).

Nonetheless, educators still face insurmountable difficulties on providing sufficient, appropriate, effective resources, in both the setup of inclusive classrooms and scholastic materials (Bruwer et al., 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Since the observations and assertions by Bantwini and Diko (2011) and Bantwini and Letseka (2016), educators' practical challenging experiences teaching LVI are heightened as a result of resource constraints and poor support from those with authority, especially, from school authorities, education officials, and even parents. It is still apparent in the classrooms, as asserted by Leithwood (2010) and Leithwood et al., (2010), that for successful inclusive education of LVI, certain environmental adjustments, including the role of school leadership and parents are non-negotiable and imperative. Some of the needed adjustments include light settings in the classrooms, seating positions, bold colour, white boards instead of chalkboards, enlargement of print books, tactile and audio aids (Brown et al, 2013). The lack of enough resources to support the inclusion of LVI dampens hopes and wills of educators to help such learners. Consequentially, inclusive education policy still looks a mere wishful gesture, especially, in poorly resourced communities (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Thiessen, 2007, 2012).

4.3 Summary

The concept of inclusive education is meant to reflect the democratic values of equality and human rights as well as the recognition of diversity. The research findings on educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy by educators teaching LVI underscore perspectives contained in current literature. The findings highlight the two major themes indicating that multifaceted societal changes,

encompassing educational reform and contextual changes, including the management of diversity in schools still pose challenges for educators. Educators have an understanding of inclusive education policy; however, the implementation of inclusive education requires more than the understanding of the policy. In the next chapter, I discuss the closing remarks in relation to the research questions, and where possible, provide recommendations and insight for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a summary of all the major conclusions regarding educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy for learners who are visually impaired. I also provide a summary of the previous chapters, including reflections on the research methodology used in the study. I start off with a discussion covering the summary of all preceding chapters, which includes Chapters 1 to 4 in Section 5.2. Section 5.3 presents the research conclusions, and a summary of the research findings arranged according to the research questions. The conclusions provide answers to the research questions in Section 1.3 of Chapter 1. Section 5.4 presents the relevance of the theory. Section 5.5 is a summary of the major contributions of the study. Section 5.6 contains a discussion of the limitations of this study and I wind up the chapter offering recommendations for the implementation of guidelines and for future studies in Section 5.7; Section 5.8 contains the concluding remarks.

5.2 Summary of the chapters

Chapter 1 provided an introductory overview of the study inquiry as well as the content of the dissertation; stated the research questions, problem statement, contextual background, and the purpose of the study. The concern of the study was determining educators' knowledge and understanding of the inclusive education policy in respects to visually-impaired learners.

Chapter 2 explored inclusive education policy with specific reference to educators' knowledge and understanding of the policy for learners who are visually impaired. From the literature reviewed it is evident that a lack of training of educators of visually impaired learners may hamper the implementation of the inclusive education policy. Secondly, South African tertiary education institutions responsible for training educators have often changed the curriculum, introducing inconsistencies in knowledge build-up and the understanding of inclusive classroom teaching. Thirdly,

the issue of limited resources features highly in the literature as an impediment to effective implementation of inclusive education.

In **Chapter 3** the research methodology was discussed, beginning with the paradigm adopted for the study and thereafter, the research design, methods or techniques for both data generation and data analysis. The multi-case study research design was adopted in light of the qualitative nature of the study and the interpretivist paradigm. Purposive sampling was applied when identifying study cases and selecting research participants. The data generation techniques included participatory reflection and action-based workshops, interviews and participant observation. Data was analysed and interpreted by making use of thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 presented the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis. After the discussion of the sub-themes, their relevance to the current literature was outlined.

5.3 Research conclusions

In the following subsections I present the conclusions resulting from the study. Firstly, I present conclusions to the secondary research questions and then to the primary research question.

5.3.1 Secondary research question 1

- How is inclusive education understood in full-service school classrooms?

To answer this question and the subsequent ones, data was screened and the themes that emerged had to highlight the Educators' understanding of key areas of the inclusive education policy statements. Those areas that ought to have emerged in the themes included the teaching and pedagogical practices, the initial screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS), how Educators go about seeking more information related to the learners (LVI), and the setup of inclusive classrooms and resourcing. Also important was the understanding and take on Educators' collaboration with parents, training on inclusive education and support structures as illustrated in the policy.

The evidence from the data suggests that educators in full-service schools can be said of not having adequate understanding of inclusive education as declared in the policy statements. Nonetheless, I found that, in most full-service schools, the regularity with which, for example, Educators adopted instruction and learning approaches that quickened the coverage of the curriculum was rife. Meaning that such teaching practices are not borne and informed of good pedagogical practices and strategies as highlighted in the inclusive education policy. In the instances like those concerning curriculum coverage, the participants highlighted remedies that ought to be undertaken, such as applying the curriculum differentiation strategies, were not widely practiced to the benefit of LVI, as noted in participants' comments. The other notable aspect arising in the themes was the kind of attitude some educators had towards LVI. Most Educators did not seem to care much or aware of the Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) forming part of their responsibility. Instead, often treated SIAS as the work of learning support teachers, which confirms the findings by Shahid, Ehsaan and Khan (2018) and Bantwini and Letseka (2016) that poor attitudes make inclusive education a mere wishful gesture.

Nonetheless, the success of inclusive education is meant to be the ideal of all educators in an inclusive classroom context, and educators ought to view it as a transformation tool for achieving equality, equity and empowering the LVI (Maguvhe, 2015b; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2018). Although there are significant challenges experienced by most Educators, the instruction and learning practises are not in tandem with the policy recommendations for an inclusive classroom. As was observed by Pijl, Frostad, and Flem (2008), some educators teaching LVI in full-service schools often socially excluded visually-impaired learners by sending them to specialised classes where they were provided with specific support. LVI were less popular in some cases and some educators still did not acknowledge LVI in the classrooms, while others experienced fewer relationships or participated less often as a member of a sub-group.

Participants outlined other challenges, some of which suggest insufficient training or the lack of capacity development to handle diverse learners with learning impairments (Bruwer et al., 2014; Power & Taylor, 2018). However, their remarks were in agreement with Shahid, Ehsaan and Khan's, (2018) findings about the educators' level

of understanding and how to handle learners with significant learning impairment. Some of the challenges can be associated with the lack of the required training as observed by Maphalala (2006) and support structures. It is on this basis that I answer this secondary research question claiming affirmingly that Educators' understanding of inclusive education in full-service schools remains inadequate when catering for LVI, given the time period ever since the inception of inclusive education policy.

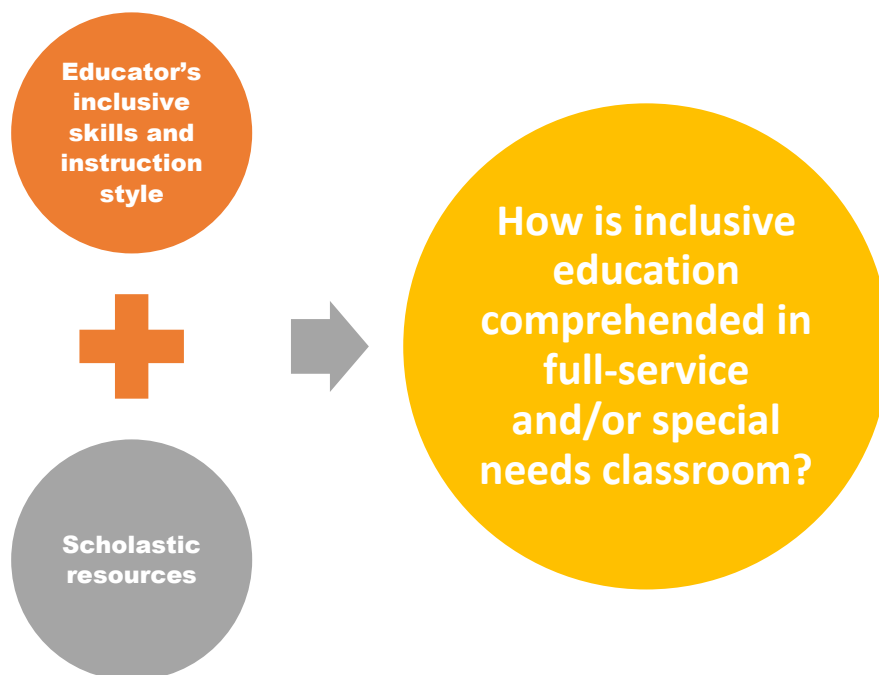


Figure 5-1 Illustration of the secondary research question with Theme 2

5.3.2 Secondary research question 2

- How is inclusive education understood in special needs school classrooms?

