

**Differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in
Nigerian and South African schools**

By

ETINOSA IZEBIGIE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR

Dr Nkhensani Susan Thuketana

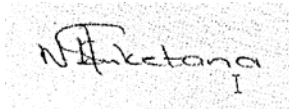
September 2024

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Early Childhood Education 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.



Etinosa Izevbigie



Supervisor

Dr Nkhensani Susan Thuketana

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the grace and wisdom You bestowed upon me to complete this degree. I acknowledge Your mercy and faithfulness throughout this journey.

To my wonderful parents, Pastor Ighodaro and Pastor (Mrs.) Ose Izevbigie, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude, for your labour and sacrifices, which have not been in vain.

Thank you, Aunty Chichi, Aunty Promise and Aunty Tessy, for your love and support. I appreciate you all.

Thank you, Dr. Thuketana, for being the perfect SUPERvisor and so much more. I am grateful for your motherly guidance and encouragement.

Thank you, Prof. Funke Omidire, and Dr. Ruth Aluko for your motherly care and love. I am forever grateful.

A big thank you to my CEA family for being a wonderful support system.

To Olufemi Olayinka, thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement. I love you dearly.

To my amiable class captain and friend, Shine Aung. Thank you, Shine, for always motivating me to persevere.

Lady P! I appreciate your friendship and sisterhood.

Thank you to the Empowered Generation team—Mrs. Heather, Ms. Sagree, and Uncle Fidel—for being such a blessing in my life.

I am especially grateful to Pastor Eben, Lady Pastor Gloria, and my First Love Church Tuks Campus brethren.

Last, but certainly not least, I am grateful to all the participants of this study.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EDU165/22
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD Differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African schools
INVESTIGATOR	Miss Etinosa Izevbigie
DEPARTMENT	Early Childhood Education
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	19 December 2022
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	21 June 2024
CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:	Prof Funke Omidire

Mr Simon Jiane
Dr Susan Thuketana

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

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

ABSTRACT

Equity in mainstream schools has been declared the heart of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda. The agenda expects mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. In line with the 2030 Agenda, this study investigated and compared how Nigerian and South African Foundation Phase (FP) mainstream schoolteachers understand and differentiate their classroom assessments to promote equitable practices for all learners. Additionally, the study examined the support mainstream schoolteachers require and get from the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) in Nigeria and District-Based Support Teams (DBST) in South Africa to implement inclusive assessment policies in their classrooms. The theory-based conceptual framework that guided this study comprised the Capability Approach, which served as the lens for understanding equity and fairness of assessment policies and practices in mainstream schools. Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences served as the lens to investigate how assessment can be differentiated to promote equitable practices for all learners, including learners with special education needs. Lave and Wenger's Community of Practice (CoP) was used to elucidate teacher support and professional partnership in mainstream schools for the effective implementation of differentiated assessments. The study adopted a pragmatism paradigm within an explanatory, sequential mixed methods design and employed a convenience sampling strategy to select 100 FP mainstream schoolteachers from Nigeria and South Africa. In addition, 10 FP teachers were interviewed in each country, and important assessment policy documents such as the National Policy for Education in Nigeria and the Curriculum Assessment Policy in South Africa were analysed to answer the research questions. The study's findings based on the participants' perceptions and lived experiences were used to propose a framework to promote the implementation of differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for each country.

Keywords: Community of practice, differentiated assessment, district-based support teams, foundation phase, inclusive education, school-based management committee

Language Letter



Member South African Translators' Institute
www.language-services.online

18 September 2024

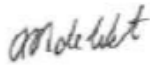
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The thesis titled "Differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools" by Etinosa Izevbogie has been proofread and edited for language and technical format (structure) by me.

I verify that the thesis is ready for publication or public viewing regarding language and style, and it has been formatted as per the prescribed style.

Please note that no view is expressed regarding the document's subject-specific technical contents or changes made after the date of this letter.

Kind regards



Anna M de Wet

SATI MEMBER 1003422

BA (English, Classical Languages) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.
BA Hons ((Latin) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.
BA Hons (Psychology), University of Pretoria.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACAI	Approaches to Classroom Assessment Instrument
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
BEC	Basic Education Curriculum
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CoP	Community of Practice
CRA	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FME	Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria
FP	Foundation Phase
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
HOD	Head of Department
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IEP	Individualised Education Programme
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning

JSS	Junior Secondary School
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSE	Learning Support Educator
MI	Multiple Intelligences
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
NPE	National Policy on Education
NPSNE	National Policy for Special Needs Education
OBE	Outcome Based Education
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PPT	Paper Pencil Test
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statements
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBMC	School-Based Management Committee
SBST	School-Based Support Teams
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Education Needs
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission, Namibia
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Ethical clearance certificate	iii
Abstract	iv
Language Letter	v
abbreviations and Acronyms	vi
Table of Contents	ix
List of Figures	xvi
List of Tables	xvii
1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background and Context of the Study	3
1.3 Rationale	6
1.4 Problem Statement	7
1.5 Purpose of the Study	8
1.6 Research Questions	9
1.7 Hypothesis	9
1.8 Concept Clarification	10
1.8.1 Mainstream Schools	10
1.8.2 Differentiated Assessment	10
1.8.3 Equitable	10
1.8.4 Foundation Phase	11
1.8.5 Special Educational Needs	11
1.9 Preliminary Literature Review	11
1.9.1 Mainstream Schools/Classrooms in the Nigerian and South African Context	11
1.9.2 Perceptions of South African and Nigerian Teachers on Classroom Assessment	14
1.9.3 Differentiated Assessment Practices in the Foundation Phase	17
1.9.4 Support Structures for Mainstream Schoolteachers to Effectively Assess Learning	19
1.10 Conceptual Framework	22
1.10.1 Capability Approach	23
1.10.2 Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)	23
1.10.3 Community of Practice (CoP)	24
1.11 Working Assumptions	25
1.12 Research Paradigm	25
1.12.1 Pragmatism	25

1.12.2	Methodological Approach	26
1.13	Research Design.....	27
1.13.1	Multiple Case Studies	27
1.13.2	Sampling/Selection of Participants.....	28
1.13.3	Data Collection	28
1.13.3.1	Questionnaires as a Quantitative Data Collection Method	28
1.13.3.2	Semi-Structured Interview as a Qualitative Data Collection Method	29
1.13.3.3	Document Analysis.....	30
1.14	Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	30
1.14.1	Quantitative Data Analysis.....	31
1.14.2	Qualitative Data Analysis	31
1.15	Quality Measures	31
1.15.1	Quantitative Quality Criteria	32
1.15.1.1	Validity.....	32
1.15.1.2	Reliability	32
1.15.2	Qualitative Quality Criteria.....	32
1.15.2.1	Credibility.....	32
1.15.2.2	Transferability.....	33
1.15.2.3	Dependability.....	33
1.15.2.4	Confirmability.....	33
1.16	Ethical Considerations.....	34
1.17	Overview of Chapters.....	34
1.18	Conclusion	36
2	CHAPTER TWO: EMERGENCE OF MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND ASSESSMENT POLICIES	37
2.1	Introduction.....	37
2.2	Emergence of Mainstream Schools Internationally and in Africa	37
2.2.1	Emergence of Mainstream Schools Internationally	38
2.2.1.1	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).....	38
2.2.1.2	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).....	39
2.2.1.3	Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994).....	39
2.2.1.4	Education for All (2000).....	40
2.2.2	Mainstream Schools' Emergence in Africa	40
2.2.2.1	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1986).....	41
2.2.2.2	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)	41
2.2.2.3	Implementation of Inclusive Frameworks in Africa.....	42
2.2.2.4	Challenges With the Implementation of Inclusive Education and the Growth of Mainstream Schools in Africa	49
2.2.3	2.2.3 Emergence of Mainstream Schools in Nigeria.....	52
2.2.3.1	Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)	52

2.2.3.2	Child Rights Act (2003)	53
2.2.3.3	National Policy on Special Needs Education (2015).....	53
2.2.3.4	National Policy on Inclusive Education (2016).....	54
2.2.3.5	Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018)	55
2.2.3.6	Revised National Policy on Inclusive Education (2023).....	56
2.2.3.7	Factors that Hamper the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools in Nigeria	57
2.2.4	Emergence of Mainstream Schools in South Africa	59
2.2.4.1	Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996a)	59
2.2.4.2	South African Schools Act.....	60
2.2.4.3	National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services	60
2.2.4.4	Education White Paper 6 (2001)	61
2.2.4.5	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support	62
2.2.5	Factors that Hamper the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools in South Africa.....	62
2.3	Overview of Assessment in the FP	64
2.3.1	Overview of Assessment in African Countries	64
2.3.2	Brief History of Assessment Policies and Guidelines in Nigeria	66
2.3.2.1	National Policy on Education (1981)	67
2.3.2.2	Fourth Edition of the National Policy on Education (2004)	67
2.3.2.3	9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (2008).....	68
2.3.2.4	Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (2013).....	68
2.3.2.5	National Policy on Education (2013).....	69
2.3.3	Brief History of Assessment Policies and Guidelines in South Africa.....	69
2.3.3.1	Outcome-Based Education (OBE)	69
2.3.3.2	Curriculum 2005	70
2.3.3.3	Revised National Curriculum Statements	71
2.3.3.4	Curriculum and Policy Statements	71
2.3.3.5	National Protocol for Assessment: Grades R–12	73
2.3.3.6	Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom Through CAPS ..	74
2.4	Concluding Remarks	75
3	CHAPTER THREE: PERSPECTIVES AND POLICIES ON DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT.....	76
3.1	Introduction.....	76
3.2	Differentiated Assessment as an Inclusive Framework	76
3.2.1	Strategies to Differentiate Assessment in the FP.....	78
3.2.2	Misconceptions Regarding Differentiated Assessment	82
3.2.3	Reliability and Validity in Differentiated Assessment	84
3.3	Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Assessment.....	84
3.3.1	Teachers' Conceptualisation of Differentiated Assessment	85

3.3.2	Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices	91
3.3.3	Relationship between Teachers' Assessment Practices and Learners' Academic Achievement.....	95
3.4	Support Structures for Mainstream Schoolteachers to Assess Learning.....	97
3.4.1	Importance of Support Structures in Differentiating Assessment	97
3.4.2	Functions and Roles of School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) in Nigeria.....	98
3.4.3	Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Require from SBMCs to Implement Differentiate Assessment	99
3.4.4	Functions and Roles of the DBST in South Africa	100
3.4.5	Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Require from the DBST to Differentiate Assessment.....	101
3.5	Concluding Remarks.....	103
4	CHAPTER FOUR: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	104
4.1	Introduction.....	104
4.2	Capability Approach.....	104
4.3	Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)	107
4.4	Community of Practice (CoP).....	113
4.5	Concluding Remarks.....	117
5	CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY	118
5.1	Introduction.....	118
5.2	Research Paradigm	118
5.2.1	Pragmatism.....	119
5.2.1.1	Ontological Assumptions.....	119
5.2.1.2	Epistemological Assumptions	121
5.2.1.3	Alignment with the Conceptual Framework	122
5.2.1.4	Criticisms of Pragmatic Paradigm.....	123
5.3	Methodological Approach.....	124
5.3.1	Mixed Methods Approach	124
5.3.2	Criticism of Mixed-Methods Research.....	125
5.4	Research Design.....	125
5.4.1	Exploratory Sequential MMR Design	126
5.5	Sampling/Selection of Participants	129
5.6	Data Collection Methods.....	130
5.6.1	Phase 1: Questionnaires as a Quantitative Data Collection Method.....	130
5.6.2	Phase 2: Semi-Structured Interview as a Qualitative Data Collection Method....	131
5.6.3	Phase 3: Document Analysis	133
5.7	Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	133
5.7.1	Quantitative Data Analysis.....	134
5.7.2	Qualitative Data Analysis	134
5.7.1.1	Thematic Data Analysis	135

5.7.2	Data Integration.....	137
5.8	Quality Measures	137
5.8.1	Quantitative Quality Criteria	138
5.8.1.1	Validity.....	138
5.8.1.2	Reliability.....	138
5.8.2	Qualitative Quality Criteria.....	138
5.8.2.1	Credibility.....	139
5.8.2.2	Dependability.....	139
5.8.2.3	Transferability.....	139
5.8.2.4	Confirmability.....	140
5.9	Ethical Considerations.....	140
5.9.1	Institutional Approval and Access to Research Site.....	140
5.9.2	Informed and Voluntary Consent	141
5.9.3	Protection from Harm and Risk.....	141
5.9.4	Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality	141
5.10	Conclusion	142
6	CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE.....	143
6.1	Introduction.....	143
6.2	Demographic Profiles of the Respondents in Nigeria and South Africa	143
6.2.1	Gender of Teachers.....	143
6.2.2	Age of Teachers	144
6.2.3	Highest Formal Qualifications	145
	<i>Teachers' Years of Experience</i>	146
6.2.4	Grade Level Taught by Teachers.....	147
6.2.5	Number of Learners in the Class.....	147
6.2.6	Number of Learners with Special Education Needs.....	148
6.3	Data Presentation of Survey Questions with Teachers in Nigeria and South Africa..	149
6.4	Testing the Reliability of the Responses.....	167
6.5	Independent Samples t-Test for Association.....	169
6.6	Conclusion	173
7	CHAPTER SEVEN: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA	174
7.1	Introduction.....	174
7.2	Codes and Biographical Data of Participants	174
7.2.1	FP Teachers in Nigeria.....	174
7.2.2	FP Teachers in South Africa	175
7.3	Data Presentation and Analysis: Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers	176
7.1	Conclusions	196

8	CHAPTER EIGHT: INTEGRATION OF THE DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS	197
8.1	Themes and Categories	197
8.1.1	Theme 1: Mainstream Schoolteachers' Perception of Inclusive Education	198
8.1.1.1	Sub-Theme 1.1: Mainstream School Context	198
8.1.1.2	Sub-Theme 1.2: Teachers' Perception of Inclusive Education	200
8.1.1.3	Sub-Theme 1.3: Teachers' Experience Accommodating Learners with Special Education Needs.....	201
8.1.2	Theme 2: FP Teachers' Assessment Practices in Mainstream School.....	204
8.1.2.1	Sub-Theme 2.1: Teachers' Assessment Practices in the FP	204
8.1.2.2	Sub-Theme 2.2: Differentiated Assessment Strategies for Learners with Special Education Needs.....	207
8.1.2.3	Sub-Theme 2.3: Contextual Limitations to Differentiating Assessment.....	209
8.1.3	Theme 3: Teachers Support Requirement to Differentiate Assessment	210
8.1.3.1	Sub-Theme 3.1: Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Receive to Differentiate Assessment	211
8.1.3.2	Sub-Theme 3.2: Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Require to Differentiate Assessment	212
8.1.4	Theme 4: Contextual Framework to Promote Differentiated Assessment.....	214
8.1.4.1	Sub-Theme 4.1: Teachers Views on Promoting Differentiated Assessment in Nigerian Mainstream Schools	214
8.1.4.2	Sub-Theme 4.2: Teachers' Views on Promoting Differentiated Assessment in South African Mainstream Schools	215
8.1.4.3	Sub-Theme 4.3: Sharing Best Practices	216
9	CHAPTER NINE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	217
9.1	Introduction	217
9.2	Summary of Literature and Empirical Findings	217
9.2.1	Summary of Literature Findings.....	217
9.2.1.1	Findings Related to the Emergence of Mainstream Schools Internationally and Locally	217
9.2.1.2	Findings Related to the Overview of Assessment in the FP	220
9.2.1.3	Findings Related to Differentiated Assessment as an Inclusive Framework	222
9.2.1.4	Findings Related to Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Assessment.....	224
9.2.1.5	Findings Related to Support Structures for Mainstream Schoolteachers to Assess Learning	226
9.3	Scientific and Emergent Findings Relating to the Conceptual Framework	227
9.3.1	Capability Approach	227
9.3.2	Multiple Intelligences.....	229
9.3.3	Community of Practice	231
9.4	Summary of Empirical Findings.....	233
9.4.1	Mainstream Schools in the Nigerian and South African Context	233
9.4.2	FP Teachers' Assessment Practices in Mainstream Schools	234

9.4.3	Teachers Support Requirement to Differentiate Assessment	236
9.4.4	Contextual Framework to Promote Differentiated Assessment in Nigeria and South Africa	236
9.5	Research Question	237
9.5.1	Research Sub-Question 1	237
9.5.2	Research Sub-Question 2	238
9.5.3	Research Sub-Question 3	240
9.5.4	Research Sub-Question 4	240
9.5.5	Main Research Question	241
9.6	Recommendations.....	243
9.6.1	Recommendation for Policymakers: Alignment of the Curriculum and Assessment Policies with Inclusive Policies	243
9.6.2	Recommendation for SBMC/DBST: Partnership and Collaboration between Mainstream Schoolteachers and Stakeholders	244
9.6.3	Recommendation for Teachers: Adequate Training and Workshops.....	244
9.7	Framework for the Contextualisation of Differentiated Assessment	245
9.8	Recommendations for Future Research	248
9.9	Concluding Remarks	248
REFERENCES		250
10 APPENDICES		329
10.1	Appendix A: Request to Conduct Research, Education Department	329
10.2	Appendix B: Request to Conduct Research, Principals.....	332
10.3	Appendix C: Request to Conduct Research, Foundation Phase Teacher	335
10.4	Appendix D: Questionnaire – Nigeria	338
10.5	Appendix E: Questionnaire – South Africa	342

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The Context of the Study.....	4
Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework Guiding the Assessment of Learners in Mainstream Schools.....	24
Figure 5.1: Illustration of the Sequential Explanatory Design Procedures in the Present Study.....	128
Figure 6.1: Gender of FP Teachers	144
Figure 6.2: Age Range of the FP Teachers.....	144
Figure 6.3: FP Teachers' Highest Level of Formal Education	145
Figure 6.4: Teacher's Years of Experience	146
Figure 6.5: Grade Level Taught by Teachers	147
Figure 6.6: Number of Learners in the Class.....	148
Figure 6.7: Number of Learners With SEN	149
Figure 6.8: Teachers' Perception of the Learners in Their Classroom.....	150
Figure 6.9: Purpose of Assessment in the FP	152
Figure 6.10: Teachers' perception about the curriculum.....	153
Figure 6.11: Teachers' assessment practices	155
Figure 6.12: Teachers' Competency Levels.....	158
Figure 6.13: Limitations to Teachers' Ability to Modify and Adapt Their Assessment.....	161
Figure 6.14: Teachers' Collaboration With Colleagues Regarding Assessment	162
Figure 9.1: Framework for the Contextualisation of Differentiated Assessment.....	245

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Suppositions and Biases	25
Table 6.1: Teachers' Perception About the Learners in Their Classroom.....	150
Table 6.2: Purpose of Assessment in the FP.....	151
Table 6.3: Teachers' Perception of the Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines	153
Table 6.4: Teachers' Assessment Practices.....	154
Table 6.5: Examples of Teachers' Assessment Practices in Nigeria	156
Table 6.6: Teachers' Competency Level.....	157
Table 6.7: How Teachers Ensure Their Assessments are Reliable and Valid	159
Table 6.8: Limitations to Teachers' Ability to Modify and Adapt Their Assessment.....	160
Table 6.9: Teachers' Collaboration With Colleagues Regarding Assessment	162
Table 6.10: Teachers' Collaboration Regarding Assessment.....	163
Table 6.11: Teachers required support from SBMC.....	165
Table 6.12: Teachers' Support Required From DBST.....	166
Table 6.13: Cronbach's Alpha Values for Responses From Teachers in Nigeria.....	168
Table 6.14: Cronbach's Alpha Values for Responses From Teachers in Nigeria.....	169
Table 6.15: An Independent T-Test for Null Hypothesis 1	170
Table 6.16: An Independent T-Test for Null Hypothesis 2	171
Table 6.17: An Independent T-Test for Null Hypothesis 3	172
Table 6.18: An Independent t-Test for Null Hypothesis 4	173
Table 7.1: Codes: FP Teachers in Nigeria	174
Table 7.2: Biographical Data of the Participants In Nigeria.....	175
Table 7.3: Codes: FP Teachers in South Africa	175
Table 7.4: Biographical Data of the Participants.....	176
Table 8.1: Themes and Sub-Themes	197

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Mainstream schools are inclusive schools that uphold the principles of equity and equality by providing a learning environment that caters to all learners, as well as those with special educational needs (SEN) (Buckley-Walker & Lipscombe, 2021). These schools promote human rights and social justice with a commitment to promote a rewarding education for all (Smit et al., 2020). However, evidence from empirical research unveiled that learners' physical access to mainstream schools is insufficient to provide them with quality education and equitable access to the curriculum, specifically in the Foundation Phase (FP) (Du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014; Nel, 2018). Instead, FP mainstream schoolteachers must be well grounded and knowledgeable about practical strategies to accommodate all learners through their pedagogy, of which assessment is critical (Naudé & Reda, 2017; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation - International Bureau of Education [UNESCO-IBE], 2019). Teachers' assessment practices should provide all learners with equitable opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills irrespective of their differences. Equitable assessment practices in mainstream schools will empower each learner to "experience success and a genuine sense of belonging to the learning community" (Okeke et al., 2014, p. 219).

The traditional definition of assessment based on uniformity and standardisation became outdated with the increasingly diversified world realities (Förster et al., 2018). Traditional assessments which are often one-size-fits-all, proved to limit learners in mainstream schools, particularly those with SEN from demonstrating their knowledge and skills fairly and equitably (Taole, 2020). Traditional assessments are narrowly designed, conducted, and interpreted to suit an "ideal" learner without acknowledging the range of diversity that may have a bearing on how learners demonstrate mastery optimally (Moon et al., 2020). Moreover, traditional assessments unfairly label learners as incapable of learning and demonstrating their learning, potentially hindering their progression in school. UNESCO's (2020) Global Education Monitoring Report affirmed that "good-quality assessment is a fundamental part of an inclusive education system" (p. 113). Hence, the dire need for a paradigm shift from the traditional theories, principles, and beliefs of assessment in mainstream classrooms to differentiated assessment (Moon et al., 2020; Popham, 2018).

The shift to differentiated assessment is predicated on research arguing its benefits on learners' academic achievement, metacognitive capabilities, motivation, positive self-perception, and enhanced teacher instruction (Moon et al., 2020; Noman & Kaur, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2015). Differentiated assessment acknowledges and seeks to accommodate the differences among learners in mainstream schools by providing them with equitable opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the content taught (Izevbigie, 2021). Differentiated assessment acknowledges that all learners can demonstrate their knowledge and skills with the right level of accommodation and support (Tomlinson, 2014; Moon et al., 2020). It is essential that mainstream schoolteachers are effectively supported to implement equitable assessments for all learners (Hehir et al., 2016; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018).

Despite mainstream schoolteachers' endorsement of inclusive policies and frameworks, such as differentiated assessment, they have frequently expressed their concerns regarding inadequate professional support, which they believe impedes their capacity to implement such policies effectively (Singal, 2019). Mainstream schools with the presence and effective functioning of support systems and personnel, such as occupational therapists and autism support personnel, are more open to receiving and catering to learners with SEN (Mkwanazi, 2023; UNESCO, 2020; Van Zyl, 2023). According to a survey of teacher unions, the provision of support personnel for education is largely inadequate globally (Education International, 2021). The survey found that support personnel in at least 15% of countries were either completely absent or unavailable (Education International, 2021). In some countries, they were somewhat available, ranging from 29% to 44%, while in others, they were always available, ranging from "5% to 22%, depending on the type of support personnel" (Education International, 2021, p 108).

This study, therefore, sought to investigate and compare the extent to which Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment. In addition, this study investigated the support the teachers require and get to implement inclusive assessment policies in their classrooms. More specifically, the study explored how differentiated assessment can be utilised as an inclusive framework to promote equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream classrooms. The findings of this study resulted in the development of a framework for the contextualisation of differentiated assessment in the aforementioned countries.

1.2 Background and Context of the Study

This study stems from the findings of my master's dissertation, which investigated the “perceptions of FP mainstream schoolteachers about differentiated assessment” (Izevbigie, 2021). I aimed to explore how South African teachers interpret and implement differentiated assessment strategies in their classrooms and the support requirements that they receive and require from the District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs). The findings reveal that most teachers have a limited understanding of differentiated assessment as an effective tool for accommodating the needs of all learners (Izevbigie, 2021). Moreover, some participants expressed concerns about the practicality of implementing differentiated assessment in their classrooms due to unfavourable contextual factors such as overcrowded classrooms and insufficient resources (Izevbigie, 2021). Furthermore, the findings suggest that the DBSTs did not adequately support the teachers in implementing inclusive assessment policies/principles in their classrooms, which led to unfavourable consequences for some learners, particularly learners with SEN (Izevbigie, 2021). Thus, this research sought to investigate further the extent to which assessment is differentiated and practised in the two African countries while taking cognisance of the contextual realities mainstream schoolteachers are faced with. The support available and required by mainstream schoolteachers in these countries to implement differentiated assessments was also investigated.

This research was implemented in Nigeria and South Africa (SA) (see Figure 1.1). The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country in West Africa, with a population estimated to be over 211 million (World Bank Group, 2024). It occupies an expanse of 923,769 square kilometres and ranks 161st on the Human Development Index (World Bank Group, 2024). Nigeria is a multicultural state inhabited by over 250 ethnic groups that speak 500 distinct languages; however, the lingua franca chosen in Nigeria is English (Junaidu, 2018). The Republic of South Africa (RSA), on the other hand, is the southernmost country in Africa (Britannica, 2022). Ranking as the 23rd most populous country globally, the population of RSA is estimated to be 63 million people and occupies an expanse of 1,221,037 square kilometres (Statistics South Africa, 2024). SA is popularly known as the "rainbow nation" due to the country's multiracial diversity (Yende & Yende, 2021). Its rich diversity is mirrored in the constitution's acknowledgement of 12 official languages, including sign language (RSA, 1996a). It

is also a developing country, ranking 114th on the Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Figure 1.1: The Context of the Study



In terms of assessment in mainstream schools, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in SA states that assessment must accommodate and cater to all learners, including learners with SEN and barriers to learning with the right level of support (DBE, 2012). In the same vein, the goals of assessment, as stated in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE), include "accurately measure the abilities of learners, eliminate the intractable problems associated with the traditional Paper Pencil Test (PPT); and improving learning" which cannot be accomplished with traditional approaches to assessment (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013, p. 45). Policy-wise, these African countries agree that assessment should promote equitable

experiences for all learners. However, the effective implementation of inclusive assessment policies is required for the learners to benefit from such assessments.

In SA, teachers have expressed their preference for inclusive assessment practices and frameworks such as differentiated assessment (Izevbigie, 2021). However, there is a widely held perception among teachers that the education system is under-resourced and unable to effectively support the implementation of these practices (Engelbrecht, 2020; Thuketana, 2018). Hence, inclusive assessment policies and frameworks such as differentiated assessment are often perceived as idealistic and disconnected from the challenging reality of schools, which undermines its implementation (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). The DBSTs were established in SA to implement inclusive frameworks, such as differentiated assessment (Department of Education [DoE], 2005). However, despite the establishment of the DBST, most teachers have expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support that they have received from them (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018; Mfuthwana, 2016; Mkwazazi, 2023). The feedback from teachers suggests that the DBST has not been able to provide the necessary level of support teachers require to differentiate assessments (Izevbigie, 2021). Therefore, the DBSTs should re-examine their support processes to ensure they align with teachers' expectations who face the reality of implementing differentiated assessments in unfavourable contextual conditions.

The few research conducted on classroom assessment in Nigeria has revealed that a significant number of FP schoolteachers rely on traditional assessment methods as they are not familiar with inclusive assessment practices (Egbedeyi & Babalola, 2023; Ikenyiri et al., 2022; Olujuwon et al., 2021). Consequently, their insufficient knowledge and skills in accommodating the diverse needs of learners are often reflected in their inability to assess learners with SEN effectively (Egbedeyi, 2020). In Nigeria, there is a dire need to promote inclusive assessment frameworks, such as differentiated assessments that accommodate and cater to all learners. The dearth of empirical literature and data about differentiated assessment in Nigeria and the support mainstream schoolteachers require and receive from the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) have further posed a barrier to the execution of inclusive assessment practices.

Against this background, the present study endeavoured to investigate and compare the degree to which South African and Nigerian FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners. More particularly, the study delved into how differentiated assessment can be contextualised in these African countries, utilising support systems to foster effective implementation.

1.3 Rationale

My motivation for conducting this study stems from a longstanding interest in the field of classroom assessments. As an undergraduate student in 2015, I investigated strategies aimed at eradicating examination malpractices as perceived by secondary school learners in Benin City, Nigeria (Izevbigie, 2015). The study was prompted by the observation that a significant number of Nigerian learners resort to malpractices to pass their assessments, which has a negative bearing on the educational system (Agwu et al., 2022; Udim et al., 2018). I found in the study that many learners resort to examination malpractice due to the high-stakes and summative nature of the assessments (Izevbigie, 2015). Additionally, the learners stated that they did not feel sufficiently prepared to pass the assessments. Hence, they relied on malpractices to avoid the consequences of failure (Izevbigie, 2015).

As a result of my findings, I recommended the use of formative assessments rather than the undue reliance on summative assessments to keep the learners abreast of their learning (Izevbigie, 2015). Empirical data agrees that teachers' traditional classroom assessment practices may be a contributing factor to test anxiety, learners' failures, and the increasing cases of examination malpractice in Nigeria (Ekuri et al., 2011; Nwachukwu & Ogudo, 2014).

As a master's student in South Africa, I sought to understand how classroom assessment can be inclusive in mainstream schools and promote effective learning and access to the curriculum for all learners, specifically in the FP. My findings revealed that mainstream schoolteachers in the FP encounter difficulties in implementing inclusive assessment policies in their classrooms, particularly for learners with SEN, due to contextual constraints (Izevbigie, 2021). This challenge has resulted in a decline in the confidence levels of both the teachers, who feel incapacitated, and the learners, whose learning needs are left unattended during

assessment. Furthermore, the teachers' frustration is exacerbated by the lack of adequate support systems to implement inclusive assessment (Izevbigie, 2021).

The motivation behind this present study is further rooted in the scarcity of literature and empirical data on differentiated assessment in African contexts. The existing literature and data on this subject are predominantly derived from developed countries such as America, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, and the Netherlands, which possess contextual realities that differ from those of African communities (Bešić, 2020; Chan & Lo, 2017; DeLuca et al., 2021; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Moon et al., 2020; Wormeli, 2018, 2023). Due to the dearth of empirical data and literature, it is not apparent how differentiated assessment can be utilised as an inclusive framework in African countries, specifically Nigeria and South Africa. For this reason, the results of this research add immensely to the literature and generate research evidence on the implementation and contextualisation of differentiated assessment in developing countries. Furthermore, this research formulated a framework to promote the implementation of differentiated assessment in the countries mentioned above.

1.4 Problem Statement

Equity in mainstream schools has become a global concern as it has been declared the heart of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda (Unesco Institute of Statistics [UIS], 2018). In line with the 2030 Agenda, it is expected that mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG], 4). African countries seem to be lagging behind as unequal distribution of opportunities perseveres. Most African countries still struggle to evolve the education system, which has historically been rooted in racial discrimination, inequality and social injustices, into a system based on human rights, fairness and equity (Ngwaru & Dreyer, 2021).

Assessment in most African countries is often linked with summative and standardised assessment administered at the end of the term to all the learners as proof of the content mastered (Adediwura, 2012; Eduwem & Tommy, 2021; Motsoeneng & Moreeng, 2022). This traditional approach to assessment may potentially disadvantage more vulnerable learners, especially those with SEN. A study conducted in seven African countries revealed that 1 in 10 teachers had a low understanding of general pedagogy, while none of the teachers had minimum knowledge regarding

assessment to promote learning (Bold et al., 2017). When unduly utilised to ensure accountability, such high-stakes assessments may result in detrimental instructional practices, such as teachers teaching learners just to pass the examination. Furthermore, the results from these assessments lack construct validity as it cannot be inferred that they represent a true depiction of the knowledge and skills that the learner has mastered (UNESCO, 2020).

In the pursuit of inclusive education, assessment must not be overlooked. Teachers' assessment practices must align with the foundational principles upon which a democratic and inclusive society is built. To determine learners' abilities and progress in mainstream schools based on assessments that are skewed and discriminatory creates a crack in the system. Unfortunately, learners with SEN are more likely to be left behind (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013; UNESCO, 2020). For example, the placement of learners in special schools is often based on assessments that narrowly focus on the learners' cognitive abilities without considering them as a whole being with interests and needs (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). A paradigm shift is needed in understanding and the utilisation of assessment as a discriminatory tool to implement exclusionary laws and policies to an inclusive tool for promoting learners' access to the curriculum and quality education (Hegarty & Finlay, 2020).

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016, p. 9) has called on all mainstream schools to “replace standardised assessments with flexible and varied forms of assessments”. Additionally, they emphasise the importance of “recognising individual progress towards broader goals, and providing alternative pathways for learning” (CRPD, 2016, p. 9). In this regard, I propose that differentiated assessment is fundamental in accommodating learners with diverse needs and promoting fair assessment practices in mainstream schools. Learners' differences in demonstrating their knowledge and skills should not hamper their right to quality education in the FP.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This research aim was to investigate and compare the extent to which Nigeria and South Africa FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners. Additionally, the study examined the support mainstream schoolteachers require to differentiate assessments in their classrooms. Specifically, the study explored how differentiated

assessment can be contextualised as an inclusive framework in these countries to promote effective implementation. The results of this research contributed to the literature on the phenomenon and provided a framework to differentiate assessment in Nigeria and South Africa.

1.6 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following primary research question:

- 1 How can differentiated assessment be contextualised as an inclusive framework for equitable assessment practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools?

The following research sub-questions guided the study:

- 1 What are the perceptions of FP mainstream schoolteachers regarding inclusive education?
- 2 To what extent do Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment to promote equitable practices?
- 3 What support do teachers in mainstream schools require and get to implement differentiated assessments in their classrooms?
- 4 What contextual framework can be utilised to promote differentiated assessment in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools?

1.7 Hypothesis

The study tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of inclusive education.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of assessment.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference between the support Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers get and receive.

1.8 Concept Clarification

1.8.1 Mainstream Schools

These schools seek to address the learning needs of all learners by removing potential barriers to learning and promoting access to quality education for all learners (Buckley-Walker & Lipscombe, 2021). They are schools that accommodate and cater to the learning needs of all learners, including learners with SEN (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2016). Hence, mainstream schools are resourced with the required infrastructure, teaching and learning resources, inclusive pedagogies, and individualised support (International Institute for Educational Planning UNESCO [IIEP-UNESCO], 2019). Mainstream schools foster and acknowledge the human rights of all learners to education by providing the opportunities the learners need to attain academic excellence equitably. They promote diversity, acceptance, fairness, and social justice in a democratic society (Nel, 2018). For this study, the above definitions of mainstream schools within the African context were used interchangeably as they sum up the holistic definition.

1.8.2 Differentiated Assessment

Differentiated assessment can be defined as a shift from the traditional practice of assessment, which ignores the diversity learners bring and possess, to an innovative approach to assessment that acknowledges and accommodates the diverse needs of all learners (DBE, 2011). Differentiated assessment involves “accommodations and adaptations that are designed to equalise opportunities for all learners by addressing barriers which they may experience and provide support to enable the learners to give a true account of their knowledge and/or skills” (DBE, 2017, p. 168). It does not compromise the assessment standard nor provide a learner with an unfair advantage over their peers (DBE, 2017). It “considers learners’ skills, readiness, interests, and needs” (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 1). Within this study, the above definitions of differentiated assessment were utilised.

1.8.3 Equitable

Equitable is derived from the word equity. According to Lumadi and Khoza (2022, p. 17), equity “considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness and impartiality of its distribution at all levels of educational sub-sectors”. Equity in education is defined as fairness, which entails that individual or socioeconomic conditions, such as gender, race, language, or ethnic background, do

not pose a barrier to learners' educational achievement (Schleicher, 2021). Equity guarantees that all learners have an inclusive schooling experience and supports in attaining their learning potential without creating barriers or diminishing expectations (Schleicher, 2021). For this study, equitable refers to mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices that provide fair opportunities to learners to demonstrate their knowledge without giving them an undue advantage.

1.8.4 Foundation Phase

The FP within the South African context is the first phase of formal schooling (DBE, 2011). It includes the Reception Year, which is also known as Grade R to Grade 3. Learners within this phase are often between the ages of ± 5 years and ± 9 years (DBE, 2011). In the Nigerian context, primary education is segmented into two phases (NERDC, 2013). The phases include lower primary and upper primary education. This study focuses on the lower primary phase, which consists of the first three years of formal schooling (Salami & Egbedeyi, 2018). For this study, FP refers to Grades 1–3.

1.8.5 Special Educational Needs

The term SEN has been described in many ways by different scholars. The term has been popularly used to refer to learners with physical impairments such as auditory, visual, and speech impairments (Tohara, 2021). However, this definition has been deemed insufficient and broadened by some scholars to include learners with learning, developmental, and intellectual disabilities (Alqahtani, 2023). The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) state that learners with SEN are learners who “for a wide variety of reasons, require additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods in order to participate and meet learning objectives in an education programme. Reasons may include disadvantages in physical, behavioural, intellectual, emotional and social capacities” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012, p. 83). Hence, learners are identified as having SEN based on the difficulties, they experience at school rather than physical impairments or medical circumstances only. The definition provided by ISCED was used within the context of this study.

1.9 Preliminary Literature Review

1.9.1 Mainstream Schools/Classrooms in the Nigerian and South African Context

The Salamanca Framework of Action on Inclusive Education, amongst other international policies, encouraged the development of mainstream schools in Nigeria

and South Africa (Adigun, 2021; UNESCO, 1994). These African countries formulated inclusive policies that obliged regular schools to accommodate and cater to learners with SEN who were previously relegated to special schools (DoE, 2001; FME, 2016).

Scholars in Nigeria have conducted extensive research on inclusive education and have revealed that, although gaining ground, inclusive education is not widespread in the country. Fakolade and Adeniyi (2009) found over a decade ago that only one out of 36 states in Nigeria had incorporated inclusive education, with other states at various stages of initiation. A few years later, more states in Nigeria such as Abia, Lagos, Oyo, and Plateau, have made significant strides in adopting inclusive education (Salami, 2013). More recently, the Southwest region of Nigeria, with states such as Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo, and Osun, has demonstrated a commitment to accommodate learners with SEN in mainstream schools (Egbedeyi & Babalola, 2023). These findings indicate that the inclusive education coverage in Nigeria is still low, leaving many vulnerable learners with SEN out of mainstream schools in some states.

South Africa, as an African country, has shown remarkable commitment to the establishment of mainstream schools and the enactment of inclusive policies (Andrews et al., 2020). However, there is still a gap between the ideal policies and their implementation, especially in rural areas (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). Many learners in rural areas are still denied their right to quality inclusive education (Marloth, 2022). Research conducted in rural areas has revealed that rurality often has a bearing on inclusive education due to the prevalence of low understanding and literacy levels of parents, as well as insufficient qualified teachers (Thuketana, 2018). Furthermore, traditional beliefs about disability being the result of witchcraft or misfortune hamper the growth of inclusive education in rural areas (Thuketana, 2018).

Moreover, the emergence and growth of mainstream schools in Nigeria and South Africa came at a cost. Investments in infrastructure and resources such as ramps for wheelchairs became paramount to accommodate all learners notwithstanding their SEN (Adeniyi & Olufemi-Adeniyi, 2024; Engelbrecht, 2020; Engelbrecht & Savolainen, 2018). Studies have revealed that most mainstream primary schools, particularly in rural areas in South Africa and Nigeria, are under-equipped with the infrastructure and resources needed to realise inclusive education (Ogbuka, 2019; Thuketana, 2018). Most of the existing schools were erected without due consideration of the needs of

learners with SEN (Mpu & Adu, 2021). There are insufficient or non-existent basic resources, such as chairs and desks, and resources to accommodate learners with SEN, such as braille machines, audiobooks, ramps, and large print books in some schools (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2017; Mitchell, 2008).

The unavailability of these resources hampers the realisation of inclusive education and the functionality of mainstream schools (Kamble & Gaikwad, 2021; Kgothule & Hay, 2013; Rahmat, 2021). Consequently, in Nigeria, an average of 10.5 million children do not attend school (UNICEF, 2022). Most of the marginalised children who do not attend school are children with special education needs (UNICEF, 2022). Empirical data have reported on the complex association between poverty, disability, and access to inclusive education (Engelbrecht, 2020).

As much as mainstream schools need to restructure their buildings and infrastructure to accommodate and cater to all learners, I argue that it is also imperative that emphasis on restructuring pedagogical practices and assessment to accommodate all learners is key. In this regard, inclusive education rights should extend beyond “rights to education” to “rights in education”, which include differentiated assessment (Spren & Vally, 2006, p. 353). South Africa’s EWP6 states that “new curriculum and assessment initiatives will be required to focus on the inclusion of diverse learning needs ... since curricula create the most significant barrier to learning and exclusion for many learners” (DoE, 2001, pp. 31–32). In South Africa, the curriculum has been changed at least thrice from 1998 to 2012 to accommodate all learners in mainstream schools (Izevbigie, 2021). Although the current South Africa curriculum is perceived to be more responsive to learners with SEN than the previous curriculum, it is argued that there is still room for improvement (du Plessis & Marais, 2015; Izevbigie, 2021; Magagula, 2015).

Furthermore, findings reveal that most South African and Nigerian teachers, mainly the older generation, are not enthusiastic about modifying their assessment practices to be inclusive (Eduwem & Tommy, 2021; Ikenyiri et al., 2022; Ramollo & Kanjee, 2023; Omebe, 2014; Olutola et al., 2016). Research attributes reasons to contextual challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of support, and time constraints (Izevbigie, 2021). Notwithstanding, mainstream schools have promoted inclusive education with evidence-based benefits for learners and society (Hehir et al., 2016;

Mahlo, 2017). South Africa, there was an increase in the enrolment of learners with SEN rose from 77,000 in 2002 to 121,461 in 2015 (DBE, 2015). Furthermore, there has been an increase in the availability of external financial support to advance initial teacher education programmes (DBE, 2015).

1.9.2 Perceptions of South African and Nigerian Teachers on Classroom Assessment

It is often found in studies that teachers' perceptions inform their practice (Opre, 2015; Sadler & Reimann, 2018). Teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment are shaped by various influences such as their personal experiences with assessment, either as learners or teachers, their beliefs about the purpose of assessment, and their understanding of assessment theories and policies (DeLuca et al., 2021; Popham, 2018). Moreover, establishing the connection between perception and practice is a multifaceted phenomenon, given the interplay between sociocultural and political influences on teachers' assessment practices (Brown et al., 2019; Gebri & Brown, 2014; Raji et al., 2020; Remesal, 2011). Notwithstanding, notable assessment scholars (Brown, 2006; Brown et al., 2024; Deneen & Brown, 2016; Xu & Brown, 2016) have sought to investigate how teachers understand and conceptualise assessment and factors that might have a bearing on their understanding.

In Nigeria and South Africa, few studies have examined FP teachers' perceptions of assessment. In Nigeria, it has been found that teachers understand assessment mainly for the purpose of accountability and to improve instructional methods (Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2020; Raji, 2023). Conducting assessments for accountability purposes is to determine if most of the learners are high achievers and if the school is ranked as a top-performing school (Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2020). This understanding of assessment may put teachers under undue pressure to teach and narrow their instructional approach to teaching only content to be assessed for learners to get good grades (Raji et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2017). This focus occurs because the teachers will be held accountable for the learners' performance, especially in fee-paying schools. As a result, some teachers subject learners to rote learning and content cramming to reproduce the answers on paper.

Additionally, research findings indicate that the predominant perception of assessment among Nigerian teachers is summative (Ndubueze et al., 2015; Raji et al., 2020). In this vein, teachers have demonstrated a limited understanding of formative

assessment, which has resulted in its underutilisation, depriving learners of the opportunity to enhance their learning through constructive guidance and feedback (Motsoeneng & Moreeng, 2022). Also, teachers understand formative assessment primarily as a tool to assess the cognitive domain of learners periodically, thereby neglecting the affective and psychomotor domains of the learner (Afemikhe & Omo-Egbekuse, 2011; Ndubueze et al., 2015). An investigation of 1080 teachers' perceptions and practices of formative assessment in Nigeria revealed that the teachers' assessment methods were aligned with their perceptions (Nwachukwu & Ogudo, 2014). Hence, there was an undue reliance on the use of written essays and multiple-choice assessments to assess the cognitive abilities of the learners (Nwachukwu & Ogudo, 2014). However, the use of projects, observations, and journals for assessment appears to be less common among teachers (Nwachukwu & Ogudo, 2014).

Furthermore, teachers' perception of their learners' cognitive abilities influences how they assess them (Izevbogie, 2021). Teachers who perceive their learners to possess the same cognitive abilities tend to use standardised assessments, while teachers who perceive their learners as having different cognitive abilities seek to differentiate assessments to accommodate these differences (Tomlinson, 2015). However, to differentiate learners' cognitive abilities, most teachers in SA and Nigeria have categorised learners as slow, average, or fast learners (du Plessis & Marais 2015; Izevbogie, 2021). These categories favour the use of Bloom's taxonomy to differentiate assessment. While Bloom's taxonomy assists teachers in differentiating the level of assessment questions, it provides a limited view of differentiated assessment, which is broader than categorising questions from simple to complex (Moon et al., 2020). Therefore, mainstream schoolteachers must also understand the multiple intelligences their learners possess.