When it comes to educators in special needs classrooms, the same benchmarking aspects as implied in the inclusive education policy were used to determine the answers for this question. The findings indicate there being a sufficient and considerable understanding of inclusive education among the Educators in special needs schools. For example, to negate curriculum coverage, Educators employed the curriculum differentiation strategy as a means to address shortfalls for LVI. Also notable was a significant emphasis to conduct annual workshops on inclusive

education, and parents were invited to attend such events. There was also an emphasis on collaboration with parents to ensure LVI had support both at school and in their homes.

Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) was adopted in all special education schools as an initial process in assessing the needs for learners. Most of the classroom setup addressed the learners' needs. Nonetheless, the inclusive classrooms setup in special needs schools had yet to reflect all the six items underpinning the inclusive education policy as argued for by McConkey's (2003) on inclusive classrooms. The findings also highlighted a significant likelihood of social exclusion for LVI from the community as commonly highlighted in the literature review (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Maguvhe, 2015b). But educators were attempting to educate communities on the need to educate LVI, addressing through the conduction of regular workshops. On this basis, I can claim with significant confidence that it was evident that some educators in a specialised needs environment had eschewed sufficient understanding and had knowledge of inclusive education policy for visually impaired learners. For example, LVI are often treated in the same way as those with lesser impediments. In addition, social acceptance seemed emphasized between categories of learners with varying learning impairments. Many LVI were often included and taught together with other learners. The findings confirm the need for Educators to be deliberately knowledgeable on inclusive education, adopt inclusive pedagogical practises when teaching learners in inclusive classrooms (Bourne et al., 2016).

The study's findings on inclusion are congruent with those of many others, like Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018), Murungi (2015) or Ntombela (2011) and underscore the importance of building a community within the classroom to make education inclusive for LVI. McConkey (2003) suggests that "philosophically and pragmatically, inclusive education is primarily about belonging, membership, and acceptance", which aligns with the South African special needs education policy assertion that all children and youth can learn under enabling learning circumstances. All learners need unwavering and ongoing support since they are different and their differences must be both acknowledged and respected. There are still notable and significant challenges with most educators' attitudes, behaviours, teaching methods and practices, the

curriculum and environment, falling way short meeting the diverse, and sometimes, complex learning needs from LVI. Therefore, the ideal of McConkey (2003) of inclusive education promoting “full participation and equality” through providing children with disabilities an opportunity to interact with other children and participate in their communities remains distant.

5.3.3 The primary research question for the study

- What is educators’ knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy for learners who are visually impaired?

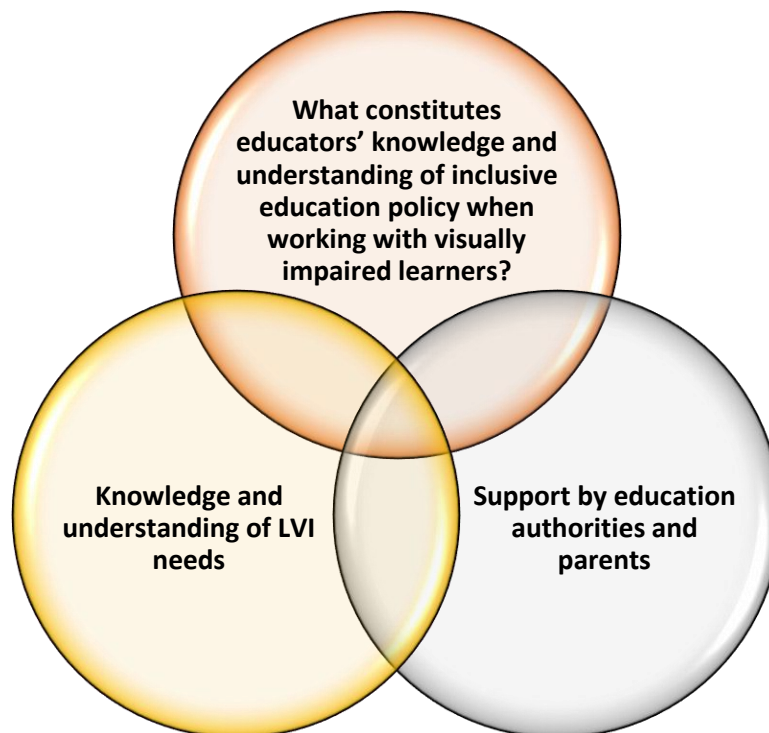


Figure 5-2 Relationship between primary research question and Theme 1

Both in the PRA workshop sessions and school visits, participants freely shared their opinions, thoughts and frustrations about their knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy and its implementation. The findings suggest that the participants' understanding of inclusive education policy varies, depending on their role and training, especially about implementation. Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1 indicates that when it came to knowledge and understanding of LVI needs, educators in special schools had better means of catering for their learners than educators in full-service schools. For instance, Educators in special schools took it upon themselves to educate one another regarding the best ways to deliver curriculum while accommodating LVI

in their classrooms, while those in full-service schools refer learners to education specialists. I can conclude that many educators have knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy. This study found that educators in special schools had positive affective experiences in implementing inclusive education or handling learners with adverse learning impairments. Theme 1, sub-theme 1.2 indicates that some educators have taken the responsibility upon themselves to create awareness among peer educators and call on them to adopt inclusion in their classrooms. Educators are inclined and preoccupied with implementation challenges, some of which reflect the overall working conditions of being an educator although not necessarily specific to inclusive education.

The findings are in line with perspectives in the literature on what educators teaching LVI can do and achieve regarding inclusive education. LVI, especially those from townships, are most at risk (Bruwer et al., 2014; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). Discouraged parents feel less capable of providing additional support to their children due their limited educational background and the lack of educational resources (Maguvhe, 2015b; Maphalala, 2006). However, as beacons of hope, there are some educators going an extra mile to achieve inclusive education.

The findings highlight concerns about educators' need of support. This is in agreement with Maphalala (2006) and Zagona, Kurth and MacFarland (2017) who observed that educators should be offered support in terms of basic information on implementing SIAS in inclusive contexts. Educators working in inclusive contexts should be well-grounded in knowledge of the SIAS process and how they can be supported in implementing inclusive education (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Ruparelia et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the majority of participants in PRA workshops often did not express their opinions and experiences while discussing the existing support structures that ought to be in place at schools. Some noticeable signs were the lack of resources, such as instructional and learning media, the dilapidated nature of many classrooms and offices, poor facilities and amenities, and a lack of basic infrastructure like ramps for wheeled-chaired learners to access classrooms (Bruwer et al., 2014).

In spite of the limited support for inclusive classrooms, academic excellence remains featured as a priority in schools and the expectation of better performance of learners

is set high for educators (DoE, 2001). Nonetheless, the implementation of inclusive education has encountered many challenges, often attributed to the cause of underperformance among learners or even learners dropping out of schools (Willging & Johnson, 2009). To mitigate some of the challenges related to inclusive classrooms that educators and learners face, Ciarrochi, Heaven and Davies (2007) recommend the need to access psychological counselling as well as increasing resources to help both educators and learners to utilise their abilities for academic achievement. In tandem with Ciarrochi et al.'s (2007) recommendations, Witvliet et al. (2019) observe that the current thinking and positive affective experiences among educators can be linked to the motivation for future goals. Educators of visually impaired learners should be beacons of hope outcomes (Cheung et al., 2014).

5.4 The relevance of ecological systems theory to this study

Bronfenbrenner (1989) believed that schools and educators should support learners' primary relationships and create an environment that accommodates and nurtures children and their families (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The way in which educators understand and implement inclusive education policy impacts the LVI directly and in turn influences their behaviours and attitudes to schooling, and probably the rest of their lives. Schools and educators form part of the microsystem level which is the crucial level according to theory (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Their interaction with the parents as per mesosystem level as well as all other levels has the strongest influence and greatest impact on children. Hence it is important and necessary for schools and educators to provide supportive learning environments for their learners. This theory stresses the significance of children's individual differences that feature during their developmental years. This has influenced how people view and assist children with learning barriers. Berk (2006) states that the structure of Bronfenbrenner's environment consists of five levels (as seen in Figure 1-1).

Table 5-1 Comparison of the theoretical framework and the themes that emerged from the study

<i>Key aspects of sociocultural theory</i>	<i>Findings that emerged from data analysis in Chapter 4</i>
Microsystem	Theme 1: Information seeking and understanding through practice Sub-theme 1.1: Knowledge and understanding of LVI needs.
Mesosystem	Theme 1: Information seeking and understanding through practice. Sub-theme 1.2: Support by education authorities and parents
Exosystem	Theme 2: Skills, instruction practices and resources Sub-theme 2.2: Scholastic resources
Macrosystem	Theme 2: Skills, instruction practices and resources Sub-theme 2.1: Educator's inclusive skills and instruction style
Chronosystem	No occurrences in data

The findings of this study indicate that educators from full-service schools, like those for special needs schools, understand inclusive education to some extent. However, educators are preoccupied with implementation challenges that impact their deliverance of the curriculum and how they cater for learners with visual impairment. This theme relates to the microsystem of the developmental ecological system as it incorporates the relations and influences learners have with their immediate surroundings such as family, school or neighbourhood environment. The mesosystem relates to interaction between structures of learner's microsystem; for example, the connection between the educator and the parent; in this study parents felt less capable of providing additional support to their children due to their education background and the lack of educational resources. However, educators went the extra mile to provide support to the parents so that they were on par with them.

The exosystem refers to the structures in this system that impact the learners' child's development by connecting with their microsystem, such as school resources; the learner may not be directly involved in this system, but the actions of the family impact them. One of the study findings is that township schools are the most obstructed schools due to a lack of resources. The macrosystem includes customs, laws and cultural values and is considered the outermost system in the learners' development. Educators' skills and instruction style are influenced by the training they receive from institutions of higher learning or provided to them by the Department of Basic

Education as per the inclusive education policy. This training enables them to provide an inclusive classroom that caters for the needs of LVI.

5.5 Possible contributions of the study

The current study provides insight into educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy in an inclusive classroom context and in the nature of inclusive education in full-service schools. It indicates that there is still work to be done regarding emotional and material/physical resources facilitating the effective implementation of an inclusive education policy. It further suggests that educators are still not grounded in the concepts and practice of inclusion and special schools as stipulated by the Department of Education White Paper 6 on special needs education.

As a result, this study contributes to the need for understanding of what educators are confronted with daily in the inclusive classroom context. Several stakeholders can find meaning regarding educators' experience, stakeholders such as unions, heads of department, communities, parents, educational psychologists and future researchers. The Department of Education might find the study valuable as it propagates the insight that some educators are unable to distinguish between inclusive contexts and special schools. Therefore, the Department may start creating awareness between the two with the hope of assisting educators in understanding whom to consult for assistance. The study may also assist policymakers in training educators whenever there is a paradigm shift so that educators may know what they are dealing with in a situation like the introduction of inclusive education. The study may create awareness in the Department of Education of the importance of up-to-date and effective training programmes, and the need to support educators when they shift from one system of education to the other.

The study could help educational psychologists in preparing them to have an understanding when assisting educators suffering from frustrating experiences. Furthermore, it might create an awareness that there is a need for extra training for school counsellors whom educators often need to consult when in need, since few schools have such facilities. Lastly, the study might help communities and families to start supporting educators and learners in inclusive education.

5.6 Challenges and limitation of the study

The research process that informed my study is linked to a number of limitations. To begin with, during data generation participants worked in groups which means that participants might have not felt free to share sensitive information. Although, the attendance of PRA workshops was high in most cases; in some instances, staff members showed signs of having been coerced into attending the sessions or were not informed about the workshops in time. Many attendees expressed frustration with the scheduling of PRA workshops; they mentioned participation in discussions was not voluntary. At times different sub-groups would be formed and continuously talk among themselves or did not consent to signing the participation forms. Where possible, PRA workshops had to be carried over to the following day since many preferred that they be held in the morning hours. On the same note, in working in groups participants seemed to influence each other in responding to some questions and this might have led to some information being held back as participants tend to follow the first speaker's line of thought (Marrelli, 2008). In one group participants seemed to converge on one theme although they were encouraged to express their personal thoughts and experiences since there was no wrong answer to the questions.

The research study was conducted in English which is generally a third or fourth language of most South African Educators (Casale & Posel, 2011). Although the assumption may have been that Educators bear functional knowledge of English, they still struggled with expression. This might have prevented some research participants from engaging in discussion. The audio recordings and transcripts show that in some groups specific participants dominated the discussions more than others.

Bonanno et al., (2015) describes resilience as a process that occurs over a period of time. Therefore, the current study may have restricted benefit in explaining understanding of inclusive education by Educators teaching LVI because of it being a single study. Most likely, conducting a longitudinal study will be commendable. Also, this study was part of a bigger project, so I did not have complete control. For instance, I could not influence the data generation date on which it would have been suitable for me to participate. As a result, I participate in a few cases while absenting for many.

5.7 Recommendations

5.7.1 Skills training

There should be training in vocational skills that can help change educators' mind-set about more realistic and hands-on hope-experiences in the inclusive classroom (Chang, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000). I therefore, recommend that the school system or the Department of Education leadership take note of this recommendation and engage educators in periodical workshops and training sessions to train them in positive thinking. Another recommendation is that institutions of higher learning, which are responsible for training students to become educators, follow specific criteria for training educators about inclusive education and make inclusive education a core module in the curriculum for every educational qualification. The reason is that there are student educators who are not aware of the challenges in inclusive education, which could affect them when they enter the teaching profession. This is because educators' attitudes as well as their perceptions are said to play a crucial role in learner dropout rates (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015). These also affect the general academic performance of learners in inclusive education (Rand & Cheavens, 2009).

5.7.2 Support structure

The school support system and structure should be reinforced with relevant personnel, such as counsellors to offer personalised support to learners as well as to educators. Then educators would experience hope differently and would likely have their hope augmented. I further recommend that there should be more district meetings with educators since district structures play a crucial role in supporting educators. It is at these district support meetings that educators can report on their challenges in an inclusive setting. These specific needs of the educators may motivate the authorities to provide schools with specific resources to deal with learners in an inclusive classroom setting. Identifying specific resources is crucial for educators to be effective in the classroom context (Sebastian et al., 2017; Seligman & De Silva, 2011).

I also recommend that parents be encouraged to participate in their children's school activities as this plays a significant role in academic achievement. Sebastian, Moon and Cunningham (2017) substantiate this by pointing out that when parents are involved, their children's academic achievement increases, and so does their self-

esteem. I further recommend that the management and the entire school system deal with all the operational challenges, which prevent educators from performing their duties and influence the way in which they experience hope. These operational deterrents could be in the form of red tape, which educators have to go through when dealing with the learners in an inclusive education system. It could be the school management through to the secondary structures of the Department of Education. All these deterrents should be relaxed so that educators can deal effectively with challenges.