In SA schools, most teachers lack the knowledge and skills to use formative assessment data effectively to identify and address learning gaps (Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015). This reality suggests that while some teachers' understanding of assessment might be adequate, they may not be using the results of these assessments effectively to make decisions about their learners' learning (Isnawati, 2023). Hence, equipping teachers with the right perceptions about differentiated assessment should be accompanied by a discussion of how to implement it in their classrooms to promote

equitable access for all learners. Furthermore, most preservice teachers' perceptions of assessment are primarily associated with formal high-stakes assessment (Brown, 2011; DeLuca et al., 2016). Some scholars, such as Campbell (2013), argue that the training of teachers in assessment has been inadequate and possibly overshadowed by their teaching experiences or personal characteristics. Other studies suggest that training programmes focused on the curriculum and assessment can transform teachers' perceptions and impact their assessment practices (Hill et al., 2017).

Ramollo and Kanjee (2023) conducted a study with 22 FP teachers from eight primary schools in SA. The schools were sampled because they had not participated in any formative assessment professional development programmes. The schools were mainly located in low socioeconomic contexts (Ramollo & Kanjee, 2023). It was revealed that the teachers' knowledge and understanding of formative assessment significantly improved after undergoing the development programme (Ramollo & Kanjee, 2023). However, it was reported that the teachers' improved knowledge and understanding could be attributed to the follow-up practical application (Ramollo & Kanjee, 2023). This finding supports and builds on evidence from surveys and case studies that integrating assessment training with real classroom experience is key to realising a shift in teachers' perceptions (Andersson & Palm, 2018; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Evers, 2014). Additionally, this finding provides teachers with time for reflection on their practices, increases their understanding of assessment, and enables them to use assessment evidence to achieve more equitable outcomes (Hill et al., 2017).

Teachers' perceptions of assessment can also be influenced by their understanding of assessment policies and guidelines to enhance learning and teaching (Pyle & DeLuca, 2013; Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). It is, therefore, important that assessment policies and guidelines in SA and Nigeria provide practical ways for teachers to differentiate assessments to accommodate the differences that have a bearing on how learners demonstrate mastery of the content. Research findings in SA further suggest that teachers develop their understanding of assessment based on their classroom experience (Sethusha, 2012). Many teachers have expressed frustration regarding the number of learners to which they cater. Most classrooms have an average class size of 80 to 100 learners (Mkandawire et al., 2016; Mpu, 2018). Congested and overcrowded classrooms without an effective support structure may impede the

teachers' ability to differentiate assessment as they might be overburdened in a bid to meet up with the pace of the curriculum (Pyle & DeLuca, 2013). Hence, teachers facing contextual challenges might perceive inclusive assessments as impractical.

Some teachers also hold negative perceptions of assessment (Barnes et al., 2017). Negative perceptions according to Brown (2004, 2006), include the belief that assessment is irrelevant to the teaching and learning process. Research conducted in Nigeria attests that some schoolteachers understand assessment and learning as isolated events in the classroom (Azuka, 2014). The understanding made it difficult for teachers to use assessment results to address learning gaps and promote teaching and learning (Azuka, 2014; Okyere & Larbi, 2019).

1.9.3 Differentiated Assessment Practices in the Foundation Phase

The FP is a significant and delicate phase in a learner's physical, mental, social, and emotional development (Naudé & Reda, 2017). The FP learners come into formal education at different stages of development with different potentials, abilities, interests, and skills. Therefore, these varying abilities should be harnessed and utilised as a resource by the FP teacher to actualise the full potential of all learners and cater to their learning needs (Prinsloo, 2001). The rich diversity of FP learners in mainstream classrooms is the foundation of utilising differentiated assessment.

The Nigerian curriculum does not explicitly state the assessment strategies teachers are to utilise in the FP. However, it emphasised that educational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalised by their being in whole, not in part (FRN, 2013). This suggests that assessment practices for Nigerian teachers should encompass more than just the cognitive abilities of the learners, which are often narrowly conceptualised. Gardner (1983) argued that learners' intelligence is multifaceted, and their cognitive abilities are diverse with varying degrees of strength. However, the assessment practices of Nigerian teachers indicate that they assess the cognitive development of the learners by relying on or two assessments (Faleye & Adefisoye, 2016; Nwachukwu & Ogudo, 2014). Thus, many teachers are not prepared with the knowledge and skills to conduct a holistic assessment of what a learner knows and can do (Ikenyiri et al., 2022; Nwana, 2007; Uvie, 2021).

Additionally, teachers' assessment practices should consider the behaviour, attitude, interests, learning styles, and skills of the learners, which influence how they

demonstrate their knowledge and skills (Idowu & Esere, 2010). The FP learners often express themselves in an environment that fosters their curiosity and hands-on engagement through play (Niemeyer & Scott-Little, 2001). Therefore, assessing young learners using traditional methods where they are expected to sit quietly in a controlled and silent classroom and demonstrate their knowledge orally or using a pencil and paper can increase their anxiety (Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015; Rao & Sun, 2010). In many classrooms, how learners learn and how they are required to demonstrate their learning do not align. It has been argued that if instruction is differentiated in the FP, assessment should also be differentiated (Noman & Kaur, 2014).

The NPE (2004) also indicates that assessment should be conducted continuously using various assessment methods. Classroom assessments should be conducted using varied methods to gather valid evidence of learners' learning (Hill et al., 2017). Rahman (2018) found that teachers lack an understanding of diverse methods for assessing their learners. Abdulmumini (2023) showed that 525 (37.3%) participants fell below expectations in classroom assessment skills. Similarly, Ikenyiri et al. (2022) evaluated teachers' assessment practices in public primary schools in Nigeria. The findings showed that the teachers relied on written and objective assessments. Additionally, about 80% of the assessment items were constructed at the lower level of Bloom's taxonomy (Ikenyiri et al., 2022). In the affective domain, the only assessment tool employed by the teachers is the observation method (Ikenyiri et al., 2022).

Differentiated assessment is a framework that acknowledges learners' physical, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor differences by utilising a variety of assessment tools to accommodate and cater to their needs (Moon et al., 2020). When learners' differences are not accommodated during the assessment, it could have adverse psychological effects on them, particularly those with SEN (Matz, 2019; Polesel et al., 2012). It has been stated that young learners avoid academic activities that project them as failures, hindering their further engagement with the curriculum (Naudé & Reda, 2017). Thus, assessment should be differentiated "based on the learner's interest, profile and learning style" to promote active engagement (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 1).

Although it is at the FP that the fundamentals and groundwork of learners' schooling experiences are established, empirical data and literature reporting on the implementation of differentiated assessment in this phase in Nigeria and SA are scarce (Ayaya et al., 2020; Makoelle, 2012). This study, therefore, contributes immensely to existing literature.

1.9.4 Support Structures for Mainstream Schoolteachers to Effectively Assess Learning

The first support structure needed by a mainstream schoolteacher is a documented policy that guides the teacher on practical ways to adapt the curriculum, teaching strategies, and assessment to meet the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom. Assessment policies in SA, such as “Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS¹” provide the teacher with a template to cater to all learners in the classroom (DBE, 2011). On the other hand, Nigeria has policies on inclusive education in general, but there is no policy dedicated to guiding how assessment can be differentiated (FRN, 2016). In addition, policies alone are not enough to support mainstream schoolteachers as they also require personnel support through professional experts (Mfuthwana, 2016; Nel, 2018).

Although teachers are expected to be qualified and trained to cater to all learners, they require the support of specialists (Mpanza & Govender, 2022). In Nigeria and SA, a multidisciplinary team of professionals has been saddled with the responsibility of assisting mainstream teachers to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018; Mkwanazi, 2023; Van Zyl, 2023). In Nigeria, support structures include the SBMC, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the State Ministries of Education (SME) (FME, 2016). In SA, on the other hand, support structures in mainstream schools include “School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs), Institutional-level Support Teams (ILTS) and District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs)” (DoE, 2001, p. 16). I investigated the support requirements of teachers from the SBMC in Nigeria and DBST in SA.

The SBMCs of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Nigeria are statutory and non-political committees saddled with the responsibility of supporting schools (Agundu et

¹ CAPS stands for “Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement”

al., 2024). The SBMCs is pivotal in equipping teachers with content knowledge, innovative pedagogical skills and practices, and providing solutions to challenges encountered in the implementation of the curriculum and resource management in schools (Bander, 2012; Obi & Onyilibe, 2024). The SBMCs are representatives of the local community and better understand the specific needs and challenges faced by teachers in their schools (Oduwaiye et al., 2016). In addition, they foster a strong sense of ownership and commitment within the community, offer ongoing support and monitor the progress of capacity development programmes (Obi & Onyilibe, 2024).

The SBMC collaborates with other stakeholders and does not work in isolation (Ugochukwu & Goodhope, 2023). They collaborate with the Parent Teacher Association, the Nigeria Union of Teachers, All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools, the Old Students Association, Civil Society Action Coalitions on Education for all Ministries, and Departments and Agencies of Government (Ugochukwu & Goodhope, 2023). Engelbrecht and Green (2001) emphasised that a “community-based approach is key and emphasises the involvement and utilisation of professional support service from other government departments” (p. 52).

Similarly, the DBST in SA is an interdisciplinary group of professionals established in each district. Each team is responsible for monitoring and supporting several schools (DoE, 2001). The DBSTs comprise professionals such as Learning Support Educators (LSEs), psychologists, therapists, and specialists in specific impairments. Additionally, curriculum experts are part of the team that collaborates with mainstream schoolteachers in developing lessons, analysing learner performance, and promoting differentiation (Jacobs, 2015). Government representatives from local departments are also part of the team (Mkwanazi, 2023; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2022). The team is tasked with integrating their specialised expertise and employing collaborative problem-solving techniques (DoE, 2001). The primary goals and responsibilities of the DBSTs include helping teachers to make their teaching and assessment methods more adaptable to accommodate all learners (DoE, 2001, 2005, 2006). Additionally, they are responsible for providing in-service training to teachers to improve their skills and enhance their ability to support learners with SEN (Mfuthwana, 2016). The DBSTs provide a framework for learning support at the district and school levels (Mkwanazi, 2023).

Support structures must be effective and operational in assisting mainstream schoolteachers, as studies have revealed that teachers often feel abandoned and left alone to cater to their learners (Izevbigie, 2021; Taylor, 2017; Thuketana, 2018). Consequently, some teachers have a negative perception towards accommodating learners with special education needs, as they feel incapable of supporting them effectively without the necessary support (De Boer et al., 2011). In this regard, teachers may feel overwhelmed and less confident in differentiating assessments in their classrooms without collaborative support. Through collaboration with other teachers and professionals, teachers can acquire a wider range of skills and knowledge, leading to better learning outcomes for learners (Williams, 2010). Mainstream schoolteachers must collaborate with parents, families, and various other educational professionals (DBE, 2014).

Empirical research conducted in Nigeria on the support that mainstream schoolteachers require and get from the SBMC is limited to providing support, such as establishing capacity development programmes for teachers (Bander, 2012; Obi & Onyilibe, 2024). There are also a few studies focused on the role of SBMC in ensuring that schools provide a safe and conducive learning environment for learners and promote accountability and development in schools (Oduwaiye et al., 2016). Other studies have focused on the role of the SBMC in resource mobilisation (Oresajo, 2021), enhancing teaching and learning in schools by supporting teachers' development and reviewing modern teaching strategies (Ihedioha, 2021; Ogundele & Adelaba, 2009). Fewer studies have focused on the support provided by the SBMC on curriculum implementation. In rural areas of River's State in Nigeria, Ugochukwu and Goodhope (2023) found that the SBMC play a crucial role in enhancing learning by prioritising the implementation of relevant curriculum contents that align with the needs and goals of learners in their communities. This role ultimately leads to improved learning for all learners.

Furthermore, SBMC ensures that local and improved instructional materials are used to enhance understanding of curriculum contents (Ugochukwu & Goodhope, 2023). Ayeni & Bamire (2022) added that the involvement of parents and local leaders in the SBMC is important in the effective implementation of their supportive roles. Notwithstanding, there is a lack of empirical literature and data on the support mainstream schoolteachers receive and require from the SBMC to differentiate

assessments for learners, including learners with SEN. However, it has been reported that there are challenges facing the SBMC, which include a lack of collaboration among its members, lack of effective communication and poor levels of commitment from members (Kwashabawa, 2017). Despite the numerous challenges, support from SBMC can foster better teaching/learning environments, school effectiveness and learners' achievements (Bandur, 2008; Obi & Onyilibe, 2024).

In SA, mainstream schoolteachers have commented on their need for urgent assistance to implement inclusive policies as some teachers are unsure of how to accommodate the differences of learners in their classrooms (Dreyer, 2014; du Plessis, 2013; Makhalemele, 2011; Makhalemele & Tlale, 2021; Mabaso, 2019; Van Zyl, 2023). Some teachers struggle to differentiate assessments for learners with SEN as some of the learners may struggle with tasks such as reading, writing, and following instructions (Mpanza & Govender, 2022). Additionally, they may also display behavioural challenges (Mpanza & Govender, 2022). Hence, teachers have expressed the need for support from the DBST to support learners successfully. Research findings indicate that the DBSTs are understaffed and require more “specialist staff, such as psychologists, therapists, and social workers, to support learners” in schools (DoE, 2001, p. 8). Teachers have further indicated that they require longer workshops if they are to be adequately capacitated (Mpanza & Govender, 2022). Therefore, a training programme should be complemented by specialised support teams that can enter classrooms and provide teachers with hands-on training and practical skills to tackle learners' learning barriers (Du Plessis, 2013; Mpu & Adu, 2021; Van Zyl, 2023).

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks guiding this study comprised the Capability Approach (Sen, 1992), which served as the lens for evaluating the extent to which FP teachers' assessment practices are equitable. Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory served as the lens for investigating how assessment can be differentiated for all learners in mainstream schools. Furthermore, to investigate professional partnerships and collaboration amongst teachers and education stakeholders, Lave and Wenger's (1991) Community of Practice (CoP) was utilised as the lens. I utilised the conceptual framework as the lens to investigate the phenomenon as a single theory was insufficient to investigate the phenomenon and answer my research questions.

1.10.1 Capability Approach

Sen (1992) propounded a *capability approach* as a theory for social justice in the field of economics. However, this approach has been applied to education as a framework to examine issues regarding fairness and equity in mainstream schools (Hinchcliffe & Terzi, 2009). There are two core concepts of the capability approach: functions and capabilities (Sen, 1992). Capabilities refer to “what people are able to do and to be when given real opportunities” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 5). On the other hand, *functionings* refer to the attainments or accomplishments that an individual has realised (Sen, 1992). Hence, equitable assessment practices in mainstream schools are the capabilities needed for learners to attain the required functionings, which is the attainment of academic success. Equity, according to this approach, entails taking cognisance of individual differences that are both intrinsic (gender, race) and extrinsic (attributed to environmental and social factors) (Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016). In this regard, the level of equity in mainstream schoolteachers’ assessment practices should be evaluated based on the extent to which they recognise and accommodate the learners’ differences (Terzi, 2014). Therefore, the capability approach was used in this study as the lens to evaluate the extent to which the assessment practices of FP mainstream schoolteachers are equitable.

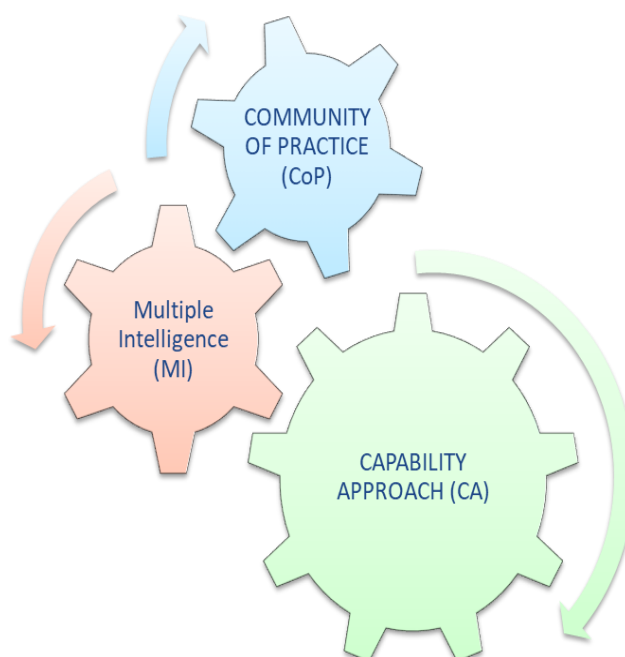
1.10.2 Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)

The theory of MI was propounded by American psychologist Howard Gardner in 1983. Gardner believed that the traditional approach to understanding cognition and assessing intelligence was too limited, and he sought to expand the scope of understanding learners’ cognitive ability beyond the confines of an IQ score (Gardner, 1983). He proposed that learners have multiple intelligences, not just one, and grouped these abilities into nine comprehensive intelligences (Armstrong, 2018). These intelligences include “verbal, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and spiritual intelligence” (Gardner, 1983, p. 48). Gardner believed that every learner brings a combination of all nine bits of intelligence to the classroom, each with varying degrees of strength and that these bits of intelligence can be nurtured and developed (Altan, 2020; Gardner, 1983). Therefore, assessment should be differentiated to accommodate the diverse intelligences present in each learner.

1.10.3 **Community of Practice (CoP)**

A CoP is a “group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). For a community to be recognised as a CoP, there must be three vital characteristics, which include a “domain” of interest (primary issues that members experience and are committed to) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). There must also be a “community” where members participate in joint activities such as information sharing, problem-solving, and discussions as they pursue their aims within the domain. Finally, there must be a shared “practice” (such as frameworks, resources, and best practices) to which members are committed as practitioners (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The DoE in SA and Nigeria acknowledge that inclusive policies cannot be effectively implemented in mainstream schools without support and collaboration within and outside the schools (DoE, 2001; FRN, 2016). For FP mainstream schoolteachers to differentiate assessments, there must be collaboration and partnership involving all relevant stakeholders marked by a collective sense of commitment to make assessments inclusive for every learner.

Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework Guiding the Assessment of Learners in Mainstream Schools



1.11 Working Assumptions

Table 1.1 presents my working assumptions and the actions I took to counteract their influence on the study.

Table 1.1: Suppositions and Biases

Supposition	Action to counteract their influence on the study
FP teachers' understanding of differentiated assessments can influence how they conduct assessments.	Confirmability ensures that personal opinions are not presented in the findings, and instead, the results are based on the collected data or presented responses
FP teachers do not receive enough support to implement differentiated assessments in their classes.	verbatim.

1.12 Research Paradigm

Paradigms can be defined as a system of established beliefs, assumptions, principles, and conduct that guide researchers regarding a study's approach and best practices (Kuhn, 1970). Paradigms serve as the lens researchers use to view the world, formulate research questions, and select the methods to answer the questions. This study was guided by the pragmatism paradigm.

1.12.1 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a paradigm grounded on the belief that actions depend on worldviews, which are inseparable from the circumstances and settings in which they occur (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatists acknowledge that a person's worldview and beliefs are the outcome of experience, which informs practice. Although individuals differ based on worldviews and experience, there are often varying measures of shared worldviews within a social context (Morgan, 2014).

The pragmatism paradigm supports the belief that distinct paradigms can be utilised together to foster knowledge creation and meaning-making (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Pragmatism allows researchers to draw on the strength of both subjectivity and

objectivity when either of the lenses is insufficient to answer the research questions (Shannon-Baker, 2016); hence, this study utilised both constructivism and positivism paradigms.

Knoblauch and Pfadenhauer (2018) assert that constructivism believes in multiple constructed realities based on an individual's personal experiences and interactions within a bound context. In this regard, constructivism allowed me to gain in-depth knowledge about the FP of mainstream schoolteachers' understanding and lived experiences of the phenomenon within their context. Based on the socially constructed realities of the teachers, using this paradigm further provided insights into how differentiated assessment can be contextualised in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.

This study also adopted the positivist paradigm. Positivism, which is based on objectivity and the use of scientific methods to measure variables, enabled me to determine the extent to which South African and Nigerian FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners based on their responses (Park et al., 2020). This paradigm further enabled me to determine if the understanding and practice of the phenomenon in these countries differ statistically or not. Pragmatism is widely considered a suitable paradigm for mixed methods studies (Feilzer, 2024).

1.12.2 Methodological Approach

Mixed methods is the systematic combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in a study to answer the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2017). However, mixed methods research (MMR) "is simply more than reporting two distinct strands of quantitative and qualitative research; these studies must also integrate, link, or connect these strands in some way" (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007, p. 108). It builds on the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative approaches when either is insufficient to investigate the research problem comprehensively and answer the study's questions.

The MMR approach is the most suitable for this study because "both numerical and text data" (Maree, 2016, p. 270) are required to answer the research questions. Since it is almost impossible to gain in-depth knowledge of the teachers' understanding and lived experience of the phenomenon from the use of objective methods only, the

quantitative approach is insufficient (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, utilising only a qualitative approach was deemed inappropriate in measuring and determining the extent to which the understanding and practice of the phenomenon vary between both countries (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The application of MMR was implemented as an explanatory, sequential approach. An explanatory, sequential MMR approach entails the collection of quantitative data first to provide a broader understanding and comparison of the phenomenon and then the gathering of qualitative data to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to investigate the reasons why these variations were found (Creswell, 2014; Doyle et al., 2019).

1.13 Research Design

1.13.1 Multiple Case Studies

Multiple case studies were employed using an explanatory, sequential MMR approach (Briggs et al., 2014; Creswell, 2014). Yin (2014, p. 16) conceptualises “a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident”. A case can consist of an individual, event, entity, or organisation. Therefore, multiple case studies combine two or more cases in a study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The relevance of applying multiple case studies is informed by the need for an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon and to compare the disparities and similarities between cases (teachers), within their social context (South African and Nigeria schools), and individual settings (mainstream classrooms) (Creswell, 2014). Multiple case studies enabled me to apply multiple data collection/gathering methods, such as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, to understand the phenomenon in-depth (Kumar, 2018). This study was conducted in the context where the phenomenon occurred to uncover the social realities and issues affecting its implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Notwithstanding, criticisms have been levied against the use of this design. The findings from case studies cannot be generalised to the total population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, the findings of this study are not intended to generalise the phenomenon in Nigeria and SA but to provide insight into how the phenomenon is

understood, practised, and possibly contextualised to foster its implementation. Nevertheless, the findings may be used to predict the understanding and practice of the phenomenon in these African countries due to multiple case studies with a larger sample size (Creswell, 2012). Hence, the restrictions of this design did not limit the application in this study.

1.13.2 Sampling/Selection of Participants

Sampling refers to the systematic selection of research participants with the prerequisite ability to provide relevant data about the phenomenon investigated. In line with the methodological approach, this study adopted a sequential sampling design (Briggs et al., 2014; Creswell, 2014). Based on this sampling design, quantitative data was collected in the first phase and qualitative data was collected in the second phase. A total of 100 FP mainstream schoolteachers in both countries were conveniently selected as respondents for the quantitative data. In Nigeria, 50 FP schoolteachers from eight mainstream primary schools (private and public schools) were conveniently selected. A similar sample was applied in South Africa. The participants for the second phase (semi-structured interview) of the sampling were drawn from the participants who specified their interest in the interviews to provide in-depth information. Ten (10) FP teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews in Nigeria, and another ten FP in semi-structured interviews in South Africa.

Convenience sampling as a quantitative sampling strategy has been criticised due to its relatively small sample size, which is not representative of the population, and the findings from the study cannot be generalised. However, the primary purpose is to gather in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon from participants who experience the phenomenon in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). Notwithstanding, this sampling strategy can provide relevant data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

1.13.3 Data Collection

1.13.3.1 Questionnaires as a Quantitative Data Collection Method

An adapted questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data. The original questionnaire instrument was titled the Approaches to Classroom Assessment Instrument (ACAI) and had evidence of validity and reliability (DeLuca et al., 2016). The ACAI was created to represent contemporary methods for assessing learners in the classroom (DeLuca et al., 2016). The ACAI demonstrated its initial construct

validity through assessment specialists and a panel of experienced teachers. Hence, this study leveraged on the quality of the questionnaire while making it more suitable to the Nigerian and South African context. The primary modification made from the original questionnaire was the addition of the section on the support the teachers receive and require from the DBST/SBMC to differentiate assessment.

The questionnaire was sectioned to measure the FP mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions, practices, experiences, and support requirements about the phenomenon studied by using a 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was also designed to collect data on the demographic information of the teachers, such as their age group, gender, and Grade taught. Information such as the name of the teacher capable of revealing their identity was avoided. Rather, codes and pseudonyms were used instead.

Utilising a questionnaire for this study enabled me to collect quantitative data on mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices that can be statistically analysed by testing the hypotheses and findings compared between Nigeria and South Africa (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, administering questionnaires is both cost- and time-efficient as data can be collected from more individuals within a shorter period compared with interviews. However, this study did not rely only on questionnaires due to its weaknesses. Creswell (2014) enumerates the limitations associated with questionnaires, including the possibility of missing data when the questionnaire is not completed or returned. Also, the feelings and lived experiences of the respondents cannot adequately be collected with questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to mitigate the limitations associated with questionnaires.

1.13.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview as a Qualitative Data Collection Method

A semi-structured interview is a rich source of data in qualitative research whereby the researcher engages in dialogue with the participants by asking predetermined open-ended questions to gather relevant information about the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences about the phenomenon studied (Maree, 2016; Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Semi-structured interviews produce in-depth information as the participants can voice out their beliefs and experiences about the phenomenon.

For this study, the participants who were interviewed included those who were willing to discuss their quantitative responses further, which enabled me to probe deeper to gain better insights into their understanding and experiences of the phenomenon studied (Brinkmann, 2018). Since I was not able to capture all the participants' responses in writing, I sought consent to enable me to record the interviews verbatim to safeguard the accuracy of the data meticulously (Maree, 2016). Furthermore, I took notes to supplement the recordings that may not have been captured, such as the participants' emotional expressions.

Semi-structured interviews have been criticised due to the possibility of the researcher's presence influencing the responses from the participants (Creswell, 2014). Hence, document analysis was used to obtain a deeper contextualisation of the phenomenon and to enhance the quality of the study's findings.

1.13.3.3 Document Analysis

Kiiza (2019) defines document analysis as the careful examination and analysis of documents to uncover meanings, obtain knowledge, and evaluate literature grounded in the study context to gather relevant data about the phenomenon studied. Documents are secondary data sources that provide valuable qualitative data for researchers and may include both public and private records. Documents such as the National Policy for Education and the National Policy on Inclusive Education were analysed to understand how differentiated assessment can be contextualised to promote equitable practices in Nigeria. In South Africa, relevant documents such as EWP6, the "National Protocol for Assessment for Grade R-12; CAPS, Guidelines for DBSTs, and the DBE Responding to Diversity in Grades R To 9: Practical Approaches To English and Mathematics Curriculum Differentiation" were analysed (DBE, 2011). The documents enabled me to remain abreast of the assessment policies and support requirements in Nigeria and South Africa. The documents also enabled me to ascertain the participant's compliance with policy documents.

1.14 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis in research is the systematic process of making meaning from gathered data by organising, transcribing, or scientifically describing the data to answer the research questions (Miles & Singal, 2014). The researcher expected to extract

meaning from the data gathered from various sources and interpret it based on the methodology and context of the study (Gibbs, 2018; Kent, 2015).

1.14.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarise the responses of the respondents to determine the mean (average scores of the responses per item) and standard deviation (spread of the data) of the independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2012). For this study, the independent variables are the African countries (Nigeria and SA), while the dependent variables are the participants' perceptions and practices. Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses and determine whether the differences between the means of the two groups (Nigeria and South Africa) were statistically significant.

1.14.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered in this study were analysed using thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis involves the systematic process of categorising, analysing and interpreting emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I followed the process recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the data. Firstly, I transcribed the recorded interviews, converting the audio data to text data. I then read through the textual data multiple times to get acquainted with it. After that, I created codes from the data by grouping similar ideas and sorting them into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were further revised and categorised into sub-themes. Subsequently, the data was interpreted and presented based on the emerging themes and sub-themes to address the research questions. The findings generated from the qualitative data analysis were used to provide deeper insight into the quantitative findings.

1.15 Quality Measures

Consideration must be given to the quality and rigour of research studies throughout the process (Laher, 2016). Researchers are thus obliged to maintain and enhance the quality of their study. For this study, validity and reliability were used to ensure that high standards for quality are met in the quantitative component of the study. Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were used to ensure high

standards were met in the qualitative component of the study (Brown et al., 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

1.15.1 Quantitative Quality Criteria

1.15.1.1 Validity

Validity in quantitative research can be defined as the degree to which the research findings accurately measure what it envisioned to measure or achieve (Drost, 2011). The research instrument for the quantitative data was an adapted questionnaire. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to cover all the content of the variables that the study intended to measure (Marshall, 2005). More importantly, I submitted the questionnaire to be examined by my supervisor and conducted a pilot study (Tarrant et al., 2014). Furthermore, this study utilised various data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews and document analysis, to enhance the study's validity.

1.15.1.2 Reliability

Heale and Twycross (2015) denote that the findings of a research study are reliable when the same instrument used to collect data is administered at a different time to the same respondents in similar contexts and obtain similar results. Although this study is not a replication study, to ensure the reliability of the research findings, the measuring instrument was meticulously designed clearly and concisely to ensure that the respondents understand each item. I also informed the respondents that there was no right or wrong answer and encouraged them to answer each item without fear or prejudice of being judged. Additionally, I piloted the questionnaire with three FP teachers in each country with similar criteria to the proposed respondents to enable me to check the consistency of the instrument (Tarrant et al., 2014). In other words, I calculated Cronbach's alpha, which is statistically used to measure the consistency of the questionnaire (Boparai et al., 2018).

1.15.2 Qualitative Quality Criteria

1.15.2.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is generally considered the primary and most significant criterion in establishing rigour and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). The research process was documented with comprehensive details of the data collection process, analysis and interpretations to provide evidence that the findings are based on the gathered data and so to guarantee and establish credibility and confidence in

the authenticity of the study findings (Polit & Beck, 2014; Rose & Johnson, 2020). Additionally, the study was triangulated methodologically (multiple methods of data collection and analysis), theoretically (multiple theoretical orientations), and with environmental triangulation (multiple mainstream schools in Nigeria and South Africa) (Connelly, 2016).

1.15.2.2 Transferability

Transferability denotes the degree to which the findings from this study can be transferred to similar settings (Connelly, 2016). Though the aim of this study was not to generalise the findings to all mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa, as I could not sample teachers from all 36 states in Nigeria and 11 provinces in South Africa, the study provided a framework from which further studies can be conducted. I provided a comprehensive description of the research sites and context, participants, data collection methods, processes and analysis to establish transferability. The detailed description provided the conditions and settings under which the study might be transferred and be applicable to similar settings (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

1.15.2.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the findings of this study can be obtained within similar contexts using the same research instruments, methods, and participants (Connelly, 2016). The rationale and conditions for choosing the research sites, participants, research design, and data collection and analysis were justified To foster the consistency of the research findings and promote repeatability in similar settings (Janis, 2022).

1.15.2.4 Confirmability

Confirmability as a quality criterion was established to ensure that the research findings and interpretations were grounded in the participants' perceptions and lived experiences implementing differentiated assessment in their classrooms and not altered by my perceptions and bias (Ahmed, 2024). I have stated my inclinations and assumptions about the study beforehand (see Section 1.8) to ascertain confirmability, as explained by Anney (2014). Furthermore, because this study constitutes an MMR study, the strength of using an objective approach enabled me to check possible biases associated with the subjective component of the study. I also utilised multiple

data collection methods to ensure that the study findings were authentic and truthfully presented the participant's perceptions and experiences.

1.16 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is fundamental in conducting a research study. It is expedient that the participants of this study are protected from all forms of misconduct, deception and harm that might negatively affect them and their institution (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure ethical research, I employed ethical strategies before, during, and after the fieldwork, data analysis and presentation of findings to promote the integrity of the study.

Before commencing the fieldwork for this study, the necessary approvals were secured from the ethics committee at the University of Pretoria, as well as from the pertinent DoEs and the schools and participants who were included. Once the necessary approvals were secured, I briefed the participants about the study's objectives to ensure their understanding before they chose to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The willing teachers gave their voluntary consent to participate in the study by signing the consent form. The participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that they were permitted to withdraw their participation at any time without prejudice. Furthermore, their anonymity and confidentiality were protected through the use of pseudonyms and password-encrypted files (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

1.17 Overview of Chapters

Chapter One: Introduction and Orientation of the Study

The first chapter introduces the study and provides the context and background of the study. Additionally, I foreground the problem statement, rationale, and purpose of the study in this chapter. I also clarified the key concepts used in the study and provided the research questions that guided this study. Subsequently, I discussed and justified the chosen paradigm, methodology and research design used in developing and conducting the research. I further provided a brief discussion of the quantitative and qualitative quality measures implemented to guarantee the quality of the research findings.

Chapter Two: Emergence of Mainstream Schools and Assessment Policies

In Chapter 2, I will discuss prevalent empirical literature on the emergence of mainstream schools internationally, as well as in Africa, specifically in Nigeria and South Africa. Thereafter, I will discuss assessment practices in the FP by presenting a historical synopsis of assessment policies and curricula in Africa, Nigeria, and South Africa. I will also present a comparative discourse on the curriculum and assessment policies in Nigeria and SA.

Chapter Three: Perspectives and Policies on Differentiated Assessment and Support

In this chapter, I review the diverse literature on differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework by delving into strategies to differentiate assessment in the FP, misconceptions regarding differentiated assessment and the reliability and validity of differentiated assessment. Additionally, I discuss teachers' perceptions regarding differentiated assessment, their classroom assessment practices and the relationship between teachers' assessment practices and learners' academic achievement. I conclude this chapter by providing a detailed review of the importance of support structures in differentiating assessment in Nigeria and South Africa.

Chapter Four: Conceptual Framework

Chapter 4 presents the conceptual framework that underpinned this study. The conceptual framework includes the Capability Approach, Gardner's theory of MI and the CoP. This chapter further situates the framework within the context of this study and literature.

Chapter Five: Methodology

In this chapter, I elaborate on the paradigms used in this study. I provide the rationale for utilising the pragmatist paradigm and mixed methods methodology, which enabled me to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, I discuss the research design and delineate the sampling method and sample used in the study. I also provide a rationale for the data-collection procedures and data-collection instruments. Finally, I explain the quality measures followed in the study and the ethical considerations to which I adhered.

Chapter Six: Data Analysis and Interpretation of the Quantitative Phase

In this chapter, I present the quantitative findings of this study in Nigeria and South Africa, which were collected through survey questionnaires. Additionally, I present the analysed quantitative data in graphical and tabular formats and provide a discussion of the key findings that emerged from the survey results.

Chapter Seven: Data Analysis and Interpretation of the Qualitative Phase

I present the qualitative findings obtained through semi-structured interviews and present the data with verbatim quotes from the participants.

Chapter Eight: Consolidated Findings

In Chapter 8, I summarise and analyse the quantitative and qualitative results from Chapters 6 and 7. I compare and validate the findings with existing literature while discussing the key findings. Furthermore, I explore the key themes and subthemes identified through thematic analysis.

Chapter Nine: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

In Chapter 9, I outline the main conclusions of the research and the relevant literature that supports addressing the research inquiries. I clarify the advancements made through this study in terms of establishing a framework to contextualise differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools. This chapter concludes with recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

1.18 Conclusion

This opening chapter has introduced the background and context of the study to give an overview of the study. The reasoning and philosophical position taken have been discussed, as well as the purpose of my research and the research questions. Key concepts have been defined. I provided a brief explanation of my choice of research design and methodology and summarised the upcoming chapters. In the following chapter, I examine and discuss relevant literature on the research topic.

CHAPTER TWO: EMERGENCE OF MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND ASSESSMENT POLICIES

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I introduced and discussed the background of the study, focusing on its main argument, which investigated the use of differentiated assessment in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools. I also presented the rationale, problem, and purpose of the study. Moreover, I elucidated the fundamental principles utilised in the research, presented a preliminary review of the literature, and briefly deliberated on the chosen conceptual framework and methodology. Eventually, the preceding chapter examined ethical implications and delineated the study's structure.

In this chapter, I conduct a comprehensive review of literature pertaining to the establishment of mainstream schools and an overview of assessment policies in Nigeria and South Africa. This review involves a critical examination of various international and national books, research studies, and journal articles. The findings presented in this review offer valuable insight into the historical development of mainstream schools and the evolution of assessment policies over time in Nigeria and South Africa.

2.2 Emergence of Mainstream Schools Internationally and in Africa

Mainstream schools are inclusive schools that accommodate and cater to the educational needs of diverse learners regardless of their physical, cognitive, and affective differences in the same learning environment (Hess, 2020; Smit et al., 2020). Mainstream schools aim to promote access to educational opportunities and success, thereby fostering humanitarian principles such as fundamental human rights, justice, fairness and equity for all learners. These schools are premised on the belief that all learners can be educated when supported with the needed financial, infrastructural, material, and effective professional support services (Dreyer, 2017; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013; Sheetheni, 2021). Ainscow (2020) stated that there is an educational, social, and economic justification for the emergence of mainstream schools. Educationally, mainstream schools are expected to benefit all learners through instruction and assessment that respond to their specific needs and accommodate their differences (UNESCO, 1994). Socially, mainstream schools are justified because they can combat negative behaviours harmful to perceived disabilities and differences, which may lead to a just and non-prejudiced society (Skae et al., 2020; Subramoney,

2017; Walton, 2018). Finally, as an economic justification, mainstream schools are more cost-effective to establish and maintain than setting up a multiple schooling system specialising in specific groups of learners (Ainscow, 2020).

International inclusive policies and legislation have significantly fostered the emergence of mainstream schools locally and globally (Mphwina, 2022). Hence, an international analysis of these policies and legislation provides a better understanding of the emergence of mainstream schools, as discussed in Sub-section 2.2.1 below.

2.2.1 Emergence of Mainstream Schools Internationally

This section critically explores the inclusive frameworks, legislations, and policies that encouraged the formation of mainstream schools globally as a result of inclusive education. Therefore, the study examined the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) (Section 2.2.1.1), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRA) (1989) (Section 2.2.1.2), the Salamanca Statement (1994) (Section 2.2.1.3), and Education for All (EFA) (2000) (Section 2.2.1.4).

2.2.1.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The UN General Assembly adopted the UDHR in 1948 after the Second World War (UN General Assembly, 1948). The UDHR epitomised the first international expression of human rights and became the bedrock upon which subsequent human rights documents originated. The right of all children to quality mainstream schooling free from discrimination, particularly at the FP, was considered imperative, as stated in Article 26 of the UDHR (Greaves, 2019; UN General Assembly, 1948).

Thuketana (2018) pointed out that while most nations accepted the UDHR, they were not legally obliged to implement it. Consequently, agreements were signed by these to evade possible sanctions but maintain the existing state of affairs (Thuketana, 2018). The International Bill of Human Rights was established to assess adherence to the declaration among international community members and guarantee that countries worldwide complied with it and endeavoured to advance and implement human rights (UN, 2015). In this vein, it can be said that the degree to which mainstream schools are evident in a nation is the extent to which the human rights of learners are upheld. If learners are sufficiently accommodated to access the curriculum through differentiated assessment, they will be mainstreamed into society (Kaur et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2015).

2.2.1.2 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The drafting of the CRA was met with opposition from those who believed that existing treaties already protected children (Cohen, 1989). Thus, it was believed that it was unnecessary and repetitive to encourage the proliferation of treaties safeguarding children's rights. However, counterarguments asserted that existing treaties were too general to adequately protect the special needs of children (Cohen, 1989). Therefore, in a bid to further establish the right of all children, regardless of their disabilities, to quality education in a mainstream school, the convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 (UN, 1989).

Most countries have enshrined the Convention into their national laws to facilitate educational opportunities that are accessible and adaptable for all. Therefore, all educational stakeholders need to participate in developing strategies to ensure that each child's learning needs are met according to their specific needs, culture, and environment (Mphwina, 2022). In this regard, every child in mainstream schools, including those with SEN, has a right to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that align with their learning needs and uniqueness to access the curriculum, thereby promoting equitable opportunities for all.

2.2.1.3 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994)

Although other inclusive-related policies existed, the Salamanca Statement, which emerged during the Salamanca Conference held in Spain in 1994, is considered the most influential international inclusive document (UNESCO, 1994). The conference was attended by 300 participants from 92 nations and 25 international organisations. The goal was to give priority to including children with special needs in regular schools so that their various learning requirements could be met without any discrimination (Marumo, 2018; UNESCO, 1994). Nations were urged to “adopt as a matter of law or policy inclusive education” (Statement, p. ix) and “include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs” (Preface, p. iii).

The Salamanca Statement helped shift the focus from the learner to the system, recognising the need for schools to be restructured to accommodate all learners (UNESCO, 1994). Moreover, it emphasised the importance of teacher training in implementing inclusive policies in mainstream schools and adapting the curriculum and teaching methods to suit the learners' needs rather than forcing them to conform

to a regimented system (UNESCO, 1994). Schools had to acknowledge the diversity among learners and take them into account when planning and building their physical structures, employing resources, and formulating principles and regulations. Consequently, assessments in mainstream schools should not disadvantage learners due to their differences or special needs.

2.2.1.4 Education for All (2000)

After evaluating the accomplishments and failures of the past decade regarding inclusion, the EFA conference beckoned upon nations to identify existing barriers to inclusive education and local enablers to mitigate those barriers (UNESCO, 2002). During the conference, it was revealed that most marginalised learners were still excluded from educational institutions worldwide (UNESCO, 2002). As a result, a timeframe was set for 2015 to ensure that all learners receive quality primary education by enabling basic education institutions to do so. However, most nations failed to meet the intended timeframe (Thuketana, 2018; UNESCO, 2015).

It is concerning that UNESCO projects that approximately 220 million children, adolescents and youth will still be out of school in 2030 (UIS, 2018). Furthermore, primary completion rates in low-income countries still lag behind other countries (Mundy & Manion, 2021). The findings in these reports emphasise that addressing the global challenge of implementing policies to support inclusive education requires serious attention (Smit et al., 2020). It is important for teachers, who play a strategic role in implementing inclusive policies in schools, to be adequately prepared with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support to cater to all learners effectively. Ultimately, teachers have the greatest impact on whether learners benefit from these policies or not (Kaplan & Lewis, 2013; McKenzie et al., 2020; Naicker, 2018). This study argues that inclusive frameworks, such as differentiated assessment, may mitigate the exclusion of many learners, especially those with special education needs who are dropping out of school.

2.2.2 Mainstream Schools' Emergence in Africa

International inclusive laws and frameworks contributed to establishing inclusive schooling systems in Africa, which has positively impacted the advancement of equity and justice (Murray, 2019). However, some scholars have argued that African traditional societies had a social justice system before the advent of the International

Bill of Human Rights (Ssenyonjo, 2012). Hence, African nations longed for an indigenous document that would conceptualise human rights, equity, and social justice from the African point of view, considering their colonial and oppressive past (Lindholt, 2019). This section discusses critical African documents such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR, 1986) (Section 2.2.2.1) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of The Child (ACRWC, 1990) (Section 2.2.2.2), which led to the emergence of mainstream schools amongst African nations.

2.2.2.1 African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1986)

The ACHPR acknowledges every child's right to quality education within African nations. Although the charter (Article 17) did not explain the content of the rights in detail, Article 60 of ACHPR draws inspiration from international laws on human rights, such as the UDHR (Ufuoma, 2011). In accordance with the provisions of the African Charter, it was expedient that educational facilities be available to all learners in a manner that is both affordable and accessible (Murray, 2019). Physical and economic access alone is no longer sufficient due to the increasing cognitive, affective and psychomotor diversity among learners in mainstream schools. Differentiated assessment acknowledges the range of differences amongst learners and creates pathways for them to access the curriculum and progress in the educational system (Moon et al., 2020; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

The charter also states that African nations should “reduce brain drain and encourage qualified Africans living abroad to return” (ACHPR, Para 71). Brain drain has become a trending issue in many African nations, such as Nigeria (Ighoshemu & Ogidiagba, 2022; Ogbu, 2019). Many local professionals are migrating daily in search of greener pastures. Mainstream schoolteachers require the support of professionals such as therapists and psychologists to enable them to implement inclusive policies. The lack of professional support could pose a barrier to the effectiveness of inclusive policy implementation in African nations. In this regard, the establishment of mainstream schools in Africa may increase the demand for such professionals in schools.

2.2.2.2 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)

The ACRWC specifies every child's right to education. The education should be directed to “the promotion and development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (ACRWC, Article 11(2)). When

African learners are given the opportunity in mainstream schools to develop and attain their full potential, it positively impacts the development of African nations (Onuora-Oguno, 2019; Thandeka, 2021). Article 11 also makes provision for physically challenged children. The article instructed state parties to take appropriate measures to provide the type of education that will suit their abilities.