I recommend that educators be provided with enough resources to deal with challenges in their work with learners in inclusive education. A lack of resources has been a challenge for many years as most schools are under-resourced, and it affects how educators deal with learners in the inclusive classroom (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). This insufficient provision of appropriate resources in dealing with such challenges makes it difficult for educators to focus on teaching learners only as they utilise more of their time trying to get resources in their classrooms. A study conducted in South Africa and Australia by Mansfield, Ebersöhn, Beltman, & Loots, (2018) found that the lack of resources in classrooms, including lack of classroom maintenance is the biggest challenge facing educators in performing their duties.

5.7.3 Large scale inquiry

Gaps that require further investigation were identified in the current study. These gaps were across the board and included even South African literature on the topic, which was investigated. These gaps were discovered when the participants were asked, for example, about the extrinsic pathways of inclusive education. Few participants comprehended the dynamics of the learners in their respective classrooms, which was one of the vital factors. The aspect, which is highlighted by research on the extrinsic pathways, is SIAS (Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support). The findings of this study, therefore, seem to suggest that resource constraints are hindering learners' success in inclusive classroom contexts despite the efforts by some educators (Mel, 2004).

I recommend that future research should focus on addressing issues such as educator-parent collaborative relationships in the implementation of inclusive

education policy. The researcher utilised quite a small sample, and I recommend increasing the sample to more cases, and including rural and township areas.

5.8 Conclusion

This study sought to determine educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy. The study was conducted in five different provinces, namely KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Eastern Cape, Free State and Gauteng. In spite of what the literature says about hope-experiences, at the end of this study the findings indicated that hope-experience outcomes are positive among educators in the inclusive classroom setting. However, there is a need for intervention in the form of support structures as well as proper training of educators providing inclusive education. It is important that hope-experience interventions be emphasised by the school administrators and district officials when creating a manageable learning process that can bridge the gap between the challenged learners and their peers in the inclusive classroom and the educators, their parents as well as the community at large. Lastly, there is a need for conducting another inquiry, this time with a larger participant base than this study to provide more generalisable outcomes. This would offer more reliable and conclusive results on the overall state of inclusive education.

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APPENDIX A: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee

09 March 2018

Dear Ms Mpaku-Papu

REFERENCE: UP 17/06/01 Ferreira 18-003

This letter serves to confirm that your application was carefully considered by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. The final decision of the Ethics Committee is that your application has been **approved** and you may now start with your data collection. The decision covers the entire research process and not only the days that data will be collected. The approval is valid for two years for a Masters and three for Doctorate.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. **Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void.** The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
 - Change of investigator,
 - Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
 - Participants
 - Sites

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Upon completion of your research you will need to submit the following documentations to the Ethics Committee for your Clearance Certificate:

- Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
- Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
- Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number **UP 17/06/01 Ferreira 18-003** in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes



Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

Chair: Ethics Committee

Faculty of Education

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



CONSENT LETTER

Dear Educator

Background:

You are invited to participate in a research study by the University of Pretoria, Department of Educational Psychology. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. Please take the time to read the following information and ask for clarity you may need.

Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to explore educator's needs, experiences and expectations in terms of the implementation of inclusive education policy, more specifically in support of learners who are visually impaired. The findings of the study will be used to develop a postgraduate diploma in visual impairment studies, in support of teacher training in the field of inclusive education policy implementation.

Research activities:

If you decide to participate you will be expected to participate in two participatory workshops of 2–3 hours each, presented after hours at your school over two days, towards the end of 2017 or beginning of 2018. In addition, you may be requested to allow classroom observation to take place in your class during one morning. Throughout, the research team will be making field notes, taking photographs, making audio-recordings, and observing all activities.

In addition to these activities you will be invited to take part in a colloquium in 2018 in order to discuss the developed module content and share any additional information and ideas you would like to add. Observation, field notes, recordings and photographs will once again form part of this activity. If needed, you may be invited to participate in a follow-up interview.

Benefits of participation:

Your contributions will ultimately inform the development of a postgraduate qualification which will benefit teachers in future. The discussions that you participate in may also be of value and provide you with ideas to implement in class.

Risks:

No risks are foreseen however in the case of any such unfortunate event, we will deal with it in a professional and confidential manner.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

All information obtained will be dealt with in a confidential way and you and your schools identity will be protected. Even though recordings will be made and photographs taken, your face will be disguised except if you opt for it to be shown. All recordings will be transcribed and identities protected by using pseudonyms when reporting on the data. No information or identities will be disclosed to anyone outside the research team.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

Compensation:

There is no monetary compensation to you for your participation in this study.

Consent

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without cost. I therefore voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Full name of participant

Signature

Date

Consent to take pictures and show my face **YES/NO**

Researcher's signature

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF CODING OF TRANSCRIBED POSTERS

POSTERS: WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED?

CASE 1

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO?

- Be patient;
- Understanding;
- Have compassion for learner with visual impairment;
- Know Braille + contractions;
- Be able to adapt and simplify curriculum(take the essence out);
- Adaptation of papers;
- Computer skills good;
- Understand the difference in eye condition and medical considerations;
- Know when to refer;
- Know pass requirements;
- Keep learning developing;
- Continually adapting;
- Every child is unique.

LEARNERS WHO ARE VISUALLY IMPAIRED/BLIND

- braille writers;
- CCTV system;
- Braille printers;
- Embossers;
- Lots and lots of paper;
- Printing works;
- Adapted tables and chairs;
- Special orientation;
- Dark lines+ thicker paper;
- Adapted learning material in different fonts+ braille;
- Enlarged and simplified worksheets and pictures;
- Adapted LTSM (for example zoo boards);
- 3D models + rules;
- Talking calculators;
- White canes and mobility in structures;
- Adaptable lightning;
- Small lamps;
- Ruby/max mouse electronic devices;
- Understanding different eye conditions;
- Development of good special orientation especially for geometry;
- Patient teachers;
- Small classrooms;
- Additional time for assessments;
- Individual hands on teaching.

CASE 2: WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye conditions; • Braille basic + contractions • How to make adaptations for the different eye conditions; • Understand prognosis; • Basic information on home situation of the child; • Psychological impact of previous trauma; • Know about newest technology; • Good understanding of curriculum in order to focus on essential; • Information of different additional impairments/ disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to learn computer, Braille, adaptations, transcriptions of BR to print; • Sensitive handling of parent of child with impairment (sometimes strict/ sometimes lenient); • Braille editing of BR text before printing; • Minimilise content; • Patience with learners who take long to learn; • Know how to do amanuensis; • Adaptation of exam papers; • Prepare diagrams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In service training programme • IT specialist; • Braille technician; • All electronic devices and LTSM; • Enlarge and in Braille; • Read and scribe amanuensis human resources.

CASE 3: WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille; • Computer skills; • Subject: good knowledge(stay updated) • Eye conditions; • Knowledge about other medical conditions (of learners) • Emotion challenges that go with visual impairment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience; • Compassion; • Multi task; • Diversify; • Professional= do not get emotionally involved; • Read and write Braille. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brailers; • Braille industrial printers (Duxbury); • Printing press; • Software for visually impaired; • Assistive devices (camera, replace black board) <p>Ruby's Magnifiers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational therapists (mobility)

- Physical examples (tangible).

CASE 4: WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESOURCES
Training; Further studies; Workshops; Research; Read more books; Sharing ideas (networking) Should be trained on how to deal with visual impaired learners; Assessment and identification of learners	Computer skills; Communication; Patience Tolerance; Sign Language Great Communication	Braille; Computer; Visible posters; Big fonts on work cards; Suitable stationary. Reading glasses Books with bigger font Talk back machine Braille

CASE 5: WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESOURCES
Training on how to identify learners who are visually impaired: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to assess. • How to use braille. • Ways on how to build their self-esteem when in the mainstream. • How to design lesson plans and activities that will accommodate these visually impaired or blind learners. • Which font size is suitable for learners? • Individual needs of the learners; • Handling; • How to assess them; • Knowledge of using resources 	Identify; Assess; Design; Implement Training/workshops	Braille equipment; Charts Braille; Spectacles; Hands; Flash card(big font)

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

Name: Learners with Visual Impairments

<Files\\Participant Observations> - § 9 references coded [15,33% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2,96% Coverage

¶13: were not very sure about the contents of the policy regarding inclusive education. However, they knew what the main points were about – that all children were able to learn and were entitled to equal treatment (non-discrimination)

Reference 2 - 1,04% Coverage

¶14: On the shelves in these two rooms, a lot of broken Perkins brailers were stored.

Reference 3 - 2,11% Coverage

¶17: the educator showed me on her computer screen how she was busy converting a technology text book to braille. She explained that all illustrations had to be removed.

Reference 4 - 2,93% Coverage

¶17: methods a teacher could use to explain some of the concepts that were illustrated in the sighted textbook. She proposed two possible methods: (1) Using a model and (2) using an already known concept to explain something unknown

Reference 5 - 1,66% Coverage

¶17: some educators taught blind learners without providing them with text books or notes, expecting them to remember subject content.

Reference 6 - 0,68% Coverage

¶17: the ability to place yourself in the learners' shoes

Reference 7 - 1,16% Coverage

¶17: patience and an understanding of the challenges and distinctive problems of blind learners

Reference 8 - 1,25% Coverage

¶10: no tactile aids in the classroom. All the blind learners did not have text books in front of them

Reference 9 - 1,52% Coverage

¶10: were enough plugs in the classroom for electronic aids, but there were none. Also, no learners had brailers with them

<Files\\THIBOLOHA SCHOOL> - § 10 references coded [12,98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,37% Coverage

¶4: explained that the braille printer was broken

Reference 2 - 1,99% Coverage

¶7: the Apex machine – was it for the school? Mr. B told me that the school had 2 Apex machines – about R80 000 each. He said that each and every blind learner did have a braille machine, but that the braille machines were heavy to carry around

Reference 3 - 1,22% Coverage

¶7: There were a lot of damaged/broken machines. It cost about R5000 to fix a braille machine and the only braille machine technicians were in Pretoria

Reference 4 - 1,65% Coverage

¶8: the most problematic during his schooling and study years. His number one challenge was interaction – how to interact socially with sighted people, having been in a school for the blind all his life.

Reference 5 - 0,37% Coverage

¶18: adapt to the pace their learners can manage

Reference 6 - 1,30% Coverage

¶18: having used a slate and stylus at school to write with, he got to know computers only when he started to go to university. That proved to be a huge challenge

Reference 7 - 1,66% Coverage

- ¶11: How to take the history of each learner into account (medical history/eye conditions

¶12: as well as home circumstances)

- ¶13: Braille grade 1 and grade 2
- ¶14: Other diseases and conditions that learners may have

Reference 8 - 0,55% Coverage

- ¶15: Knowledge of different assistive devices and software (e.g. JAWS).

References 9-10 - 3,86% Coverage

¶19: stressed the following values:

- ¶20: Patience
- ¶21: Unconditional love for the children
- ¶22: Dedication
- ¶23: Willingness to go the extra mile
- ¶24: Willingness to provide pastoral care.

¶25: Skills that they mentioned that teachers need to possess were the following:

- ¶26: Knowledge of different barriers to learner that learners have
- ¶27: Knowledge of diagnostic measures
- ¶28: Know how to teach learners activities of daily living

- ¶129: Know how to teach skills that learners may need in life outside school.

<Files\\transcripts final> - § 21 references coded [47,11% Coverage]

References 1-2 - 7,54% Coverage

¶14: You know eeeee, before I could get experience on how to work with eee learners with diverse needs, neh .. I've encountered a problem at the mainstream, I have a one child who was attacked by epilepsy, this kind of epilepsya without eeee fitting neh.. that child neh will just disengage and switch off then I could understand *hore* I thought that this child was spoilt , I thought this child did not want to work, *wabona*. Each time would say "ma'm I've switched off" "while you supposed to be doing your work you always say, you've switched off" Only to find that when I start with my eeeee course of knowing about inclusive education, I realized that no I deprived that child I denied that child an opportunity, I did not have the knowledge, the knowledge that I've got now, I've acquired now as an inclusive education specialist I could have applied there, cause most of the learners are now being labelled as being you know aaaa, misbehaving, they are you know being given all these kinds of names , only to find it us

¶15:

References 3-4 - 3,02% Coverage

¶16: You know, as a learning support teacher especially in the mainstream, especially in township schools where parents eeee does not have this knowledge, they don't understand their own children you know, they don't understand the barriers, the barriers that they learners are encountering, so us in the mainstream schools , you know we must have this information so that we can apply it to these learners not to be ...

Reference 5 - 2,04% Coverage

¶17: may be another thing is to have a knowledge to understand that learners learn differently. Learners are different so that you can be able to,, can help to include them in your teaching, ja I think so. The knowledge of ..that learners are different, are learning differently

References 6-7 - 2,29% Coverage

¶18: decaps, it gives us opportunity to apply differentiated curriculum. We are given an opportunity to do the fasttracking to do the backtracking, you know we are given an opportunity to do learner-base and learner pace. So now a teacher if you have that knowledge you can do curriculum the curriculum straddling ,

Reference 8 - 0,37% Coverage

¶11: so the curriculum differentiation must be onboard.

Reference 9 - 1,70% Coverage

¶14: most parents do not know their children, so usually what we do at the beginning of the year we would invite the parents here and then we workshop them about eee differentiated curriculum what they could do with the learners at home

Reference 10 - 3,17% Coverage

¶22: you know when they go back to their class you know they are treated exactly as other learners, you know they ignore the fact that the learners are not the same, you know that's our main worry, that's our main worry but now and then we are trying to educate the SBST, the school assessment team you know all the teachers, when we are doing the management plan, we include the trainings on how to deal with learners with diverse needs

Reference 11 - 0,65% Coverage

¶23: In mostly you'll find that they focus more on the learners that are performing very well

Reference 12 - 2,36% Coverage

¶28: the fact of pulling them out of the class they think eee that even in their assessment tasks must be planned by us. You know there's still a confusion. Its like now we are doing the exclusion. These learners with barriers to learning its like... you've got their own teachers, you know,we are still you know we are worried

References 13-14 - 1,93% Coverage

¶31: the learners who experience barriers, they just take the examples randomly,so they feel that the officials will come and find that this learner was not in the class, he did not write the classwork, you see, so that's the challenge they have- Curriculum coverage

Reference 15 - 3,20% Coverage

¶33: we are telling them, even if the person is from the district, you must tell them about the SIAS, the policy . explain, don't just be submissive and agree to anything, show them policies

hore eeee this one is performing at a lower level, this one needs a high level of support hence his work is like this he is different to others, you know. I think even the the curriculum facilitators themselves they don't have this knowledge

¶134:

Reference 16 - 0,33% Coverage

¶135: because they are putting pressure on teachers

Reference 17 - 1,34% Coverage

¶137: the teachers they just run with the curriculum *wabona* ja and denying these ones that need additional time and additional resources you know and opportunity, they are being deprived

¶138:

Reference 18 - 4,10% Coverage

¶152: you know this things of the relationships, you'll find that the mother is using Sepedi and the fathers speaks Xhosa or siZulu, and you'll find that when the se parents speak they use different languages when they communicate with the child they use a language that is different to the language that is used at the school, so the learner cannot acquire the skills that are needs here, so only the tea hers are the only ones mainly the ones who are trying to teach these concepts to the learners, whereas at home its different , so the support is not enough

Reference 19 - 3,71% Coverage

¶154: We are trying to fill the gaps, we are trying to fill the gaps that were not acquired at the previous grade or current grade remedial. We are trying to simplify the different concepts. we are trying to make these learners understand the content, so we are bringing a lot of strategies, we are bringing a lot of visual aids , you know to stimulate their cognitive concepts. We are even tapping to their perceptual motorskills, you know our teaching differ totally with the ones that teachers are applying.