State parties are encouraged to follow the 4-A scheme, as outlined by Tomaševski (2003) when ensuring learners' right to quality education. In terms of the 4-A scheme, mainstream schools must “be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable” to the needs of the learners (Tomaševski, 2003, p. 8). In terms of availability, mainstream schools in African nations should be established within the reach of children in their communities. It has been often reported that quality education is mostly available in urban areas (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Mainstream schools must also be structured to be accessible to all learners regardless of their abilities or disabilities to meet the changing needs of all learners (Andrews et al., 2020). Children in Africa who have developmental disabilities are generally not given the same educational opportunities as their peers due to various reasons, such as a lack of resources and cultural belief systems that correlate disability with witchcraft (Genovesi et al., 2022; Thuketana, 2018).

Acceptability in mainstream schools involves considering a schooling system that is adequate for all learners and not only a group of learners (Tomaševski, 2003). Hence, the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to assessment disadvantages most learners, especially those with special education needs (Reisdorfer, 2020; Renard & Vandeputte, 2018; Stefanakis & Meier, 2010). Finally, mainstream schools should be adaptable to the needs of learners rather than adapting learners to a static system. Mainstream schoolteachers must be equipped and supported to adapt the curriculum and their assessment practices to cater to all learners without compromising the quality of education (Tomlinson et al., 2015).

2.2.2.3 Implementation of Inclusive Frameworks in Africa

Most African nations have introduced national policies aimed at ensuring inclusive education drawing from international frameworks and African charters (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020; Naicker, 2018; Walton, 2018). However, scholars have argued against literature that suggests that the principles and practices of inclusive education

originate from the Global South (Okeke et al., 2014; Phasha et al., 2017). African communities, especially in rural areas, valued social justice and fairness with respect for the dignity and interdependence of the people. The solidarity and communal life of Africans are also reflected in renowned sayings amongst Africans, such as “I am because of you” and “it takes a village to raise a child” (Gcelu, 2019, p. 2). Additionally, localised inclusive and communal ideologies have been established in Africa, such as “Ubuntu” in Nguni, SA; “Akato Timihirt” in Somalian (Ethiopia); “Ushirikishwaji” in Swahili (Kenya and Cuba); “yincenye ngalokugcwele” in Siswati (Swaziland) (Sulochini & Slee, 2019). Most African nations' manner of communal living was abruptly changed with an era of oppression and segregation by colonial rulers. In a bid to regain an almost lost identity, Africans are faced with a struggle for true independence from the Global South as “policymakers and technocrats are more influenced by global frameworks than indigenous knowledge” (Kisanji & Saanane, 2009 as cited in Sulochini & Slee, 2019, p. 6). Despite the significant strides African nations have made towards inclusive education and society, there are still shortcomings and many grounds yet to be covered (Thandeka, 2021; Thuketana, 2018).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Ghana

In Ghana, the MoE (2003) enacted strategic policy plans for 2003–2015 and 2010–2020. The policy sought to integrate all children with non-severe SEN in mainstream schools by 2015 (Ghana MoE, 2003). The strategic policy plans conceptualised inclusive education narrowly by opening the gates of mainstream schools to accommodate and cater to learners with non-severe disabilities. Nketsia (2018) argued that although the inclusive policies were a major step towards inclusive education, many other vulnerable learners were still excluded. In addition, inclusive education was segmentally conceptualised as the policies expected learners with certain disabilities to be placed in special schools (Ghana MoE, 2003). Following the enactment of the policies, it was argued that there was little or no emphasis on the reformation of regular schools and the teaching and learning pedagogies to align with inclusive policies (Nketsia, 2018).

In 2015, a new inclusive policy, which is the current policy in Ghana, was therefore put in place (Ghana MoE, 2015). The current policy promotes the right to basic education for all learners, which is founded on the notion that all learners can learn,

notwithstanding their differences. The policy further pledges to transform both the schooling systems, the curriculum, instruction and assessment to cater to the diverse learning needs of all learners (Ghana MoE, 2015). Aligned with some UNESCO documents such as UNESCO (1994, 2005), the current policy has adopted the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. The UDL principles promote the adaptation and modification of the schooling system, including assessment to meet the needs of the learners rather than requiring learners to adapt to meet the needs of the system (Hartmann, 2015). In this regard, the policy commits to the sustainability of equitable access of all learners to quality education and the promotion of a democratic and inclusive nation (Ghana MoE, 2015). However, Ghana's inclusive education policy also aimed to convert special schools into resource centres to support mainstream education while maintaining separate institutions for learners with severe and profound disabilities (Ghana MoE, 2015). The policy emphasised cooperation between the two types of schools to accommodate learners with special education needs, as well as regular screening and diagnosis of learners with disabilities (Nketsia, 2018). Staff training was also a key priority (Ghana MoE, 2015).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Kenya

Similarly, Kenya's National Policy Framework on Education (2012) is grounded on the provisions of the constitution and Kenya's vision of 2030 (Republic of Kenya [RoK], 2007). The National Policy Framework is upheld by the principle of accessibility and equity towards the attainment of the 2030 vision (RoK, 2007). Hence, the constitution of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2010) establishes the right of all learners, including learners with disabilities, to inclusive education. Furthermore, discrimination on any ground is prohibited in the constitution and the Basic Education Act (MoE Kenya, 2013; Republic of Kenya, 2010), as well as the concealing of a person with disabilities, which is regarded as a crime. Kenyan Sign Language is regarded as an official language. The Basic Education Act recognises a wide range of learners with special education needs, such as learners with cognitive impairment, physical impairment, and disadvantaged learners due to their socioeconomic context (MoE Kenya, 2013). The government of Kenya commits to the provision of professional experts and specialists to provide support to the learners to adequately include and cater to these learners in a mainstream school (Kavua, 2018).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Ethiopia

In addition to the enactment of inclusive policies and the acknowledgement that all learners should be accommodated in mainstream schools, the MoE (2012) in Ethiopia has provided guidelines for curriculum differentiation and an Individual Education Programme for learners with SEN. The Guideline for Curriculum Differentiation and Individual Education Programme (2012) clarifies a differentiated curriculum as “an adapted and modified type of curriculum that focuses on the ability level of learners. It aligns the cognitive, affective, communicative, and physical demands of the formal curriculum to the capacities, strengths and needs of individual learners” (p. 12). Consequently, the guideline emphasises the need for teachers to differentiate their instruction and assessment to align with the needs of all learners, including those with SEN. Of note is that the guideline for curriculum differentiation enables mainstream schoolteachers to break down their subject content into practical and manageable parts without being unduly overwhelmed about meeting the designated time required to cover the curriculum content (MoE, 2012; Side, 2019). Therefore, the learning objectives, subject content, resources, learning experience as well as assessment are conducted with all learners included (MoE, 2012).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Lesotho

In Lesotho, the MoE (Lesotho MoE, 1989) developed a policy statement with a seven-fold agenda. The policy sought to promote the integration of learners with disabilities into mainstream schools by establishing resource centres to assess their needs (Lesotho MoE, 1989). The policy further sought to ensure that learners with disabilities complete basic education without dropping out of the system. The establishment of a support team was also deemed important to support the learners and teachers in mainstream schools (Lesotho MoE, 1989). The rights of learners with disabilities to stay with their parents or legal guardians are also protected. Special education programmes were part of the initial teacher training (Lesotho MoE, 1989). This initiative led to the creation of the Special Education Unit in 1991 and the introduction of inclusive education in ten schools through a pilot programme. Additionally, itinerant workers received training to assist mainstream education in six of the country's ten districts. The ‘Education Sector Strategic Plan’ (2005) was formulated to advocate the inclusion of learners with SEN into mainstream schools further by having an established Special Education Policy in 2006 to foster access for learners with SEN.

Training was to be provided to 700 teachers per year on the identification and assessment of learners with SEN to increase human resources (Ministry of Education and Training, 2005).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Namibia

After Namibia gained its independence in 1990 from an oppressive system, “equity, justice, democratic participation and respect for human dignity were the main goals of the new approach to education” (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture [MoEAC], 1992, p. 22). In addition, the Namibian government formulated a policy called “Toward Education for All” as a commitment to do away with an educational system rooted in ethnic and racial discrimination (MoEAC, 1992, p. 25). In line with inclusive education, the policy initiated a radical shift from accommodating only the elite to accommodating all Namibians, which included learners who are physically and cognitively impaired, as well as vulnerable, gifted, and exceptional learners (MoEAC, 1993). The inclusion of all learners in mainstream schools was premised on the notion that all learners benefit from an inclusive learning environment rather than be categorised and separately catered to according to their needs (Sheetheni, 2021). In this regard, the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education was adopted in Namibia (Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, 2013). It is worth noting that to contextualise the inclusive policy in the country, the policy focuses on those who were previously marginalised, such as

“children of farm workers; children in remote areas; street children; children in squatter, resettlement and refugee camps; children who are considered ‘over age’ in the current education policies; orphans and vulnerable children; the girl child; children with emotional and behavioural challenges.” (MoEAC, 2013, p. 5)

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Angola

A significant event that led to the development of special education from an inclusive perspective in Angola was the signing of the Salamanca Declaration in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). As a signatory, Angola committed to promoting the goal of EFA and examining the necessary policy changes to support inclusive education (Antonio et al., 2021). Specifically, this meant enabling schools to cater to all children, particularly those with disabilities. Subsequently, Angola took significant steps toward the inclusion of children with disabilities by implementing Project 534/Ang/10, aimed at promoting educational opportunities for the rehabilitation of vulnerable children

(INEE, 2006).

In 2017, the National Policy of Special Education in Angola was designed to facilitate the inclusion of 30,000 children with SEN into mainstream primary schools by 2022 (Antonio et al., 2021; Mendes & González, 2021). This policy was intended to be implemented across 6,000 primary schools (UNESCO, 2020). The policy also aimed to provide capacity building and training for teachers (Lobo d'Avila et al., 2019). Effective implementation of inclusive assessments in the classroom requires that teachers are adequately capacitated and supported with the necessary training and resources to ensure that all learners are accommodated, regardless of their learning needs, thus promoting equitable educational outcomes.

However, the National Policy for Special Education Oriented to School Inclusion has been criticised for failing to distinguish between special and inclusive education, creating the impression that they are similar (Mendes & González, 2021). Additionally, the policy does not define the term "diversity" and does not adequately emphasise Angola's sociocultural context, making it challenging to conceptualise and establish inclusive education for all learners (Mendes & González, 2021).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Malawi

The MoE and the Malawi Institute of Education collaborated to create the "Malawi National Strategy for Inclusive Education" to offer guidance for mainstream schools and other education stakeholders on implementing inclusive education effectively (Chirwa et al., 2021). In Malawi, a dual approach to education is in place: learners and youth with severe disabilities receive education in specialised schools or centres, while those with mild disabilities are included in mainstream education (Chimwaza, 2016; Chirwa et al., 2021; Itimu & Kopetz, 2008; MacJessie-Mbew et al., 2023). However, "special schools at every education level are being transformed into resource centres to provide specialised facilities and support for learners with special needs, as outlined in the 2007 National Policy on Special Needs Education" (Malawi's MoE, 2007, p. 3).

In 2013, the National Strategy for Inclusive Education was developed by the MoEST to offer guidance for effectively implementing inclusive education in the country's education system (MoEST, 2013). The success of inclusive education, as indicated by the National Inclusive Education Strategy (Ngwena, 2013), significantly relies on the support from various stakeholders and role players. The 2013 National Inclusive

Education Strategy emphasised that district education offices are responsible for ensuring inclusivity in district education plans, programmes, and budgets. The strategy also stressed the importance of improving the skills of district education management and supervisory teams in inclusive education. Furthermore, it highlighted the need for district offices to gather information on inclusive education in the district, ensure that school buildings and facilities are accessible to all learners with diverse needs, oversee the evaluation and referral processes for learners with SEN, and encourage collaboration between special schools and mainstream schools (Banda, 2023; Kachali, 2020).

Inclusive Education and Mainstream Schools in Tanzania

Following the Salamanca Statement, the Tanzanian government put specific actions in place to guarantee the successful execution of the inclusive education plan (Muyungu, 2015; Possi & Milinga, 2017). These measures comprised the development of the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) 1 from 2002–2006 and PEDP 2 from 2007–2011. Mbwambo (2015) outlined plans to implement Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and the 1995 education and training policy. These plans intended to establish clear priorities and realistic objectives that align with the objectives and targets outlined in the Salamanca statement, the 1995 framework of actions, the Dakar Framework of Action for EFA, and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) summit (Hofman & Kilimo, 2014; Muyungu, 2015). The implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania started in Temeke Municipality in the Dar es Salaam region in 1998, where a pilot programme was carried out by the MoE, the Salvation Army, and UNESCO (Mbwambo, 2015). Inclusive education institutions can now be found in all regions of Tanzania.

Tanzania's National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2018–2021) states that inclusive education aims to promote human rights and ensure access to education, aligning with the UDHR by acknowledging diversity as a fundamental aspect of humanity (Revelian & Tibategeza, 2022). Every learner, regardless of their differences, has the right to education as a basic human right. This right includes learners with SEN, who should not be excluded from accessing education. Therefore, education should be indiscriminate to facilitate their inclusion into societal structures and enable their personal and national development (Revelian & Tibategeza, 2022).

2.2.2.4 Challenges With the Implementation of Inclusive Education and the Growth of Mainstream Schools in Africa

Statistics have revealed that high numbers of children are still out of school in Africa; as a result, they are not benefiting from their right to quality education (UNESCO-UIS, 2019). Additionally, data consistently shows that “sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest educational enrolment, retention, and completion rates in the world” (UNESCO-UIS, 2018). In such circumstances, learners with special education needs are likely to be more disadvantaged (Le Fanu et al., 2022). In addition to the need in Africa to increase the enrolment of learners with SEN in mainstream schools, there is also the need to promote access to the curriculum through differentiated assessment (Armstrong., 2000; Croll & Moses, 2000; Phasha et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the implementation of inclusive policies in mainstream schools across African nations has been inhibited by poor infrastructure (Banks & Zuurmond, 2015; Bipath et al., 2021; Gajendrabhai & Saini, 2020; Majoko, 2018; Thuketana, 2018; Zwane & Malale, 2018). The Namibian government has indicated that insufficient resources, particularly in schools in rural communities, as well as a lack of accessible infrastructure, hamper the effective implementation of inclusive policies in the country (MoE Arts and Culture Namibia, 2018). Similar findings have been revealed in Kenya, where much-needed equipment to promote inclusive education for learners with SEN is needed (Nthia, 2009). Likewise, in Malawi, although learners with SEN are encouraged to enrol in mainstream schools, inadequate facilities force many to transfer to special schools. For example, learners with visual impairment are often transferred to schools for the blind (UNESCO, 2020).

An analysis of the experiences of learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities in inclusive schools in Accra, Ghana, revealed that despite the legislation and policy framework on inclusive education, learners with disabilities face numerous challenges (Okyere et al., 2019). These challenges include the standardisation of learning and assessment tasks for all learners without due consideration of their learning needs. Therefore, the current state of inclusivity for learners with SEN in Ghana is deemed questionable and unsatisfactory, with little or no emphasis on differentiating the curriculum (Okyere et al., 2019). Thus, in addition to promoting access to mainstream schools, countries need to strengthen their efforts to

accommodate learners through the curriculum, which is key to differentiated assessment.

Moreover, there have been consistent findings suggesting that an increase in the number of learners in schools outstrips the increase in the number of teachers, thereby creating an imbalance in the teacher-learner ratio (Armstrong et al., 2010; Matsepe et al., 2019). Large class sizes and congested classrooms not only suffocate the learners and teachers but also inclusive policies and practices such as differentiated assessment (Engelbrecht, 2020). Examining Ghana as a case study, most of the schools are not compliant with the stipulated class sizes (Alhassan, 2014; Singal et al., 2015). As a result, teachers are tasked beyond their expectations to accommodate many diverse learners, which may have a negative bearing on their perception of inclusive education (Casely-Hayford et al., 2013; Alhassan, 2014). Additionally, many learners, although present in the class, are left alone without support tailored to their needs (Agbenyega, 2008). To remedy this situation, teachers may resort to the use of teacher-centred and authoritarian approaches to instruction and assessment, with the use of corporal punishment to maintain order and discipline (Alhassan & Abosi, 2014; MoE, 2015). This practice demotivates learners, especially those with SEN, from continuing their education as they are marginalised and isolated in the classroom (Alhassan, 2014; Singal, 2015).

Teacher training programmes have also been found wanting in preparing mainstream schoolteachers to accommodate and cater to all learners (Dreyer, 2017; Ledwaba, 2017). In Ethiopia, teachers' training programmes are deficient, with only one course content provided to equip the preservice teachers with knowledge about inclusive education and special needs education (Side, 2019). Only teachers specialising in teaching in special schools are largely informed at the universities and colleges. However, Side (2019) argues that some teachers specialising in special education graduate without being equipped with the basic skills to support learners with SEN. Hence, some learners who are hearing impaired are not provided with sign language translators during lessons (Side, 2019). In Namibia, similar findings have reported that many teachers are not qualified to accommodate and cater to learners with diverse needs (Sheetheni, 2021; Zimba, 2011). It has also been noted that the effective establishment of inclusion in Namibia “requires well-trained and motivated teachers, adequate teaching and learning materials and a flexible curriculum with the active

participation of parents and the community at large” (Zimba, 2011, p. 47). Surprisingly in Ghana, special needs education courses provided at colleges of education discuss disability as a medical condition only (Nketsia et al., 2020). Another challenge with the inclusion of all learners in Africa is the prevailing traditional and indigenous belief across the continent that disability is the result of misfortune, witchcraft and a punishment from the gods (Eide et al., 2014; Waliaula, 2009). This negative perception of disability often leads to discrimination against children with disabilities in the community. In a Ghanaian study, it was discovered that some preservice teachers held cultural beliefs that led to negative attitudes towards inclusive education (Nketsia, 2017). These beliefs, along with the medical model, tend to influence teachers to attribute learning difficulties to individual learners rather than to social and environmental factors within the school. Some parents of children with disabilities are not keen to send their children to school as they believe that they cannot be educated (Sulochini & Slee, 2019).

Additionally, a lack of effective support structures has inhibited the successful implementation of inclusive policies in mainstream schools across Africa (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Makuya, 2021; Mbewe, 2021). A research study conducted by Chibwe (2021) in Zambia aimed to investigate the difficulties involved in implementing inclusive education in the country. The study was based on evidence collected from certain primary schools located in the Kitwe District of Zambia. Some of the challenges encountered in the country include a lack of trained personnel to support the programme (Chibwe, 2021). Furthermore, according to the 2014 report from the Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC), there is an emphasis on the importance of providing additional support from professionals other than teachers to enable learners with special needs to engage in education fully. Kenya faces a scarcity of professionals such as “sign language interpreters, braille transcribers, speech therapists, audiologists, and educational psychologists” (Kavua, 2018, p. 23). In Lesotho, the Ministry of Education and Training policy documents, including the policy statement of 1989 and the strategic sector plan 2005, do not address the involvement of non-teaching professionals like psychologists and occupational therapists in the evaluation of students with SEN to ensure appropriate placement and support (Desgranges et al., 1995; Mosia, 2014).

2.2.3 Emergence of Mainstream Schools in Nigeria

The educational system in Nigeria has experienced three major eras: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence eras (Imam, 2012). The educational system in Nigeria was informal before the British conquest. The primary aim of the education system was to develop the child to become a functional member of the community (Fafunwa, 2004). However, the colonial era ushered in an educational system that was targeted towards producing the desired manpower to meet the needs of the colonial masters (Imam, 2012). This system of education was thus a misfit. The scope of the educational policy was limited and did not align with the expectations and goals of the Nigerian people (Rwomire, 1998).

Nigeria's independence from Britain initiated diverse reforms in the educational sector. Nigeria ratified several inclusive international instruments, such as the 'UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (CRPD), and African instruments, such as the ACHPR (Arimoro, 2019). However, Nigeria has also developed national policies that are more context-specific in enabling all children to have access to education (MoE, 2013; Obi & Mary, 2016). In order to examine the emergence of mainstream schools in Nigeria, the following sections discuss the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) (2.2.3.1), Child Rights Act (2003) (2.2.3.2), National Policy for Special Needs Education (2015) (2.2.3.3), National Policy on Inclusive Education (2017) (2.2.3.4) and Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) (2.2.3.5).

2.2.3.1 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria includes a provision against discrimination, which prohibits making distinctions based on "place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties" (Art. 15.2). The Nigerian government is required to ensure that educational opportunities at all levels are equitable and of acceptable quality (FRN, 1999, Art. 18). The section equally mandates the government to provide "free, compulsory and universal primary education" (Section 18(2)(a), FRN, 1999).

The Nigerian Constitution classifies the right to education as a secondary right in comparison to the fundamental human rights outlined in Chapter IV of the same Constitution (FRN, 1999). Scholars have scrutinised this classification of the right to

education as a socioeconomic right, which is not typically enforceable under the Constitution, questioning the level of importance the country attaches to education (Abdulraheem-Mustapha, 2021). Nigerian scholars such as Adekunle (2019) have noted that the implementation of free and compulsory basic education is yet to be realised due to factors such as funding, quality of teachers, and inadequate resources.

2.2.3.2 Child Rights Act (2003)

The Nigerian government enacted the Child Rights Act as a result of signing, ratifying, and domesticating the ACRWC and the CRA 2003. Section 15 of CRA stipulates that “in every action concerning a child, whether undertaken by an individual, public or private body, institutions or service, court of law, or administrative or legislative authority, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration”. In this regard, the assessment practices of Nigerian teachers should be grounded in the best interest of the diverse learners in their classrooms.

Despite the efforts of the Nigerian government to implement the Child's Rights Act, it seems that there are varying levels of acceptance and implementation of the Act across different states in Nigeria (Mbaebie, 2018). States such as Abuja, Abia, Anambra, Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Enugu, Imo, Jigawa, Kwara, Lagos, Nassarawa, Ogun, Ondo, Plateau, Rivers, and Taraba have incorporated the provisions of the Child Rights Act 2003 into their Child Rights Laws (Ikpeze & Oti-Onyeama, 2021). Despite the encouraging provisions of the Act, children with intellectual disabilities are expressly excluded from the domain of Section 15. Therefore, Nigeria cannot regard the Act as ensuring full legal protection for children with disabilities (Mbaebie, 2018).

2.2.3.3 National Policy on Special Needs Education (2015)

The NPSNE was developed in 2015 to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for children with disabilities in order to meet SDG 4 Goal 4.5. before 2030 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015). The policy's goal was to create a paradigm change so that learners with special needs may reach their full potential and have equal access to opportunities and a learning environment free from discrimination (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015). The policy also stipulates that a differentiated curriculum to accommodate all learners, including learners with SEN, would be provided (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015).

However, a recent study on educational opportunities for learners with SEN revealed that none of the 34 sampled primary schools in Southwest Nigeria offered accommodations for learners with impairments (Lawal et al., 2022). The results corroborate those of Fehintola (2019), who found that insufficient knowledge and skill to identify learners with SEN and a lack of sufficient support structure are among the barriers that prevent these learners' access to quality education in mainstream schools. Kanno and Onyeachu (2018) also found that Abia State, Nigeria, lacked sufficient supplies of educational infrastructure and resources to cater to the needs of learners with impairments. As a result, in Nigeria, there is still a gap between the expectations of the policy and its applications in mainstream schools.

2.2.3.4 National Policy on Inclusive Education (2016)

The National Policy on Inclusive Education defines inclusive education as “the process of addressing all barriers and providing access to quality education to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the same learning environment” (FME, 2016). The policy seeks to establish a cohesive and harmonised system of inclusive education by transforming and renovating special schools to function as resource centres (FME, 2016). The Nigerian government has acknowledged the significance of inclusive education in advancing social justice and equality (FME, 2016). This policy emphasises the importance of including learners with SEN and implementing strategies to reduce the dropout rates in primary education. It serves as a national standard for effectively implementing inclusive education in Nigeria.

Some fundamental principles of this policy include recognising that each learner has unique learning needs and believing in every learner's potential for learning (FME, 2016). Therefore, the belief in the capability of all learners to learn should be accompanied by the belief that all learners can demonstrate their learning. To achieve the goal of the policy, Strategy 6 involves regularly reviewing and updating the curriculum and assessments to foster inclusive education strategies at all levels (FME, 2016). It also involves allocating extra time and using suitable methods for testing and examining learners who struggle with standard tests. Additionally, providing teachers with guidance on adapting teaching methods to meet learners' needs and environment to enhance teaching and learning is part of this strategy (FME, 2016).

Even though the policy states that adjustments should be made during assessment for learners who have "difficulty accessing standard tests", the same policy states that the hallmarks of an inclusive education system involve teachers modifying the curriculum, assessment methods, and lessons to accommodate the needs of "all" learners with various backgrounds and abilities (FME, 2016, p. 22). The policy further states that teachers should evaluate learners learning using methods that suit their abilities and requirements, and they should provide a range of assessment tools to assess learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The policy aims to adapt the curriculum to support all learners, regardless of their abilities and learning styles, and to provide accessible ways to assess and certify learners' progress based on the curriculum (FME, 2016, p. 18).

However, there is a lack of empirical data to determine if mainstream schoolteachers are differentiating their classroom assessments to accommodate all learners (Irinoye & Eyengho, 2022).

2.2.3.5 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018)

Discrimination may refer to the conferment of certain privileges on particular persons or the denial of certain privileges to particular persons because of race, sex, nationality, religion or disability (Mbanugo, 2019). A person must not be subjected to discrimination on the basis of his handicap by any person or institution under any circumstances or means, as stated in Sections 1(1) and (2) of the Act (Amucheazi & Nwankwo, 2020). The Act makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities. If found guilty, the guilty party faces a punishment of N 1,000,000 for a corporate body and N 100,000 for a period of jail for six months, with or without a fine, for an individual (Amucheazi & Nwankwo, 2020).

Mbanugo (2019, p. 135) opined that discrimination "excludes a child from the life of the community in the application of different rules to comparable situations and the application of the same rules to different situations". Most learners, especially those with special needs, are discriminated against when the curriculum is not adapted to suit their learning needs (Marishane et al., 2015). Adapting the curriculum necessitates differentiated assessment (Moon et al., 2020). The inability of mainstream schoolteachers to differentiate assessment and the prevalence of a one-size-fits-all

approach to assessment is discriminatory as the same rules are applied to different learners (Ledwaba, 2017; Majuddin & Khambari, 2019).

2.2.3.6 Revised National Policy on Inclusive Education (2023)

The NPE was revised in 2023 in line with the “Sustainable Development Goal 4, emphasising inclusive and equitable quality education for all, this policy aligns our educational framework with international best practices” (FME, 2023, p. i). The policy states that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is saddled with the responsibility to review the curriculum and assessment practices, aligning them with current best practices on inclusive education worldwide (FME, 2023). The revision of the policy to adopt international best practices is a commendable step taken by the Nigerian government as it shows the country’s commitment to inclusive practices. Additionally, the policy is “a call to action for educators, policymakers, parents, and the community at large to work collaboratively to ensure that education is a transformative force that leaves no one marginalised”, p. i). The document detailing the policy sets out plans for catering to a variety of learners, including learners with SEN, and presents a plan for introducing inclusive methods in educational institutions.

One of the remarkable revisions made to this document is broadening the scope of inclusive assessment in mainstream schools. The policy requires teachers to assess their learners in ways that are suitable and aligned to the learner’s abilities and needs. Additionally, it was stated that “various assessment tools to measure learners’ knowledge, skills and attitudes, rather than depending on examination scores” (FME, 2023, p. 25). Moreover, the policy acknowledges assessing learners via “play, art, sports, verbal, and practical tasks” (FME, 2023, p. 25) rather than relying unduly on written assessment. This revision is not farfetched from Gardner’s theory of MI, which acknowledges that learners possess diverse forms of intelligence which influence how they learn and demonstrate learning. In this regard, the teachers are mandated by the policy to adapt their teaching and assessment strategies and tools to accommodate and cater to the ability, learning needs and learning style of each learner.

The provision for continuous training and support structures are also included in the policy. The goal of the training is to foster an understanding of inclusive education policies and strategies for their implementation (FME, 2023). In addition, the training

aims to equip teachers and other stakeholders on “resource management to address inclusion, encourage the production of learning and teaching materials at local level” (FME, 2023, p. 14). The importance “of community mobilisation and participation to support inclusion and mentorship” is also documented in the policy (FME, 2023, p. 14). The support base to aid the implementation of inclusive education was also broadened to include “counsellors, caregivers, audiologists, sign language teachers/facilitators and interpreters, social workers, low vision experts, psychologists, and physiotherapists” (FME, 2023, p. 15).

2.2.3.7 Factors that Hamper the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools in Nigeria

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, special schools are still prevalent. Some of the special schools include the School for the Deaf, Kaduna; the Wesley School for the Blind, Surulere, Lagos; Joseph-Daycare for the Visually Handicapped, Ogbomosho; and Otukpo Blind Workshop, Benue State (Ekwueme, 2022). The government and churches own some of these special schools, and others are privately owned (Ekwueme, 2022; Orubite & Maigida, 2000). Special schools do not provide the learners with the opportunity to mix freely with other typically developing learners except for their siblings, relatives and probably neighbours.

Ugwu and Onukwufor (2018) delved into the prevalent challenges impeding the successful implementation of inclusive education in the Nigerian context. Specifically, they focused on teachers' prevalent negative attitudes and beliefs regarding the inclusion of learners with special education needs into mainstream schools (Ugwu & Onukwufor, 2018). These negative beliefs and attitudes have fostered the discrimination, segregation, labelling, and non-acceptance of learners with special needs into mainstream schools despite the inclusive policies available (Fakolade et al., 2009; Obisesan, 2020). To many, the ideal place of learning for learners with special needs is at a special school (Fakolade et al., 2009; Oluremi, 2015; Orlunga & Alikor, 2023). The majority of participants in a survey conducted by Kusimo and Chidozie (2019) concurred that special schools for the physically challenged were separated from ordinary schools. Furthermore, most respondents doubted that Nigeria has any chance of domesticating SDG 4, which calls for inclusive education for everyone by 2030 (Kusimo & Chidozie, 2019).

Researchers from Nigeria, including Egbedeyi (2020), investigated the understanding of inclusive education among FP teachers in the Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government Area of Lagos State. Thirty-five (35) instructors participated in the descriptive survey. One reason inclusive education is not entirely implemented in Nigeria is that the teachers demonstrated a low level of understanding of the subject (Egbedeyi, 2020). Insufficient knowledge of inclusive education negatively influences teachers' willingness to promote inclusive policies (Adigun, 2021; Lawal, 2022). Similarly, insufficient knowledge of differentiated assessment has a bearing on teachers' implementation of inclusive assessments.

Additionally, the dearth of trained personnel such as sign language interpreters, braillists, and speech therapists poses a threat to inclusive education implementation in Nigerian mainstream schools (Arimoro, 2019; Eburikure, 2013). Ofuani (2011) agreed that there are few inclusive schools and a lack of facilities in Nigeria to meet the needs of learners with special needs. There is also a need for continuous in-service training for mainstream schoolteachers to keep abreast with current knowledge and pedagogic skills, such as differentiated assessment (Eburikure, 2013). Inclusive education requires efficient human and sufficient material resources to effectively accommodate and cater to the learning needs of all learners.

Another limitation to the effective implementation of inclusive education is overcrowded and congested classrooms in Nigerian schools (Babatunde, 2015; Okechukwu & Oboshi, 2021). This challenge often leads to burnout and demotivation as the teacher is overworked in an uncondusive environment (Okechukwu & Oboshi, 2021; Ogunrinbokun et al., 2023). Furthermore, teaching and assessment are carried out within a stipulated time in most schools. When the classroom is overcrowded and congested, there is little or no time to cater to all learners, particularly those with special education needs (Eburikure, 2013). It has further been highlighted in the literature that the national curriculum used in Nigerian schools does not reflect inclusiveness (Ekwueme, 2022). Consequently, the rigidity of the curriculum may pose a barrier to the implementation of inclusive policies and assessments in mainstream schools.

2.2.4 Emergence of Mainstream Schools in South Africa

South Africa's mainstream school system developed in response to the global movement for inclusive education, especially the Salamanca Treaty that was signed in Spain (Engelbrecht & Muthukrishna, 2019; Thuketana, 2018). In order to maintain unequal access to education, the government established a racialised system of school segregation before South Africa's democratic transition. According to Engelbrecht (2020) and Spaull (2015), this system disenfranchised black people and others with special needs while exclusively benefiting the white minority.

The establishment of a democratic administration in April 1994 brought an end to the Apartheid rule in South Africa, which fostered a transformation of the schooling system (Steyn et al., 2017). As a result, South Africa enacted new laws, regulations, and structures to rectify historical injustices, as well as a new constitution. Thus, the Constitution of South Africa (1996a) (Section 2.2.4.1), the 'South African Schools Act' (SASA) (RSA, 1996b) (2.2.4.2), 'The National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training' (NCSNET), the 'National Committee for Education Support Services' (NCESS) (Section 2.2.4.3), the DoE EWP6 (DoE, 2001) (Section 2.2.4.4), and 'Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Strategy' (2014) (Section 2.2.4.5) are discussed in the following sections to provide further insights into the emergence of mainstream schools in South Africa.

2.2.4.1 Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996a)

The RSA's post-apartheid constitution was enacted to rectify the injustices of the Apartheid era and to create a society predicated on fairness, democracy, and fundamental human rights (RSA, 1996a). The supremacy of the constitution is foregrounded, as any "law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and the obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled" (RSA, 1996a, Section 1). Therefore, the education system in the South African context should align with the Constitution. Furthermore, the constitution includes a comprehensive Bill of Rights that affirms the right of every South African citizen to receive basic education. (RSA, 1996a).

However, a number of studies have suggested that despite the constitution's commitment to creating a just and equitable society, racial inequality in the South African education system persists, with white learners still predominating in well-resourced schools (Dixon & Roux, 2018; Mphanda, 2018; O'Regan, 2018; Spaull,

2016). Thus, Thuketana (2018, p. 75) noted that “the Constitution alone could not address all the matters for the successful implementation of inclusive education.” Therefore, institutional policies such as the SASA (RSA, 1996b) were formulated to align with the principles outlined in the constitution, aiming to facilitate the implementation of policies that promote inclusivity.

2.2.4.2 South African Schools Act

The South African Schools Act (SASA) was formulated to provide a comprehensive framework to govern all South African schools officially (RSA, 1996b). Founded on the fundamental values of the constitution, the act further “advances the development of inclusion in South African schools” as it states that, “a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way” (RSA, 1996b, p. 4). Consequently, the conventional assessment approach that assumes all learners are the same and does not account for their differences is an unfair discrimination in mainstream schools. Research has found that the implementation of SASA is still wanting in effectively serving its purpose, as many learners with special needs continue to face discrimination in mainstream schools (Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013; Kern, 2020). In order to conduct research and provide recommendations on special needs education and the provision of support services, the NCSNET and the NCESS were established in 1996 by Prof. Sibusiso Bengu, the then-education minister (DoE, 1997).

2.2.4.3 National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services

The 14-member Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET) and the ten-member Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) presented their findings and recommendations on special needs education and support services to the DBE (Daniels, 2010; DoE, 1997). The investigation uncovered issues with a “rigid and inflexible curriculum that tends to standardise teaching and assessment, leading to the exclusion of learners with special education needs” (Izevbigie, 2021, p. 35).

Studies have revealed that an inflexible curriculum is still an issue in mainstream schools because it restricts access to the curriculum for learners with special education needs, even decades after the NCSNET and NCESS published their findings (Doyi, 2023; Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). As a result, the necessity of a

differentiated curriculum has been examined and researched by several academics (Ledwaba, 2017; McKenzie, 2021). Nevertheless, in mainstream classrooms, differentiated assessment, which supports curricular access and informs instruction, has not received the much-needed attention.

The NCSNET and NCESS guidelines called for the establishment of a unified education system to do away with the distinction between special education and mainstream schools (DoE, 1997). Additionally, they suggested creating a community-based support system for teachers and children in the integrated education system. It was advised that training staff to deliver sufficient support services in schools was imperative (DoE, 1997). These suggestions, which sought to improve social integration, community responsiveness, and access to a unified schooling system and curriculum, were a major step towards encouraging inclusion in South African schools. The EWP6 was developed as a result of these discoveries (DoE, 2001).

2.2.4.4 Education White Paper 6 (2001)

'Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System' is a policy that supports social justice, equitable access to education, social integration, human rights, participation, and a healthy environment (DoE 2001; Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Hess, 2020). The objective is to develop a nationwide approach that attends to the various requirements of every learner, including those with SEN, in mainstream schools (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). Education White Paper 6 believes that every learner is different and capable of learning with the right help. Schools must accommodate different learners with a range of learning.

The provision of resources and infrastructure has been the main emphasis of change. However, practice and literature have failed to emphasise the need to change assessment beliefs and methods in order to support curricular access (Engelbrecht, 2020). Subject advisers in South Africa were found to be inadequately prepared to help teachers support learners with special needs in accessing the general curriculum (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). As a result, the South African government's SIAS policy was further formulated to guarantee all learners, including learners with special needs, access to an inclusive education (DBE, 2014).

2.2.4.5 Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The SIAS strategy was stipulated in South Africa to offer teachers and learners comprehensive, systematic, and cooperative support (DBE, 2014). SIAS provides learners with the opportunity to be screened and tested to receive the support they need to improve their inclusion and involvement in the classroom (DBE, 2014). The SIAS strategy, according to Angelina Matsie Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education, aims to cater to the requirements of every learner in the society, particularly those who are at risk and prone to being marginalised and left out (DBE, 2014, Foreword).

It is imperative that learners with SEN be properly identified and assessed to guarantee that they receive the assistance they require to be effectively accommodated in mainstream classrooms (DBE, 2014). Smit et al. (2020) affirmed that the evaluation procedure ensures that learners receive support tailored to their needs. However, some teachers experience the SIAS strategy as cumbersome due to the documentation process (Mkhuma et al., 2014). Tomlinson and Moon (2013) assert that differentiated assessment can be utilised as an effective diagnostic tool to locate where the learners are and provide the needed support to advance to the best of their ability.

2.2.5 Factors that Hamper the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools in South Africa

Significant efforts have been made in South Africa to develop laws, policies, frameworks, and legislation to ensure quality education for all learners (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). However, despite the efforts invested by stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive laws and guidelines, there are still challenges, particularly at the classroom level (Engelbrecht, 2020; Smit et al., 2020). Wahl (2017) reported that some mainstream schools still deny access to learners with special education needs because teachers feel incapable of implementing inclusive education. Donohue and Bornman (2014) confirmed that some teachers feel incapable of implementing inclusive education due to a limited understanding of how to implement the policy to accommodate all learners practically. According to McKenzie et al. (2020), teachers in the Apartheid era were specifically trained for either mainstream or special school teaching. This differentiation resulted in some mainstream schoolteachers feeling unprepared to meet the diverse learning needs of learners. They often viewed their

training as impractical and not relevant to their specific teaching context (Kozleski & Siuty, 2016; Nel et al., 2014). Therefore, in order for mainstream schoolteachers to effectively address the diverse learning needs of learners, it is necessary to restructure continuous professional development and training to accommodate all learners.

In many African nations, the implementation of inclusive education is particularly challenging due to a rigid curriculum, teaching methods, and assessments that fail to accommodate diverse learners (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). In South Africa, the curriculum has evolved significantly over time, and the current CAPS make provisions for learners with special needs (DBE, 2011). However, scholars like Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) argue that CAPS needs to be more flexible to meet the requirements outlined in White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001).

Moreover, many South African teachers support the idea of including all learners, however, some perceive inclusion as limiting for learners with special education needs. Hebron and Humphrey (2014) and Goodall (2018) pointed out that learners with special education needs in mainstream schools are often bullied by their peers, leading to loneliness and anxiety. Additionally, many teachers feel that learners with special needs require too much attention, causing them to neglect both the learners with special needs and the typically developing learners (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Mahlo, 2017). This scenario creates a form of exclusion. Mainstream schools should cater to the needs of all learners without neglecting anyone due to their abilities or special needs.

Challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and resource limitations present significant barriers for mainstream schools to implement inclusive policies (Kirul & Cooc, 2018; Meier & West, 2020). The high number of learners in the classroom creates challenges for teachers in offering personalised support and attention to learners with varying needs. Marais (2016) conducted a research study which confirmed that overcrowded classrooms adversely affect learners' academic achievement because teachers allocate more time to addressing disciplinary matters instead of concentrating on teaching. Furthermore, it can be challenging for teachers to tailor assessments to suit the needs of each learner in a large class, especially without sufficient support (Meier & West, 2020). These challenges promote the placement of learners with special education needs in special schools.

It is evident that Nigeria and South Africa have adopted inclusive education in varied degrees. In terms of the constitution, both countries uphold the tenets of non-discriminatory policies and practices, specifically in education. Policies have also been enacted in both countries to foster the inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream schools. Moreover, special schools persist in both countries. Hence, the establishment of mainstream schools as the new regular schools are still left wanting, and the implementation of inclusive policies and the accommodation of learners with SEN can be improved.

2.3 Overview of Assessment in the FP

The FP focuses on building essential skills, understanding, and proficiencies to create a strong base for future learning (Mahlo, 2017). It is a vital stage during which a learner's principles, actions, self-confidence, and attitudes are shaped to develop a well-rounded learner (Skae et al., 2020). In this regard, an exclusionary schooling foundation can have negative consequences on a young learner's life and their overall social, psychological, and mental well-being.

When young children begin their educational journey, they come into school at different developmental stages, with diverse abilities and interests, and from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures (Schachner, 2019). They also exhibit a natural curiosity and a keenness to explore the world around them (Lucas & Spencer, 2020). According to Noman and Kaur (2014), teachers in the FP should acknowledge and adapt to these individual differences when creating their teaching and assessment strategies in order to offer enriching and meaningful learning opportunities for all learners.

2.3.1 Overview of Assessment in African Countries

In Africa, educational quality has not progressed as expected. Hence, research studies have been conducted with the aim to improve the quality of education in Africa and promote access to basic education (UNESCO, 2004; World Bank, 2004, 2011). In this regard, international agencies, such as the World Bank and UNESCO, have focused on classroom assessment as it has been recognised that equitable assessment practices can promote learners' access to the curriculum and quality education in Africa (Lieberman & Clarke, 2012; Ottevanger et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2004; World Bank, 2011). The primary purpose of the assessment system in many African

countries is to prepare learners for standardised national examinations (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004; Sayed & Kanjee, 2013). This purpose of assessment in many other African countries, such as Kenya, Malawi, Namibia and Nigeria, was inherited from their colonial past. The nature and structure of these exams aim to ensure the certification and selection of learners into secondary schools (Sayed & Kanjee, 2013). Consequently, assessment policies prioritise national exams and summative assessment systems, with less attention given to formative assessment in the classroom. Within these systems, disadvantaged learners, particularly those who are poor or marginalised, often face significant disadvantages.

The past decade has witnessed a rise in the number of African countries revising their assessment policies to promote equitable practices (Perry, 2013). In Malawi, this initiative has involved implementing continuous assessment with backing from global entities and financial support from international contributors (Chirwa et al., 2021). In Namibia, education reform after independence focused on using assessment for “improving teaching and learning through a balanced integration of assessment activities in terms of assessment for learning and assessment of learning principles” (Sayed & Kanjee, 2013, p. 378). However, there is much more ground to cover in formulating and implementing assessment policies that promote equity for all learners, including learners with SEN.

A more recent study, which involved seven “African countries – Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda” – investigated the assessment practices of some primary schoolteachers (Bold et al., 2017, p. 1). In the study, it was found that only a few teachers showed the skill to assess their learners’ learning. Moreover, 80% of teachers posed questions during their lessons that demanded their learners to remember information or to apply what they had learned (Bold et al., 2017). About 50% of teachers asked questions that required higher-order skills and critical thinking. Generally, 30% of teachers were able to assess both lower and higher-order thinking (Bold et al., 2017). Ten per cent (10%) of teachers in Mozambique and 30% of teachers in Kenya could provide their learners with feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, 5% of teachers in Togo and 36% of teachers in Nigeria could monitor and comment on the learning progression of their learners. Generally, the evidence suggests that teachers’ knowledge and ability to utilise assessment to promote quality education is poor across the seven countries (Bold et al., 2017).

Moreover, research findings have revealed that teacher assessments were lacking in quality in various ways, such as using poorly constructed assessments (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004). In Malawi, Chiziwa and Kunkwenzu (2021) conducted a study on the formative assessment practices of teachers in eight primary schools. The findings showed an undue reliance on written assessments that did not promote higher-order thinking. Additionally, the frequency of tasks and the utilisation of formative assessment results were more consistent with summative purposes (Chiziwa & Kunkwenzu, 2021). Perry (2013) affirmed that common formative assessment strategies such as oral assessment, written assessment and government-sponsored assessments are mostly utilised in Africa. A research survey involving seventy FP teachers from public primary schools in Kenya revealed that most teachers are challenged in designing and preparing classroom assessments (Momanyi & Rop, 2020). Hence, it was reported that most teachers in Kenya rely on commercial exams that vendors set, which only aim to cover curriculum content (Momanyi & Rop, 2020).

Contextual factors such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient access to educational resources, substandard facilities, underqualified teachers, lack of support from district or ministry authorities, and limited opportunities for training and capacity building have been associated with poor assessment practices in Africa (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004; Sayed & Kanjee, 2013; Bold et al., 2017). Assessment scholars have attested that little is known about how African teachers utilise assessment results in making instructional decisions and the bearing those decisions have on learners' learning (Perry, 2013). In addition to this shortcoming, there are minimal studies on how differentiated assessment can be contextualised as an inclusive framework to promote equitable practices in mainstream schools.