Reference 20 - 0,89% Coverage

¶159: the learner did not do the work because there is no one, there is not enough supervision at home, there are no resources.

Reference 21 - 8,47% Coverage

¶163: I would ask some kind of financial support from the SMT that like financial...for instance when we are doing the concepts that need concentration, there are resources that need to be purchased that will bring interest, you know that will attract these learners to focus more. You'll find that those assistive devices are very expensive, they need to be financed, so instead of finding the correct or suitable device you just take anything then the impact becomes negative you see, so I'll ask for some kind of financial assistance to can provide alternative LTSM like assistive devices. Some are, they are suffering from the *bare keng* hard of hearing, sight, they will need a magnifying glass something like that. Some hard of hearing they will need tape recorders, you don't hearing aids and then sometimes you'll need *bare keng* personal support, a support from the service providers like OTs to come maybe just once ja, ja Occupational Therapists or speech therapist, and some kind of finance that we can order one of these service providers to come and give us the support that we don't acquire here as teachers have to and the impact becomes

<Files\\VISIT TO SILOE SCHOOL NEAR POLOKWANE> - § 17 references coded [19,42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,62% Coverage

¶15: special class, an inclusive model was followed where learners were allowed to attend mainstream classes on the appropriate academic levels

Reference 2 - 2,40% Coverage

¶21: The learners have outstanding musical abilities, but the other school on the premises, St. Francis, took most of their musical instruments. They also repossessed all the models that were in the model room. Biology and science teachers were now left without any models for the blind learners to feel. Because all learners were being taught in braille, each and every learner needed a braille machine. However, Grade 1 learners did not all have braille machines and new learners could not be given machines, as there was a shortage.

¶22:

Reference 3 - 1,21% Coverage

¶25: Understand the child IN TOTALITY (this she stressed).

¶26: Here she mentioned the diverse needs of each individual child. The teacher needs

¶27: to assess the child and meet the child where he/she is, use whatever he/she has.

¶28: One should never compare any child to another.

Reference 4 - 0,11% Coverage

¶30: Function of the SBST.

¶31:

Reference 5 - 1,07% Coverage

¶131: Knowledge of screening and assessment procedures.

¶132: She explained that assessment needed to be done in a team, and that the school

¶133: health nurse played an important role. Some basic knowledge of eye conditions

¶134: were important as well.

Reference 6 - 2,55% Coverage

¶136: the principal spoke for a while about the challenges they experienced with parents, who were often illiterate and had a lack of knowledge with regard to blindness and the stimulation of their visually impaired child. She told me about cases where parents went out for the day, leaving their blind child alone in the home with some food next to him. She explained that many children who arrived at school were not even toilet trained. Parents tended to be over-protective, did everything for the child and did not believe that they could do anything independently.

Reference 7 - 0,94% Coverage

¶137: principal told me about a full-time brailist working at the school, whose duty it was to convert written text to braille and to make embossed teaching aids. These resources were all in a very modern library

Reference 8 - 0,42% Coverage

¶139: However, because of staff shortages she is required to teach *and* do the mobility instruction.

References 9-10 - 1,69% Coverage

¶139: she is not able to instruct all learners and she has to select the cases where the need is most severe. She explained to me that most of the staff had gone to Braille training at the university of Venda. The learners of the teachers that have gone to the training are supervised by their colleagues, so the classes are over-filled and instruction not taking place as usual.

Reference 11 - 0,57% Coverage

¶140: the teacher was not really sure how to approach her task. There was no sign of any stimulation aids or classroom decorations.

Reference 12 - 2,09% Coverage

¶41: A number of learners were sitting on the carpet, playing with blocks. A few older learners were sitting at desks. About 5 little ones were sitting at a table marked with their names (in writing, no braille). I could not see any braille or tactile classroom resources. Apart from two large hand-drawn pictures of a cow and a horse, marked 'COW' and 'HORSE', there were no classroom decorations. There were shelves at the back of the class that were full of toys.

Reference 13 - 1,62% Coverage

¶42: The teacher complained about this year's class. She said that she did not really see progress. Especially one little boy, who had hydrocephaly, could not keep up at all. She mentioned that she requested the psychiatrist to come and test the children. I could see that she was out of her depth with regard to the co-morbidities some of her learners displayed.

Reference 14 - 2,25% Coverage

¶42: She brought some plastic animals to demonstrate how they had to feel what the animals looked like. However, I realized that this could not be an effective way to introduce them to animals. Not only did the plastic animals not have hair, but their size were also very deceptive. The cat was even larger than the cow, and the horse missed one leg. I asked her how she prepared her learners to read braille and she brought a wooden strip with holes made in groups of six, resembling a braille cell.

Reference 15 - 0,85% Coverage

¶42: the teacher did have appropriate basic skills, but still lacked knowledge of appropriate ways to work on concept formation in blind learners and of co-morbidities and how to handle that.

Reference 16 - 0,65% Coverage

- ¶54: Training for teachers should aim at the holistic development of learners. They should be prepared to function in life outside in the community.

Reference 17 - 0,38% Coverage

¶57: teachers should be passionate. 'They need to make the seemingly impossible possible'

APPENDIX E: FIELD NOTES

REFLECTIVE FIELD NOTES: VISIT TO PHILADELPHIA LSEN SCHOOL

We arrived at 08h00 on the first morning and were directed to a smart boardroom, where our PRA session was going to take place. Educators started to arrive. We were received by a visually impaired educator. When the permission letters were completed, she asked whether our advanced diploma was going to be any different from the one presented by Unisa (which no longer exists). She also wanted to know if the school was going to reap any benefits from their participation in the project. We explained that the project was an action research project, where the participants would definitely benefit from their participation. We promised to give feedback as soon as the course content was finalised. When we wanted to start our session, one educator pointed out that they had been under the impression that they were only coming for an introduction and that no arrangements had been made for their classes.

Educators were not very sure about the contents of the policy regarding inclusive education. However, they knew what the main points were about – that all children were able to learn and were entitled to equal treatment (non-discrimination). They proposed to meet again at 10h00, when all would be free to attend. In the meantime, we could go for classroom observation.

I asked the visually impaired educator to show me around. She took me to two rooms where some devices were in use to generate learning materials for blind learners. There was an embossing machine, a braille printer, an Apex (still in its box) and two devices that could be used to enlarge print for visually impaired learners that were similar to the CCTV systems we saw at Prinshof School. These enlarging devices were apparently not really in use, maybe because the need for them exceeds the supply by far. And I suspect that they would need a lot more screens to put the system in use in a classroom, which they don't have. According to the visually impaired lady, the learners could use the devices in their own time, but I doubt it very much that they are being used. The little room where they are right now is very crowded with some things obviously unused and covered in a layer of dust. On the shelves in these two rooms, a lot of broken Perkins brailers were stored.

I was also taken to see the library, where the braille specialist was busy preparing braille notes and books. Some braille books, wire-bound, were stored on the shelves. There were tables where some educators and one or two learners sat in front of computers.

I then followed my guide to her office. On the way there, she started talking about her passion for teaching blind learners. She pointed out that a teacher of the blind works 'double'. Where

a sighted learner can just look at a picture, a blind learner has to be exposed to real-life tactile experiences – e.g. they could be taken outside to feel a leaf during a biology lesson.

In her office, the educator showed me on her computer screen how she was busy converting a technology text book to braille. She explained that all illustrations had to be removed. I asked her what methods a teacher could use to explain some of the concepts that were illustrated in the sighted textbook. She proposed two possible methods: (1) Using a model and (2) using an already known concept to explain something unknown. For example, use a known shelf in his hostel room to explain what a frame structure is. The educator complained about the laziness and lack of motivation she sees in some staff members. She told me that some educators taught blind learners without providing them with text books or notes, expecting them to remember subject content. I asked her what the main value would be that would ensure that a teacher was a good VI teacher. She believed that it was the ability to place yourself in the learners' shoes. She also mentioned patience and an understanding of the challenges and distinctive problems of blind learners. As an example, she mentioned blindisms. A learner may act in a socially inappropriate way (e.g. a learner playing with his penis, not realizing that it is a private part that is not supposed to be exposed). Other staff members wanted to punish the blind learner for his actions, but she went to explain to him what private parts were and that they were not supposed to be exposed. After her explanation, the learner stopped the inappropriate behaviour.

The educator told me her own story. She contracted measles as a little girl and suffered serious damage to her eyes. She was admitted to the then HF Verwoerd hospital, and had to undergo several operations. She stayed in HF Verwoerd hospital for about two years, during which her schooling came to a complete standstill. When the doctors told her parents that no more could be done for her eyes, she was discharged and enrolled in Siloe Lsen School in Polokwane. Here staff members changed her birth year on her registration documents from 1960 to 1962, so that her age could not disqualify her from starting afresh in Grade 1. She completed her schooling and went on to become a teacher.

The educator then took me to a classroom, where I proceeded to observe a lesson of another educator – grade 10 history. The class was over-filled. Learners were sitting on tables as there were not enough chairs. I observed about 6 blind learners and about 5 learners with albinism. I also saw one learner with a hearing aid. There was one learner with cerebral palsy sitting in a wheelchair. The horseshoe-shaped tables were arranged in such a way that the long ends were against each other.

The teacher gave an animated presentation. Although she read from the text book, she stopped to explain some core concepts (e.g. middle class) and allowed some discussion on the

topic. She also answered questions, although she made sure that learners don't divert too far from the topic. There were no tactile aids in the classroom. All the blind learners did not have text books in front of them. I noticed at least two who did have text books and who were reading from them while the teacher read from her sighted text book. Others were only listening. I noticed that some notes were written on the blackboard, although the teacher did not refer to them during the lesson. There were enough plugs in the classroom for electronic aids, but there were none. Also, no learners had brailers with them.

An interesting discussion followed when the teacher, during the discussion about 'middle class' asked whether learners would like to stay in their parents' homes. Learners made it clear that they would not like to do so. They would like to be independent. One blind learner stood up and said that he would like to bring a girlfriend home and that he would need privacy!

It was now time for the PRA discussion, so I proceeded to the boardroom, where teachers arrived one by one. Two of the educators that were present in the morning did not turn up, but those that came did their best and gave good answers. I asked one group for their opinion about inclusive education. My question was not even properly out yet, when the educator said 'NO!' emphatically. She was convinced that inclusive education in our South African classroom settings (large classes, lack of assistive devices and trained teachers) was impossible. Her colleagues fully agreed.

The educators gave very appropriate feedback and were confident about their knowledge and skills.

On day 2, we arrived at 10h00 as arranged. We found even less educators than on the previous day – only 6 people turned up. However, they again did their best to give good answers. One group seemed to struggle to progress and had to be prompted gently.

OKHOZINI PRIMARY SCHOOL DAY 1

The school is situated in a rural area. The gate was open. There was no sign at the entrance to indicate the name of the school. On entrance, I noticed a kind of a guard room, a small cement cubicle without windows, at the gate. There were learners in it, peeping inquisitively through the windows at our cars. The children were playing outside. A number of learners were throwing rubble at each other. At the one side of the premises there was a lot of rubble lying around. The walls were dirty, paint coming off. Between the two rows of classes, a vegetable garden was planted. Vegetables were looking healthy and growing well!

The principal had a very small office, neatly kept but cluttered with piles of still-packaged text books and other goods. Classes had good, sturdy desks in them but classrooms had a dilapidated look. A freight container without any windows was on the premises, serving as a

kitchen. Huge pots could be seen where a motherly-looking lady used gas burners to prepare food for the feeding scheme. All the learners are on the feeding scheme. The school has something over 300 learners. It only accommodates learners from Grade 5 – 9. Toilets seem dirty. Learners seemed somewhat unruly and noisy. Loud cheers broke out when they found out that they are being sent home early so that the data collection session can take place.

A classroom was hastily swept. The teachers organized themselves into 2 groups. After a much appreciated lunch, the discussions began. One group seemed to be led by a somewhat domineering teacher, a Mr Z, who would dictate the answers of the questions to a lady who acted as a scribe. It was a challenge to convince all these educators to offer their opinions. However, they did seem to loosen up more as the discussion continued. Mr. Z did the feedback of this group the first time. However, when Mr Z insisted that someone else had to do the feedback the second time, the other members of the group all refused point blank to do it. A member of the second group had to do the feedback for them. The second group participated excellently. Both groups thought carefully about the answers to the questions and offered model answers that belied the circumstances under which the school had to be run.

The first poster, about the inclusive education policy and the implications for teachers, was done with enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the answers revealed a lack of know-how about disability and how to handle it in the classroom. One group, after a lot of careful thought, tried to list a few kinds of visual impairments and included 'long-sightedness,' 'short-sightedness,' 'side-sightedness' and 'a learner with an artificial eye'. The second poster was found to be a challenge. The teachers found it difficult to formulate knowledge and skills needed to teach in an inclusive setting. However, all were earnestly trying to provide good answers to the questions on the posters and with a little prompt here and there, they came up with very sensible suggestions.

GEORGEDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL: DAY 1

When Dr. Sefotho and I arrived at Georgetdale Primary after our session at Okhozini. This school did have a sign to indicate its name. There was a fence and a locked gate, which the guard opened for us when requested to do so. We parked in front of a wall adorned with a painting to depict the inclusive status of the full service school. Although the painting had become faint, it was headed 'For Care and Support'. In it was a learner with a wheelchair and two learners with a skipping rope who were supposedly trying to involve him in their game. The impossibility of the children's game was somewhat symbolic of the impossibility of the task of these educators to implement inclusive education in class ...

We proceeded to the staff room where we found utter chaos. The room was hot and filled to the brim with buzzing educators. Our two colleagues were trying their best to organize group

discussions under these impossible conditions. The educators were seated at long tables. The mood was negative. Apparently the educators were not informed that they had to take part in the research project after work hours. They were tired, angry and uncooperative. Some were calling out loudly for an explanation and were wondering what they were letting themselves into, while our colleagues had already tried to explain everything to them. We had to compromise and shorten our poster discussions considerably. Even then, some people did not cooperate at all. One male teacher lay on his arms, falling asleep.

The question about inclusive education policy proved challenging for them. Some of them googled the concept on their phones. The irony struck me – educators at a full service school that need to google the concept ‘inclusive education’! However, we managed to calm the group down and conduct a much shorter than planned session with reasonable success. What stood out in these educators’ answers was a feeling of deep frustration. They formulated answers on their posters that indicated that they found inclusion impossible in their overcrowded classes.

The food was presented as they left. They appreciated the food and suddenly no one was in a hurry anymore as everyone enjoyed the free lunch! The mood became much more positive and one senior staff member suggested that we use the support centre for the next day’s session and that we come at 7h15 the next morning instead of in the afternoon. To this we agreed readily.

Looking around on the school premises, I saw the same dilapidated look that we met at Okhazini. One classroom had a window without any panes. However, the garden did look well-kept. The principal was a professional-looking man who seemed to be quite competent but the lack of communication with his educators with regard to the PR group session was a little disturbing.

GEORGEDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL DAY 2

We arrived at Georedale Primary at about 7h00, ready for the day. While my colleagues started to organize our gear, I enquired about the support centre, where we were supposed to conduct the day’s session. To my amazement, I was shown a beautiful brick building (the only brick building on the premises). An educator and another staff member helped me to make preparations in the wonderful, spacious area. Posters addressing different challenges (e.g. drug abuse) were on the walls. In front was a huge banner, stating the mission and vision of Georedale, which boils down to quality education that “caters for a full range of needs.”

We were able to create 8 groups by moving tables together – and there were still lots of space to spare! The educator who helped me organize the tables informed me about the use of the support centre. According to him, learners with barriers to learning were sent to the support

centre for support sessions. There was an educator who only handled these cases. I asked about the different disabilities in the school. The educator mentioned one or two learners with hearing disabilities (who no more wore their hearing aids), one learner in a wheelchair and several learners with visual impairments. These learners had not been diagnosed and did not have glasses. The state system was so cumbersome that it seems people have given up trying to get them some.