2.3.2 Brief History of Assessment Policies and Guidelines in Nigeria

Assessment policies and guidelines in Nigeria have undergone several amendments. The section below provides a comprehensive review of key assessment policies that have been enacted throughout the years, taking cognisance of their provisions for differentiated assessment.

2.3.2.1 National Policy on Education (1981)

The need for an NPE came about due to the 1969 National Curriculum Conference (Ajuwon, 2008). The 1977 NPE was criticised and questioned about its relevance to Nigerians' needs and aspirations (Imam, 2012). The 1977 policy, which was popularly known as the one-shot system, was found to have a series of shortcomings (Imam, 2012). It was mainly summative, anxiety-provoking, fostered examination malpractices, and teachers taught exclusively for examination (Kukwi, 2003). Furthermore, it lacked formative assessment, placed a high premium on the exit certificate, and was deemed responsible for the school dropout rate (Ikejani, 1999).

Hence, the 1981 NPE brought about some changes in the Nigerian educational system (FRN, 1981). The system, commonly known as the 6-3-3-4 system, brought in a new method of assessment. It presented the concept of continuous assessment in place of the one-shot, summative assessment (Kukwi, 2003). Diverse research studies reported that teachers' continuous assessment practices were attributed to a lack of understanding of the policy (Adebowale & Alao, 2008). This concern arose because the teachers' assessment practices were still largely hinged on summative principles (Adeyemo, 2003; Kayode, 2003; Onuka, 2005).

2.3.2.2 Fourth Edition of the National Policy on Education (2004)

This 4th version was required due to certain policy advancements and modifications, as well as the necessity to revise the 3rd version (1998) accordingly. The policy emphasised that the issue of equal educational opportunity for all citizens should occupy the central place. Thus, Section 1 Paragraph 4 (c) asserts that: "every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities, irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability".

However, the policy did not make provisions for how the curriculum, and more specifically, assessment, can be differentiated to provide all learners with equal educational opportunities (Lawrence & Oba, 2022). Such omissions could potentially hinder the attainment of the policy's objective of providing an inclusive and equitable education system.

2.3.2.3 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (2008)

After the Nigerian Federal Government's decision to implement the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in September 1988, the NERDC regulated and reorganised all existing primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) curricula into a 9-Year BEC (NERDC, 2008). This curriculum was put into practice in Nigerian schools in 2008. The 9-Year BEC was established to achieve the goals of EFA, as well as to meet “the targets of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and the MDGs” (NERDC, 2008, p. i).

The curriculum was designed to provide a relevant, ever-changing, and globally competitive learning experience, ensuring that learners at the Basic Education level can compete effectively anywhere in the world in terms of knowledge, skills, techniques, values, and attitude (NERDC, 2008). The 9-Year BEC, which included 20 subjects, emphasised transforming values, eliminating poverty, promoting critical thinking, fostering entrepreneurship, and developing life skills (NERDC, 2008). However, the curriculum workload due to the number of subject contents to be taught per term made it unsustainable. In this regard, the curriculum was revised to make it more practical, relevant, and engaging for young learners in 2012, and its implementation began in September 2014 (NERDC, 2013).

2.3.2.4 Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (2013)

The Executive Secretary of NERDC affirmed that the school curriculum is a constantly evolving and adaptable document that changes regularly to meet the demands, obstacles, and ambitions of society (NERDC, 2013). The revision process of the curriculum involved seeking input from different stakeholders in education, including curriculum specialists, subject matter experts, educators, policymakers, employers, and parents. The objective of the revision was to reduce the burden within and across subjects while maintaining the depth, suitability, and interconnectedness of the content. The curriculum was reduced from 20 subjects to 10 subjects (Igbokwe, 2015; Olateru-Olagbegi, 2015). The Executive Secretary of NERDC encouraged teachers to enhance the content with pertinent materials and information from their immediate surroundings (NERDC, 2013). Adapting the curriculum for learners with special education needs was also encouraged.

There is a greater focus on practical skills, vocational training, and the integration of Information and Communication Technology to ensure that learners are proficient in digital literacy. The curriculum also stresses ongoing assessment to track student progress and offer prompt feedback. The aims of the revised BEC include decreasing early school dropout rates and addressing the educational needs of young individuals who have had to interrupt their studies for various reasons through complementary approaches (Udofia et al., 2021).

2.3.2.5 National Policy on Education (2013)

The NPE outlines in Section 9 (C) that assessment should cover both the areas of formative assessment and summative assessment (NERDC, 2013). The policy further indicates that assessment should accurately measure the abilities of learners, improve the credibility of assessment held in Nigeria, address issues associated with traditional PPTs, and enhance learning (NERDC, 2013). The policy emphasises the use of computer-based tests to achieve these objectives.

Unfortunately, though the policy recognises formative continuous assessment as a broad assessment area, and this was even mentioned first, no strategy has been provided to achieve this goal (Modupe & Sunday, 2015). It has been argued that the policy is still based on the old notion, where assessment is seen primarily to determine measures and, thus, for certification against the new assessment culture, which strongly emphasises the integration of instruction and assessment (Bashir & Mera, 2019; Nworgu, 2014).

2.3.3 Brief History of Assessment Policies and Guidelines in South Africa

The South African educational system has undergone significant changes since 1994 to ensure that assessment policies are inclusive for all learners. These changes in assessment policies will be discussed briefly in the following sections.

2.3.3.1 Outcome-Based Education (OBE)

The curriculum policy known as OBE was the initial policy to incorporate assessment principles following the Apartheid era in the South African education system (Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015). Its goal was to initiate a fundamental change from a system of education that was previously characterised by standardised high-stakes examinations and whose primary goal was “to rank, grade, select and certificate learners” to an education system that “informs and improves the curriculum and

assessment practices of teachers” (DoE, 1998, p. 4). The OBE policy highlighted that assessment should focus on “clearly defined outcomes to credit learners’ achievements at every level, whatever pathway they may have followed, and at whatever rate they may have acquired the necessary competence” (DoE, 1998, p. 5).

The OBE policy marked a departure from the excessive reliance on standardised assessments, which failed to acknowledge individual learner differences and instead treated all learners as uniform (Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015). Although OBE was initially intended to address past inequalities, the implementation of the curriculum was focused on achieving specific outcomes without taking into account the diversity present in the classroom (Hendricks, 2010). As a result, the then Minister of Education, Professor Bengu, announced the discontinuation of OBE on March 24, 1997, in favour of adopting Curriculum 2005 (Moodley, 2013).

2.3.3.2 Curriculum 2005

In 1998, Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced as a holistic policy intended to change the curriculum and upgrade the educational environment in all schools across South Africa (Fataar, 2000). However, within two years of its implementation, it was criticised by education stakeholders for not adequately training teachers on the new learning areas that were introduced (Moodley, 2013). In response, the Minister of Education at the time, Kader Asmal, established a committee to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, such as departmental representatives and teachers, to evaluate the curriculum (DoE, 2000). The committee found several weaknesses in the curriculum, such as confusing terminologies, which led to demotivation and confusion among teachers (Makgato, 2018).

The relevant stakeholders in education should have a clear understanding of assessment policies, particularly the teachers who put them into practice in the classroom. It is crucial for teachers to undergo training on effective methods for adapting and applying assessment policies. If this is not done, learners may not fully benefit from the curriculum. The Review Committee has identified multiple shortcomings in Policy C2005 and suggested phasing it out in order to adopt the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) (Makgato, 2018).

2.3.3.3 Revised National Curriculum Statements

The Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) was introduced in 2002 based on the key findings of the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee (DoE, 2000). The goal of the RNCS was to use clear language and provide specific terminology to aid in teacher training and orientation (Makgato, 2018). Assessment was “a continuous, planned process of gathering information about the performance of learners measured against the Assessment Standards of the Learning Outcomes” (DoE, 2002, p. 93). The aims of assessments were revised to support and monitor learners' progress better.

The RNCS was found to increase the workload of teachers significantly, according to Sayed and Kanjee (2013). Teachers may perceive inclusive assessments as posing additional demands on them (Engelbrecht, 2020; Shabalala, 2023). It is crucial for teachers to feel motivated to adapt their attitudes and assessment methods to align with inclusive policies. However, mainstream schoolteachers need to receive adequate support to address the challenges associated with inclusion.

The presence of support systems such as the DBST is essential and cannot be compromised when it comes to effectively putting inclusive assessment policies into practice (Smit et al., 2020). Studies on teachers' encounters with the execution of the RNCS showed inadequate preparation and insufficient assistance for teachers in schools (Selesho & Monyane, 2012). To mitigate the drawbacks of RNCS, the DBE introduced the Curriculum and Policy Statements (CAPS) (DBE, 2011).

2.3.3.4 Curriculum and Policy Statements

The CAPS is a policy document that embodies the expertise, abilities, and principles that are considered vital to guide the educational process in South African schools. It is designed to equip all learners, irrespective of their backgrounds, for personal fulfilment and meaningful engagement in society while acknowledging global imperatives (DBE, 2011). Ms. Angelina Angie Matsie Motshekga, the Minister of Education, revealed that the curriculum seeks to rectify previous educational disparities and provide equal opportunities for all while also upholding human rights, inclusivity, and social justice as outlined in the Constitution of the RSA (DBE, 2011). The CAPS outlines what should be taught and assessed in schools (DBE, 2011). As a result, mainstream schoolteachers need to have a good understanding of CAPS and the differentiated assessments embedded in CAPS.

Based on research findings, teachers hold both positive and negative opinions about the CAPS. Maharajh et al. (2016) conducted a case study exploring how teachers implemented CAPS in three primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The research revealed that teachers viewed CAPS as a beneficial policy because it instigated substantial changes in assessment approaches compared to earlier curricula (Maharajh et al., 2016). Another research conducted by Du Plessis and Marais (2015) confirmed that teachers perceive CAPS as being focused on assessment and all-encompassing, which helps them understand what to teach and evaluate. Teachers also expressed gratitude for the yearly teaching plan, which offers direction on the specific quantity of tasks for formal assessment (du Plessis & Marais, 2015). Additionally, teachers in the FP found CAPS to be easy to use due to its simplicity, making it effortless for them to grasp the content. (Magagula, 2015).

Nevertheless, teachers also hold concerning views on CAPS. Some teachers have pointed out that CAPS is restricted by inadequate resources in most South African schools (Davis, 2017; Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020; Molapo & Pillay, 2018). This suggests that many South African schools lack sufficient classrooms and learning and teaching materials to implement the curriculum effectively. Additionally, the inadequate involvement of teachers in the curriculum development process is another obstacle to curriculum implementation (Ajani, 2021). Integrating teachers fully into the curriculum reform process can enhance curriculum implementation (Taole, 2020). The perspectives, methods, and understandings of teachers regarding the curriculum will contribute to its successful implementation (Nunalall, 2012).

Additionally, findings revealed that most teachers do not clearly understand the objectives of CAPS; therefore, it is difficult to implement the CAPS document in teaching and learning (Ajani, 2021). Prior research also indicates that teachers perceive CAPS as burdensome due to the extensive workload required to cover each term. Some teachers have indicated that CAPS does not take into account the needs of learners who learn at a slower pace and need additional time to comprehend the content taught (Magagula, 2015; Ramabulana, 2017). Another conflicting perspective on CAPS is that the assessment is rigid and does not cater to the diverse learning styles of learners (du Plessis & Marais, 2015). Flexibility of CAPS is important to accommodate learners with special needs and learning barriers. Nonetheless, it's also vital to consider that gifted learners are often overlooked by teachers, who might think

they do not require extra attention (Marumo, 2018; Oswald & de Villiers, 2013). Gifted learners frequently feel unengaged in class, as the activities and assessment tasks may not challenge or stimulate them (van Wyk, 2018). Thus, CAPS should cater to the needs of all learners in mainstream classes, including gifted learners.

Prior research has indicated that some teachers hold favourable and some unfavourable views on CAPS. However, they collectively agree that the lack of adequate training, resources, and support has resulted in an unsuccessful implementation of CAPS (Maharajh et al., 2016; van der Nest, 2012). CAPS encompasses the National Protocol for Assessment, which supervises assessment procedures (DBE, 2012).

2.3.3.5 National Protocol for Assessment: Grades R–12

The 2012 National Protocol for Assessment is a detailed policy document outlining the framework for using assessment to maintain precise records for qualitative teaching and learning (DBE, 2012). Assessment is defined in this document as “a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other education stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners” (DBE, 2012, p. 34). The aim of assessing learners in the classroom, whether formally or informally, is to gather valid evidence of learners' progress using different types of assessments (DBE, 2012). Assessment evidence should adequately reveal a learner's capability and skill.

Regular classroom assessments and end-of-year examinations are encouraged by the policy (DBE, 2012). According to the DBE, the national assessment policy “must adhere to the stipulations in Education White Paper 6” (DBE, 2012, p. 2) in order to accommodate learners with special needs and those who face learning barriers. The policy stresses the use of diverse assessment tools to gather information on learner progress in a manner that is effective and efficient (DBE, 2012). Assessment should also be used to enhance teaching and learning, as well as to develop intervention strategies to address the diversity of learners in classrooms.

2.3.3.6 Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom Through CAPS

‘The guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS’ aim to equip teachers with approaches to accommodate the diverse learning requirements of learners (DBE, 2011). The DBSTs are also mandated to utilise these guidelines when aiding teachers in schools. These guidelines are designed to assist mainstream schoolteachers in recognising and understanding the diversity present among learners, and they provide strategies to address it. Furthermore, the guidelines detail how the curriculum and assessment can be differentiated and offer teaching methods such as collaborative work and multi-level instruction (DBE, 2011). The guidelines for differentiated assessment are based on the understanding that learners with diverse needs cannot be taught and assessed in the same way (Brasfield, 2024). Therefore, traditional assessment methods should no longer be used in schools to allow all learners to access the curriculum (Wormeli, 2023). Differentiated assessments should meet each learner at their level and help them progress in their learning. However, many teachers have been resistant to implementing these guidelines, as they are fixated on traditional methods of assessment, which creates barriers to learning in mainstream schools (Lindner & Schwab, 2020).

The curriculum and assessment policies in Nigeria and South Africa have undergone significant changes. In Nigeria, the shift from one-shot summative assessment to formative assessment was a major change. Additionally, the introduction of computer-based assessment was another important development. However, the curriculum and assessment policies have not yet included provisions for adapting assessments to meet the diverse learning needs, interests, and profiles of learners in mainstream schools. The use of technology could be an opportunity to create differentiated assessments instead of relying solely on traditional approaches. South Africa, on the other hand, has formulated policies such as the guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS, which acknowledge the various forms of diversity present in mainstream schools. Although some teachers have noted that the current curriculum and assessment policy is challenging for some learners, provisions have been made for adapting and modifying the curriculum to accommodate these learners.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

International laws and frameworks have served as vital instruments for the establishment of mainstream schools in Africa. Many African countries have demonstrated their commitment to inclusive education by developing policies relevant to their contexts with the aim of accommodating and catering to all learners in the same learning environment. However, the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria and South African mainstream schools continues to face significant challenges. Additionally, both countries have made significant modifications to their assessment policies in order to make them more inclusive. These modifications have entailed a departure from traditional assessment approaches. South Africa seems to be ahead of Nigeria with its assessment policy, which includes differentiated assessments in CAPS. The next chapter explores the perspectives and policies on differentiated assessment in Nigeria and South Africa and the support mainstream schoolteachers require and receive to differentiate assessment.

CHAPTER THREE: PERSPECTIVES AND POLICIES ON DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the emergence of mainstream schools internationally, particularly in Africa, in Nigeria and South Africa. I also examined the developments and evolution of inclusive assessment in Africa, specifically in Nigeria and South Africa. In this chapter, I presented the perspectives and policies regarding differentiated assessment. Finally, I discussed the support that mainstream schoolteachers require and receive from support structures such as the School Based Management Committee in Nigeria and the DBSTs in South Africa to implement differentiated assessments in their classrooms.

3.2 Differentiated Assessment as an Inclusive Framework

In the past, an assessment was primarily used in schools to determine learners' competency levels, decide on promotion to the next grade, and determine eligibility for graduating them or placing them in special schools (Macy et al., 2015). This primary use of assessment was based on the assumption that all learners within the same age group and in the same class had similar cognitive abilities, interests, and learning needs (Förster et al., 2018; Stefanakis & Meier, 2010). It was further assumed that all learners demonstrate their knowledge and skills the same way with the same assessment method, hence the prevalence of the traditional uniform assessment practices. Assessment scholars have criticised and argued against traditional assessment paradigms that deny the increasing and prevalent diversity among learners in mainstream schools (Marzano, 2000; Noman & Kaur, 2014).

Around the world, the typical classroom, which reflects society, accommodates learners who possess a wide range of abilities and skills and from various socioeconomic backgrounds (Engelbrecht, 2020). In addition, learners vary in terms of prior knowledge, interests, readiness to learn, learning styles, pace of learning, support requirements, confidence, and independence (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). These differences significantly influence how learners learn and how they demonstrate what they know and can do (Fogarty & Pete, 2010; Stefanakis & Meier, 2010; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). In this regard, assessing learners using traditional approaches may have an adverse effect on their psychology and self-perception (Bursuck et al., 1999). These learners may become demotivated

and lose self-confidence and interest in schooling as they constantly fail to meet the standard measured by an assessment that does not align with their needs. Consequently, the learners may view themselves as failures, which puts them at risk of dropping out of school or, at best, being placed in special schools (Noman & Kaur, 2014; Zigmond & Thornton, 1985). Traditional assessments pose a barrier and are exclusory tools that prevent several learners from accessing quality education, especially learners with SEN (Jung & Guskey, 2010; Noman & Kaur, 2014).

More than ever, the onus lies on mainstream schoolteachers to recognise and embrace diversity as the new norm, implement assessment approaches that are inclusive, and consider their learners' abilities, strengths, and peculiar needs (Doubet et al., 2018). Additionally, teachers must acknowledge that all learners can demonstrate knowledge. A learner's inability to optimally demonstrate their mastery of the content may be a result of the assessment method and practices of the teacher (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Although learners have diverse abilities, many teachers struggle to accommodate them when planning their assessments (Gable et al., 2000; Guild, 2001; Naqvi, 2009; Shepard et al., 2005; Sizer, 1999). This practice may lead to unintentional bias in assessment and invalid information and judgement about the learner (Popham, 2001). Therefore, it is important to implement differentiated assessment, which creates diverse pathways for learners to optimally demonstrate their abilities and skills (Doubet et al., 2018; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023)

Assessment scholars such as Tomlinson and Moon (2013) have revealed that differentiated assessment is an inclusive framework that can foster accessibility, motivation, and efficiency for all learners. The scholars contended that differentiated assessment ensures that the curriculum is accessible to all learners, including those with special needs, as it provides various pathways for them to display their knowledge and skills (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Differentiated assessment enables mainstream schoolteachers to gather valid evidence using assessment methods aligned with their learners' abilities. The information gathered enables the teacher to make informed instructional decisions to promote learning further and provide interventions and support that are tailored to move the learner forward in the curriculum.

Differentiated assessment can also foster motivation. Motivation "refers to a learner's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the

learning process" (Bomia et al., 1997, p. 1). Skinner and Belmont (1991, p. 3) further attest that when learners are motivated, they "initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they generally show positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest". Motivation takes various forms and differs among learners and contexts (Paquette & Rieg, 2010). Tomlinson and Moon (2013) posited that differentiated assessment can effectively promote learner motivation as it takes their interests and learning profiles into account. FP learners are often forced to demonstrate their competency levels orally or by using a pencil and paper in a regulated environment. This assessment practice may demotivate learners and increase their anxiety levels. Many research studies have established that young learners, especially learners with SEN, might not speak in situations where they are anxious (Kearney & Rede, 2021; Muris & Ollendick, 2015; Schwenck et al., 2021). In this regard, FP teachers are encouraged to provide a physically and psychologically safe environment for their learners (Paquette & Rieg, 2010). Differentiated assessment considers the learner's peculiarity in deciding viable assessment methods for learners to demonstrate their learning, which may lead to increased learner participation and engagement with assessment tasks.

Furthermore, the authors argued that differentiated assessment promotes efficiency by gathering accurate and relevant information that can be used to make informed decisions about a learner's progress and future learning needs (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). This enables teachers to tailor their instruction to better meet the needs of individual learners. There are few research studies conducted on differentiated assessment globally, with fewer studies conducted in Africa and South Africa and almost none in Nigeria (Noman & Kaur, 2014). Thus, there is an urgent need to understand how the FP can differentiate assessment in mainstream schools to promote equity and inclusion for all learners, including those with SEN.

3.2.1 Strategies to Differentiate Assessment in the FP

Many states have provided various assessment strategies to differentiate assessments for learners with special education needs through accommodations and adaptations (Paquette & Rieg, 2010). Four typical accommodation strategies are often provided for learners with SEN. The accommodations include presentation accommodations, which allow learners to access information in ways that do not

require them to read standard print visually. In addition, response accommodations are provided to allow learners to demonstrate their learning using some type of assistive device or support (Paquette & Rieg, 2010). Setting accommodations are also provided to learners to allow for a change in the location in which an assessment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting. Lastly, there are “timing and scheduling accommodations to increase the length of time to complete an assessment” (Paquette & Rieg, 2010, p. 125).

The DBE in South Africa offers accommodations for learners with SEN, such as providing “braille and large print materials for learners with visual impairments, assigning scribes to write the learner's responses to questions verbatim, and hiring sign language interpreters for deaf learners” (DBE, 2017, p. 7). Some studies have indicated that FP teachers provided individualised support to learners who had difficulties with class activities and gave extra time to learners who had processing difficulties or poor psychomotor skills (Subramoney, 2017). Assessment can also be differentiated based on the “learners' readiness, interest, and learning profile” (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 1). This strategy benefits all learners, not only learners with special needs (Thuketana et al., 2023; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2011; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Learners' readiness can be defined as “a learner's current proximity to specific learning goals, targets, or outcomes” (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013, p. 10). It is imperative to understand that the learner's readiness does not equate with the learner's ability. Assessment scholars argue that these terms should not be used interchangeably (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). Learners' ability may imply a relatively fixed and inherent trait, while readiness indicates a temporary condition that should evolve through instruction (Kaur et al., 2019). The assessment conducted in the classroom, when tailored to individual learners' readiness, helps them at their current level and assists them in progressing to the next possible stage in the curriculum. In this regard, learners should consistently engage with assessment tasks that are closely aligned with their current level of knowledge, understanding, or skills and slightly challenging to enable them to progress to their next possible level of attainment (Sousa, 2001; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Paquette and Rieg (2010) further explained that when learners are faced with an assessment task, they will aspire to solve it. Hence, teachers' classroom assessment practices should enable learners to

recognise gaps in their thinking and motivate them to provide solutions that are attainable (Paquette & Rieg, 2010).

Assessment can be differentiated according to the interests of learners. Interests are the passions or inclinations of the learners and can be utilised to demonstrate their knowledge and skills (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Learners' interests are often connected with their strengths, contextual background, personal experiences, or sense of need (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023). In this regard, when assessment is differentiated based on the interest of the learner, motivation to learn and demonstrate learning is heightened as the learners are stimulated and motivated to engage in tasks. White (2017) suggested that learners' interests might influence the accuracy of a teacher's assessment methods and outcomes. Teachers can utilise different assessment approaches, such as offering learners the choice to use their preferred colours or images when completing assessment tasks (Kaur et al., 2019).

Learners' profiles include "aspects that define the learner's personality and learning preferences" (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013, p. 12). Learners' learning profiles are shaped by various factors and the interactions among them. The learning profile may be shaped by the learner's learning style, which is the learner's preferred approach to learning. For example, some learners prefer working in a group, while others prefer working alone (Dunn & Dunn, 1993; Westhof & Thuketana, 2018).

In addition, learning profiles may be due to the dominant intelligence, which is the neurologically shaped preference for learning or thinking. According to Gardner (1983), there are diverse intelligences such as verbal-linguistic, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical-rhythmic, analytical, practical, etc. Furthermore, the culture and socioeconomic background of the learner shapes their learning profile. For example, the learner's home language might be different from the language used for teaching and learning. This is a widespread phenomenon in South Africa (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2021; Heugh et al., 2020; Makalela, 2022). It is important that teachers consider the learning profiles of their learners to provide a range of teaching and learning approaches that, in turn, reflect a range of culture-based learning preferences (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023).

Classroom assessment can be differentiated based on the type of assessment, which can be formative and summative. Formative assessments refer to a range of

classroom activities that teachers use to gather information about their learners' level of mastery and that support the needs of the learners (Moon, 2005). By identifying the areas that learners have not yet mastered, teachers can make necessary adjustments to their instructional strategy to ensure effective learning (Moon, 2005). Formative assessment further equips the teacher to understand better how various learners might best access information and what assessment tasks are tailored to the needs of the learners (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Formative assessment should be differentiated as learners do not progress at the same pace. When formative assessment is differentiated, it can provide learners with support and feedback tailored to their needs (Moon, 2005). Formative assessments can be informal, such as making observations, learner discussions, small group activities, brainstorming ideas orally, and allowing learners to indicate their understanding by raising their hands (Moon, 2005; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). These assessments can also be formal, such as written or oral assessments. Irrespective of the form of assessment, each should focus on the current learning goals of the curriculum. In addition, the information gathered should inform decisions made regarding whether it is necessary to reteach or extend learning goals (Cowley, 2018; Moon, 2005).

Summative assessment, on the other hand, provides the teacher with information about learners' mastery of the content taught, usually at transition points such as at the end of the term (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Moon (2005) further explained that the information gathered during summative assessment enables the teacher to make decisions about the learner's mastery of identified learning goals and objectives and the effectiveness of the instruction, therefore allowing the teacher to anticipate the learner's readiness for the next learning outcome (Moon, 2005). Summative assessment can take various forms, from written assessments to performance assessments or portfolios (Moon, 2005). However, it is important that the summative assessment is aligned with the specified objectives that have guided the instructional decisions, as well as the formative assessment. There have been arguments regarding the purpose and the manner in which summative assessments should be conducted.

Differentiated assessment scholars have argued that if a learner is knowledgeable about the content taught but is unable to demonstrate mastery because the only task provided to demonstrate the skill is a written essay, the assessment has failed to reveal what the learner knows (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Teachers can differentiate summative assessments by providing learners with assessment tasks that align with their needs, such as writing an essay or presenting a series of annotated storyboards. It is important to note that while assessment should be differentiated, what cannot be differentiated is the set of criteria or the learning goals. An exception, however, might occur with a learner who has an Individualised Education Programme (IEP) that indicates different learning goals (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

3.2.2 *Misconceptions Regarding Differentiated Assessment*

Prominent academics like Birnie (2015) and Tomlinson and Moon (2013) have highlighted misunderstandings in the field of differentiated assessment. One common misconception in the literature is the belief that differentiated assessment requires creating different assessment tasks for each learner in the class (Doubet et al., 2018). Differentiated assessments are planned to meet specific learning objectives with varying levels of support, utilising different approaches to demonstrate understanding, knowledge, and skills. Birnie (2015) contended that most diverse learners' abilities and learning needs tend to fall within about three or four adaptable ranges. "These adaptable ranges may encompass visual, auditory, reading, and kinetic (self-practice learners) abilities" (Boland & Amonoo, 2021, p. 34).

Another widespread misconception about differentiated assessment is that it should be implemented only for learners with SEN (Hertberg-Davis, 2000). Differentiated assessment is often discussed and implemented as a support mechanism for learners who struggle academically (Westwood, 2013). However, it is important to recognise that differentiated assessment is a valuable tool for all learners. Majuddin and Khambari (2019) affirmed that assessment tailored to individual needs is essential for all learners to succeed. The key principle of differentiated assessment is that high expectations should be set for all learners. It is always expected that all learners will achieve mastery of the intended learning goals (Moon, 2005). By tailoring assessments to the unique needs and abilities of each learner, teachers can make assessments more effective for equitable learning experiences. Therefore, it is important to shift the discourse around differentiated assessment from being perceived

as an intervention for learners with SEN only to an inclusive framework that benefits all learners. Misunderstandings also put more capable and gifted learners at a disadvantage, as they often feel uninterested and unmotivated when the assessment is not adequately challenging (Heacox & Cash, 2020).

There is a common misconception that teachers can support struggling learners by awarding bonus scores or unearned marks as part of differentiated assessment (Gottlieb, 2006; Silva et al., 2005; Taylor, 2017). Tomlinson and Moon (2013, p. 9) argue that “teachers should adhere to professional and ethical assessment practices and refrain from manipulating assessment scores to accommodate some learners”. It is emphasised that differentiated assessment is valuable when it accurately represents the progress of learners (Noman & Kaur, 2014). Furthermore, some critics of differentiated assessments have indicated that whilst teachers may consider the differences among learners, assessments should not be differentiated (Mills et al., 2014).

Additionally, Abedi (2008) highlights concerns regarding the validity of differentiated assessment due to specific accommodations. Assessment scholars have clarified that accommodations provided on assessment must align with those provided for instruction; otherwise, assessment results may be invalid. Concerns about the validity of an assessment are based on whether accommodations can level the field for learners without providing an unfair advantage over their peers (Sireci & Faulkner-Bond, 2015). Thus, differentiating assessments based on factors other than the intended purpose and learning needs could lead to unfairness (Mislevy et al., 2013).

It has been further stated that the allocation of grades is only meaningful if all learners have undertaken the same assessment task, thereby ranking the high and low achievers (Moon, 2005). As a result, some learners will not be challenged academically through competitions and might acquire a false sense of their abilities if the assessment is differentiated. However, differentiated assessment scholars have contended that quality assessment practice and differentiation are compatible (McTighe & Brown, 2005; Moon, 2005; Tomlinson, 2005). For example, Moon argues “that three of differentiation’s key principles are that learning has to be active, involve high expectations (with appropriate scaffolding) and should occur in a social context” (Moon, 2005, p. 231). Differentiated assessment involves offering various assessment

activities that consider the diversity of learners, are aligned with the same learning goals and assessment standards and are intellectually stimulating and significant. It is an important means of ensuring that teachers are able to “eliminate barriers to demonstrating achievement” (Tomlinson, 2005, p. 265).

3.2.3 Reliability and Validity in Differentiated Assessment

An assessment that is reliable, valid, and fair to all learners can serve as the bridge to educational equity (Gottlieb, 2016). Reliability and validity are key concepts that have a bearing on the quality of assessment results that teachers use to determine learners' knowledge gaps, strengths, interests, and learning preferences (Moon, 2005). The reliability of assessment results is demonstrated by its consistency in producing the same information about a learner. The validity of assessment, on the other hand, refers to the degree of appropriateness or usefulness of an assessment for a particular purpose (Moon, 2005). It is the degree to which the assessment task can provide an accurate and fair evaluation of the learners' ability and skill and the decisions made based on the information (Moon, 2005).

It is important to make informed and justifiable decisions regarding learners' learning (Moon, 2005). The process of validating an assessment task begins with establishing its aim and learning objective and concludes with evidence that proves the accuracy of the conclusions drawn about learners' abilities from their assessment scores (Moon, 2005). For classroom assessments to yield reliable and valid data, teachers should design assessments that allow learners to demonstrate mastery of the specified learning objectives (Moon, 2005). Furthermore, the assessment task should align with the instructional methods used (Moon, 2005).

3.3 Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Assessment

Over the years, assessment scholars and educational policies have focused on understanding teachers' perceptions, knowledge and skills regarding assessment (DeLuca et al., 2014; LaPointe-McEwan & Luhanga, 2016; Yan & Pastore, 2022). The increased focus and interest in assessment stems from the acknowledgement of the important role it plays as a key part of the curriculum and decisions made based on the information on learners, teachers, schools and society (Cochran-Smith, 2023; Darling-Hammond, 2016; O'Neill & Adams, 2014). Teachers' perceptions are

important in understanding and improving their assessment practices to accommodate all learners in mainstream schools (Barnes et al., 2017; Deneen et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, very little attention has been paid to this phenomenon in Nigeria and South Africa, specifically in the FP. Moreover, there is a call for empirical research on FP teachers' conceptions of differentiated assessment and the bearing it has on promoting equitable practices in these contexts. Rogoff (1990) claimed that "there are cultural values involved in definitions of intelligence and valued behaviour and that these values affect understandings of assessment... the characteristics of a good narrative vary across cultures" (as cited in Gipps, 2012, p. 376).

The following sections critically discussed teachers' perception regarding differentiated assessment under three subheadings: 'teachers conceptualisation of differentiated assessment (Section 3.3.1), teachers classroom assessment practices (Section 3.3.2), and the relationship between teachers' assessment practices and learners' academic success (Section 3.3.3).

3.3.1 Teachers' Conceptualisation of Differentiated Assessment

This study investigated teachers' conceptualisation of differentiated assessment which includes their beliefs, understanding, and knowledge levels which is significant to comprehend the influencing their views and approaches to assessment (Brown, 2021; Deneen & Brown, 2016; Lam, 2019; Wang, 2020; Xu & Brown, 2016). Empirical literature suggests that to change and transform teachers' assessment practices effectively to be more inclusive and equitable, there needs to be a paradigm shift in their beliefs and perceptions of assessment (Offerdahl & Tomanek, 2011). However, some studies indicate that a complex relationship exists between perceptions and practices, as inconsistencies between teachers' declared beliefs and their actual practices have been observed (LaPointe-McEwan & Luhanga, 2016; Yan & Pastore, 2022).

Ugwu and Ezeokoli's (2022) research on teachers' perception of assessment shows that many teachers in Nigeria have a low understanding and perception of assessment, while others have moderate levels, and a few are highly knowledgeable in assessment. Additionally, some teachers were unable to differentiate between summative and formative assessments and were unfamiliar with various assessment methods (Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022). Teachers' limited knowledge about assessment

across all education levels has been reiterated by other scholars who have reported that teachers' poor perception of assessment may lead to ineffective practices (Anyanwu & Iwuamadi, 2015; Bandele & Oluwatayo, 2013; Ogidi & Udechukwu, 2020, Okonkwo, 2013; Omebe, 2014). In contrast, Ogunjimi and Lawal (2020) found that the teachers involved in their study demonstrated a good knowledge of assessment. This was concluded based on 60.5% of the teachers suggesting that assessment is a tool for learners' improvement. The authors acknowledged that differences in findings could be due to the methodological approach, study location, and the characteristics of the participating teachers (Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2020). However, the study did not explain why the remaining 39.5% of teachers indicated that they did not find assessments relevant (Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2020). Possible factors that might have influenced the teachers' views on assessment were not investigated.

A commonly found perception of assessment among teachers is the belief that assessment is primarily for accountability purposes. In this regard, assessment is used to hold learners accountable for their learning (Barnes et al., 2017). Teachers with this perception of assessment often describe assessment as “placing learners into categories,” “assigning grades,” and determining “if learners meet qualification standards” (Brown, 2006, p. 168). Additionally, assessment is popularly perceived as a tool for holding schools and teachers accountable for the performance of their learners (Barnes et al., 2017, 2020). In this regard, assessment results are mainly utilised to provide information on the school or learners' performance as an “indicator of school quality” and “a good way to evaluate a school” (p. 168). In Nigeria, Raji et al.'s (2020) qualitative study revealed that all the teachers utilised assessment for both improvement and accountability, although to varying degrees. The perceptions of the teachers encompassed using assessment for reporting, certification, sorting, diagnosing, placement, and evaluating the extent of content mastery by learners (Raji, 2023). The research further uncovered that assessment was perceived as a tool to manage the behaviour of learners and to ensure coverage of the curriculum content. Of note is the use of assessment to regulate learners' behaviour in the classroom (Raji, 2023).

The perception of assessment for accountability is often influenced by the predominant assessment culture and societal expectations, which are usually enforced by policymakers (Barnes et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2019; Raji et al., 2020;

Remesal, 2011). Ayodele (2012) found that some teachers in Nigeria's comprehension of assessment are aligned with societal and cultural expectations of schools and learners. Similarly, Sethusha (2012) observed that teachers in South Africa predominantly regard assessment as a method for collecting marks. This perception of assessment is likely to influence the instructional and assessment practices of the teachers as the primary aim is for learners to attain high marks.

However, according to Wilson (2013), accountability systems do not unduly pressure well-informed teachers who understand the purposes of assessment. These teachers will know how to use assessment scores to improve the teaching-learning process and determine learners' current and potential levels through improved instruction. In this regard, studies have revealed that some teachers understand assessment to inform instruction and promote learners' learning (Brown, 2006). Teachers with this perception of assessment understand assessment as improving instructional practices and approaches and providing learners with feedback on their abilities and learning gaps (Brown, 2006). Brown (2006) elucidated that the perception of assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning aligns with the belief that assessment provides valuable and useful information. In this regard, for assessment information to positively impact teaching and learning, teachers need to have confidence in its accuracy. Therefore, mainstream schoolteachers should be equipped with the right perception and understanding of differentiated assessment, which enables learners to take a true account of their abilities and skills.

In a recent study, primary and secondary schoolteachers' perspectives on assessment in Nigeria were examined (Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2020). This study seems to be one of the few in Nigeria that explored classroom assessment from teachers' viewpoints. The research involved 300 teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria, who completed a Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire based on Brown's (2006) work. The analysis revealed that teachers viewed assessment as a means to enhance teaching and learning and that there were no differences based on teachers' gender or qualifications (Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2020). Similarly, teachers understand assessment as a process that involves gathering diverse evidence of learning and is an ongoing process aimed at enhancing learners' learning. Furthermore, assessment is also considered an event, serving as a means to measure learning and evaluate the extent of learners' grasp of the content (Raji, 2023). Conversely, assessment is a continuous process that

encompasses both formal and non-formal methods, with a focus on the comprehensive improvement of learners' learning. (Raji, 2023)

FP schoolteachers' years of experience have also been found to influence their perception of assessment (Berger et al., 2018). Okeke and Ohia (2011) investigated the perceptions of 13,261 primary teachers in non-fee-paying public schools in Enugu State, Nigeria, regarding continuous assessment. While the new and less experienced teachers had yet to accept and fully understand the need for continuous assessment, the more experienced teachers appreciated its benefits (Okeke & Ohia, 2011). A study was conducted on the assessment literacy of 400 classroom teachers and teacher candidates from Canada and the United States (DeLuca et al., 2021). They observed that experienced classroom teachers tended to prioritise a differentiated approach to assessment. These teachers were found to create fair assessment conditions for all learners, taking into account their diversity and the needs of learners with SEN more than the teachers with fewer years of experience (DeLuca et al., 2021).

Empirical literature also acknowledges that traditional paradigms continue to influence teachers' perceptions and practices regarding assessment. Consequently, newer understandings of assessment are "likely to conflict with prevailing beliefs," which may lead to resistance towards progressive approaches to assessment (Shepard, 2000, p. 12). Traditional assessment paradigms involve a "one-size-fits-all approach that assesses all learners in the same way and under the same conditions to ensure standardisation" (Izevbigie, 2021, p. 61). In SA, studies have shown that although assessment policies and guidelines are transitioning from traditional methods to more inclusive approaches, teachers still hold onto and use traditional assessment paradigms (DBE, 2011, 2012, 2017; Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015). This "one-size-fits-all approach has been the standard for many decades, and many teachers have become accustomed to it" (Izevbigie, 2021, p. 61). As a result, teachers need ongoing training and support to embrace the shift to differentiated assessment (Lam, 2019; Thuketana, 2018; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014).

In addition, teachers' understanding of assessment policies and guidelines has been found to influence their perception of assessment. Some researchers in South Africa, including Sayed and Kanjee (2013) and Kanjee and Mthembu (2015), argue that the CAPS lack clarity on how to use assessment to improve teaching and learning. This

lack of clarity may lead to teachers continuing to view assessments in a standardised manner due to inadequate understanding of assessment terms and purposes. Furthermore, most teachers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to use assessment data effectively to identify learning gaps and address the learning needs of their learners (Ramollo & Kanjee, 2023).

A survey was conducted in Nigeria with 500 teachers in private and public secondary schools to investigate their understanding of assessment (Hager & Inko-Tariah, 2021). The findings revealed that the teachers have a good understanding of assessment concepts and principles, such as different types of assessment, grading methods, consistency in grading, and how to enhance grading processes. However, they struggle with the application of these concepts, particularly in choosing appropriate assessment strategies, interpreting learners' scores, using assessment information effectively, ensuring the validity of test scores, using scores appropriately, and improving performance through assessment (Hager & Inko-Tariah, 2021).

Surprisingly, some teachers regard assessment as unimportant in the teaching and learning process (Barnes et al., 2017). Studies have indicated that teachers who hold pessimistic viewpoints on assessment, like considering it insignificant or unrelated to learning, may encounter difficulties with assessment policies and recommended guidelines (Brookhart, 2011; Brown et al., 2019). Negative attitudes toward assessment can have an impact on the education system because assessment is frequently utilised to shape instructional methods, which, in turn, promotes learners' access to the curriculum. (Barnes et al., 2017). In this vein, research studies have found that some teachers in Nigeria do not frequently assess their learners, and those who do so use only a few assessment methods or techniques (Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022). The percentage of teachers who do not assess their learners for a whole term and those who do so only sparingly points to the fact that most teachers leave out the assessment component of the teaching-learning process. Deneen and Brown (2016) argued that if teachers' views of assessment are not updated, their assessment practices will remain the same.

Research studies further suggest that some lecturers view assessment as unimportant because they are required to adhere to assessment standards that challenge their professional autonomy (Rohrbacher, 2015). According to a study by Denecke et al.

(2011), “when content and teaching standards are imposed from an external source, they only serve to legitimise mediocrity in higher education curricula” (p. 13). Rohrbacher (2015) recommends that teachers should have the freedom to conduct assessments in ways that they believe are suitable for their learners while using policies as a guide. Another reason suggested for teachers viewing assessment as unimportant is that some teachers find assessment to be time-consuming (Lumadi, 2013). In South Africa, teachers have indicated that they are often pressured to cover the curriculum content and see assessment as taking up most of their teaching time (Maharajh et al., 2016). They are focused on completing the work and recording, often neglecting learners with special education needs (Lumadi, 2013). Teachers also find the paperwork involved in the teaching and learning process to be burdensome. For example, in the home language (English) learning area, teachers need to teach and assess learners in listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, thinking, reasoning, language structure, and use. They are also required to compile assessment tasks that include more than one assessment standard. These assessment standards support the development of competencies, particularly in literacy, including reading, writing, and visual literacies, which are considered critical (Lumadi, 2013).

Moreover, results from the qualitative findings indicate that while some teachers lack sufficient assessment knowledge, others face challenges that make them unable to implement assessments (Hager & Inko-Tariah, 2021; Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022). Teachers' neglect of assessment can equally be attributed to a lack of or inadequate assessment training. Many teachers indicated that they never had opportunities for in-service training, especially on assessment (Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022). Several studies have revealed that assessment has largely been ignored in initial teacher education globally (DeLuca, 2012; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017). In Nigeria, teacher training on assessment varies according to the area of specialisation, which often has a bearing on their perceptions of assessment (Hager & Inko-Tariah, 2021). Hager and Inko-Tariah (2021) argued that science teachers demonstrate a higher level of assessment literacy compared to their counterparts in arts and vocational fields, which is likely due to their prior exposure to preservice training (Hager & Inko-Tariah, 2021). This finding aligns with Alkharusi's (2009) study, which suggested that pre-service teachers specialising in English, mathematics, and science tend to possess higher levels of

assessment knowledge compared to those in art and physical education. An investigation of the current teacher education training at a Nigerian university revealed that there is no specific undergraduate course on assessment in the Bachelor of Education programme (Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022). Only two related courses are offered: GCE 203: Basic Statistics in Education (a 200-level course) and GCE 302: Measurement and Evaluation in Education Practice (a 300-level course) (Fehintola, 2019). It is argued that these two courses are insufficient to provide trainee teachers with the necessary knowledge of assessment methods and practices (Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022).

Additionally, certain teacher education programmes offer courses in assessment, while others only include some content on assessment in their courses (Brown, 2021; Poth, 2013). Recent findings indicate that teacher education programmes with specific assessment courses are preferable. This is because covering only certain aspects of assessment in a limited number of courses might not fully address all the goals, types, theoretical underpinnings, and use of assessment principles (Brown, 2021; DeLuca et al., 2021). Moreover, in developing assessment courses within teacher training programmes, the emphasis should be on instructing classroom assessment techniques rather than an undue reliance on large-scale testing techniques (Brown, 2021).

As stated earlier, a thorough search of the literature suggests that no study has specifically focused on the perception of Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers on differentiated assessment. Consequently, the review drew data from studies across educational levels on formative and summative assessment which were not necessarily differentiated to accommodate all learners in the classroom.

3.3.2 Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices

Assessment scholars have sought to investigate the association between teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Barnes et al., 2017; Monteiro et al., 2021; Opre, 2015). However, establishing the link between teachers' perceptions and practices of assessment is multidimensional due to the societal, cultural, and political influences on their classroom practices (Opre, 2015; Sadler & Reimann, 2018). In this regard, scholars such as Willis et al. (2013) and several authors (Adie et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2019; Pastore & Andrade, 2019; Xu & Brown, 2016) have sought to investigate

classroom assessment practices of teachers while taking cognizance of the influence of sociocultural factors and context in which the teachers are situated.