I looked around in the building. There was a reception area with lovely couches and a desk where a receptionist was seated. A huge whiteboard-calender adorned one wall, where training sessions such as 'epilepsy workshop', 'ADHD' were written down. There were also two therapy rooms, of which one was meant for a psychiatrist. The principal showed me around. In the one therapy room there was a Snellen chart for testing vision. However, the principal explained to me that there was no staff to occupy these rooms. The psychiatrist, who was supposed to be employed there full-time, had to service a wide area and only came there once in a while. The other room had been unoccupied since the support centre was built. However, it was equipped well. Against one wall, there was a bookshelf full of beautiful reading resources.

Returning to the hall where we prepared the tables, I found the room filling with educators. It was a totally different situation from the previous day. We were able to give clear instructions, move around the tables to encourage participants and get their attention when needed. Thankfully, a very fruitful PR poster session was conducted. Photos, videos and recordings could be taken. Everyone was thanked with a little present and all left smiling, greeting us jovially. It was a great relief to have ended off our research at this site in this way after the previous day's challenge! Two of our colleagues stayed behind to conduct classroom observation. They later reported that the educators that they observed had 60 learners in their classes and that any inclusive education in these settings was totally and utterly impossible. So probably the individualised attention that these learners are receiving at the support centre will be the only support that they will get. Question is – will it be sufficient?

OKHOZINI PRIMARY SCHOOL DAY 2

Dr. Sefotho and I arrived a little early for our 9h00-appointment for classroom observation. We greeted the principal, who pointed out the classrooms where we were supposed to do our observation by 9h00. I then took the opportunity to move around the premises and make some observations. I used the staff toilet, which was in a sorry state. The toilet lid was hanging to one side. The basin was missing, as was the plastering of the wall. A mirror against the wall was broken.

I greeted the lady who was doing cooking in the container – for the whole school. She complained that the gas in the bottles was almost finished, but nevertheless she managed to finish the meal, which was cooked in gigantic pots. Behind the container, I noticed that the rubbish I saw the previous day was the school's own dump. Learners went there to empty the bins of the classes. However, of course the wind blew some of the papers around, which added to the poor look of the premises.

At last it was time for the classroom observation. I was told that the teacher that I was to observe, Mr Z, had four visually impaired learners in his class, a Grade 6 class. Mr Z's class had no posters or other learning materials on the walls. The walls were dirty and completely empty except for a crumpled calendar hanging precariously from a nail in the wall. The electric plug was completely missing. Electric wires were hanging from the ceiling where the light was supposed to be.

Mr Z. greeted the class, who stood up and chorused a greeting in unison. He requested them to remain standing, while I seated myself in a desk against the back wall. Mr Z then proceeded to ask the class their tables – e.g. 4 times 6, 3 times 2 etc. – those who could answer correctly were allowed to sit, the others had to remain standing. I started to feel stressed on slow learners' behalf – how would they feel if they had to remain standing up to the end? However, luckily Mr Z allowed all learners to sit down after a while.

The lesson began with 'Corrections'. Mr Z. is an older educator, well in control of his subject. One can see that he has many years of experience. However, he is purely a chalk-and-talk-guy. The 'corrections' are written on the blackboard, and learners have to follow the explanations. Correct answers are chorused after him. Mr Z. has excellent classroom discipline. Maybe too excellent, because learners do not seem to have the courage to interact freely with him. He is very strict, not abusively so, but several times he did jab at learners who got answers wrong, saying 'you don't know? In grade 6? What a shame'. His style is overly structured, so much so that the learners even clap a specific pattern in unison to congratulate someone who gave a correct answer – when told to do so.

After the 'corrections', learners are requested to close their books and listen to the explanation of the new work of the day, which is also done on the blackboard. Mr Z. writes neatly, but quite small. From the back, I had to strain to see what he was writing. I looked around to see where the visually impaired learners were, but could see no one wearing glasses. Halfway through the lesson, I noticed a boy sitting more or less in the middle of the row who would rub his eyes repeatedly. I realised that he was probably one of the VI learners. Mr Z. wrote up the homework for the day, which also had to be written down. He was the only one in the class with a text book. No learner had a text book.

While the learners were writing, I took a walk around the class. I noticed that everyone was writing furiously, starting from the 'corrections' to copy the work from the blackboard. Most of them probably had not done the homework and now needed the correct answers in their books. The little boy who had been rubbing his eyes was copying the sums one number at a time. He would look up, look down, write one number down and then look back up again. It was a lost battle. He would never be able to write down all the information on the blackboard before the end of the period.

Mr Z. wanted to know how his lesson was. I praised his ability as an educator and told him that I could see that he was well in control of his subject, upon which he smiled broadly. I then asked him where the visually impaired learners were seated. He pointed them out to me. To my amazement, all of them were seated very much to the back of the classroom. I guessed that they were hiding behind other learners because they were always behind with their work. I walked up to each learner and asked them if they could see what was written on the board. One learner said that she could not always see everything, but that she then asked her neighbour to write the homework down for her. I wondered how the neighbour would cope to write down her own and her VI friends' homework. Another learner said that she could not see well on the board. I suggested that she ask the teacher to move forward, but she just gave me a wide-eyed look. My guess was that she did not have the courage to approach him. All of the VI learners complained that their eyes got very strained and teary and burned. Mr Z left the class for a moment and I could see two girls conversing and pointing to the blackboard. One of them was a VI learner. I asked her if I could help. She said that she could not read what was written. I encouraged her to walk up to the blackboard, which she did, after which she proceeded to finish writing up her work.

After the observation session, I went to inform some of the educators that we would have a meal again before having the next session. Two educators were sitting in an empty classroom. There were shelves against the one wall, reaching from floor to roof. The shelves were crammed with text books, some of the packs unopened. I noticed one whole stack of Grade 6 Maths books and couldn't help thinking of the learners who I had just observed struggling without textbooks. I asked the educators about the text books in the shelves. They explained that most of the books were already outdated because of the curriculum changes.

Dr. S and I sat in the car to wait for the PR group session, which would take place at 12h00. We discussed our various observation sessions. An educator came to invite us to enjoy some juice in the office. They had prepared some cake and 2 glasses of cooldrink for us, which was highly appreciated. I had time to look around the office. Two apparently new copy machines were in the office. Against the one wall, square boxes were stacked. It looked like text books.

Against the other wall, some sanitary pads in plastic packaging were stacked. There were some plugs in the office, whereas the classes had no electricity.

At 11h00 it was time for the learners to queue for their meal. They had only one break time, which lasted for a full hour (11h – 12h). Learners needed time to queue for food and have their meal. Several boys returned for seconds. Our colleagues arrived with the food for the educators.

At 12h00, the PR group session started. The mood was relaxed and cooperative. The educators were focused on their task and willing to think hard and discuss lively. Even the feedback was great fun, with educators making jokes, causing everyone to roar with laughter. I was surprised at the thoughtful answers on the posters. I realised that these educators have the potential and the will to really make a difference. They just need the right training and direction! What stood out was the unanimous feeling of the educators that they need knowledge, skills and resources – especially resources. Both groups indicated that the school has zero resources. One group mentioned that the environment needs to be conducive for inclusive education – for example, the walkways and floor surfaces should be smoother to accommodate VI learners. When asked what educators could do about that, the answer was that the SGB was in control of the school and that educators were powerless to change things like that. I realised that the educators had a kind of learned helplessness. They were waiting on the SGB, the government, nurses – instead of realising their own responsibilities as agents of change. They did not think that they could make a difference to the dilapidated setting that they were working in. They did not realize that resources could be made quite cheaply. They had a whole wall full of text books going to ruins without being used. However, all the educators were hard-working, earnest people. As mentioned before, I believe that they just need the right direction.