Furthermore, empirical literature available on teachers' assessment practices has been widely researched internationally by secondary and high school teachers (Brown, 2006; DeLuca et al., 2020; Gebril & Brown, 2014; Pastore, 2023). Other research studies have focused on higher education instructors (Offerdahl & Tomanek, 2011; Postareff et al., 2012; Sadler & Reimann, 2018; Zhou & Deneen, 2016) and teacher education (Elshawa, 2016; Levey-Vered & Alhija, 2018; Mustafa & Manaf, 2019). However, very few studies have examined the assessment practices of FP teachers in Nigeria and South Africa. FP teachers' assessment practices play a pivotal role in the shaping and development of young learners cognitively, emotionally, socially and in their self-esteem. This section, therefore, sought to investigate teachers' assessment practices based on available literature with the possibility of understanding the assessment practices of Nigerian and South African FP teachers.

In Nigeria, the NPE (FRN, 2004) emphasises the use of continuous or formative assessments alongside summative assessments at all educational levels. According to the NPE, continuous assessment in the classroom aims to enhance learners learning (FRN, 2004). However, assessment practices in Nigerian schools often fail to meet these intended objectives (Omebe, 2014). For instance, Anyanwu and Iwuamadi (2015) noted that teachers in Nigeria generally prefer and tend to rely on the one-shot, summative final assessments administered at the end of the term or semester over formative and continuous assessments (Osadebe, 2015). The lack of effective assessment practices that support learning is a significant challenge, especially in Nigerian higher education (Anyanwu & Iwuamadi, 2015).

The NPE has been criticised regarding the 30% allocation given to formative assessments and the 70% allocation given to summative assessments. The 30% weighting allocated to formative assessment might be a source of discouragement for teachers who conceptualise assessment primarily for accountability purposes, such as the accumulation of marks and awarding of grades to determine who passed or failed (Parra & López, 2024). Hence, they might channel their assessment practices towards summative assessment as that is what counts in the report sheets (Omebe, 2014). Quantitative data findings indicate that when teachers have a clear

understanding of formative assessment as an ongoing process, they use various strategies and feedback to adjust instruction in order to meet the learning needs of learners (Ugwu & Ezeokoli, 2022). Moreover, without understanding formative assessment, teachers channel their feedback on reporting grades and on the performance of the learners compared with others in the class. In a similar vein, a study in South Africa by Kanjee and Croft (2012) revealed that around two-thirds of teachers had only a "basic" or "below basic" grasp of formative assessment. Consequently, most teachers did not utilise formative assessment within their classrooms (Kanjee & Croft, 2012). This finding indicates that teachers often base their classroom assessment practices on their familiar and comfortable methods. Implementing inclusive assessment strategies, as proposed by Tomlinson and Moon (2013), requires teachers to venture beyond their comfort zone. Teachers who have grown accustomed to using traditional assessments should be motivated and adequately assisted in differentiating their assessment methods.

Furthermore, when teachers do not understand the purpose of the assessment, the assessment task might be misused or wrongly applied. Research findings suggest that the purpose of formative assessment is still unclear to many teachers as they are often used for summative purposes (Anyanwu & Iwuamadi, 2015; Raji et al., 2020; Yan, et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers' assessment practices are mostly teacher-centred, with minimal learner participation and engagement (Barnes et al., 2019; Parra & López, 2024). Hence, the teacher designs, administers and analyses the results of the assessment without taking cognisance of learner diversity, which may have a bearing on how they demonstrate knowledge. Teacher-centred formal assessment tasks often involve paper-and-pencil tests with multiple-choice, true and false, and open-ended questions. However, informal assessment tasks often include asking learners oral questions during instruction and giving them classroom activities (Parra & López, 2024). Brookhart (2011) referred to this practice as insufficient in developing learners' critical thinking skills.

Popham (2018) noted that educators frequently utilise inappropriate assessment tools to gauge learners' progress in their classes. Similarly, Wilson (2013) stated that a single assessment tool may not suffice to measure a learner's comprehension of the content taught, possibly due to the design of the assessment, which could be biased. When developing an assessment, it's important to consider the diversity of the learners

to develop assessment tasks that will not pose barriers or limitations to effectively demonstrating their knowledge and skills (Wilson, 2013). Hence, teachers should aim to incorporate various assessment tasks in their classrooms that are aligned with the dominant intelligence of their learners. Written essays and multiple-choice assessments are the most common practices among Nigerian teachers. Other modes of assessment, such as observation, oral assessment, and peer group assessment, are scarce (Azuka, 2014; Nwachukwu & Ogudo, 2014). Many teachers rely on written assessments, which are usually more convenient for them. Scholars such as Ndubueze et al. (2015), who focused on the assessment methods used by teachers in Nigeria, indicate that it is important to provide training for teachers to equip them with the required knowledge on how to develop equitable assessments. The authors further emphasised the need for ongoing studies on the assessment practices of Nigerian teachers to observe if there are any changes in their methods (Ndubueze et al., 2015).

Studies conducted in South Africa have further suggested that teachers in the FP lack sufficient knowledge of assessment and classroom assessment practices to identify learning gaps and address learners' needs (Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015; Sayed et al., 2014). Similar findings have been revealed by scholars such as Ogidi and Udechukwu (2020), who focused on evaluating the assessment practices of teachers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The goal was to assess the extent to which these teachers utilised assessment methods to foster learners' attainment of the learning outcomes. Analysis of the findings showed that teachers' assessment practices did not result in the use of assessment evidence to enhance teaching and learning. This finding is not uncommon in literature (Anyanwu & Iwuamadi, 2015; Ogidi, 2018; Osadebe, 2015). The ability to utilise assessment to identify learners' gaps in understanding is vital in the learning cycle, as well as learners' progress in the acquisition of the intended learning goal and outcome (Schuld et al., 2017). Assessment is not an end in itself, but it is a key part of the learning cycle as it informs instruction and access to the curriculum (Yan, et al., 2021). Teachers should be supported and equipped to understand the connection between assessment, instruction and the curriculum (Schuld et al., 2017).

Research findings also suggest that various factors influence teachers' assessment practices, such as limited time to implement assessment due to large class sizes and

the attitude of teachers towards assessment (Azuka, 2014). Additionally, teachers' academic qualifications, educational background, field of specialisation, knowledge, and skills may have a bearing on their assessment practices (Ogidi & Udechukwu, 2020; Sanga, 2016). Of note is that some teachers in Nigeria are prone to assessment misconduct and practices to aid learners in passing their summative assessment (Ndubueze et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding the current requirements and endeavours to enhance teachers' understanding and implementation of assessment methods at various educational stages (Brookhart, 2017; Deneen & Brown, 2016), as well as significant proof indicating the correlation between teachers' views and the application of efficient assessment approaches (Volante & Beckett, 2011; Xu & Brown, 2016), research on assessment in the Nigerian and South African context is significantly lacking. The scarcity of studies specifically within an inclusive framework necessitated this investigation,

3.3.3 Relationship between Teachers' Assessment Practices and Learners' Academic Achievement

There is extensive evidence supporting the idea that formative assessment can significantly improve learners' academic progress and attainment (Hidayat, 2020; Munro, 2012; Taylor, 2017). Additionally, scholars such as Hattie (2008) found that teachers' formative assessment practices with emphasis on providing feedback tailored to the needs of learners significantly facilitate their learning. Of note in the literature is the finding that in several case studies by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), schools that transitioned from "failing" to "exemplary" were linked to the implementation of formative assessment practices (OECD, 2005). Teachers who understand the purpose and use of assessment are better able to create and conduct classroom assessments while using the results to improve their teaching methods and enhance learning (Chappuis et al., 2012; Pastore & Andrade, 2019).

Research findings have indicated that when teachers' assessment practices align with the cultural, linguistic, and cognitive differences of learners, more equitable outcomes can be achieved (Hill et al., 2017; Shepard, 2001). The effective use of formative assessment, when differentiated, can also promote equitable experiences for learners at risk of dropping out of school and learners with SEN (Bennett, 2011;

Hill et al., 2017). Teachers exacerbate learners' anxiety and widen achievement gaps when they use summative assessments excessively and offer minimal descriptive feedback to learners (DeLuca et al., 2019; Hattie, 2016; Von Der Embse et al., 2013).

Furthermore, teachers' level of knowledge and understanding about assessment have a bearing on learners' motivation and engagement in the teaching and learning process (Mellati & Khademi, 2018). This correlation occurs because teachers who implement equitable assessments are able to consider learners' interests and design creative assessments. Mellati and Khademi's (2018) study found that teachers' assessment literacy influenced the comprehension and writing abilities of learners and effective classroom practices. Ashraf and Zolfaghari's (2018) study affirms that higher levels of assessment literacy led to more reflective teaching practices.

Reflective teachers engage in critical thinking about the extent to which their assessment methods and practices accommodate all learners in their classrooms and optimise their ability to demonstrate their mastery (Minott, 2021). In this regard, research further suggests that learners taught by teachers with a good understanding of assessment and who have undergone professional development tend to perform better academically (Andersson & Palm, 2018; Mellati & Khademi, 2018). Therefore, teachers need to be well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to differentiate assessments effectively (Popham, 2018). More importantly, FP teachers must grasp the concept of differentiated assessment, as learners are in a critical stage of development (Kanjee & Mthembu, 2015).

In Tanzania, it was found that the assessment practices of the teachers were associated with learners' learning (Sanga, 2016). The study emphasised the association between the learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessment practices (Sanga, 2016). It was found that when assessment is integrated with teaching and learning, learners benefit from the process, and the teachers can assess the learners' knowledge levels and the effectiveness of their teaching methods (Sanga, 2016). Therefore, learning and assessments should be closely connected in well-designed pedagogies (Sewell et al., 2010). Teachers' classroom assessment practices that focus on promoting and improving learning rather than ranking or classifying learners fosters comprehension (Isnawati, 2023; Lumadi, 2013; Popham, 2009; Sanga, 2016).

Despite the acknowledgement that differentiated assessment is fundamental in mainstream schools to promote inclusive and equitable practices, there is a dearth of research on this topic, especially within the Nigerian and South African contexts (Kaur et al., 2019; Varsavsky & Rayner, 2013).

3.4 Support Structures for Mainstream Schoolteachers to Assess Learning

Inclusive education is a method that impacts the entire education system and relies on appropriate and efficient support services (Tebid, 2019). As a result, mainstream schools should be viewed as a community-centred system within a social and ecological framework where stakeholders collaborate to exchange their expertise, make choices, and address challenges.

3.4.1 Importance of Support Structures in Differentiating Assessment

It is widely emphasised in policy documents (DoE, 2005) and by various researchers (Makhalemele, 2011; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018; Tebid, 2019) that collaboration and partnership between mainstream schools and support structures are imperative. Research studies have shown that both teachers and learners recognise the benefits of effective support structures in enhancing the implementation of inclusive frameworks such as differentiated assessment (Datta, 2015; Izevbigie, 2021; Nel et al., 2016).

Collaboration among teachers and other education stakeholders, such as educational psychologists, can tackle the challenges mainstream schoolteachers encounter, particularly in systems that are shifting from traditional to inclusive assessment frameworks (Köpfer & Óskarsdóttir, 2019; Nel et al., 2016). Studies have advocated the need for mainstream schoolteachers to collaborate with teachers in special schools from the pre-service level (Furuta & Alwis, 2017). In a study conducted in Sri Lanka, it was found that a few teachers in mainstream schools collaborated with and received support from the other educational stakeholders (Furuta & Alwis, 2017). In Kenya, a small-scale intervention focused on establishing inclusion committees comprised of learners, teachers, head teachers in mainstream schools, special-school teachers, and community members (Elder & Kuja, 2019). These committees met regularly to discuss how to make schools more inclusive and to develop co-teaching and collaboration methods (Elder & Kuja, 2019). Similarly, Namibia's MoE has sponsored the renovation of special schools into resource centres and recommended

collaboration with mainstream teachers to enhance their capacity; this collaboration included co-teaching (MoE Namibia, 2013).

However, findings on the support received and required by mainstream schoolteachers to specifically differentiate assessment is significantly lacking. If teachers are not adequately supported in differentiating assessments in their classrooms, they may feel less confident, ultimately diminishing their self-efficacy (Hofman & Kilimo, 2014; Nel et al., 2014). When teachers feel isolated, they may become demotivated and frustrated, with some even wanting to leave the profession (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018). Similar to other inclusive policies, it's fundamental to state that differentiated assessment should not be the sole responsibility of mainstream schoolteachers (Burkett, 2013). "Collaboration and support within mainstream schools can help teachers better implement differentiated assessment policies and principles in their classrooms" (Izevbigie, 2021, p 150). The following sections will discuss the roles and functions of support structures in Nigeria and South Africa.

3.4.2 Functions and Roles of School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) in Nigeria

The School-Based Management Committee was set up in Nigeria to increase stakeholders' participation in schools and respond more effectively to learners' diverse needs (Ogundele & Adelabu, 2009). It is acknowledged in Nigerian literature that the effective implementation of the curriculum and the attainment of the expected outcome requires the involvement of the SBMCs (Anyakorah et al., 2021). The School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) serves as a bridge for bringing community resources into schools, improving the flow of government resources, and establishing connections between the government, schools, and the community (Maina et al., 2020; UBEC, 2011). The SBMC strives to advance quality education through collaborative efforts involving the government, community, teachers, and children, and to narrow the existing gap between schools and communities, ultimately aiming to improve the quality and efficiency of education (Pinnock, 2012; Maina, Mohammed & Adeola, 2020).

One of the main responsibilities of the School-Based Management Committee is to create an opportunity for all stakeholders to engage actively in school management, to enhance access, fairness, and learning achievements for learners, as well as to

establish a secure and suitable learning environment for all learners (Ogunode & Chijindu, 2022). The SBMC also aims to assist underprivileged individuals with special needs in the community in accessing education. Additionally, they advocate for learner enrolment, retention, attendance, graduation, and seamless progress through different levels of primary and secondary education (Ogunode & Chijindu, 2022).

Though the SBMCs have been established in many schools in Nigeria, only a few are reported to operate effectively (Maina et al., 2020). Most studies conducted on the functionality of SBMCs in non-fee-paying schools indicate that the SBMCs are not as effective as expected due to insufficient resources and funding constraints (Ogunode & Chijindu, 2022). Consequently, many mainstream schoolteachers are left without the much-needed support to cater for learners with SEN in their classrooms.

3.4.3 Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Require from SBMCs to Implement Differentiate Assessment

The National Policy on Inclusive Education outlines some of the support requirements provided by the SBMCs to foster the implementation of inclusive policies (FME, 2016, 2023). The SBMCs are required to ensure that inclusive policy documents are strictly adhered to by schools, including private schools, by monitoring and evaluating the progress of schools located in the community to implement inclusive policies. Through monitoring, the SBMCs are expected to report and support schools in line with their success and challenges (FME, 2016, 2023). They are further required to offer ideas and resources about the implementation of inclusive education and ensure effective community participation (FME, 2016, 2023). The SBMCs are also responsible for improved teaching and learning conditions, such as “making teaching interesting, more effective and efficient to enhance learning” and implementing plans to increase access and participation of all learners who are not in school (FME, 2023, p. 32). Of note is that the SBMCs are expected to review and update the curriculum and assessments to make it inclusive at all levels and, specifically, adapt them to meet the needs of learners with intellectual disability (FME, 2016, 2023).

The empirical literature on the support mainstream schoolteachers receive and get from the SBMCs has largely ignored their role in adapting the curriculum and assessment to accommodate and cater to all learners, including those with SEN. Hence, little or nothing is known about teachers' support requirements in the literature.

However, Bakwai (2017) investigated the effectiveness of SBMCs' strategies in primary schools and found that organising workshops for teachers and community members was the most effective strategy used in the North-west Zone of Nigeria. Although the content of the workshop was not disclosed in the study, mainstream schoolteachers have clamoured for training and workshops to equip them to implement inclusive policies in which assessment is vital (Ajani, 2022; Ogba et al., 2020; Osuji, 2014). Additionally, Bakwai (2017) found that the SBMCs' monitoring of teachers' lesson delivery was high in all the states to ensure that teachers regularly attend to their classes and that learners do their homework. The finding may imply that the SBMCs can support teachers in their classrooms to differentiate their assessments to cater to all learners. Teachers in South Africa have requested that support personnel come into their classrooms and provide hands-on support on how to accommodate and cater to their learners (Izevbogie, 2021). In this regard, training and workshops should be accompanied by hands-on support for the effective implementation of differentiated assessments.

Onyachom (2023) and several authors, such as Agundu et al. (2024) and Eboatu et al. (2018), have examined the support SBMC provides in promoting learners' access to education. It was found that the major contributions of SBMCs in this regard include "creating awareness on the importance of education and enlightening members of the community on the need to send their children to school, encouraging community participation in school planning, monitoring and evaluation" (Onyachom, 2023, p. 43). In this regard, the SBMC can create an awareness to enlighten teachers on the importance of differentiating assessments to promote curriculum access for all learners.

3.4.4 Functions and Roles of the DBST in South Africa

The teams of experts within the DBSTs are comprised of individuals with diverse knowledge, skills, and experiences at provincial and regional levels (DoE, 2005; Mfuthwana, 2016; Mabaso, 2019; Smit et al., 2020). Supporting mainstream schoolteachers and learners effectively and adequately is the main objective of DBSTs (Mabaso, 2019). The responsibilities and roles of DBSTs in an inclusive education system are defined in White Paper 6, "Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System" (DoE, 2001), and "Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: District Based Support

Teams" (DoE, 2005). DBSTs are required to assist mainstream schoolteachers and learners as specified in White Paper 6 and other policy documents related to inclusive education.

The DBST's primary responsibility, as stipulated by the DoE, is to assess and continuously collaborate with teachers to enhance their capacity to implement inclusive education. It also aims to identify learners with special education needs and offer the support required to meet their diverse learning needs (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2005; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Mfuthwana, 2016). The DBST and teachers are responsible for assessing learning programmes, implementing initiatives to support learners, adapting teaching and differentiating assessment to accommodate all learners (DoE, 2001). In addition, the DBST assesses the efficiency of educational and support programmes, recommends changes, and provides learning aids to learners requiring assistance (DoE, 2001; Mfuthwana, 2016).

Some scholars have expressed concerns about the inclusive schooling system in South Africa, as it has been pointed out that developing effective collaboration between the DBST and teachers has been challenging (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). This challenge is due to the fact that learners with SEN are often referred to special schools by their mainstream schoolteachers, which raises questions about whether teachers are aware of the support available to effectively accommodate these learners (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018; Mfuthwana, 2016; Nel et al., 2014). Hence, studies have stressed the importance of educating teachers in mainstream schools about the roles of the DBST and how they can seek support for their learners (Mfuthwana, 2016; Nel et al., 2014).

3.4.5 Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Require from the DBST to Differentiate Assessment

Research findings have revealed for over a decade that there continues to be a gap between policies on the support DBSTs are mandated to provide and the actual support provided to mainstream schoolteachers (Nel et al., 2014; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Thuketana, 2018). This gap in policy and practice has created a crack in the inclusive system whereby both the teachers and the learners requiring the support are left to navigate through the challenges. The gap created has led to negative consequences which have a bearing on the status of inclusive schools in South Africa (Mpanza & Govender, 2022).

Mfuthwana's (2016) study found that teachers expressed their need for practical training and assistance from the DBST in implementing inclusive policies. Ngubane's (2019) study supported these findings, with teachers emphasising their requirement for ongoing, structured, context-responsive workshops and training. Participants also advocated for hands-on support in their classrooms, in addition to training by the DBST. Furthermore, concerns have been raised about inconsistent monitoring by the DBST, and it was proposed that the DBST should be based in schools to ensure consistent access (Ngubane, 2019). It might not be feasible to expect the "DBSTs to be located in specific schools, considering the large number of mainstream schools in South Africa" (Izevbigie, 2021, p. 134). The DBSTs are allocated to schools within the district rather than to individual schools (DoE, 2005; Mkwanazi, 2023; Thuketana, 2018). However, research has also indicated that schools, particularly in rural areas, are often overlooked by the DBSTs (Makhalemele, 2011; Ngubane, 2019; Thuketana, 2018).

Some schools are uncertain about the type of assistance the DBSTs should offer, as the DBSTs are frequently unavailable, and there is minimal or no evidence of cooperation, training, guidance, or visits to schools (Subramoney, 2017). "Unequal and insufficient distribution of support services may further put learners at a disadvantage. Effective collaboration between DBSTs, teachers," and parents is important for promoting inclusion and differentiated assessments in mainstream schools (Izevbigie, 2021, p. 57).

Some researchers have pointed out that the DBST's inconsistent monitoring of schools could be due to the ineffective transportation system. This system makes it difficult for the DBST to reach schools in need of support, particularly those in rural areas (Makhalemele, 2011). Moreover, the distance between the DBST offices and most rural schools results in long travel times. As a result, instead of spending time supporting mainstream schoolteachers and learners, the DBST members spend a considerable amount of time travelling to schools (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). It is important to provide the DBST with adequate resources and infrastructure to visit schools and address reported concerns on a regular basis to address this issue, (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). Additionally, the shortage of human resources, like psychologists and language therapists, within the DBST contributes to their inconsistency (Smit et al., 2020; Tebid, 2019; Thuketana, 2018).

Some studies have suggested that many mainstream schoolteachers are dissatisfied with the support provided by the DBST in assisting referred learners (Nel et al., 2014; Subramoney, 2017). Additionally, participants mentioned that they felt the DBST was not properly trained and was not effective in assisting learners with special needs (Nel et al., 2014). Schoeman's (2012) research also found comparable results, with participants observing that the DBSTs lacked adequate skills to “provide curriculum, assessment and instructional support in the form of learning programmes, learner support materials and equipment, assessment instruments and professional support” (DoE, 2001, p. 49). Studies suggest that most research on the support that mainstream schoolteachers need from DBSTs has focused on general support for implementing inclusive education policies. However, there is a lack of studies on the support that mainstream schoolteachers need from DBSTs to differentiate assessments in their classrooms, especially in the FP (Izevbigie, 2021). Therefore, the findings of this study aimed to address this gap in the literature.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter examined and evaluated various sources in relation to the viewpoints and policies on differentiated assessments. Furthermore, I explored the support that mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa need and obtain from support systems to carry out differentiated assessments in their classes. The subsequent chapter delved into the theory-based conceptual framework utilised for the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

The study was guided by a theory-based conceptual framework that used three different theories as lenses to explore various aspects of the research problem. Sen (1992) used the capability approach to evaluate the equity of assessment policies and practices in mainstream schools. Gardner's theory of MI was utilised to investigate how differentiated assessment can promote equitable practices for learners with varied abilities in developing contexts. Lastly, Lave and Wenger's (1991) CoP was used as the lens to understand teacher support and professional partnerships. The conceptual framework was used to investigate the phenomenon analyse and interpret the findings, as a single theory was not enough to explore the phenomenon under investigation and answer the research questions.

4.2 Capability Approach

The Capability Approach, introduced by Sen in 1992 and developed further by Nussbaum in 2000, is a framework that focuses on social justice in the field of economics. Moreover, this framework is gaining ground in inclusive education (Unterhalter, 2013; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007) to investigate and address issues of social justice, fairness, and equity in mainstream schools (Brando, 2020; Hart & Brando, 2018). The capability approach consists of three key concepts, which include *capabilities*, *functionings*, and *differences*.

The concept of *capabilities* refers to “what people are able to do and to be when given real opportunities” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 5). They are the innate potentials that every learner possesses to achieve certain results given the right opportunities. Furthermore, capabilities denote the freedoms that are void of barriers, in contrast to mere formal rights and freedoms (Underwood et al., 2012). In this regard, mainstream schools must recognise and acknowledge that all learners including learners with SEN possess, in varying degrees, the capabilities and potential to demonstrate their knowledge and skills when assessment is differentiated. Differentiated assessments provide learners with the needed opportunities to flourish in mainstream schools and achieve certain “doings and beings” (Robeyns, 2021). However, standardised assessments are still prevalent in most mainstream schools which deny learners equitable access to the curriculum. This prevalence may be fostered by an inflexible

curriculum, teachers' inadequate knowledge and skills and lack of training (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022).

The term *functionings* refers to “various states of doings and beings” (Sen, 1992, p. 40) that an individual is able to achieve. They are the “achievement of a person: what she or he manages to do or to be” (Sen, 1985, p. 12). Functionings can be described as the capabilities that have been realised or the actions and states of being that a person has the freedom to achieve or become. The capability approach considers every learner to have the capability to realise certain functionings in mainstream schools (Broderick, 2018). However, traditional approaches to assessment, which are often based on a pencil-paper assessment, have for centuries narrowed the opportunities for learners to attain or realise certain functionings. When the assessment practices of mainstream schoolteachers are not differentiated to accommodate the diverse capabilities of learners, many learners, especially those with SEN, fall through the cracks and are labelled as underachievers, unable to flourish in a mainstream school.

Hence, for functionings to be realised, differences must be acknowledged. *Difference* according to this framework, is the freedom that a learner is given to achieve their capabilities and convert them into functionings (Sen, 1999). It is imperative that mainstream schools take cognisance of the individual differences that are both intrinsic (gender, race) and extrinsic (attributed to environmental and social factors) (Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016; Reindal, 2016; Sen, 1999). Most of the time, learners are referred to special schools because their differences are often perceived as being foreign to the accepted norm. Additionally, teachers are not prepared to accommodate these differences, which they perceive as a burden. This situation may lead to a double-edged disadvantage where learners with disabilities are segregated from their peers by being educated in a special education classroom or included in a mainstream school where their needs are not accommodated in the learning process (Minow, 1985). Either way, the learners may encounter social stigmas or discrimination (Lim, 2020; Minow, 1985; Robeyns, 2021). Through the lens of the capability approach, the perception of mainstream schoolteachers regarding the inclusion of all learners including learners with SEN was investigated.

Moreover, capability theorists suggest that this framework transforms the definition of what constitutes a disability or special education needs, going beyond the traditional contrast between medical and social models of disability (Terzi, 2007, 2010). Mitra (2006) states that disability entails a deprivation or restriction in capability or functioning. This research aligns with capability theorists who argue that an individual's capability set is shaped by their connections to the political, social, and economic structures that they are located and not just an internal or physical impairment (Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1992, 1999; Terzi, 2004, 2007). As a result, some disabilities are influenced by contextual factors such as poverty, discrimination, an inflexible curriculum, lack of implementation of inclusive policies, and low-quality early childhood experiences (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; Sen 1992, 1999). In this regard, the capability approach was further adopted in this study to evaluate the implementation of inclusive and assessment policies, guidelines, and frameworks in mainstream school contexts (Terzi, 2007, 2014; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

Frankel and Underwood (2012) outlined key principles of policies that support inclusive practices. These policies include a commitment to enrolling learners with SEN in mainstream schools, establishing effective relationships to advance inclusion through inter-agency collaboration and communication, and a commitment to a transdisciplinary team (Frankel & Underwood, 2012). Nigeria and South Africa are among the numerous countries in Africa and around the world that have pledged their commitment to non-discriminatory practices in society and education. However, for these policies to be practically implemented and beneficial to all learners, mainstream schools must be structured and designed to be inclusive in their content delivery and assessment. Failure to achieve this will place countries in a paradoxical position of both accepting inclusive education policies and rejecting their implementation at the classroom level.

The capability approach is further used in the study to evaluate equity in mainstream schools. Unterhalter (2003) and Raynor (2007) have demonstrated with empirical evidence that not all that goes on in mainstream schools is necessarily beneficial to all learners (Norwich, 2014). Mainstream schools can either reinforce or transform structural and societal injustice and inequity in African societies, particularly in terms of assessment (Khoza, 2020; Vaughan, 2016). Equity in mainstream schools involves examining all aspects of mainstreaming, including the curriculum, the physical

environment, social interactions, textbooks and instructional materials, involvement of all learners, support offered, and well-trained and supportive staff (Lim, 2020). Research has suggested that learners with special education needs are better able to access the curriculum when they are taught in a mainstream classroom (Soukup et al., 2007). Moreover, modifying the curriculum and assessment methods is often associated with positive academic performance for these learners (Lee et al., 2010).

In relation to pedagogical practices, the capability approach highlights three pedagogical principles that support equity for FP learners with SEN (Underwood et al., 2012). The first principle states that instruction, as well as assessment, must be differentiated and tailored to the needs and abilities of learners. Hence, differentiated assessment is described as best practice in mainstream schools as each learner possesses a unique set of capabilities which can be influenced by the social environment. The second principle indicated that learners should be accommodated and catered to in inclusive settings rather than being segregated (Frankel & Underwood, 2012; Guralnick, 2008). Thirdly, there must be systemic support for inclusive practice through policy and professional relationships (Booth et al., 2006; Lero, 2010).

The capability approach may face criticism for being too individualistic, especially from those with a communitarian perspective (Gore, 1997). However, Robeyns (2021) argues that these criticisms fail to differentiate between ethical and methodological individualism. To ensure that all learners in a mainstream school are provided with equitable opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, it is imperative to consider the individual needs of each learner. Although the capability approach provides a framework for evaluating the equity of assessment policies and practices in mainstream schools, it is insufficient for examining how assessments can be differentiated to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners. Hence, the need for Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

4.3 Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)

In 1983, Howard Gardner introduced the Theory of MI. This theory suggests that there are several different forms of intelligence, each with its own way of understanding and processing information. The MI theory offers a practical way to define intelligence and allows teachers to leverage learners' strengths to support their learning (Cavas &

Cavas, 2020; Morgan, 2021). While the theory proposes a biological foundation for intelligence, it does not imply that intelligence is solely genetic and inherited, as Gardner also recognised the social and cultural aspects of intelligence (Altan, 2020). According to Gardner (1999), "intelligence is a biological potential to process information that can be utilised in a cultural context to solve problems or create products that hold value in a society" (pp. 33–34). However, no intelligence is more important than the other. Howard Gardner opposed the psychometric approach to intelligence as he believed that it was incomplete (Altan, 2020). The psychometric approach to intelligence asserts that there is one general intelligence that is used to solve any problem, no matter the assessment task or domain being assessed (Christie & Lingard, 2020; Kubiszyn & Borich, 2024). The traditional approach to intelligence assumes that intelligence is an inherent and unchangeable trait that can be easily quantified (Gipps, 2012). As a result, assessment scores are often used to place learners into categories based on their performance relative to others (Obiakor et al., 2021). The psychometric approach sees fairness as standardisation, which implies that all learners are assessed in the same way and under the same conditions, without consideration for their individual abilities, interests, or needs (Obiakor et al., 2021).

In the field of education, there has been limited success in introducing new methods to replace the prevailing psychometric assessment paradigm (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2024). As a result, the assessments currently used are not significantly different from the ones employed a century ago (Morris, 2011). Despite the advancements in understanding intelligence, particularly those advocated by Gardner, the psychometric approach continues to dominate the education system (Taylor, 2013; Yu & Frempong, 2012). However, Gardner's theory of MI is gaining ground as an exception to the dominant psychometric theory. The MI theory has brought innovation both in the theoretical understanding of intelligence and in assessment methods, which are tailored to the needs of the learners (Cavas & Cavas, 2020). These new assessment methods aim to encompass the various intelligences present in young learners (Davis et al., 2011).

In the theory of MI, Gardner defines nine areas of intelligence, which all learners have to varying degrees (Gardner, 1983, 199). The first intelligence is referred to as Visual-spatial intelligence. Learners with this intelligence are skilled with images, spatial

judgement, and/or puzzles. They can manipulate and create mental images to solve problems, which are not limited to visual domains. Recent studies by Hasan and Maemonah (2024) found that there is a significant difference between the measurement of learners' interest before and after a spatial experiential learning intervention. In this regard, assessment practices should take cognisance of learners with this intelligence. Verbal-linguistic intelligence is the second intelligence learners possess in varying degrees (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). It involves being skilled with words and language (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). During an assessment, learners with this intelligence can use language effectively to express themselves rhetorically or poetically and to remember information (Hali, 2017). Studies based on this intelligence have revealed that learners perform better than their intelligence, as reflected in the assessment after being taught using the audio-linguistic method (Handayani et al., 2021; Hali, 2017).

Gardner (1983, 1999) further indicated that learners possess logical-mathematical intelligence, which involves being skilled in logic, reasoning, and/or numbers. Learners with this intelligence can analyse problems logically, perform mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically (Gardner, 1983, 1999). Logical-mathematical intelligence and verbal-linguistic intelligence are more prominent in education discourse as they correspond closely to the traditional types of intelligence measured by intelligence tests (Gardner, 1983, 1999). Several studies have revealed some learners are strong in logical-mathematical intelligence in the indicators of numeracy and problem-solving (Arum et al., 2018; Azinar et al., 2019). Learners often have negative perceptions about assessments in the logic domain. Hence, creative ways of stimulating logical-mathematical intelligence through other intelligences are being explored.

Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence involves being skilled at controlling bodily motion, such as in sports or dance (Gardner, 1983). Learners with this intelligence can use their whole body or parts of their body to solve problems, express ideas and emotions, and manipulate objects. They can also use their mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements (Gardner, 1983, 1999). Incorporating movement in assessment in the form of play has been empirically proven to aid learning and foster learners' interest (Michelaki & Bournelli, 2022). FP learners are often interested and stimulated when learning and assessment are fun and incorporate music and rhythm (Gardner, 1983,

1999). Musical-rhythmic intelligence involves being skilled with sound, rhythm, tone, and music. Hasan and Maemonah's (2024) study concluded that there was a significant difference between the measurement of learners' interest in learning before and after the musical intervention.

The sixth intelligence identified by Gardner (1983) is referred to as intra-personal intelligence, which involves being skilled at self-knowledge and reflection. Learners with this intelligence can distinguish and identify their personal thoughts and feelings and use them to understand their behaviour. Sellars' (2006) intervention study sought to support a group of 27 FP learners in a large school in a rural community who were classified as low achievers in literacy. The learners were introduced to a programme specifically designed to foster their self-knowledge and establish how it may be used to improve English learning (Sellars, 2006). The intervention increased the learner's awareness of their own strengths, which had a positive bearing on their English development. Similarly, several studies conducted on learners' intrapersonal intelligence agree that children from an early age start developing their sense of self-understanding, self-regulation, and self-image (González-Treviño et al., 2020; Mendoza-Lazaro et al., 2017). Inter-personal intelligence on the other hand, which is the seventh identified intelligence, involves being skilled at communicating with and relating to others (Gardner, 1983). Learners with this intelligence may flourish when assessed in a group or collaborate with their peers.

Naturalist intelligence is the eighth intelligence and involves being skilled at understanding and relating to the natural world. Learners with this intelligence are interested in learning and assessment that involve their senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) (Meyer, 1998; Wilson, 2013). These learners may struggle to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in a standardised test (Jančaříková, 2019). FP learners are often considered to have strong naturalist abilities, finding joy in learning about animals and plants and participating in nature-related activities (Jančaříková, 2019). By incorporating nature-based activities, teachers can effectively enhance and stimulate the learner's knowledge and skills through well-designed learning and assessment strategies (Lesmana, 2016). Spiritual intelligence, the ninth intelligence, involves the ability to place our actions and lives within a broader, more enriched context filled with meaning. It enables us to assess which course of action or life path holds greater significance than another.

Gardner believes that every learner in the classroom brings a collection of all nine intelligences to bear on problems, each to varying degrees of strength, and these intelligences can be nurtured and developed (Gardner, 1983; Hoerr, 2004). Intelligence can be developed based on the learner's interaction with their environment (people, resources) (Altan, 2020; Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). In this regard, learners' cognitive ability and educational attainment in the FP are more dependent on and shaped by their external experiences, such as the teachers' assessment practices. Since learners are not born with equal cognitive abilities, their various forms of intelligence should not be evaluated by one form of intelligence only through a standardised assessment. However, most African countries only focus on measuring knowledge in one way, often paper and pencil-based assessment, which should not be the case, particularly in mainstream schools (Altan, 2020).

Most of the time, assessments focus on verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligence, which mainly involves left-brain functions and skills. This approach forces all learners to conform to the same standards (Altan, 2020). Current assessment practices do not take the diverse abilities and potential of learners into account. Consequently, these practices have, at times, hindered learners from accessing high-quality education and reaching their full potential (OECD, 2008). Both local and international assessment programmes fail to provide comprehensive data on the academic progress and profiles of learners, as traditional assessment methods do not fully capture their knowledge and abilities (Altan, 2020; Pasaribu & Suprpto, 2020).

Gardner's (1983) theory of MI implies that teachers should recognise and assess a broader range of talents and skills, further suggesting that teachers should structure their assessments to engage most or all of the intelligences present in their classroom. Gardner's MI theory not only helps teachers understand that learners have different ways of learning but also supports the success of differentiated assessment (Altan, 2020). When assessments are based on the MI philosophy, teachers can better understand the abilities and interests of their learners, which allows them to create an environment where learners can better connect with the content. Assessing with MI philosophy will also help foster a more democratic society where individual differences are nurtured and valued (Altan, 2017; UNESCO, 2009).

Internationally, scholars have found that using MI in the activities of FP learners has a positive effect on their interest and active participation as the activities are aligned with the types of intelligence present in the class and address the various learning styles of the learners (Gürkan et al., 2019; Hassan, 2020). Multiple intelligences-based assessment takes advantage of the dominant intelligences possessed by learners to demonstrate their abilities in other areas where they might be struggling, such as mathematics (Rofiah, 2016). Due to the empirical benefits of adopting MI, several schools in different parts of the world have been inspired to adapt the curricula to align with the principles of this framework (Armstrong, 1994; Campbell, 2000; Hoerr, 1994; Mettetal et al., 1997). Gardner (1993) encouraged each school to implement MI theory to suit their context. It was evident that the teachers' knowledge of MI theory changed their perception of intelligence and ways of assessing intelligence, which prompted them to adapt their curricula accordingly. In addition to incorporating the views of MI in the school curricula, studies have revealed that some primary schools have woven the principles into assessments (Simamora, 2022).

Furthermore, the development of MI-based textbooks is emerging in literature (Suwanto & Purba, 2021). Textbooks are key instructional materials that assist teachers in delivering the content embedded in the curriculum comprehensively and systematically (Lestari, 2018). Findings from diverse studies conducted on the development and implementation of MI-based textbooks revealed that it is a valid and practical step (Darmadi, 2012; Ilyas, 2019; Kandeel, 2016). This initiative not only increases the interest of MI learners but can also optimise their potential and intelligence in dealing with learning materials (Pangesty et al., 2022), thereby increasing the confidence and motivation of learners during an assessment.

Multiple intelligences theory has also been used as a way to explore and compare the different types of intelligence among learners to support those with special education needs better through the use of technology (Almeida et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2009). There is growing evidence of the use of technology to differentiate assessment, particularly for learners with SEN (Kivunja, 2015; Wegerif, 2015). Incorporating technology can significantly increase learners' active participation and engagement with their learning activities and assessment tasks (Kivunja, 2015). Scholars have sought to demonstrate how some technological applications could be used to differentiate assessments based on MI (Simamora, 2022). These applications have

proven to engage learners in a fun-filled, gamified, but pedagogical way in critical thinking at higher-order levels of cognition (Kivunja, 2015; Prensky, 2010; Van Gelder, 2001). Technological adaptations can tailor the assessment to the needs of learners with SEN to capture their attention and get them to focus on the tasks (Chung & do Prado Leite, 2009; Fernández-López et al., 2013). Learners with SEN often show improved performance and attention to detail when engaging in multimedia assessments compared to their usual performance (Hasselbring & Williams, 2000). This improvement is because technological modifications can aid in the development of fundamental skills, such as tasks that target perception, attention, memory, reading and writing, motor skills, and reasoning. These adaptations allow for adjustments in various aspects, such as the format of accessible content (image, text, sound), the way learners interact with the content (requiring more or less fine motor skill), and the size of the screen (Fernández-López et al., 2013).

The understanding of multiple intelligences helps teachers to identify learners' abilities and determine how to leverage learners' strengths to develop their weaknesses. Additionally, it informs teachers about learners' competencies to aid in transferring these competencies to various curriculum areas while focusing on gathering relevant information for the teaching and learning process (Almeida et al., 2010). Teacher-training programmes should actively equip teachers with the necessary skills and assessment techniques based on MI theory to advance inclusive education (Takahashi, 2013). Moreover, for teachers to effectively implement differentiated assessments for all learners in mainstream schools, they must be adequately supported. In this regard, the community of practice framework was included to provide this study with a wholistic conceptual framework.

4.4 Community of Practice (CoP)

A CoP is a “group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). It includes individuals who have a common interest and enhance their expertise by regularly engaging in discussions and practices regarding their interest to realise a desired outcome (Wenger et al., 2002). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) identified three essential components of any CoP, which they define as consisting of a joint enterprise (domain), mutual engagement (community), and a shared repertoire (practice) (Wenger, 1998).

The domain refers to the "shared domain" of interest or practice that initially motivates members to join forces. It is the common objective that propels the CoP and is the main concern that members encounter and to which they are dedicated (Lave & Wenger, 1991). "The domain inspires members to contribute and participate; it guides their learning and gives meaning to their actions" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 28). In this study, the common interest refers to differentiating assessment in mainstream schools to provide equitable opportunities for all learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The second vital element of CoP is mutual engagement, which refers to the community. CoP comprises formal and informal discussions, activities and social exchanges, workshops, knowledge-sharing events, and regular interactions in which members interact and learn together (Mortier, 2020). "In practice, this means that we need to talk and listen to one another; identify what we can and need to do together; and identify what each person needs to do to contribute to the whole" (DoE, 2005, p. 38). The CoP offers a structure for teachers and relevant stakeholders to receive support and collaborate in enhancing their knowledge and expertise in differentiating assessment (Mortier, 2020).

Furthermore, practice represents the outcome of this collective effort to create a shared collection of resources, including experiences, frameworks, tools, and methods for addressing problems (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Teachers have the chance to gain knowledge from more experienced teachers and professionals through the CoP, where they can see how these individuals adapt instruction and assessment in their classrooms (Slatter & France, 2018). The DBSTs need to utilise "knowledge from local educational institutions and various community resources to help educational institutions identify and overcome learning barriers and promote effective teaching and learning" (DoE, 2005, p. 6). As community members combine their expertise and resources, they can enhance their practices, make new advances, and test innovative ideas, which could lead to the holistic development of communities. Therefore, in this study, the specific knowledge that the community fosters, shares, and sustains, pertains to differentiating assessment to ensure that all learners receive fair assessment opportunities.

A CoP is known for its transdisciplinary, integrated, and coordinated nature, and it involves collaborative systems that operate across different disciplines and organisations (Guralnick, 2008; Frankel & Underwood, 2012). Successful implementation of differentiated assessment requires collaborative and constructive partnerships among teachers, support professionals, department heads, school principals, community members, and community structures (Nel et al., 2014). When stakeholders establish effective working relationships characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect, and a commitment to collaborative negotiation, teachers can receive support to address the needs of all learners, especially those with SEN (Underwood et al., 2012). Within the context of this study, the focus of CoP should be on creating equitable opportunities for all learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills regardless of their challenges.

There are several benefits of CoP in mainstream schools. It provides opportunities to enhance the integration of all learners through the curriculum, especially in assessment. It also helps teachers gain better knowledge about how to support learners in their classrooms through co-constructing knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Research has shown that CoP can act as a catalyst for promoting learning within an organisation and motivate often time-constrained staff to engage in professional and academic development opportunities that might otherwise elude them (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018; Parker & Patton, 2017).

A CoP provides learners with contextual and relevant support (Mortier, 2020). It responds to various changes in the schooling system, taking into account the characteristics and evolving needs of the learner (Thompson et al., 2009). Knowledge needs to be integrated into ongoing practice and must be nurtured through interaction with individuals who are equally passionate about including all learners (Vandenbroeck, 2012). Since the inception of inclusive education, there has been a consistent need to focus on the significance of collaboration among special and mainstream educators, professionals, parents, and learners (Mortier, 2020).

It is important to note that learning for members of a CoP is not necessarily structured and planned but rather happens by observing each other's behaviours and interactions, participating in discussions, and collectively building their understanding (Trust, 2015). The marginalisation of learners will continue as long as various

stakeholders continue to work in isolation without taking into account contextual factors (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016). Therefore, adopting a CoP as an inclusive model can provide effective and inclusive support for learners. With the increasing demand for equitable assessments, mainstream schools face a challenge to provide equitable assessment opportunities that encourage innovative pedagogical practices to enhance learners' success and quality of the learning experience.

Numerous research studies have discussed the application of CoPs as a structure for developing or encouraging professional learning in different fields and for various reasons. Some studies have concentrated on the professional development of in-service teachers (Van As, 2018; Zaffini, 2018) or initial teacher education (Benko et al., 2016; Iyer & Reese, 2013). Such studies are available in higher education, with teachers participating as CoPs or as collaborative self-study communities. Parker and Patton (2017) examined 36 teachers from nine faculty of education communities of practice, exploring how their involvement in these communities improved professional learning by reducing isolation and strengthening collaboration. In another case, Sheehy et al. (2015) utilised CoPs as a framework to portray a decade-long collaborative effort among four physical education teachers from different universities and the influence this collaboration had on their professional development and research. There is a shortage of literature on how CoPs can be employed in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools to promote differentiated assessment. This study drew from this framework to propose an inclusive framework to implement differentiated assessment to the local context.

Harvey et al. (2021) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of a CoP model in supporting professional development and encouraging innovative pedagogical practices for enhancing the quality of learners' experience and improving learners' success. The study aimed to establish a CoP by bringing together individuals who share an interest in assessment to allow staff members to exchange ideas and share their practices. The researchers sent out a general staff email to invite those interested in joining the assessment CoP. An online survey was sent to possible members who indicated interest, and a series of seminars and events were planned to publicise the community and attract new members (Harvey et al., 2021). The researchers established a private space in MS Teams as a hub for resources and an online platform for members to share ideas, resources, and practices. The anonymous

survey responses (N=28) showed that 64% of the participants had joined the community because of their interest in assessment and feedback strategies and their desire to learn new ways of assessing their learners. Of these, 82% were interested in opportunities to experiment with assessment and feedback methods. The establishment of the CoP led to a shared understanding of essential classroom assessment and feedback principles and values (Harvey et al., 2021).

In four studies conducted in the USA and Belgium, parents, teachers, and special education teachers worked together to brainstorm ways to support learners with severe intellectual disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Mortier et al., 2010, 2009; Hunt et al., 2004). Their primary concern was to find ways to help these learners learn and participate fully in different class activities. These groups met regularly, shared insights, focused on learner engagement, worked as equal partners, implemented joint strategies, and remained flexible (Hunt et al., 2004; Mortier et al., 2010, 2009). As a result, the learners showed higher levels of learning, increased social interaction, and greater engagement (Mortier et al., 2010, 2009; Hunt et al., 2004). In one of the studies, team members reflected on the process and affirmed that they had functioned as communities of practice. This method improved their capacity to educate and accommodate students with consequential intellectual impairments. Joint entrepreneurship, reciprocal involvement, and shared practice helped produce new knowledge, progressively reshaping the instructors' identity into being inclusive teachers for all learners (Mortier, 2020). The change would not have happened by merely training or explaining inclusion and disability to the teachers at the beginning of the school year. For FP mainstream schoolteachers to differentiate assessments, it is crucial to establish collaboration and partnership among all relevant stakeholders. This requires a collective sense of commitment to make assessments inclusive for every learner.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

The chapter dug into the conceptual framework based on the ideas used in the research. The next chapter describes the approach used to collect data to address the research questions. Furthermore, the research design, research methodologies, and data analysis are examined in light of the study's ethical issues.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter concentrated on consolidating and contextualising the conceptual framework, which shaped my knowledge of differentiated assessment in mainstream schools. In this chapter, I outline the process I used to generate responses to the research questions. This chapter opens with a description of the research paradigm and the philosophical background that supports the investigation. The paradigm helped to shape the study's planning, design, and implementation. This discussion is followed by a review of the methodological approach and research design employed in this study. The methodological approach and research design were justified using the study's research paradigm and conceptual framework. Following that, I discuss the sampling processes employed, the sample size selection, and the research participants. Next, I cover the methods utilised to obtain the necessary data, the types of data collected, and how the data was evaluated and presented. The chapter finishes with a review of the study's validity, reliability, and trustworthiness, as well as ethical implications.

5.2 Research Paradigm

The term paradigm was propounded by Thomas Kuhn (1970) to elucidate a set of beliefs, assumptions, values, and generalisations of a community of researchers concerning the nature of reality and knowledge (Creswell & Clark, 2017). A paradigm is further described as "a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world" (Patton, 2002, p. 69). A research paradigm is thus the philosophical lens of orientation that researchers hold about what exists and guides researchers' actions in attaining knowledge about its existence. They provide the foundation upon which research studies are conducted and interpreted "and explain in part why different researchers value one approach to research over another" (Klingner & Boardman, 2011, p. 210).

There are numerous paradigms in social research, such as interpretivism, critical realism, positivism, constructivism and pragmatism, with different ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on the above definitions and descriptions of a paradigm, pragmatism was chosen as the philosophical lens of this study.

5.2.1 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a research paradigm that originated from the work of scholars such as William James, John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce and Herbert Mead (Parvaiz et al., 2016). Pragmatism is a derivative of the Greek word "Pragma", which can be interpreted as action, from which the word "practical" is derived (James, 2000). Pragmatists often search for viable, practical solutions to complex human problems as it is an action-oriented paradigm that investigates the link between action and truth (Fishman, 1991; Gao, 2018). Hence, pragmatist researchers investigate "what works" and possible solutions to address societal challenges in the real world (Biesta, 2021). Differentiated assessment is an inclusive framework that examines inclusion and social justice in assessment within the context of mainstream schools and democratic societies. This study aimed to investigate and compare the extent to which Nigeria and South Africa FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners. Additionally, the study examined the support mainstream schoolteachers require to differentiate assessments in their classrooms and designed an inclusive framework drawn from the findings of the study to promote the contextualisation and implementation of differentiated assessment. The pragmatic research paradigm was applied to this study through its ontological and epistemological assumptions.

5.2.1.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology in research is concerned with the nature of reality. A researcher must have a clear view of reality to make the right methodological choices to answer the extensive philosophical question of what it means to exist (Lohse, 2017; Maarouf, 2019). Pragmatism implies that reality is intersubjective, thereby accepting both objectivism and subjectivism simultaneously, as individuals may have multiple interpretations of a single reality within a social context at a particular time (Morgan, 2007). In this regard, I adopted the notion that FP teachers in Nigeria and South Africa may hold multiple diverse perceptions of differentiated assessment.

Pragmatism holds that real-world problems are complex and difficult to understand using a single paradigm (Gao, 2018). Hence, pragmatism discards the traditional philosophical dichotomies of objectivity and subjectivity (Biesta 2021; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Rather than deciding between objectivism and subjectivism, pragmatist researchers focus on utilising both approaches to inquiry to achieve their

purposes (Hothersall, 2019; Morgan, 2014). Pragmatist researchers do not seek to present a universal solution to a single issue; instead, they consider and examine "the actual situations in which all factors are interconnected to make the complex picture" (Gao, 2018, p. 28). In this regard, the pragmatic paradigm was chosen for this study as it aligns with the research questions and hypothesis, I posed in Chapter 1 (Sections 1.6 and 1.7). My research questions stem from both a constructivist and positivist stance. Additionally, I needed a positivist stance to test my hypothesis. My research questions sought to investigate the extent to which FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment. More specifically, to explore how assessment can be utilised as an inclusive framework to promote equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools/classrooms.

Pragmatic researchers may first adopt the ontological stance of objectivism by assuming that there is a single reality, which is constant most of the time and utilise the quantitative approach to test a theory about reality (Maarouf, 2019). Having a theory to be tested means there is a fair knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation, which allows for the measurement of variables and the testing of hypotheses (Collins, 2017). Thus, the pragmatic researcher describes reality temporarily in "low-like generalisations". Furthermore, the pragmatic researcher adopts the ontological stance of subjectivism by assuming that reality changes periodically, and generalisations may become obsolete when the context changes (Dieleman et al., 2017). Hence, a pragmatic researcher may utilise a qualitative approach to examine the social actor's perceptions about reality to provide an in-depth understanding of the context generating the reality.

Positivism, which is based on objectivity and the use of scientific methods to measure variables, enabled me to determine the extent to which South African and Nigerian FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners based on their responses (Park et al., 2020). This paradigm further enabled me to determine if the understanding and practice of the phenomenon in these countries differ statistically or not. The constructivist paradigm, on the other hand, allowed me to gain in-depth knowledge about FP mainstream schoolteachers' understanding and lived experiences of the phenomenon within their contexts. Based on the socially constructed realities of the teachers, using this

paradigm further enabled me to provide insights into how differentiated assessment can be contextualised in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.

Pragmatist researchers further believe that actions depend on worldviews that are socially shared sets of beliefs (Morgan 2014). Although people hold different worldviews and experiences that contrast with pure objectivism, there are still varying degrees of shared experiences and beliefs. Hence, two people in the same social context may act in identical ways depending on the extent of shared beliefs about the phenomenon and give similar meanings to the consequences of their actions. Consequently, pragmatists accept that worldviews can be unique to a person and socially shared (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Morgan (2014, p. 26) agreed that to a pragmatist, “actions cannot be separated from the situations and contexts in which they occur”. Reality, according to this paradigm, is based on human knowledge, which is based on beliefs and experiences. These beliefs and experiences result in socially constructed actions (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Reality depends on the context, which means that changing the context may change the reality, and the existence of multiple contexts could imply the existence of multiple realities (Maarouf, 2019). Hence, it was important for me to pay attention to the similarities and differences that existed among FP mainstream schoolteachers’ perceptions and practices of differentiated assessment in Nigeria and South Africa.

5.2.1.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology can be defined as a researcher’s assumptions about how knowledge of what exists is attained (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Epistemological assumptions play a critical role in interpreting knowledge as it is concerned with the certainty, procedure, and nature of knowledge. In this study, epistemology concerns knowledge of differentiated assessment and teachers' support requirements through the eyes of FP mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa.

A fundamental underpinning of pragmatist epistemology is that knowledge is hinged on experience (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). An individual’s knowledge of the world is influenced by their social experiences. Different experiences often result in different perceptions and knowledge. Nevertheless, knowledge is created from socially shared experiences, resulting in socially shared knowledge. Therefore, all knowledge is social knowledge (Morgan, 2014). To understand this phenomenon clearly, I considered the

context of the participants by asking context-specific questions relevant to the participants' setting. Furthermore, this paradigm facilitated the collection of broad and in-depth information (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Yin, 2011).

Dewey (1931, 1938) observed that pragmatist epistemology aims to comprehend reality, generate knowledge, and effect change and improvement (Goldkuhl, 2012). He defined epistemology “as the controlled conversion of a problematic condition into one that is sufficiently integrated with knowledge or coherent action” (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, p. 27). Pragmatist epistemology is conceived with the goal of enhancing one’s management of existence and participation in the world (Goldkuhl, 2012). In this regard, this study sought to investigate and compare the extent to which Nigeria and South Africa FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners. Additionally, the study examined the support mainstream schoolteachers require to differentiate assessments in their classrooms. Consequently, this study aimed to foster an epistemological shift in the knowledge and assessment practices from the traditional approach based on uniformity, which fosters unfairness and invalid assessment scores, to differentiated assessment.

Additionally, the epistemological assumption of pragmatism is concerned with understanding the connection between an individual’s actions and their consequences. This understanding seeks to direct actions to achieve the desired result (Biesta, 2021). A researcher with a pragmatic approach evaluates the outcomes of different behaviours and the potential advantages of one behaviour compared to another (Biesta, 2021; Morgan, 2014). This study, therefore, acknowledges that teachers' perceptions and assessment practices may either promote or limit learners from accessing the curriculum. Hence, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were part of the data generation methods employed in this study as they examined participants’ actions. Thus, pragmatist researchers accept both observable and unobservable knowledge.

5.2.1.3 Alignment with the Conceptual Framework

Scholars have revealed a strong link between the pragmatism paradigm and social justice, fairness, and equity (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatist researchers often have a sense of justice in society. They are motivated by the need to build fair institutions and

“search for a tolerant and non-discriminatory culture that regards all people with equal concern and respect” (Dieleman et al., 2017, p. 2). In line with the belief of pragmatism, the conceptual framework of this study, which is hinged on the capability approach, advocates for fairness, equity, and social justice. I adopted pragmatism as it aligned with the conceptual framework to investigate and compare the extent to which Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classrooms to promote equitable practices for all learners.

Pragmatism, in alignment with the capability approach, further enabled me to choose appropriate research methods from the broad range of qualitative and quantitative methods, which has several advantages for social justice research (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Thus, adopting a pragmatic paradigm within the capability approach, MI theory, and CoP served as a lens to capture and analyse the participants' perceptions and practices that promote or hinder equity and social justice (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

African communities such as Nigeria and South Africa face the challenge of restructuring the educational sectors, specifically teacher assessment practices in mainstream schools, to embrace fairness and equity (Ngwaru & Dreyer, 2021). Similarly, Dewey's viewpoint of pragmatism calls upon people to develop communities that make vital opportunities and resources accessible for each person to realise their capabilities and potential (Westbrook, 1991). In this regard, this study adopted the CoP as part of the conceptual framework. The CoP advocated for developing communities within and beyond mainstream schools to foster the needed collaboration and partnership involving all relevant stakeholders to support teachers in making assessments inclusive for every learner (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

5.2.1.4 Criticisms of Pragmatic Paradigm

Pragmatism is well defined from the ontological and epistemological point of view, as a pragmatic researcher can choose the research methods that work to achieve the research aims based on their practical value. However, the combination of research methods is a continuous source of criticism (Biddle & Schafft, 2015). Hence, the pragmatism paradigm was criticised as "anti-philosophical" with an "anything goes attitude" without addressing the issue of the differing assumptions of the objective and subjective paradigms (Sale et al., 2002). The belief is that employing quantitative and

qualitative methods to investigate the same phenomenon is not feasible. Nevertheless, the pragmatic approach, with the ontological, epistemological, and axiological standpoints, aligns the perspectives of quantitative and qualitative paradigms as two coherent and harmonious philosophies (Weaver, 2018).

5.3 Methodological Approach

A methodology is a plan or method used in carrying out research that links the research methods used in addressing the research questions (Sefotho, 2018). Research commonly employs methodological approaches such as quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). This investigation utilised an MMR approach that corresponds with the pragmatic paradigm to examine the studied phenomenon.

5.3.1 Mixed Methods Approach

The MMR approach can be defined as multifaceted due to its "seemingly unpredictable patterns full of rich possibilities for diversity and potential to provide opportunities to see things that have not yet been seen" (Mertens, 2016, p. 222). It is important to note that mixed methods are not a random use of multiple approaches. Rather, it is the purposeful way of utilising the fundamentals of qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as their viewpoints, data collection and analysis to generate better insights and understanding of the phenomenon investigated (Greene & Hall, 2010; Johnson & Greene, 2007). It is widely agreed amongst scholars that MMR approaches promote breadth and depth of understanding beyond that which may be derived from each approach. The MMR approach enabled me to investigate the phenomenon from multiple viewpoints, with the flexibility to employ multiple approaches and adapt to changing contexts. However, they could still generate credible findings (Mertens, 2016). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 15) further explained that MMR does not seek "to replace either of these approaches [qualitative or quantitative] but rather draw from the strengths and weaknesses of both." The quantitative data and subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem. The analysis of qualitative data helps to enhance and clarify the statistical findings by delving more deeply into participants' perspectives. Cook and Reichardt (1979) agreed that when the need arises, researchers should not be confined to the quantitative approach alone, which fails to investigate human emotions or the qualitative approach alone, which is limited in sample size.

Utilising MMR in this study was advantageous as it promoted triangulation of the data collection methods, data, and research findings. Denzin (1978) defined triangulation as combining two or more sources to examine a phenomenon. Triangulation enables researchers to compare findings and search for contradictions, convergence and complementarity, thereby fostering a deeper and broader understanding of the phenomenon (Courtney & McCutcheon, 2010; Robinson et al., 2016). Triangulation can further increase the validity and trustworthiness of the study, strengthen the research rigour, reduce possible bias and generate new knowledge (Denzin, 1978; Wald, 2014). The study employed multiple data collection methods, such as surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

5.3.2 Criticism of Mixed-Methods Research

The MMR approach has received its share of criticism in literature. A common criticism of the MMR approach found in the literature states that quantitative and qualitative approaches cannot be united in one study (Creswell, 2011; Dawadi et al., 2021). This argument is hinged on the notion that quantitative and qualitative approaches characterise conflicting worldviews and beliefs (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This criticism is based on a myopic view and understanding of the purpose of the MMR approach, which does not involve the random integration of multiple approaches. Multiple approaches were employed in this study for complementarity, to gain a broad and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, to answer both the research questions, and to test the hypothesis. A survey was used to gather quantitative data about teachers' assessment practices in multiple contexts. The subsequent qualitative interviews aimed to provide thicker descriptions of a sample of teachers and their assessment samples. Therefore, utilising an MMR approach provided a more holistic or comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied.

5.4 Research Design

The research design seeks to provide a structured framework for a study. It provides direction for research procedures (Creswell, 2014). It shows the systematic procedures and strategies adopted to answer the research questions and validly achieve the research objectives. The research design translates a research problem into data for analysis. Research design determines the data collection methods and type of data analysis to get the desired results (Asenahabi et al., 2019)

5.4.1 Exploratory Sequential MMR Design

An exploratory sequential MMR design was used in this study. This design aligns closely with the chosen paradigm and methodological approach. An exploratory sequential MMR design is popularly defined as the sequential use of quantitative and qualitative methods in distinct phases (Creswell et al., 2003).

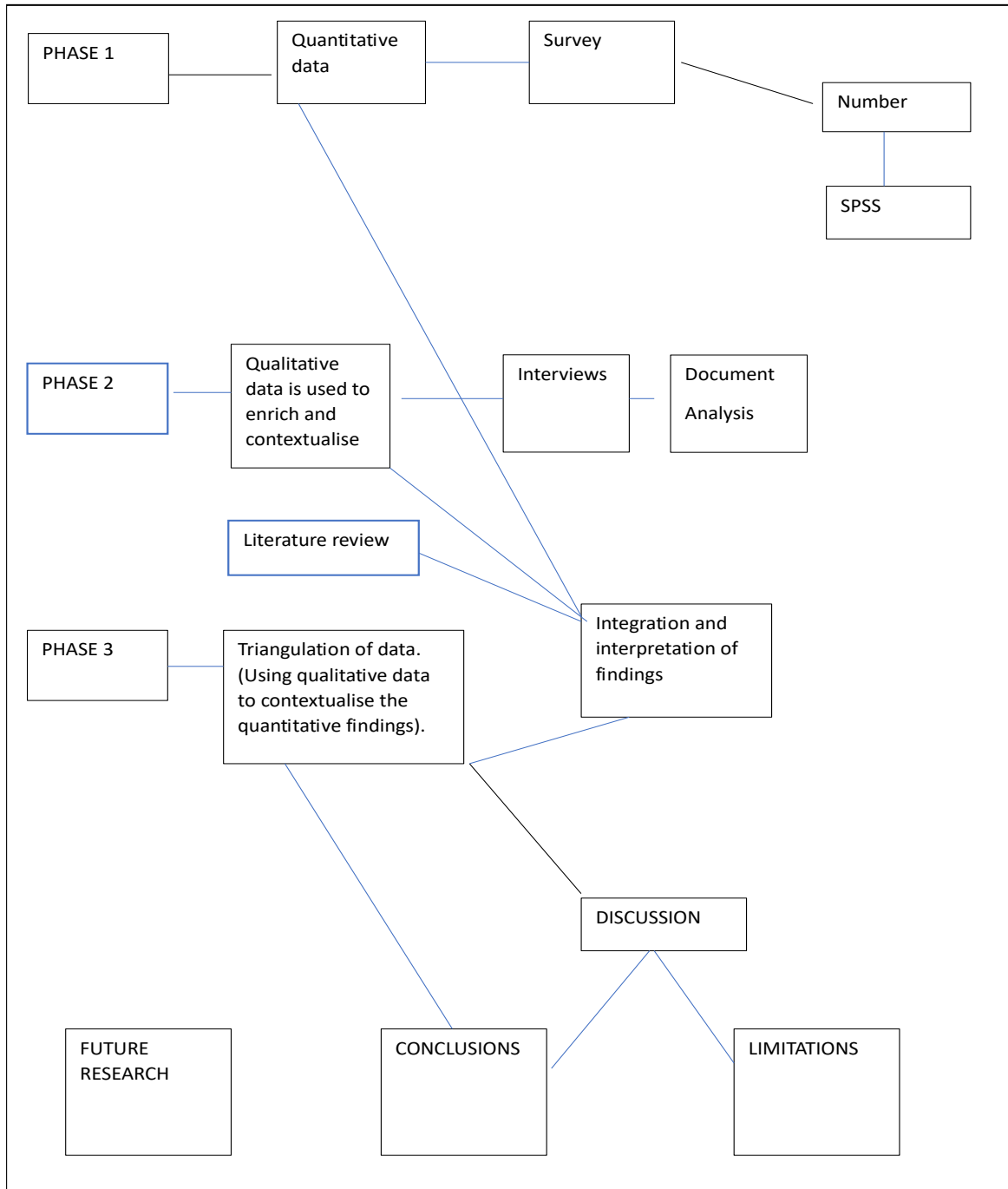
As advocated by Creswell and Clark (2017), three decisions must be considered and taken when employing this design. The first issue to be considered is priority. Priority denotes which research method – quantitative or qualitative – is dominant in the study. This study prioritised the quantitative methods over qualitative methods (QUAN + qual). Exploratory sequential design is typically carried out in three phases. The first phase in this study involves the collection of quantitative data, as informed by the interview guide's consecutive design. The quantitative method received priority because I wanted the survey questionnaire to be responded to by a large sample of FP teachers, and the qualitative approach was needed to dig deeper into the results obtained using the quantitative approach.

The second issue that needs consideration is the process of implementation. Implementation refers to the data collection and analysis order between quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data collection and analysis may be done sequentially, in chronological stages, in parallel, or concurrently (Bazeley, 2018). This study was carried out sequentially, starting from the quantitative method to the qualitative method. The quantitative data was collected and analysed first, followed by the qualitative data and analysis. The participants in the survey were asked after their consent if they would consider sharing more of their knowledge and experiences in a follow-up interview. The semi-structured interviews further investigated how differentiated assessment is contextualised in these diverse settings.

Hence, Phase 2, which is the gathering and analysing of qualitative data, builds on the first phase (quantitative data). The rationale for using the sequential design is based on the fact that the quantitative data and analysis provided a broad understanding of the research problem and the phenomenon investigated (Bazeley, 2018). The qualitative data gathering and analysis, on the other hand, further investigated and provided in-depth knowledge of the statistical results obtained in the first phase (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The final consideration is to decide when the quantitative

and qualitative data should be mixed. In Phase 3, the two data sets were organised, transcribed, thematised, and analysed individually. The process was followed by a comparison of results and emerging themes and then a return to a separate analysis. The findings were triangulated and interpreted in relation to the research questions. The phases are illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Illustration of the Sequential Explanatory Design Procedures in the Present Study



5.5 Sampling/Selection of Participants

Sampling is the systematic procedure of selecting research participants to represent a larger population in a research study (Creswell, 2014). The participants selected often have the prerequisite knowledge and capacity to provide relevant data about the phenomenon investigated. It is not feasible to investigate and report findings about the total population due to various reasons such as expenditure, time constraints, and accessibility, which usually limit researchers from gathering information from the total population (Cohen et al., 2011). Hence, this study utilised convenient sampling sequentially to sample the participants to participate in the quantitative and qualitative phases (Briggs et al., 2014; Creswell, 2014).

The target population for this study was Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers. However, for the first phase of the sampling, 50 FP schoolteachers were conveniently selected in Nigeria from mainstream primary schools across Grades 1–3. Similarly, in South Africa, 50 FP schoolteachers were conveniently selected from mainstream schools across Grades 1–3 to participate in the survey and gather the quantitative data. Cohen et al. (2011) noted that a sample size of 100 participants is sufficient to conduct a survey and statistical analysis.

The sample size for the qualitative phase (semi-structured interviews) was determined based on the teachers who expressed their willingness to participate in the interviews during the survey and provide in-depth information. The survey allowed the teachers to indicate if they were interested in being part of the individual interview. Those who showed interest were asked to provide their phone numbers. A total of 20 teachers responded and consented to participate in individual semi-structured interviews, ten (10) teachers in Nigeria and ten (10) teachers in South Africa. These 20 participants were contacted via WhatsApp to schedule interview sessions. The interviews took place approximately two months after the end date of the survey, and each interview lasted around 20 to 30 minutes. Depending on their preference, the teachers were interviewed either face-to-face or online.

Convenience sampling as a quantitative sampling strategy has been criticised due to its sample size, which may not be representative of the population, and the findings from the study cannot be generalised. However, there was a reasonable sample of 100 FP teachers, suggesting that findings could be applied to a larger sample with a

similar context and participants in which fuzzy generalisations can be made. Moreover, the primary purpose is to gather broad and in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon from participants who experience it in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). The participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Notwithstanding, this sampling strategy can provide relevant data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

5.6 Data Collection Methods

5.6.1 Phase 1: Questionnaires as a Quantitative Data Collection Method

As suggested by Magnusson and Maracek (2015), a pilot study was conducted to test the adapted questionnaire for the survey. The pilot study allowed for revisions to be made before the formal survey was conducted. The pilot survey was undertaken in Nigeria and South Africa. In Nigeria, three FP mainstream schoolteachers responded to the questionnaire on-site. Similarly, in South Africa, three FP teachers responded to the survey which I administered on-site. Based on the results of this survey, I slightly revised some terms of the questionnaires to prevent misunderstanding by the teachers. For example, in South Africa, I used the term “scoring rubric”, while in Nigeria, I used the term “marking guide”. In addition, after the pilot study in South Africa, there was a need to include an open-ended item, which was, “What would you recommend as an FP teacher to promote classroom assessment?”

The questionnaire sought to measure the FP mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions, practices, experiences, and support requirements about the phenomenon studied by using a 4-point Likert scale and open-ended questions. The Likert scale used prompts such as 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree and 4 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was also designed to collect data on the demographic information of the respondents, such as their age group, gender, and grade taught. Information capable of revealing the identity of the participant and the associated school was avoided. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire items were established based on both pilot and principal survey administration, using frequency distributions, internal consistency reliability indexes, and inter-item correlations (Hajjar, 2018; Šerbetar & Sedlar, 2016). Furthermore, I tested the internal reliability of the questionnaire and made some adjustments to the question to suit the Nigerian and South African context better. For example, the support structure I examined in Nigeria was the SBMC, while the support structure I examined in SA was the DBST.

The pilot study was followed by the administration of the adapted questionnaire to 100 participants in Nigeria and South Africa. The purpose of conducting a survey was to collect broad data on the participants' understanding and practice of the phenomenon as well as their support requirements. Administering the questionnaire further enabled me to statistically compute and analyse the main variables of the study (participants' perceptions, practices and support requirements) and to test the hypotheses posed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.7). It further enabled me to compare the findings between Nigeria and South Africa (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Administering questionnaires is both cost- and time-efficient as data can be collected from more individuals in a shorter time frame than through interviews. However, this study did not rely only on questionnaires due to its possible weaknesses. Creswell (2014) enumerates the limitations associated with questionnaires, including the possibility of missing data, whereby the questionnaire is not completed or returned, and the feelings and lived experiences of the respondents cannot be adequately collected. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to mitigate some of the limitations associated with questionnaires by providing depth and explanation of findings in the second phase of the study.

5.6.2 Phase 2: Semi-Structured Interview as a Qualitative Data Collection Method

An interview in research refers to “a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation” (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 269). Interviews, as a method for generating qualitative data, have become prominent within social science research as they allow the researcher to investigate what people think, feel, and experience the phenomenon investigated. It also helps to deepen and enrich the findings from quantitative data. Semi-structured interviews were utilised in this study. Brinkmann (2018) revealed that they are possibly the most prevalent types of interviews used in social science research for various reasons. Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to probe deeper and ask follow-up questions to gain clarity and generate rich information, which a highly structured interview might not permit since the research adheres to a predetermined set of questions (Brinkmann, 2018). In contrast “to unstructured interviews, which lack structure, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to

direct the conversation toward pertinent topics, generating the necessary data to address the research questions” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 580).

Utilising semi-structured interviews during Phase 2 of this study enabled me to gather contextual data about the knowledge and personal experiences of the FP teachers regarding differentiated assessment and their support requirements. The questions in the interview revolved around the quantitative findings in the initial stage. The structured questions directed the participants to stay on track and provide essential details about the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2011).

I conducted a total of twenty (20) semi-structured interviews with FP mainstream schoolteachers which took approximately 20 to 30 minutes each. All interviews were audio recorded to ensure that I adequately captured the responses from the participants. In Nigeria, I conducted a total of six face-to-face and 4 online semi-structured interviews: three Grade 1 teachers, two Grade 2 teachers and five Grade 3 teachers were interviewed across ten mainstream schools. In South Africa, I conducted a total of 5 face-to-face and 5 online semi-structured interviews: six Grade 1 teachers, two Grade 2 teachers and two Grade 3 teachers were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews with the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa took place at the teachers' preferred time and location.

Before the interviews began, I explained the purpose of the interview to the participants and all ethical issues concerning their participation (Section 5.8). The interviews were only conducted after receiving consent from the participants. Throughout the interviews, I maintained a non-judgemental, neutral stance to minimise possible bias and produce valid and consistent findings with the participants' perceptions (Roulston, 2010).

Notwithstanding the benefits of conducting semi-structured interviews, they have been criticised in literature due to the fact that they are time-consuming (Saldaña, 2011). Compared to administering questionnaires, it takes more time to arrange and conduct an interview. It also takes time to move from one research site to the other when conducting face-to-face interviews. A small sample size was also used to generate the qualitative data as the purpose was not to generalise the findings but to gather rich contextual data (Saldaña, 2011). Furthermore, issues regarding the quality of data generated from semi-structured interviews have been raised. However, in the

development phase of the interview questions, I ensured that the questions were framed to align with the purpose of the study, which enabled me to answer the research questions.

5.6.3 Phase 3: Document Analysis

In qualitative research, documents are a valuable source of data as they contain rich information about the subject under investigation (Creswell, 2014). Analysing documents as a method of data collection allows researchers to focus on written materials, such as policies and relevant study materials, and further explore the phenomenon being studied (Maree, 2016). I opted to use documents as a means of gathering data for this study due to their provision of valuable information on differentiated assessment in mainstream schools and its implementation in the FP.

Additionally, the details contained in the documents enabled me to examine teachers' perspectives on differentiated assessment and identify their support needs. Within the Nigerian context, I reviewed documents such as the NPE, National Policy on Inclusive Education and School-Based Management Committee to understand how differentiated assessment could be contextualised to promote equitable practices in Nigeria. Within the South African context, I examined policy documents such as EWP6, the 'National Protocol for Assessment for Grade R-12', the CAPS, and assessment guidelines for addressing learner diversity in the classroom. I utilised the documents to establish if teachers were following differentiated assessments. Analysing documents is efficient and saves time since there is no need for transcription (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, it offers the researcher written evidence of the studied phenomenon. Employing multiple data collection methods allowed for triangulation, which enhanced the credibility of the study.

5.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

MMR often involves a large amount of numeric and textual data which needs to be reviewed, organised, and analysed. This iterative process of organising the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the research sites is called data analysis (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2016). Data analysis enabled me to make sense of the gathered data to generate findings that answered the research questions (Rule & John, 2011). Hence, I was tasked with extracting meaning from the data gathered from multiple sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

5.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data was collected using an adapted questionnaire explained in Section 3.6.2. The numerical data were then coded and analysed using SPSS software (Molina-Azorín & López-Gamero, 2016). Statistical software such as SPSS for data analysis has been widely established and accepted in social science research to assist researchers with the general procedure of analysing, interpreting, and reporting the data. Utilising SPSS reduced the time needed to complete complex computations. It also ensured that the analytic procedure was accurate and reliable, as evidence for conclusions could be traced. In addition, SPSS provided visual representations of data that could easily be understood. Descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS to describe and summarise the teachers' responses and determine the mean and standard deviation of the independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2012). For this study, the independent variables are the African countries (Nigeria and South Africa), while the dependent variables are the participants' perceptions and practices.

Inferential statistics focused on correlation techniques during the data analysis. In addition, inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses and determine whether the differences between the means of the two groups (Nigeria and South Africa) were statistically significant. The hypotheses were tested using an independent sample t-test. Cronbach alpha coefficients were also computed to indicate the internal reliability of the study constructs.

5.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews and document analysis. My qualitative data analysis was based on the constructivist philosophical orientation grounded in understanding the participants' perceptions, feelings, and experiences of differentiated assessment in their social context (Sichula, 2018). Qualitative data analysis involves the iterative process of reviewing, organising, reducing, and presenting extensive textual data gathered from the research sites to extract meaning and generate findings that answer the research questions (Brinkmann et al., 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maree, 2016). Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the semi-structured interviews, and content analyses was used to analyse the relevant documents.

5.7.1.1 Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a foundational technique used for qualitative analysis that “involves identifying, analysing, and reporting emerging themes from the data” gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 50). Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended thematic analysis as a valuable technique for investigating research participants' perceptions, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unexpected insights. It is also recommended for summarising vital aspects of large data sets, as it employs a structured method of handling large data (King, 2004). Thematic data analysis is recommended for novice researchers unfamiliar with the qualitative approach, as thematic analysis is easy to understand with few procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Although thematic analysis is advantageous to analysing qualitative data, it has been criticised that its “flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from the research data” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). However, consistency and cohesion can be enhanced by clearly utilising an epistemological stance that can consistently reinforce the study's empirical claims (Nowell et al., 2017). The steps described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed in the data analysis process.

Preparing the Data

The recorded semi-structured interviews with the FP teachers were transcribed word for word. Before commencing coding, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that researchers review the dataset, as familiarity with all aspects of the data may influence the formation of ideas and the identification of potential patterns. I immersed myself in the data as I carefully read through it to familiarise myself with the depth and breadth of the data and search for meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As I read through the data, I also reflected on the purpose of the study, which was to develop a general meaning of the data that emerged from what the participants had said and practised. The interview transcriptions were prepared and organised systematically according to the sequence of the questions on the interview schedule.

Organising the Codes

After I had read and familiarised myself with the data, I revisited the data to generate codes from the data. Generating codes enabled me to organise the unstructured data, simplify it and focus on specific aspects of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). During the coding process, I systematically read through the data

to identify important sections of the data and labelled them to form the basis of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, specific statements made by the participants were highlighted, analysed and categorised as codes that represented the phenomenon investigated (Creswell, 2014). Afterwards, I clustered the codes under similar emerging themes.

Organising Themes

After I had organised and collated the different codes identified across the data, I used the codes to generate potential themes representing the study's main findings. A theme may be defined as an “abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362). Categorising the codes into themes enabled me to identify, describe and capture important data needed to answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Flick, 2014; Yin, 2012).

Reviewing Themes

The validity of individual themes was considered to determine whether the themes accurately reflected the meanings expressed by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). King (2004) argued that during this step, the researcher might discover a relevant aspect in the data that was not captured by an existing code, thus inserting a new code. On the other hand, if the researcher discovers that a code is irrelevant or repetitive, it may be removed (King, 2004). In addition, some themes may not have sufficient data to support their inclusion, while others might need to be merged or separated into distinct themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence, some themes were refined “into themes that are specific enough to be discrete and broad enough to capture a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments” (Nowell et al., 2017, pp 9–10).

Presenting the Data

Finally, the data was presented concisely, logically, coherently, and thought-provokingly within and across the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Direct quotes from the participants were an important element in the presentation of the findings to foster the understanding of the data and to highlight the prevalence of the themes (King, 2004). However, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), the presentation of

data went beyond summarising the data and including direct quotes. The presentation of data revealed patterns and their broader significance and implications of the themes. In addition, the presentation of the data was interwoven with the empirical literature. Tuckett (2005) agreed that empirical literature could be utilised to support the research findings and provide an opportunity to challenge and add to the literature.

Analysis of Document Data

Document data were analysed through content analysis, which involved examining the documents for information on differentiated practices and support requirements. Content analysis is the systematic process of identifying key attributes of the relevant documents about the phenomenon investigated. The aim of analysing these documents was to understand the meaning attached to differentiated assessment and support in mainstream schools contained in these documents to conclude from them. I searched for all concepts used to describe and define differentiated assessment practices and support requirements.

5.7.2 Data Integration

In recent years, the practice of merging both quantitative and qualitative research findings has become standard in MMR (Bryman, 2006). The merging of these two methods of research can occur at different stages of the research process, depending on the rationale for using MMR. Data integration can take place during the planning, data gathering, data analysis, interpretation, and reporting stages (Fetters et al., 2013). In this explanatory sequential MMR study, the results from the quantitative and qualitative phases were merged during the interpretation stage. This integration was aimed at utilising the qualitative findings to understand and explain the results of the quantitative phase (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). Another form of integration entailed incorporating quotes from the qualitative data to support relevant statistical findings from the quantitative analysis in the study.

5.8 Quality Measures

Considerations were taken to ensure the quality and rigour of this study throughout the research process. I maintained and fostered the quality of the quantitative part of this study by ensuring its validity and reliability. The qualitative part of the study enhanced the quality and high standards of the study through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

5.8.1 Quantitative Quality Criteria

The instrument's reliability and validity are essential in quantitative research for minimising errors (Cohen et al., 2011). In this research, validity and reliability were utilised to guarantee that the quantitative component of the study meets high-quality standards.

5.8.1.1 Validity

Validity can be defined as the extent to which a research study demonstrates or reflects the results the research attempts to achieve (Drost, 2011). The validity of the questionnaire items was established to ensure that the items and results represent the questions about differentiated assessment in mainstream schools and teachers' support requirements. The questionnaire items were examined and reviewed to ensure that they were adequately designed and relevant to the intended purpose.

5.8.1.2 Reliability

Reliability in quantitative research may be defined as the degree to which an instrument consistently measures what it sets out to measure (Pietersen & Maree, 2010). It reveals the accuracy and correctness of a measurement instrument and procedure (Thorndike, 1997). The test-retest reliability of the questionnaire was guaranteed through pilot testing. Pilot testing of the questionnaire revealed the instrument's consistency as the refined instrument was administered to similar participants. The results obtained from the pilot study were then compared with the results of the actual survey, and the comparison was expressed using the Pearson r coefficient (Rebekić et al., 2015). An internal consistency reliability analysis of the items was conducted based on the outcomes of the pilot study. The analysis provided information on which items needed to be refined or removed from the questionnaire. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Hajjar, 2018).

5.8.2 Qualitative Quality Criteria

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is important for maintaining the integrity of the findings and relies on the transparency of the study's procedures (Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness is one way to ensure that the qualitative research data-gathering procedure, findings, and interpretation are accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, Lincoln and Guba's (1985, p. 34) "criteria for trustworthiness (credibility,

dependability, transferability, and confirmability) were applied to ensure the research's quality”.

5.8.2.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is the guarantee that the findings of a study are genuine and authentic. Merriam (1998, p. 64) adds that “credibility is the congruence of the study's findings with actual reality.” Credibility provides confidence in the trustworthiness of the findings of a research study. The data gathered were checked and reviewed to ensure that the themes identified accurately represented the participants' perceptions and experiences to guarantee credibility in this study. The participants were also given a chance to read through the transcribed data to ensure that the generated themes and findings were credible and authentic (White et al., 2012). In addition, several techniques, such as the triangulation of data collection methods and checking the findings and interpretations against the raw data, were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

5.8.2.2 Dependability

Dependability is the way researchers determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subject (respondents) in the same (similar) contexts (Guba, 1981). Dependability can, therefore, be referred to as the reliability of qualitative research as it focuses on the steadiness and consistency of the research methods, process, and findings (Yin, 2011). However, dependability is not easily attained because human behaviour changes over time and between contexts (Yin, 2014). I ensured that the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to confirm the participants' exact words were used to substantiate the direct quotes to achieve dependability in this study. In addition, I ensured that the research process was logical and documented through the detailed description of the research procedure, implementation, and data collection methods (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

5.8.2.3 Transferability

Transferability as a quality criterion enables researchers to determine the extent to which the findings of a research study may be applicable in other similar settings (Guba, 1981). Transferability is often considered a form of external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability may be beneficial to future researchers, who

can draw from the findings of previous similar studies and compare them with their research settings and findings. Lietz and Zayas (2010, p. 195) agreed that "transferability is achieved when findings have applicability to another setting, to theory, to practice, or to future research". Although transferability was not the aim of this study, a detailed explanation of the research context, procedures, methods and instruments, data analysis and interpretation was offered to other researchers who were seeking to export the findings to their setting transferability options (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, comparing the varied contexts and number of participants/respondents in the study further enhanced the study's transferability to similar characteristics.

5.8.2.4 Confirmability

Confirmability as a quality criterion ensures that the researcher's interpretations and findings are free from bias but are explicitly drawn from the gathered data. Confirmability requires the researcher to establish how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability can be attained when other criteria, such as credibility, transferability, and dependability, have been established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I ensured that the semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and verified with the participants to ensure that the findings adequately represented the meanings intended to promote confirmability.

5.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical matters are vital in MMR and should be considered throughout the research process because various types of approaches are involved, which require different compliance procedures to ensure appropriateness (Creswell, 2012). Ethical considerations aim to protect the participants and ensure quality assurance of the research (Wassenaar, 2006). The following ethical considerations guided the study.

5.9.1 Institutional Approval and Access to Research Site

I obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, the Gauteng DBE, the chosen schools, and the identified participants before starting the study and gathering data in South Africa and Nigeria. This was done through the appropriate authorities responsible for access to the educational institutions used in the study.

5.9.2 Informed and Voluntary Consent

Once permission had been granted to access the research sites, I sought the consent of the principals and teachers of the selected schools. I explained the purpose of the study to ensure that they were adequately informed about the study before deciding to be part of it (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Informed and voluntary consent protects the rights of the participants to choose by themselves to be involved in the study without fear or compulsion. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study without prejudice. Informed and voluntary consent establishes a trust-based contractual relationship between the researcher and the participants throughout the research study (Dankar, 2019).

5.9.3 Protection from Harm and Risk

Research participants must be informed about any possible discomfort or risk involved in a study and how they will be addressed to enable them to weigh the possible risks of their involvement before deciding to be part of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). However, there was no potential risk or harm to the participants during the study. I also ensured that the participants were not pressured to answer any questionnaire items or questions during the interviews. They were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that they could skip any question they did not feel comfortable with.

5.9.4 Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality

The researcher was saddled with the responsibility to ensure that the information shared by the participants did not result in the disclosure of their identities in any manner to maintain anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). I ensured the anonymity of the participants by using codes and pseudonyms to conceal their names and identities. The names or identities of the participants were not documented throughout the study or during the reporting phase. Furthermore, the participants were assured that the information they provided would be protected, kept, and treated with confidentiality. As McMillan and Schumacher (2014) stated, participants may conceal useful information about the phenomenon investigated when they are not guaranteed privacy and confidentiality matters.

5.10 Conclusion

In this section, the study's research methodology was explored. The segments encompassed the research design, methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data sets. Quality assurance measures for both data sets were also addressed, and the chapter concluded with an overview of ethical considerations. The following chapter (Chapter 6) provides a discussion of the study's findings based on the gathered data.

CHAPTER SIX: PRESENTATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology implemented in the study, along with the underlying rationale for these choices. This chapter presents the empirical data and findings gathered from the quantitative phase of the study to address the research questions. The quantitative data was collected from 100 FP teachers in Nigeria and South Africa using questionnaires. The quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS software. The software was utilised to code and analyse the data and generate frequency tables and descriptive statistics. Hypotheses were tested to determine if there is a significant difference between assessment perceptions and practices employed by Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers.

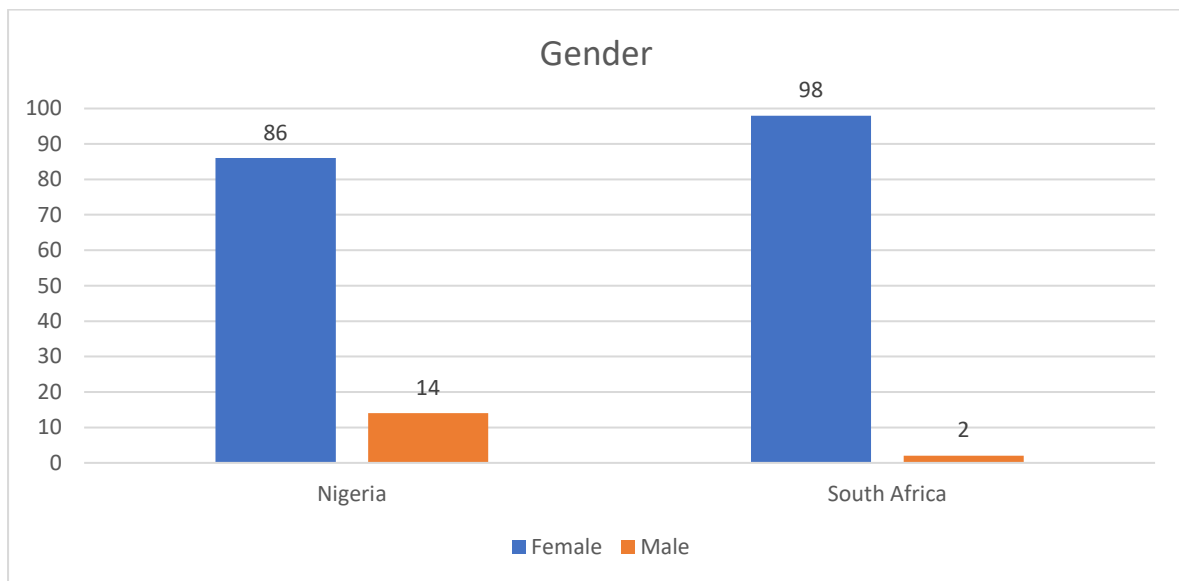
6.2 Demographic Profiles of the Respondents in Nigeria and South Africa

The first section of the questionnaire collected the demographic information of the respondents. The demographic information included the respondents' gender, age, highest formal qualification, teaching experience, the current grade level they are teaching, the number of learners in their class and the number of learners identified with special education needs. The following sub-sections presented the findings under each demographic variable for the FP teachers in Nigeria and South Africa.

6.2.1 *Gender of Teachers*

As part of the survey, the respondents were asked to indicate their gender. This question was asked to determine the gender distribution of the teachers at the schools that participated in the study. Figure 6.1 shows the gender breakdown of the 100 FP teachers who completed and returned their questionnaires.

Figure 6.1: Gender of FP Teachers

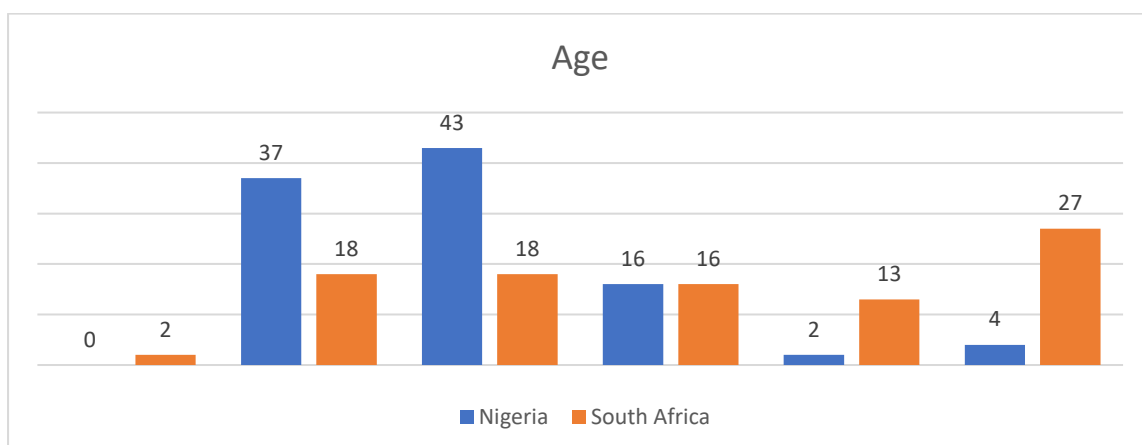


The majority of respondents were female in both Nigeria (86%) and South Africa (98%), suggesting that females predominantly occupy teaching positions in the FP. This finding is consistent with several studies conducted globally in the FP, which reveals the presence of fewer male teachers as they tend to teach higher Grades (Moosa & Bhana, 2017; Okoro et al., 2012). Furthermore, FP is often considered a mothering profession with young learners who are assumed to require nurturing (Bhana & Moosa, 2016; Nomlomo et al., 2018).

6.2.2 Age of Teachers

The respondents were also requested to specify their age range (see Figure 6.2). Gathering this information is beneficial for data analysis as it helps determine whether age influences the phenomenon under investigation (Anastasiou & Belios, 2020).

Figure 6.2: Age Range of the FP Teachers

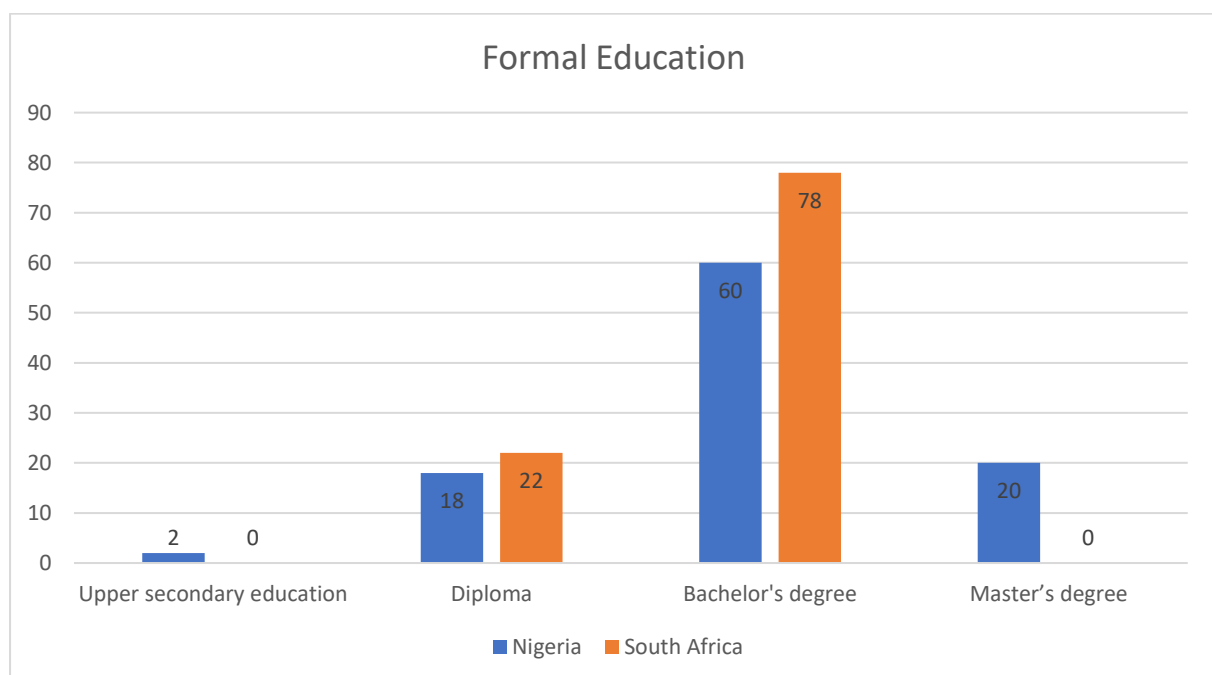


In Nigeria, none of the teachers were under the age of 25, while in South Africa, only 2% of teachers were under 25. The majority (43%) of teachers in Nigeria were between 31 and 40 years old, followed by those between 25 and 30 years old (37%). Moreover, in South Africa, the majority (27%) of teachers were over 60 years old, followed by 18% of teachers aged between 25 to 30 and 31 to 40 years old. Thus, the FP teachers sampled in South Africa were older than those sampled in Nigeria. Empirical studies conducted in South Africa have often reported that most teachers are 40 years and older (Nomlomo et al., 2018; Petersen, 2017). Older teachers are perceived as more experienced and professionally mature. However, age may not be the sole factor in effective teaching, as other variables, such as qualifications, may foster effectiveness (Eyo & Nkanga, 2020).

6.2.3 Highest Formal Qualifications

The FP teachers must possess the required knowledge and skills to guide young learners during their foundational and developmental years. All teachers need to have sound knowledge to accommodate and cater to the diverse learning needs of the learners in their classroom through differentiated assessment. Hence, the respondents were requested to state the highest level of education they had attained. Figure 6.3 presents teachers' highest level of formal education.

Figure 6.3: FP Teachers' Highest Level of Formal Education



The finding shows that most FP teachers in Nigeria (60%) and South Africa (78%) have obtained a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of formal education. This was followed by 20% of FP teachers who have obtained a master’s degree in Nigeria and 18% of FP teachers who have obtained a diploma degree. Very few (2%) teachers in Nigeria indicated that their highest level of formal education is upper secondary education. Hence, there are teachers in mainstream schools who are not qualified to teach and assess learners.

6.2.4 Teachers’ Years of Experience

Some studies have revealed that teachers’ years of experience may have a bearing on learner’s achievement (Mullis & Martin, 2017). Other studies suggest that there is a complex relationship between experience and the quality of teaching, which has resulted in mixed findings (Graham et al., 2020).

Figure 6.4: Teacher’s Years of Experience

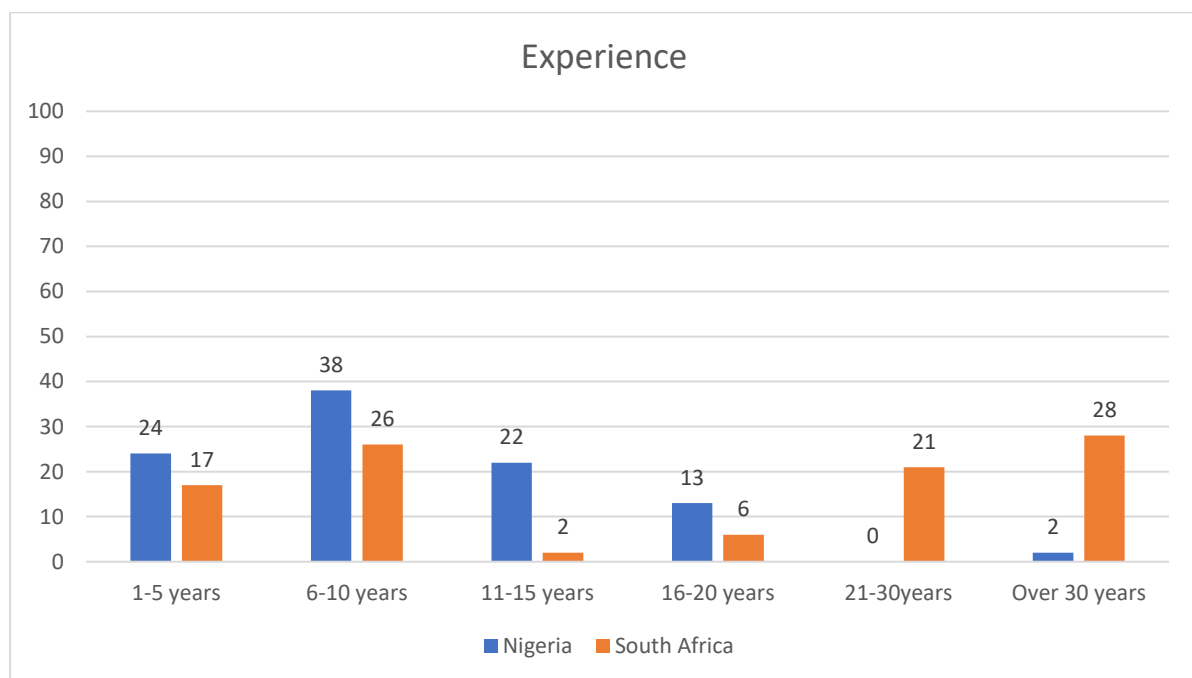
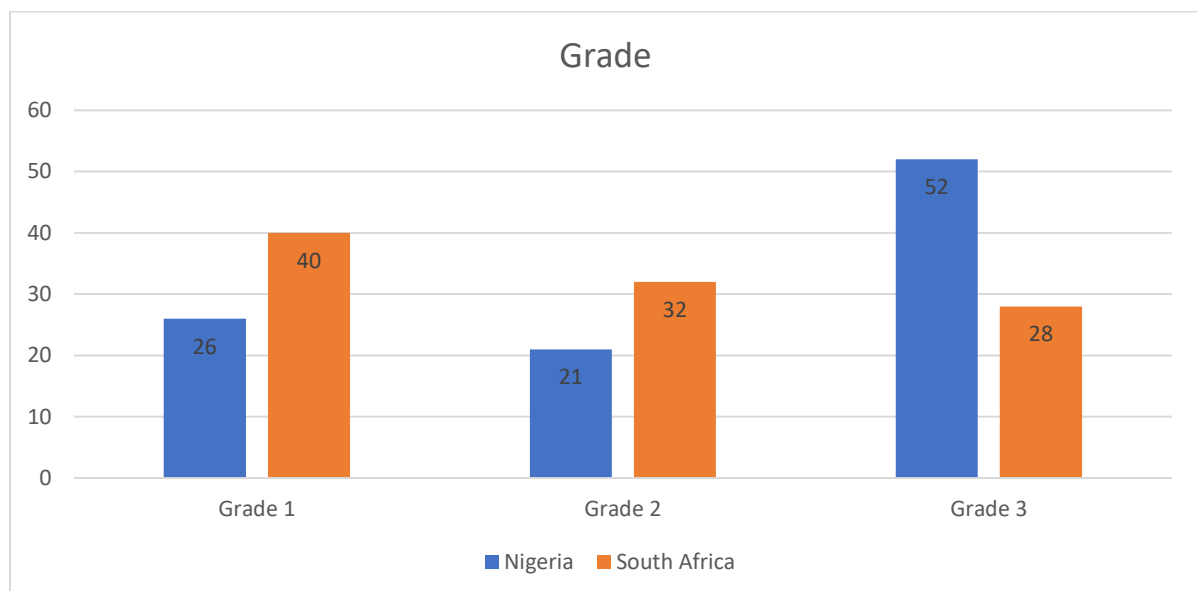


Figure 6.4 shows that the majority (38%) of sampled teachers in Nigeria indicated that they have 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. On the other hand, most of the teachers sampled in South Africa indicated that they have over 30 years of teaching experience. This finding may imply that teachers in South Africa stay in the teaching profession longer than teachers in Nigeria. Although their experience may be useful, their pedagogy might be outdated.

6.2.5 Grade Level Taught by Teachers

This study focused on Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3 FP teachers in Nigeria and South Africa. Grade 1 is regarded as the first level of formal education for a young learner, and Grade 3 is regarded as the exit Grade for young learners in both countries. Differentiated assessment in this phase uses a learner-centred approach that prioritises the learning needs, interests, and abilities of learners while fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, preparing them for success. It is designed to cater to all learners, regardless of their varied abilities and capabilities. This enables all learners to have an equal opportunity to access and benefit from quality education.

Figure 6.5: Grade Level Taught by Teachers

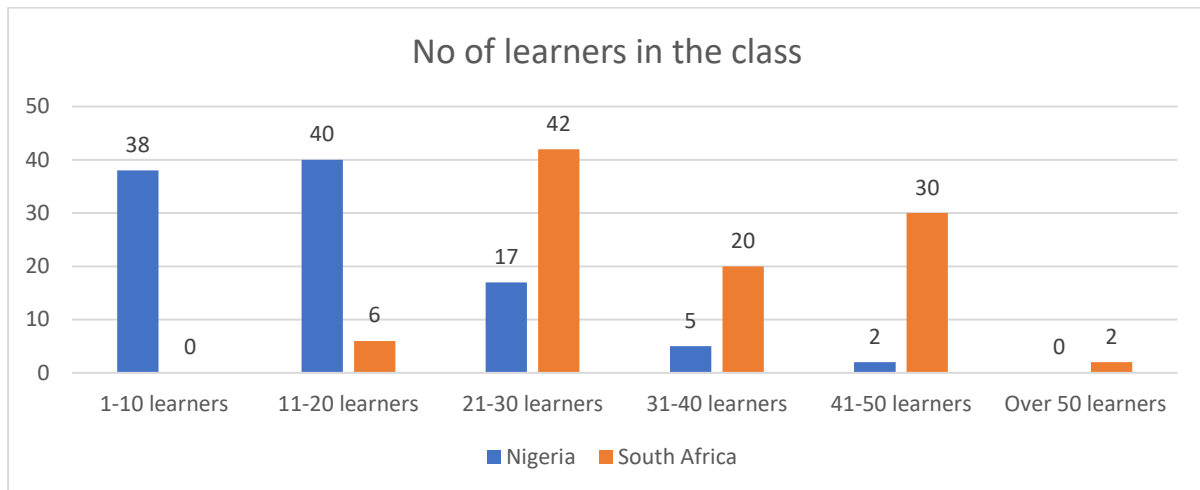


From Figure 6.5, it can be seen that, in Nigeria, 26% of the teachers sampled were Grade 1 teachers, 21% were Grade 2 teachers, and 52% of the teachers were Grade 3 teachers. In South Africa, on the other hand, 40% of the teachers sampled were Grade 1 teachers, 32% were Grade 2 teachers, and 28% were Grade 3 teachers.

6.2.6 Number of Learners in the Class

Smaller class sizes are considered beneficial, especially in the FP. They allow teachers to focus more on the learning needs of the learners (Meier & West, 2020). The teachers were asked to indicate the number of learners in their class.

Figure 6.6: Number of Learners in the Class

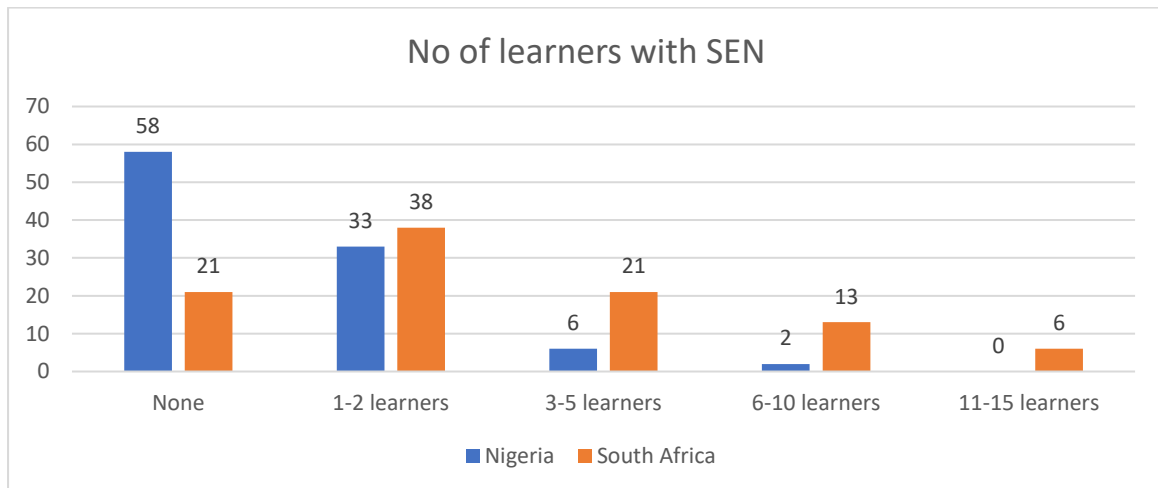


From Figure 6.6, 40% of Nigerian teachers reported having 11 to 20 learners in their class, 38% reported having 1 to 10 learners, and 17% indicated that they have 21–30 learners. The majority of South African teachers (42%) stated that they have 21 to 30 learners in their class, followed by 30% who reported having 41 to 50 learners, and 20% indicated that they have 31–40 learners. Some FP teachers stated that differentiating assessment in a large class can be burdensome, and the needs of the young learners are often neglected (Izevbigie, 2021).

6.2.7 Number of Learners with Special Education Needs

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of learners in their class who have been identified as having special education needs. Figure 6.7 presents the findings of the number of learners with SEN.

Figure 6.7: Number of Learners With SEN



The finding from Figure 6.7 shows that 58% of the teachers in Nigeria stated that they do not have any learners with special education needs, 33% mentioned that they have 1 to 2 learners with special education needs, while 6% stated that they have 3 to 5 learners with SEN. In South Africa, 38% of teachers have 1 to 2 learners with SEN, 21% have 3 to 5 learners, and 13% have 6 to 10 learners with special education needs. Many teachers have lamented about their inability to cater to learners with special education needs (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Consequently, teachers often refer them to special schools (Materechera, 2020).

6.3 Data Presentation of Survey Questions with Teachers in Nigeria and South Africa

The survey was administered to 50 FP teachers in Nigeria and 50 FP teachers in South Africa. The data collected aimed to gather information regarding the teachers' perceptions of differentiated assessment in mainstream schools, their assessment practices and the support they require and receive. The findings are presented below based on the different questions posed to the respondents.

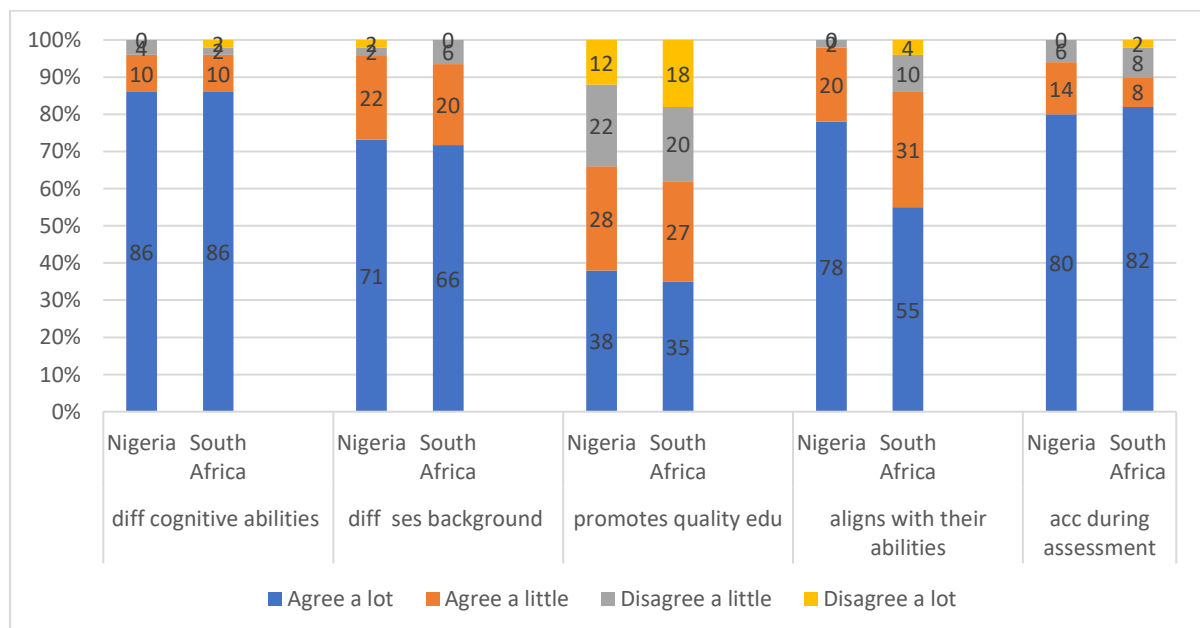
1 Thinking about your current learners, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

This section of the survey sought to collect data on the respondents' perceptions of the differences among learners in their classroom and their beliefs about adapting assessments to accommodate their learners in a mainstream school.

Table 6.1: Teachers' Perception About the Learners in Their Classroom

	Country	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The learners have different cognitive abilities and skills.	Nigeria	86%	10%	4%	0%
	South Africa	86%	10%	2%	2%
Learners in my classroom come from different socioeconomic backgrounds.	Nigeria	71%	22%	6%	0%
	South Africa	66%	20%	14%	0%
The inclusion of all learners, including those with special educational needs, in the classroom promotes quality education.	Nigeria	38%	28%	22%	12%
	South Africa	35%	27%	20%	18%
All learners can demonstrate their knowledge and skills when assessment aligns with their abilities.	Nigeria	78%	20%	2%	0%
	South Africa	55%	31%	10%	4%
The needs of all learners must be accommodated during assessment.	Nigeria	80%	14%	6%	0%
	South Africa	82%	8%	8%	2%

Figure 6.8: Teachers' Perception of the Learners in Their Classroom



The findings from Table 6.1 and Figure 6.8 indicate that most teachers in Nigeria (86%) and South Africa (86%) “agreed a lot” that learners in their classrooms possess different cognitive abilities. They also indicated that accommodating all learners during assessment is vital, with 80% of teachers from Nigeria and 82% from SA agreeing “a lot”. Moreover, 71% of teachers from Nigeria and 66% from SA acknowledged that learners in their classrooms come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Of concern is that a smaller percentage of teachers in both countries, 38% in Nigeria and 35% in South Africa, agreed “a lot” that including all learners, including those with SEN, in the classroom promotes quality education. The emergence of mainstream schools and inclusive policies in many African countries, including Nigeria and South Africa, have been a significant achievement. However, in reality, many teachers responsible for implementing inclusive policies in mainstream schools are not convinced that learners with special education needs should be accommodated. Consequently, if teachers lack the right perception and understanding about differentiated assessment, they may not be keen on implementing it (Meijer et al., 2023).

2 Thinking about the purpose of assessment in the FP, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

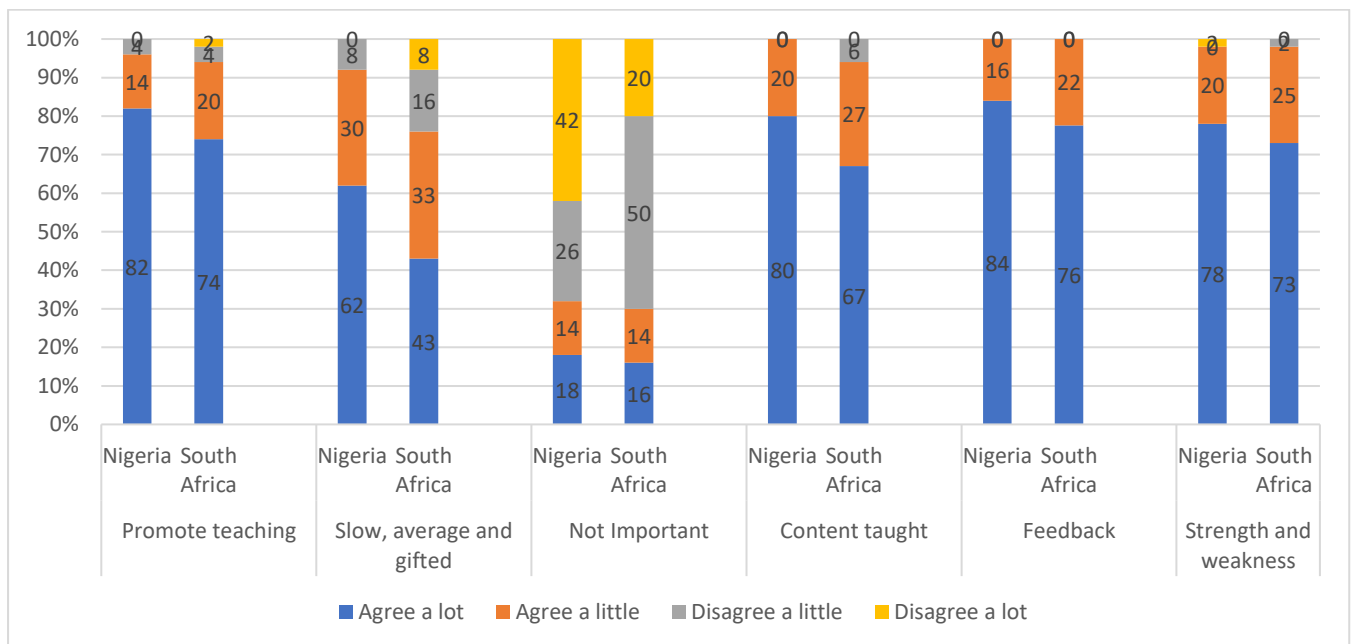
The survey collected data on the teachers’ perceptions about the purpose of assessment in the FP.

Table 6.2: Purpose of Assessment in the FP

	Country	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The primary purpose of assessment is to promote effective teaching and learning	Nigeria	82%	14%	4%	0%
	South Africa	74%	20%	4%	2%
The primary purpose of assessment is to know the slow, average, and gifted learners	Nigeria	62%	30%	8%	0%
	South Africa	43%	33%	16%	8%
Assessment is not important in the FP	Nigeria	18%	14%	26%	42%
	South Africa	16%	14%	50%	20%
Determine how much learners have learnt from the content taught	Nigeria	80%	20%	0%	0%
	South Africa	67%	27%	6%	0%

	Country	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
To provide feedback on learners' learning	Nigeria	84%	16%	0%	0%
	South Africa	76%	22%	0%	0%
To identify learners' strengths and weaknesses	Nigeria	78%	20%	0%	2%
	South Africa	73%	25%	2%	0%

Figure 6.9: Purpose of Assessment in the FP



The findings from Table 6.2 and Figure 6.9 revealed that most of the teachers in Nigeria (84%) and South Africa (76%) agreed “a lot” that the purpose of assessment in the FP is to provide feedback on learners’ learning. 82% of the teachers in Nigeria and 74% in South Africa agreed “a lot” that the purpose of assessment in the FP is to promote effective teaching and learning. Eighty per cent (80%) of the teachers in Nigeria agreed “a lot” that the purpose of assessment in the FP is to determine how much learners have learnt from the content taught. Fewer teachers in Nigeria (18%) and South Africa (16%) agreed that assessment is not important in the FP. Several studies have revealed that teachers’ perceptions about the purposes of assessment have a bearing on their assessment practices (Barnes et al., 2017; Fulmer et al., 2015). Hence, when assessment is perceived as unimportant, it “may play a significant role in teachers resisting or subverting assessment policies and intended practices” (Deneen & Brown, 2016, p 2.).

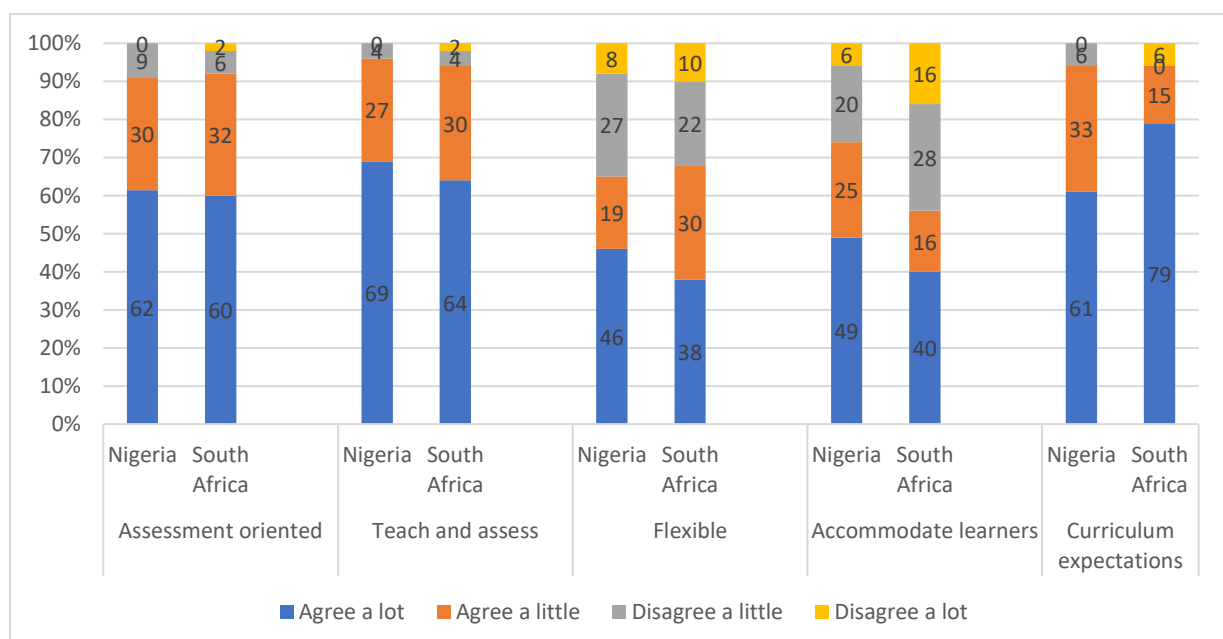
3 To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the curriculum and the assessment guidelines?

The teachers were asked about their perception of the curriculum, which is a comprehensive document that guides them on what and how to teach and assess their learners.

Table 6.3: Teachers' Perception of the Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines

	Countries	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The curriculum is assessment-oriented	Nigeria	62%	30%	9%	0%
	South Africa	60%	32%	6%	2%
The curriculum guides teachers on what to teach and assess	Nigeria	69%	27%	4%	0%
	South Africa	64%	30%	4%	2%
The curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate all learners	Nigeria	46%	19%	27%	8%
	South Africa	38%	30%	22%	10%
The curriculum guides me on how to adapt my assessment practices to accommodate learners with learning challenges	Nigeria	49%	25%	20%	6%
	South Africa	40%	16%	28%	16%
My assessment practices align with established curriculum expectations	Nigeria	61%	33%	6%	0%
	South Africa	79%	15%	0%	6%

Figure 6.10: Teachers' perception about the curriculum



The results from Table 6.3 and Figure 6.10 indicate that 62% of teachers in Nigeria and 60% of teachers in South Africa agreed “a lot” that the curriculum is assessment oriented. Sixty nine per cent (69%) of teachers in Nigeria and 64% of teachers in South Africa agree “a lot” that the curriculum guides them on what to teach and assess. Fewer teachers in Nigeria (46%) and South Africa (38%) agree “a lot” that the curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate all learners. Less than 50% of the teachers in both countries agree that the curriculum guides them on how to adapt their assessment practices to accommodate learners with learning challenges. Nevertheless, 61% of the teachers in Nigeria and 79% of the teachers in South Africa strongly agreed that their assessment practices align with established curriculum expectations.

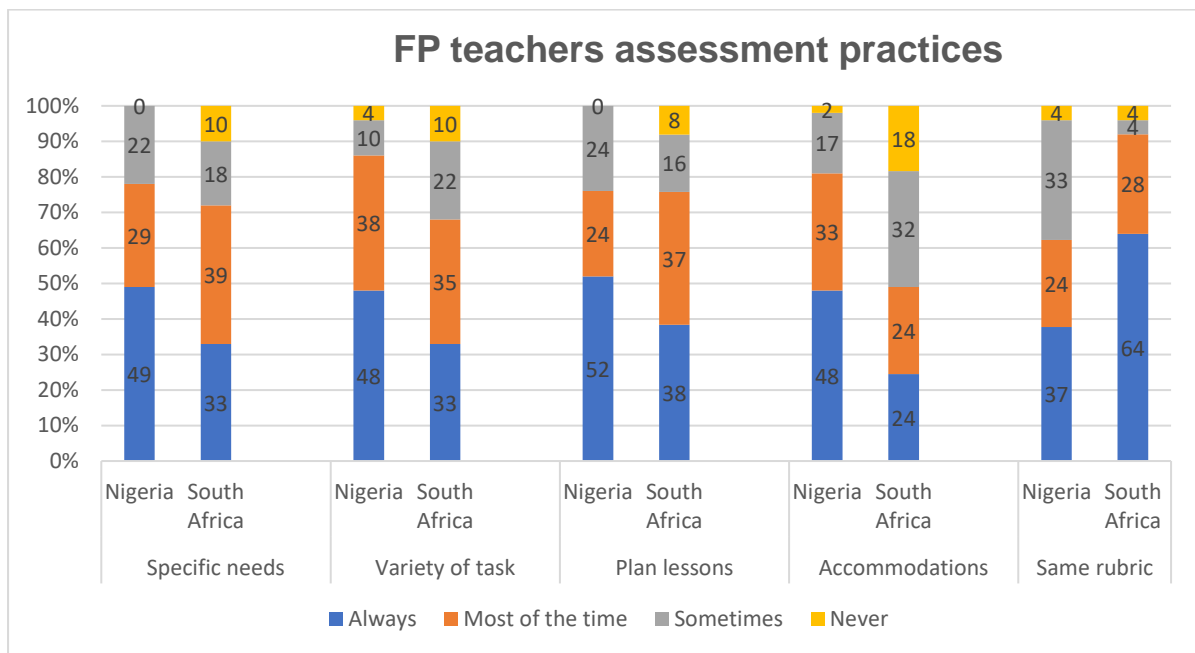
4 Thinking about your classroom assessment practices. How often do you implement the following?

In addition to collecting data regarding the teachers’ perceptions, the survey aimed to collect data regarding the teachers’ assessment practices.

Table 6.4: Teachers’ Assessment Practices

	Country	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Consider the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use.	Nigeria	49%	29%	22%	0%
	South Africa	33%	39%	18%	10%
Design a variety of assessment tasks that allow learners to appropriately demonstrate learning.	Nigeria	48%	38%	10%	4%
	South Africa	33%	35%	22%	10%
Plan class lessons and assessments that are the same for all learners.	Nigeria	52%	24%	24%	0%
	South Africa	38%	37%	16%	8%
Ensure learners with special needs are provided with accommodations on all assessment tasks.	Nigeria	48%	33%	17%	2%
	South Africa	24%	24%	32%	18%
Use the same scoring rubric for all learners.	Nigeria	37%	24%	33%	4%
	South Africa	64%	28%	4%	4%

Figure 6.11: Teachers' assessment practices



The results from Table 6.4 and Figure 6.11 show that, in both countries, less than 50% of the teachers reported that they always consider the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use, design a variety of assessment tasks that allow learners to appropriately demonstrate learning and ensure learners with special needs are provided with accommodations on all assessment tasks. However, 52% of teachers in Nigeria indicated that they always plan their class lessons and assessments in the same way for all learners. This finding reveals that FP mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices can be improved to better accommodate all learners, including those with special education needs.

5 Please give at least one example of how you assess learners with learning challenges.

The examples of how the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa assess learners with special education needs and learning challenges are shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Examples of Teachers' Assessment Practices in Nigeria

Nigeria	South Africa
Set simple and difficult questions/ there must be easy questions for weak learners and strong questions for excellent ones.	Bloom's taxonomy
Individual assessment and individual support/Plan separate assessment for those with learning challenges	One-on-one support and intervention/individual assessment/each learner works at their own pace.
Setting objective questions and other varieties of questions/ written and oral assessment.	Oral assessment if the learner cannot write/ Use different testing styles; when others write, they colour the sound.
Instructional materials/ Use of audio-visual materials/ Visual aid assessment	Read and explain to learners who cannot read. Provide a word bank to help learners write sentences; use colours, pictures and drawings. Read questions again and explain difficult words.
Ask them to come out and write the answers on the board. It fosters concentration	Keep them close to my table/ Sit at the front for assistance.
Assessing them regularly and giving them more attention/ Close monitoring, making learning fun	Several opportunities to try again/ Expanded opportunity
Extra time	Extra time
Choosing the correct word to fill a gap, the meaning of each word of the options is given in brackets to help learners with challenges.	Real modification is not done, such as giving longer time or oral examinations; it's time-consuming to look at the number of learners we have.
Assessment covers the three domains of learning/Differentiated worksheets	Provide a yellow screen over text and highlight questions with yellow on a dyslexia learner's assessment.
Giving classwork and doing corrections	Reduce workload

The findings in Table 6.5 show that the sampled teachers have similar ways of assessing learners with special education needs and learning challenges. The teachers in both countries reported that they include assessment tasks within the

learner's capability. They also provide the learners with extra time and individualised attention and support. Additionally, learners who are unable to write their assessment tasks are assessed orally.

6 Please rank your level of competence in each area below.

The teachers were asked to rank their competency level in terms of assessment in general and to assess learners with special education needs in particular.

Table 6.6: Teachers' Competency Level

	Country	Very competent	Competent	Moderately competent	Not competent
I am able to use assessment evidence to guide instructional decisions and support learners learning	Nigeria	70%	26%	4%	0%
	South Africa	58%	40%	2%	0%
I am able to design assessment activities that are responsive to the educational needs of all learners	Nigeria	57%	37%	6%	0%
	South Africa	52%	39%	9%	0%
I am able to use assessment information to locate my learners' current knowledge level	Nigeria	76%	20%	4%	0%
	South Africa	63%	34%	2%	0%
I create assessments that accommodate learners with learning challenges	Nigeria	57%	32%	9%	2%
	South Africa	43%	43%	16%	0%

Figure 6.12: Teachers' Competency Levels

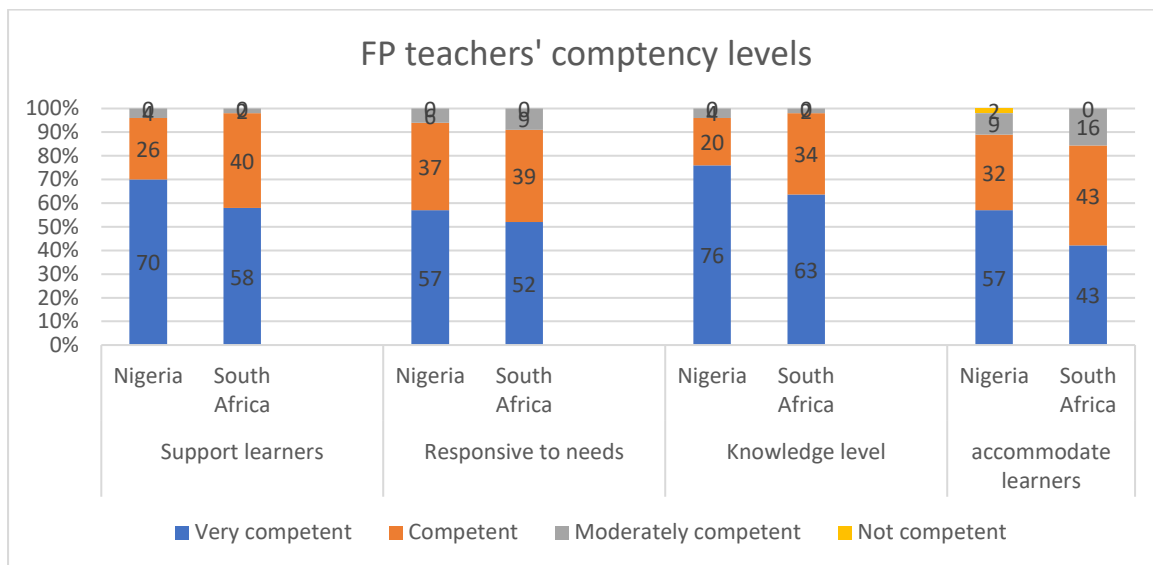


Table 6.6 and Figure 6.12 show that the majority of the FP teachers in Nigeria (76%) and South Africa (63%) indicated that they are “very competent” in using assessment information to locate their learners’ current knowledge level. Seventy per cent (70%) of teachers in Nigeria and 58% of teachers in South Africa indicated that they are very competent in using assessment evidence to guide instructional decisions and support learners learning. Fewer teachers in Nigeria (57%) and South Africa (52%) indicated that they are very competent in designing assessment activities that are responsive to the learning needs of all learners. Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of teachers in Nigeria and 43% of teachers in South Africa indicated that they are very competent in creating assessments that accommodate learners with learning challenges. These findings show that fewer teachers are very competent in designing assessments to cater to learners with varied abilities.

7 How do you ensure that your assessments are valid and reliable?

This open-ended question was designed for the respondents to state how they ensure that their assessments are reliable and valid. Fewer teachers responded to this question item in Nigeria and SA. Table 6.7 presents the findings of the responses in Nigeria.

Table 6.7: How Teachers Ensure Their Assessments are Reliable and Valid

Nigeria	South Africa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment submitted for quality assurance • Constructing the assessment from the curriculum and assessing them continuously • Ensuring the assessment questions meet the objectives of the lesson • Assessment covers the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning • Avoid ambiguous words • Questions to accommodate learners at all levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assured with the Head of Department (HOD) • Use Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) and CAPS to create assessment tasks • Plan assessment according to the curriculum • Assignments done on work covered. • Bloom's taxonomy • Constant checking if learners understand • Assessments are communicated in advance with parents to prepare learners

The teachers in Nigeria and SA reported similar ways of ensuring that their assessments are reliable and valid. The findings revealed that the FP teachers send their assessment tasks to their principals or examination committees for quality assurance. The teachers also ensure that their assessment is aligned with the curriculum and use Bloom's taxonomy to differentiate the cognitive levels of the assessment questions. There are five basic types of validity in assessment: face validity, construct validity, criterion-related validity, consequential validity, and content validity (Stronge et al., 2017). Among these types, content validity is especially important for classroom teachers. Teachers are encouraged to align their assessment tasks with learning objectives and appropriate cognitive levels to ensure content validity. To improve reliability, multiple-question items that fairly represent the content being assessed should be utilised. Additionally, all question items must be clear to the learner and appropriately challenging to improve the reliability of the assessment (Stronge et al., 2017).

8 In your view, to what extent do the following limit how you modify and adapt your classroom assessment to meet the learning needs of learners with learning challenges in your class?

The survey collected data regarding the possible contextual barriers that hamper the teachers' ability to adapt and modify their assessments to accommodate and cater to the needs of all learners in their classrooms.

Table 6.8: Limitations to Teachers' Ability to Modify and Adapt Their Assessment

	Country	A lot	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
Inadequate training programmes and workshop	Nigeria	44%	13%	13%	29%
	South Africa	29%	31%	9%	31%
Inflexible curriculum	Nigeria	36%	24%	9%	31%
	South Africa	30%	39%	17%	13%
Overcrowded classrooms	Nigeria	20%	16%	11%	53%
	South Africa	54%	17%	6%	23%
Lack of support from a specialist	Nigeria	29%	16%	7%	49%
	South Africa	45%	23%	19%	13%
Teacher aide/assistant	Nigeria	25%	20%	6%	48%
	South Africa	24%	45%	10%	20%
Curriculum workload	Nigeria	25%	20%	14%	41%
	South Africa	59%	27%	12%	2%
Insufficient knowledge and skill	Nigeria	20%	9%	5%	65%
	South Africa	15%	24%	18%	42%

Figure 6.13: Limitations to Teachers' Ability to Modify and Adapt Their Assessment

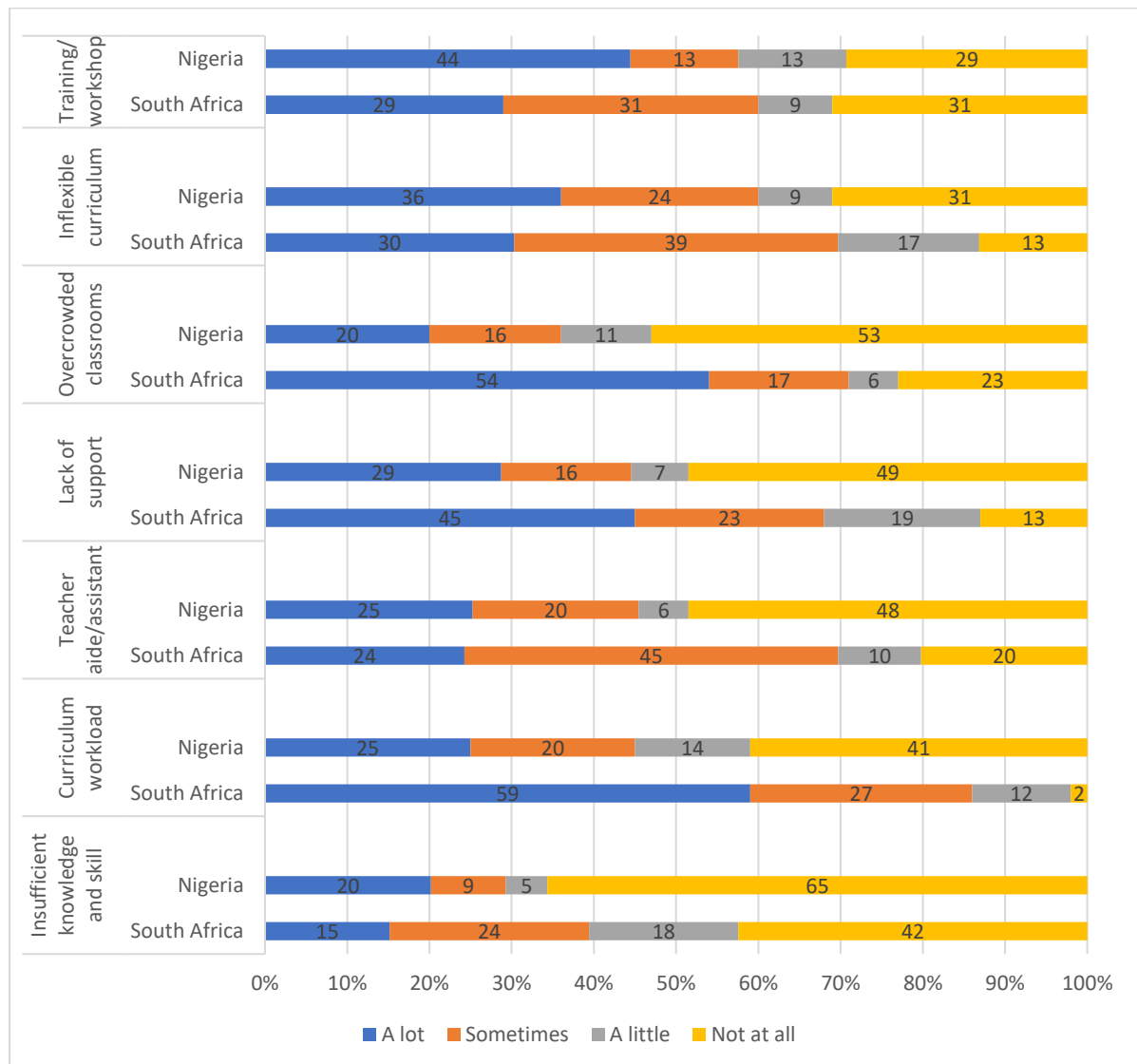


Table 6.8 and Figure 6.13 show that 44% of the teachers in Nigeria reported that inadequate training programmes and workshops limit their ability to modify and adapt their classroom assessments to meet the learning needs of learners. This was followed by an inflexible curriculum with a 36% response. This response implied that the structure of the curriculum does not effectively accommodate learners with varied abilities and needs. Almost one-third (29%) of teachers indicated a lack of support from a specialist. In SA, most (59%) of the teachers indicated that the curriculum workload limits them, while 54% of the teachers indicated that they were limited by overcrowded classrooms and lack of support from a specialist with 45%.

9 How often do you collaborate with other teachers regarding classroom assessment?

The teachers were asked to indicate how often they collaborate and receive support from their colleagues regarding assessment.

Table 6.9: Teachers' Collaboration With Colleagues Regarding Assessment

	Country	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
I observe other teachers' assessment practices.	Nigeria	57%	30%	11%	2%
	South Africa	45%	29%	19%	6%
I share my challenges and/or successes in assessing learning with learning challenges.	Nigeria	56%	33%	9%	2%
	South Africa	52%	33%	16%	2%
Work together with colleagues to improve how to assess learners with learning challenges.	Nigeria	58%	29%	11%	2%
	South Africa	56%	29%	10%	4%

Figure 6.14: Teachers' Collaboration With Colleagues Regarding Assessment

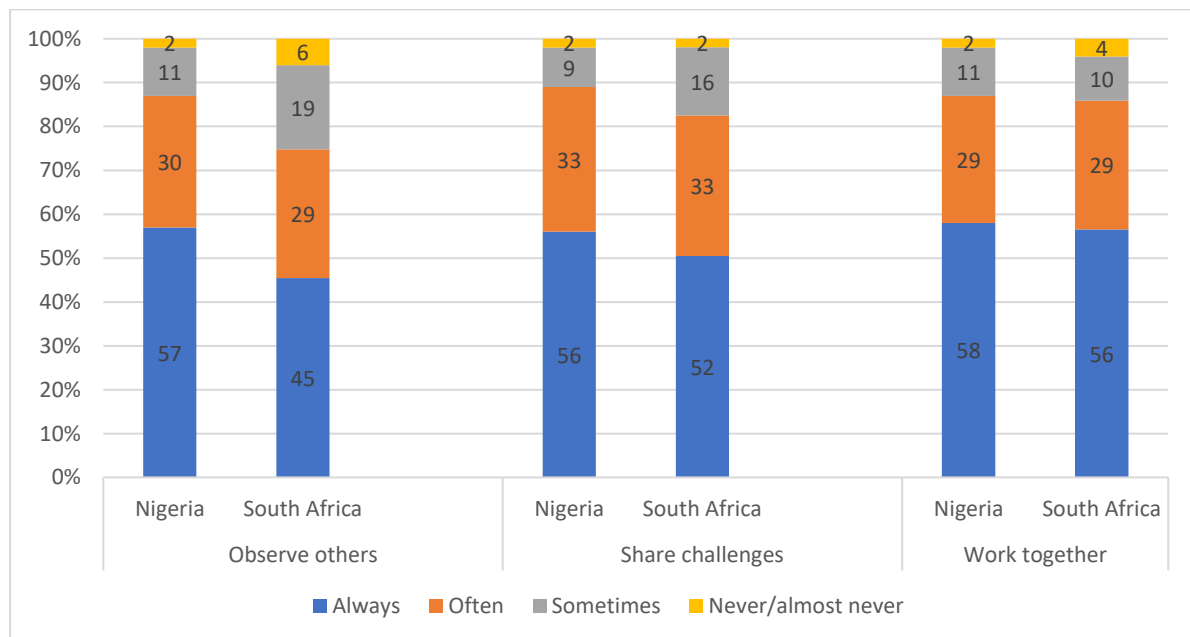


Table 6.9 and Figure 6.14 show that about half of the teachers in Nigeria (57%) and South Africa (45%) indicated that they always observe their colleagues' assessment

practices at their schools. Just over half (56%) of the teachers in Nigeria and 52% of the teachers in South Africa reported that they always share their challenges and successes in assessing learners with learning challenges, while 58% of teachers in Nigeria and 56% of teachers in South Africa reported that they work together with colleagues to improve how to assess learners with learning challenges.

10 How often do you interact with the MoE regarding assessment?

The teachers were also asked to indicate how often they collaborate and receive support from the SBMC in Nigeria and the DBST in South Africa.

Table 6.10: Teachers' Collaboration Regarding Assessment

	Country	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
I am provided with workshops and training on how to accommodate all learners during assessment.	Nigeria	30%	9%	37%	24%
	South Africa	17%	33%	37%	13%
I share my challenges and/or in assessing learners with special educational needs.	Nigeria	36%	20%	29%	16%
	South Africa	23%	42%	27%	8%
Work together to improve how to assess learners with learning challenges.	Nigeria	36%	20%	31%	13%
	South Africa	23%	42%	19%	17%

Figure 6.15: Teachers' collaboration regarding assessment

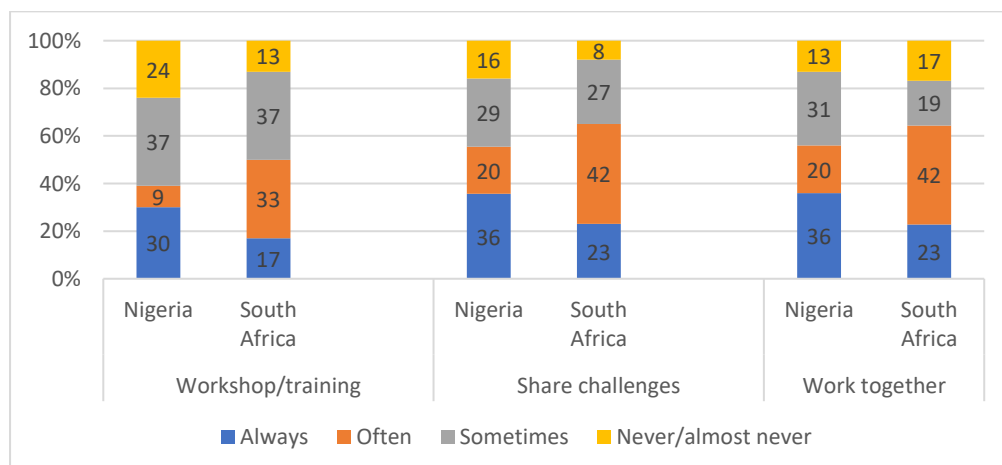


Table 6.10 and Figure 6.15 show that few teachers in Nigeria (30%) and South Africa (17%) indicated that they are always provided with workshops and training on accommodating all learners during assessments. Of concern is that some teachers in Nigeria (24%) and South Africa (13%) have never received workshops and training on how to accommodate all learners during assessment. The findings reveal that FP teachers receive more support and collaboration from colleagues regarding assessment than from the MoE personnel.

11 What type of support do you receive from the SBMC/DBST to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

The teachers were asked to state the type of support they receive from the SBMC/DBST. Thirty-six (36) teachers in Nigeria and 31 teachers in South Africa responded to the question.

About 53% of the teachers in Nigeria indicated that they do not receive any support from the SBMC. Thirty-three per cent (33%) of the teachers reported that they receive training, and 11% of the teachers indicated that they receive instructional materials. Only a few teachers (6%) reported that they monitor learners' academic studies. Three per cent (3%) of the teachers reported that they receive teaching support, but the support is not consistent.

In South Africa, 19% of the teachers indicated that they do not receive any support from the DBST. Thirteen per cent (13%) of teachers reported that they receive support only in extreme cases, which happens occasionally. They added that they receive more support from the SBST. Ten per cent (10%) of the teachers indicated that the DBSTs communicate more with their HODs. Twenty-six per cent (26%) indicated that they receive training and workshops; however, a teacher added that the training and workshops do not address the problems they are facing. Other support reported include referring learners to special schools (6%), provision and adaptations on how to follow CAPS (3%). A teacher indicated that after applications, dyslexic learners receive accommodation from Grade 4.

From the teachers' responses, the place of effective support for mainstream schoolteachers to accommodate the varied needs of learners in assessment is lacking in both countries. Insufficient support structures make the implementation of

differentiated assessment appear unrealistic, particularly in the African context (Abba & Rashid, 2020; Kaur et al., 2019).

12 What type of support do you require from the SBMC/DBST to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

The teachers were asked to state the type of support they need from the SBMC/DBST to enable them to cater to all learners through assessment. Thirty-seven (37) teachers in Nigeria and 30 teachers in South Africa responded to this question. The findings are presented in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: Teachers required support from SBMC

Require from the SBMC	Frequency
Training/ differentiated curricula training, training on learners' assessment	30%
Flexibility of the curriculum/ review curriculum, such that it will be more enriched for learning with learning challenges/ modified lesson and curriculum to support learners/ curriculum modifications to accommodate learners with special needs	24%
None	16%
Internet/ technological innovations	11%
Teaching aid	5%
Special support staff that understand the special learners/ teaching assistant	5%
Regular visit	5%
Parental involvement	3%

The findings above reveal that 30% of the teachers in Nigeria are in dire need of training and workshops tailored to capacitate them to cater to learners with special education needs through their assessment practices. The teachers (24%) further reported the need for the curriculum to be modified to acknowledge and accommodate the needs of learners with varied abilities during assessment.

Table 6.12: Teachers' Support Required From DBST

Require from the DBST	Frequency
Assessment workshops and training/more workshops and learner activities that accommodate learners with special education needs/ more specific practical courses/workshops on diversity and SIAS policy/More info on how to change/adapt assessment	53%
They must send a specialist. There are children here that should not be here - moving grade. They take so long to respond. Full-time psychologist/Full-time assistant to save time/more remedial classes from teachers that qualify for SEN/They must get a teacher for learners with special needs	20%
Equipment/provide suitable material and guidance. Resources, e.g. flashcards, posters	10%
They come into the classroom and guide Come to class to see the challenges	10%
Practical sessions with learners in the class so as to modify assessment	
Receive accommodation/concession for a scribe.	3%
Guidelines	3%
Special needs class per grade or phase.	3%
Flexible curriculum, less crowded classrooms	3%

Just over half (53%) of the teachers indicated their need for training and workshops that will further equip them to accommodate all learners, especially those with special needs education (Table 6.12). The need for training was followed by the need for personnel support and specialists such as speech therapists and occupational therapists. Of note is the requirement for other teachers trained to cater to learners with special education needs.

13 What would you recommend as an FP teacher to promote classroom assessment that accommodates the diverse learning needs of all learners in your classroom?

The FP teachers were asked to recommend strategies to facilitate the implementation of differentiated assessment.

The teachers in Nigeria recommended the use of audio-visual resources, reducing the curriculum workload, and the use of games and hands-on activities. They also recommended that assessments should cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. In addition, learners should be provided with multiple ways to demonstrate understanding, allowing for flexibility and accommodations based on individual needs and preferences. Continuous assessment for the learners and the provision of special education teachers were recommended.

In South Africa, the FP teachers recommended that learners should be grouped and assessed according to their abilities, as some learners may struggle to cope with the DBE books. The teachers have suggested the provision of specialists such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and teacher assistants to accommodate all learners due to the large class sizes. Inclusive practical assessment activities have also been recommended. One teacher suggested that there should be no written assessments for Grade 1 learners. Another teacher pointed out that the DBE needs to be more involved in what happens in schools rather than just focusing on the paperwork submitted by schools. In addition, another teacher stated that she does not recommend inclusive education at all.

6.4 Testing the Reliability of the Responses

As part of the analysis process, statistical testing was conducted using SPSS software to determine the reliability or internal consistency of the instrument. This software helped to ascertain the extent to which the responses to the questionnaire correlate with each other (Bujang et al., 2024; So-Oabeb, 2023). Cronbach's alpha measures the consistency of data provided by the items on an instrument and how closely related a set of items are as a group. The Cronbach alpha test's reliability scale ranges from 0.00 to 1.00, with negative values indicating a lack of correlation among the items (Greco et al., 2018).

Scores close “to 0.00 on the Cronbach reliability scale indicate low reliability of the measurement tool due to potential measurement errors” (So-Oabeb, 2023, p. 110). Conversely, scores nearing 1.00 indicate high reliability. The Cronbach alpha’s value is influenced by the number of items being measured (Taber, 2018). Even though there is an ongoing discussion about the acceptable alpha value, most researchers consider 0.70 to be satisfactory. Each variable in the questionnaires was analysed for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha to assess the internal consistency of responses to the multiple items in the survey. The Cronbach alpha responses from the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa are presented in Tables 6.13 and 6.14.

Table 6.13: Cronbach’s Alpha Values for Responses From Teachers in Nigeria

Variables	N	Cronbach alpha
Diverse learners in mainstream classrooms	5	.558
Purpose of assessment in the FP	6	.561
The curriculum and the assessment guidelines	5	.756
Classroom assessment practices	6	.429
Competence level	4	.809
Limitations	7	.688
Collaboration and partnership	6	.852
Total	39	.805

The responses were obtained from 50 respondents in Nigeria, and the Cronbach alpha value was $\alpha = .805$, which is above the required benchmark of 0.70.

Table 6.14: Cronbach's Alpha Values for Responses From Teachers in Nigeria.

Variables	N	Cronbach's alpha
Diverse learners in mainstream classrooms	5	.548
Purpose of assessment in the FP	6	.495
The curriculum and the assessment guidelines	5	.702
Classroom assessment practices	6	.622
Competence level	4	.780
Limitations	7	.817
Collaboration and partnership	6	.787
Total	39	.712

The responses were obtained from 50 respondents in South Africa and the Cronbach alpha value was $\alpha = .712$, which is also above the required benchmark of 0.70.

6.5 Independent Samples t-Test for Association

For a comprehensive understanding of the survey responses related to the research questions, I conducted hypothesis testing using an independent samples t-test. An independent samples t-test is employed as an inferential statistical test to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two distinct groups, in this case, Nigeria and South Africa (Kim, 2015). It is typically utilised when the samples are divided into two independent groups. The choice of statistical test depends on the nature of the data. Given that most items on the questionnaire were nominal or ordinal, the independent samples t-test was considered suitable to evaluate the null hypotheses (Cohen et al., 2011).

A null hypothesis denotes that there is no relationship between the two variables being measured in quantitative research (Singhal & Rana, 2015). In order to examine these relationships, we compared p-values (probability values) with the significance level. It is widely accepted in the literature that a significance level (α) of 0.05 is appropriate (Andrade, 2019; McLeod, 2019). P-values "less than 0.05 (< 0.05) indicate statistical significance, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis, whereas p-values greater than 0.05 (> 0.05) are not statistically significant" (So-Oabeb, 2023), p. 111).

Null hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of the learners in their classroom.

An independent t-test was performed to assess the relationship between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of the learners in their classroom. The results are shown in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15: An Independent T-Test for Null Hypothesis 1

Item	Country	N	Mean	SD	p-value	Decision	Effect size
Different cognitive abilities	Nigeria	50	1.18	0.482	0.850	Not significant	-0.038
	South Africa	50	1.20	0.571			
Different socioeconomic backgrounds	Nigeria	49	1.35	0.597	0.326	Not significant	-0.199
	South Africa	50	1.48	0.735			
Promotes quality education	Nigeria	50	2.08	1.047	0.456	Not significant	-0.150
	South Africa	49	2.24	1.146			
Assessment aligns with abilities	Nigeria	50	1.24	0.476	0.005	Significant	-0.580
	South Africa	49	1.63	0.834			
Accommodation during assessment	Nigeria	49	1.27	0.569	0.789	Not significant	-0.054
	South Africa	50	1.30	0.707			

The findings in Table 6.14 reveal that there was no significant difference between the means of most items that measured the teachers' perceptions of the learners in their classroom. Therefore, I accept the null hypothesis. There is no significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions about the learners in their classrooms.

Null hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of the purpose of assessment.

An independent t-test was performed to assess the relationship between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of the purpose of assessment in the FP. The results are shown in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16: An Independent T-Test for Null Hypothesis 2

Item	Country	N	Mean	SD	p-value	Decision	Effect size
Promote effective teaching	Nigeria	49	1.22	0.511	0.332	Not significant	-0.196
	South Africa	50	1.34	0.658			
Slow, average, and gifted	Nigeria	50	1.46	0.646	0.009	Significant	-0.535
	South Africa	49	1.90	0.963			
Not important	Nigeria	50	2.92	1.140	0.396	Not significant	0.170
	South Africa	50	2.74	0.965			
Content taught	Nigeria	49	1.20	0.407	0.071	Not significant	-0.371
	South Africa	48	1.40	0.610			
Learners' strengths	Nigeria	50	1.26	0.565	0.770	Not significant	-0.059
	South Africa	48	1.29	0.504			
Feedback	Nigeria	49	1.16	0.373	0.449	Not significant	-0.154
	South Africa	49	1.22	0.422			

The p-values obtained on 5 out of 6 items that measured the teachers' perceptions about the purpose of assessment in the FP were greater than the significance level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers about the purpose of assessment.

Null hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices.

An independent t-test was performed to assess the relationship between Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices. The results are shown in Table 6.17.

Table 6.17: An Independent T-Test for Null Hypothesis 3

Item	Country	N	Mean	SD	p-value	Decision	Effect size
Specific learning needs	Nigeria	49	1.73	0.811	0.073	Not significant	-0.366
	South Africa	49	2.06	0.966			
Plan class lessons	Nigeria	50	1.72	0.834	0.225	Not significant	-0.246
	South Africa	49	1.94	0.944			
Variety of assessment	Nigeria	50	1.70	0.814	0.029	Significant	-0.446
	South Africa	49	2.10	0.984			
Same scoring	Nigeria	49	2.02	0.946	0.002	Significant	0.630
	South Africa	50	1.48	0.762			
Accommodations	Nigeria	46	1.74	0.828	0.001	Significant	-0.743
	South Africa	49	2.45	1.062			
Performance data	Nigeria	49	1.65	0.855	0.556	Not significant	-0.120
	South Africa	48	1.75	0.758			

The findings above show that there were no significant differences between Nigerian and South African schoolteachers in their assessment practices in relation to considering the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use. They plan class lessons and assessments that are the same for all learners and use learners' performance data to inform instructional planning.

On the other hand, there were significant differences between the countries' teachers' assessment practices regarding their design of a variety of assessments, the use of the same scoring rubric for all learners, and the provision of accommodations for learners with SEN.

Null hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between the support Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers get and receive.

Table 6.18: An Independent t-Test for Null Hypothesis 4

Item	Country	N	Mean	SD	p-value	Decision	Effect size
Observe other	Nigeria	46	1.59	0.777	0.139	Not significant	-0.308
	South Africa	48	1.85	0.945			
Share my challenges	Nigeria	45	1.58	0.753	0.671	Not significant	-0.088
	South Africa	48	1.65	0.785			
Work together	Nigeria	45	1.58	0.783	0.780	Not significant	-0.058
	South Africa	48	1.63	0.841			
Workshops	Nigeria	46	2.54	1.168	0.695	Not significant	0.081
	South Africa	48	2.46	0.922			
Share my challenges	Nigeria	45	2.24	1.111	0.863	Not significant	0.036
	South Africa	48	2.21	0.898			
Work together	Nigeria	45	2.22	1.085	0.750	Not significant	-0.066
	South Africa	48	2.29	1.010			

From Table 6.18 it can be seen that the independent t-test confirmed that there is no significant difference between the support the teachers get and receive from the SBMCs or DBSTs, respectively, in the two countries. Hence, I accepted the null hypothesis as the p-values are not statistically significant. The next session presented the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of textual data obtained during the semi-structured interviews.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings from the survey conducted with 100 FP mainstream schoolteachers as part of the quantitative phase of the study. The demographic details, including gender, age range, highest educational qualification, and years of teaching experience, were presented. Additionally, the reliability of the survey instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha test, indicating high reliability with alpha values exceeding the 0.70 benchmark. The hypotheses were tested using an independent t-test. The next chapter will cover the qualitative results obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PRESENTATION OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA

7.1 Introduction

The main emphasis of this chapter is on the qualitative data derived from the second data collection phase. I conducted semi-structured interviews in the second phase to reveal and understand how FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment in their classroom to accommodate all learners and the support they require to be more effective.

7.2 Codes and Biographical Data of Participants

The codes and biographical data of the different participants employed in collecting the empirical data in this study are presented.

7.2.1 *FP Teachers in Nigeria*

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 present the codes and biographical data of the participants in Nigeria.

Table 7.1: Codes: FP Teachers in Nigeria

Teacher 1 Nigeria	T1NG
Teacher 2 Nigeria	T2NG
Teacher 3 Nigeria	T3NG
Teacher 4 Nigeria	T4NG
Teacher 5 Nigeria	T5NG
Teacher 6 Nigeria	T6NG
Teacher 7 Nigeria	T7NG
Teacher 8 Nigeria	T8NG
Teacher 9 Nigeria	T9NG
Teacher 10 Nigeria	T10NG

Table 7.2: Biographical Data of the Participants In Nigeria

Codes	Gender	Type of school	Class	Years of experience	Qualification
T1NG	Female	Public	Grade 3	13	B.ED
T2NG	Female	Public	Grade 3	21	NCE
T3NG	Male	Public	Grade 2	20	SSCE
T4NG	Female	Public	Grade 3	8	Bachelor's degree
T5NG	Female	Private	Grade 1	6	Bachelor's degree
T6NG	Female	Private	Grade 1	17	HND
T7NG	Female	Private	Grade 3	6	M.ED
T8NG	Female	Private	Grade 1	9	NCE
T9NG	Female	Private	Grade 2	10	NCE
T10NG	Female	Private	Grade 3	8	HND

7.2.2 FP Teachers in South Africa

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 below present the codes and biographical data of the participants in South Africa.

Table 7.3: Codes: FP Teachers in South Africa

Teacher 1 South Africa	T1SA
Teacher 2 South Africa	T2SA
Teacher 3 South Africa	T3SA
Teacher 4 South Africa	T4SA
Teacher 5 South Africa	T5SA
Teacher 6 South Africa	T6SA
Teacher 7 South Africa	T7SA
Teacher 8 South Africa	T8SA
Teacher 9 South Africa	T9SA
Teacher 10 South Africa	T10SA

Table 7.4: Biographical Data of the Participants

Codes	Gender	Type of school	Class	Years of experience	Qualification
T1SA	Female	Private	Grade 1	7	Bachelor
T2SA	Female	Private	Grade 2	1	Honours
T3SA	Female	Public	Grade 1	11	Diploma
T4SA	Female	Private	Grade1	30	Bachelor
T5SA	Female	Public	Grade 3	40	Honours
T6SA	Female	Public	Grade 1	27	Bachelor
T7SA	Female	Public	Grade 1	33	Diploma
T8SA	Female	Private	Grade 1	3	Diploma
T9SA	Female	Private	Grade 2	9	Diploma
T10SA	Female	Private	Grade 3	23	Diploma

7.3 Data Presentation: Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers

I gathered information through semi-structured interviews. I employed interview schedules with five semi-structured questions to gather data from 20 teachers: Ten teachers in Nigeria and ten teachers in South Africa. The participants' responses to the semi-structured interviews were recorded with their consent. The questions sought to delve deeper to understand the context of mainstream classrooms and the teachers' perception of inclusive education and the diversity that exists in their classrooms. Furthermore, the questions were designed to comprehend the teachers' assessment practices and the assistance they need to tailor assessments effectively for all learners in their classrooms. The semi-structured interview findings are organised based on the different questions posed to the participants, as set out below.

Question 1: Thinking about your current learners, how are they different in terms of their socioeconomic background and academic abilities?

This question aimed to understand the teachers' classroom environment and their perception of the differences that exist among their learners. In Nigeria and South Africa, the mainstream schoolteachers acknowledged that the learners in their classes

are diverse with varied abilities and skills. The teachers highlighted the cognitive differences that exist amongst their learners in terms of their academic attainment.

In Nigeria, T10NG stated that she has excellent learners who are able to attain 70% upwards, good learners who score between 60%-65%, average learners who are able to attain 50%, and below average learners who are able to attain 40% and below.

T8NG, who is a Grade 1 teacher in Nigeria, further explained that,

Academically, over 80% of the learners are above average. We have some that are struggling. Many of them came into the school as babies, and parents expect their children to be promoted every year, whether the child is able to cope with the next class or not. It is what I have discovered. So, some of them are still struggling and be unable to meet UP ... but the ones that are a little bit more advanced in age, they are coping very well; they find it easier to assimilate when you explain something. Their maturity level put[s] them at an advantage. (T8NG)

T3NG stated that,

In my class, I have learners that are very intelligent and some that are not up to the task. I have one that's, even while I'm teaching; she's feeling depressed ... I can explain and give them much attention, but, at the end, I see that there is nothing. I have learners that when I teach them they grab it easily. So, the learners are not on the same level. (T3NG)

Similarly, in South Africa, the language diversity was commented on. T3SA, who is also a Grade 1 teacher, stated that:

Not all of them are used to speaking in English. So, when it comes to the cognitive part. It is a lot. I know that the age also makes a difference. A lot of them are turning six years instead of seven years this year. They come from different social economic backgrounds. But with these kids, I think it is more about the age. (T3SA)

And we are an Afrikaans school, so, and she doesn't understand Afrikaans and the instruction of Africans. So I have to translate everything to her. So I know that we are going to have a term where we are going to work really, really hard because she comes from an English school and now she came to an Afrikaans school. And yeah. So I know I have ... we are going to have to work very, very hard. And with her, I have to start from the beginning with the phonics and the reading because she's already behind with that. (T1SA)

T2SA in South Africa elaborated on the diversity that exists in her classroom as she stated:

They are kids from diverse, obviously, socioeconomic backgrounds in my school, not just in my classroom, but in the school as a whole ... It's kids of different ages together in 1 classroom, so there's that difference. Then, there are children who are special needs with obviously various different kinds of learning disabilities as well as personality not difficulties, personality disorders and such. So, there's obviously, like, there's that element of diversity when it comes to their different levels. There's also kids who are quite gifted for their ages, and they obviously get accommodated. Yeah ... we have some kids who really do struggle and who do require, shall I say, like, a bit of remedial education, and then kids who are quite autonomous and who are learning material that's above their age. (T2SA)

In addition to the learners' cognitive abilities, some of the teachers commented on the learners' temperament, reasoning and behaviour. T7NG in Nigeria remarked:

The children are different in terms of reasoning and perspective. They don't see things the same way... For example, you asked a question in science and the high achiever is able to reason it out, but the low achiever might not even understand the question. Even with comprehension passages the low achievers or the learners with special needs might not be able to analyse the text independently. So, they are different in terms of their reasoning they are different in terms of their perspective and behaviour. (T7NG)

Similarly, T10SA indicated that “a lot of the children that struggle also battle with behaviour so we do follow up ... without making the child feel singled out or put on the spot, we do check their behaviour versus the learning that is taking place so it has been an uphill battle in some of the classes but things are in control now”.

In terms of the learners' socioeconomic background, some teachers, such as T9NG in Nigeria and T2SA in South Africa, stated that the learners come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, most teachers in fee-paying schools, such as T8NG, in Nigeria and T1SA in South Africa, indicated that the majority of the learners come from economically advantaged backgrounds. However, some teachers in non-fee-paying schools such as T4NG stated that “socioeconomically, the learners aren't

really different. They're mostly a maid's child(ren) or a maid themselves or orphaned yet fortunate enough to live with an aged grandparent".

T3NG suggested that teachers should take cognisance of the learners' family background, which may have a bearing on their performance. He stated:

For learners that are not up to the task sometimes it could be because of their family background... I have one in my class that is having family issues. She is not staying with her parents. When she's in the class she's always sleeping. When I wake her up and ask her why she's sleeping she explains that after school she goes to hawk and after hawking, she will do the housework, and after doing that she sleeps late at night and wakes up of very early in the morning. There's also no time for her to study. (T3NG)

In South Africa, T5SA commented on the background of most of her learners, which has a bearing on their performance. According to her:

Most of the learners come from homes with single parents. Some of them, their parents are on drugs. It is hectic. Even if they want to learn, sometimes there's nothing for them to eat. Sometimes the food they get here is their only meal for the day and then they start stealing. Their social background is hectic. Most of them are on social plan. There's a boy that could read but because of absenteeism... he's never here. He was able to read but now he cannot catch up. So, it really influences his progress. (T5SA)

In South Africa, some teachers such as T8SA, T9SA and T10SA indicated that their learners are also diverse in terms of their race. According to T10SA, she has *"quite a broad demographic in the class; we have coloured children, black children, white children, and there are also Indian children. So, we have a quite mixed demographic"*.

From these quotes, it is evident that the FP teachers in both countries acknowledged that learners in mainstream schools have varied cognitive abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds and interests.

Question 2: What are your views and experiences regarding the inclusion of learners with special education needs in a regular classroom?

The mainstream schoolteachers in both countries indicated that they cater to learners with diverse abilities and needs. However, the majority of the teachers, such as T1NG,

T1SA, T4NG, T4SA, T5NG, T7NG, T8NG, T8SA, T9SA and T10SA, cater to learners with special education needs and learning disabilities.

In Nigeria, T7NG commented that she works in

“an inclusive environment, and they believe that children with learning disabilities should be with other children who can learn independently. So, they stay in the same class”. She further commented that she has learners with “dyslexia, and learners with ADHD [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder].” (T7NG)

In South Africa, T1SA indicated that she has a learner *“on the spectrum of autism”*.

According to T4SA, *“I have three or four or five other learners that have attention deficits disorder that I have to manage. Some are on medication, and some are not”*.

She further stated that she has a learner *“that was diagnosed two or three months ago...a severe learning-disabled child ... How to read or write, he just cannot. For math he found ways to do math, but he cannot recognise two- or three-digits numbers”* (T4SA).

Most of the teachers reported that accommodating learners with SEN can be overwhelming and challenging as they often require more of their attention and time; therefore, there is a need for patience, tolerance and love.

According to T7NG in Nigeria, *“the truth of the matter is that it can be overwhelming. Sometimes I’m very stressed and I’m very frustrated”*. In addition to inclusive education being stressful, T2NG commented, *“but parents want it for their children. You have to be patient with them and dance to their tune. Play with them and encourage them. It is time-consuming as you have to focus on them and go the extra- mile”*.

T6NG commented:

I feel it’s a welcomed idea. I believe everyone is peculiar and should be given an unbiased chance to live their lives to the fullest, irrespective. We all need to understand that life is a privilege, and we must give room for others to live as much we would want to live as well. We need to also understand the we might not all learn at the same pace; hence, the need for patience, tolerance and love. No one is better than the other. I see their strengths in diverse ways, and they are encouraged on them and to persevere and do better in their areas of weakness.
(T6NG)

T9NG believes that a mainstream schoolteacher should not be tasked to accommodate learners with SEN.

Accommodating them has not been easy. You will see the ones that will frustrate you and to even want you to go off the whole teaching stuff. But the ability to be able to calm down and find a way to help them to solve that situation ... I would not recommend inclusive education because they are special children, and they need special attention and care. They also need specialists who know about them. You can't just pick a teacher and ask them to teach a special needs child. (T9NG)

In South Africa, T1SA explained:

Uhm, it's definitely difficult. Um, it is. And you definitely need to obviously put more effort into that child. And for me, teaching is a passion. So, I think it is it is good to give them those exposure in a mainstream school and I think it is possible... And with the learner, I knew I had to teach 1 on 1. And that made it difficult for me as a teacher to not neglect the rest of the class because I still need to get through all the work and assessments, and you can't just leave everything just for 1 child. But with the 1 with the spectrum of autism, he can still, you know, there's different spectrums. He can still flourish between the rest of the children. So, it differs from child to child. And this year, I learned that it's different from each autism child as well. (T1SA)

In both countries, most of the teachers recounted their experiences catering to learners with SEN in their classrooms. Some teachers believe that inclusive education should be encouraged, while others recommend that learners with SEN should be taken to special schools.

In Nigeria, T7NG stated from her experience that accommodating learners with special needs can be challenging at the beginning, but it is rewarding at the end of the day.

There's a boy in my class that has autism, and he used to always hum and say 'hmmmmmm'. He plays with his hands; he plays with the ruler, and the child that is sitting next to him complains that the child is distracting her. At some point, the class became tensed up. I think it can be draining for the children and I think it is a challenge because they are still young, and they are not able to manage the situation. That is why some parents do not believe in inclusive education because children with special needs disturb the teaching and learning process when they

throw tantrums. That is why some believe that they should be in another class, but I believe that with time, as they stay with other children, they learn the culture of how they ought to behave, and I can testify that as time went by, I started seeing improvement. The other children became more tolerant. So, I guess that this inclusive system works at the end ... they learn how to work as a team and collaborate ... Let the school be inclusive indeed. Let's make it an inclusive community if we are really serious about it. (T7NG)

T3NG also stated that learners may improve with time. According to him, he had a learner who *“when he was in Primary 1, 2 and 3, his performance was very poor but on getting to primary 5, picked up and when he got to Primary 6 he even became the class captain. With time changes might occur”* (T3NG).

According to T8NG:

Inclusive education is really challenging but with the kind of experience that we have and what we have been taught in class I am able to bring it into [a] real-life experience because there is a particular one that is kind of hyper, ... but based on what I have read about learning challenges I see that the child has challenges with paying attention. He cannot sit still in a particular place, so it is a lot of work for us. Thank God that we are like two in the class, so if I am not with him, the other teacher is with him, trying to make him sit still, write, and at least gain something along with his peers. We also have a child that finds it difficult to copy from the board. He finds it very difficult, so sometimes you have to stand in front of him and call out the words, word by word, and sometimes you have to do it alphabet by alphabet for him to be able to write. That slows us down sometimes. The child joined us second term but now he is getting better. He is a lot better from where we started from. (T8NG)

Similarly, in South Africa, T8SA stated:

It is all about giving them the help that they need because they are different learning styles, and it's just about finding out which one is most suitable for them to that adapt to is this quite a struggle. It comes with a lot of difficulties but eventually once you get used to their routine it just get better and they do benefits. (T8SA)

T9SA indicated that it is her *“fifth time of working with a child with autism; it has been a learning curve”*.

T2SA revealed that accommodating learners with SEN has more benefits than disadvantages. According to her:

So, in my experience, what I found is that the other kids do benefit from it. It acts as like a second leg for certain learners who've already caught on to what we are busy doing or busy learning about during the day. They will catch on quicker, and then they will help and assist the other kids. So, I think that helps them with their long term memory and how they understand and grasp a concept. I also think that sometimes it isn't always beneficial because sometimes you do get children who obviously want to learn more and be fast and, you know, do better and all of these things. And sometimes, I feel like it hinders their progress. If certain kids obviously are struggling with something, you can put them aside and help them, and then give them more autonomous learners ... Yeah. So, It's practical, but it's beneficial and also not. It's a two-way street. There's obviously advantages and disadvantages ... it definitely has more benefits than I would say negatives if, yeah.
(T2SA)

However, some teachers in both countries described her experience with a special learner and recommended that special schools are better for learners with SEN.

T10NG in Nigeria commented that accommodating learners with SEN is not her specialisation. According to her,

I used to have a special needs child. The reason why our boss had to receive the child is because the mother of that child insisted that she wants all her children in the same school. But left to our school we do not accommodate them. There is a school for special needs. I might be a teacher, but that is not my specialisation. So, how did I cope with the child that I'm talking about? When my boss told me that this child was going to be in my class, I told her that I don't have any experience with an autistic child. She shared with me her experience with a special needs child while in her former school and that boosted me and encouraged me to research more. I had to Google and make my research concerning that particular child because I cannot teach the child what I'm teaching the other learners. ... I noticed that this particular boy loves to draw. When it comes to art and craft, he is good. So, when I'm doing other things, I make sure that I give him a book for him to draw or to sketch. While he's doing that, I'm doing my own stuff with other learners. When I am done, I come back to him and I make sure that we sing and achieve something that day. This boy is a blessed child and he's good with calculations.

For a term, I was able to accommodate him, and I went back to my Madam, and I told her that this child needs a special school. He's not the type to throw tantrum like that but he still needs to be taken to his school. We called the mother and told her that if she wants to help her child, she should please do the right thing for him, and I thank God that the mother listened. The boy is there in his institute. (T10NG)

T4NG held a similar view as she stated:

Children with special needs have to be in the environment made specially for them according to their area of mental requirements. In my 8years of active teaching in a classroom, I have had such opportunity just once. The learner was an eight-year-old boy who was made to repeat Kindergarten class twice until I was posted to the class. I instantly picked him out as different from the others then I sent for the parent who happened to be his guardian – she owned a school but felt the boy would be better handled in a government-owned primary school. I am not a trained teacher in that area, but was able to handle him to read and write his A, B, Cs to Z and 1, 2, 3s till 20 because I made some research online on how to handle such kid. I was eventually transferred from that local government to another one and upon my enquiry as to his whereabouts, I was informed he didn't resume the new term, and there was no word from his guardian. (T4NG)

In South Africa, T4SA expressed frustration as she explained her experiences accommodating learners with SEN. According to her:

We have a school psychologist and educational psychologist. So, we had him tested, and she said, 'okay this is his problem'. He was off the chart, so he is severely learning disabled but not stupid. He is intelligent, but he would not optimally cope in a mainstream school because it is really difficult. I have three or four or five other learners that have attention deficit disorder that I have to manage. I try my best with what I have I do some Googling on how I can help them, but he needs more than I can give, and that is frustrating. I have to make do with what I have there's no support from the department. It is a huge problem at schools to have children placed in schools where they should be because it is all inclusive now, and I don't agree with that. You know it is not fair what other learners that are in the class because I am with him all the time and they don't get my attention as much as they should ... Very disruptive behaviour and they get aggressive because they feel different, and they are not accepted all the time. It is difficult to be accepted when you are different. But when we go to a school when the learners are also different then they can relate. Then it is normal for them. I don't think we

can make it work. It is like flogging a dead horse. Yes, we want to make it work but in practical ... in theory we say do this and do that, but when it comes to the practicality it is not working. They made it sound really good what's when you have 30 or 40 learners in the class you will work, and you'll never rest. (T4SA)

T1SA narrated her experiences accommodating learners with different spectrums of autism and indicated that some learners are able to flourish in mainstream schools while other learners may not be able to cope. According to her,

Unfortunately, he had to go to another school with smaller classrooms, with 5 or 6 children maybe just for him to, yeah, reach his potential ... we had a psychologist who recommended the smaller classes as well for him because you went for evaluation. (T1SA)

T3SA stated from her experience that insufficient facilities and resources make it difficult to accommodate learners with SEN. Thus, they should be sent to special schools. According to her:

Like my one child, I think that he has a bit of autism. He is smart child but he cannot copy properly from the board ... Then we have a child that has a sleeping disorder. He falls asleep during the day. So, it becomes very difficult, especially when the parents do not provide the doctor's reports. In a mainstream school, I will disagree ... because we do not have the facilities; the resources to accommodate special needs children like him. We really don't. I don't know if the learner is autistic. But he has signs. (T3SA)

T9SA believes that SEN learners should be placed in special schools as they do not have the social skills needed in mainstream schools. According to her,

In Grade two class, we have a little girl who was diagnosed with autism but she's high functioning. She is just not going to be able to make it in the mainstream school. A mainstream school is not really the place for her, she does not have the social skills. She is now being tested and she's going to be moved to a school that will cope with autism. She will get better care there, and I think it will help. It is just such a small group in the Grade Two class to have one child that is not fitting in and is not cooperating and not living the social norms and structures within the classes. It is difficult for the rest of the group so she's going to a school that specialises with autism care. (T9SA)

Similarly, T5SA explained that learners with SEN should be taken to special schools “where they belong because some kids are cruel.” She further stated:

I'm coming from a different angle. I have a daughter that is blind. Initially, I put her in the mainstream school, and they took her and put her in a Braille class, and you know us as parents who say 'no you cannot put my daughter in a Braille class'. But today, when you see her abilities, I am glad that her teacher took the initiative to put her in the Braille class. She has her own braille. We've got a Braille machine but I cannot read Braille. For me, practically, the learner should go where they belong because some kids are cruel. They don't have time for somebody that struggles and the learner will say, 'I don't want to talk because they will laugh at me.' But if they are in a group where they belong ... like somebody came to see me that her child does not have arms and she is here to see the principal and told the principal that her child is a very clever girl. I said to her that to be clever is fine but will that situation carry on in the school setup because kids are cruel. 'Are you prepared to cry every day? Are you prepared to come every day and fight for your child?' Eventually they got a place here in Pretoria. The child never came here and started off there and the child is happy with people more or less the same as her.
(T5SA)

Question 3: What strategies and methods do you use to assess your learners, including learners with special education needs?

Bearing in mind the range of diversity that exists in mainstream classrooms, the teachers were asked to describe how they assess their learners, including those with SEN.

Most of the teachers, such as T10NG, T7NG and T6NG in Nigeria stated that they assess their learners based on their cognitive abilities. T10NG stated:

I make sure that I focus more on those that are below average. Some of them, the ability to read and to understand what they read is their issue. With the below average I assess them after the class individually because one thing about the below average is that they tend to hide under the good ones and the excellent ones. With the average ones, I know where the issue is and I tackle it. I make use of positive reinforcement because the children want to hear you tell them you can do it.... 'Good job boy ... well done you're doing well'. This will boost their morale to want to learn. Using harsh words may affect the learner academically. I also

know their dominant trait and I work with their trait because as a teacher you must know these traits. (T10NG)

In addition to assessing learners based on their cognitive abilities, T7NG explained that she differentiates her assessment based on the strengths of the learners. According to her,

We use differentiated method in their classwork. For example, if I have taught English and the English questions have questions one to three, what I do is that I differentiate it with higher achievers attempting questions one to three, the middle achievers, may be questions 1 to 2 and the low achievers may be question 1. We reduce the quantity so that they are not overwhelmed. We also try to simplify the questions. It's the same thing with children with special needs... but funny enough we have children with special needs that are intelligent. Like the boy in my class, the one with autism, the boy is intelligent. The issue is with his behaviour. he behaves like a boy that is three years old. Sometimes he's able to answer questions that the higher achievers cannot answer. So, we differentiate their classwork, and we differentiate their examination and even with their activities. You don't expect a child with autism to be involved in drama presentation. It's another strategy is to identify their strengths. I don't expect a child with autism to be involved in debate so that that child does not become uncomfortable. So, what that child is good at, we begin to harness that skill that is one thing that works. (T7NG)

Some teachers, such as T8NG, T9NG, and T10NG, emphasised that they assess their learners regularly and continuously to foster their understanding of the content taught. However, during the end-of-term summative assessment, the learners are required to write what they know, as they all write the same assessment. According to T9NG:

When it comes to assessment, what I do is that I do an example for them first... we all do it together and I also make sure that for the assessments that I'm giving them, I make sure that each of them attempts the question in the class before they go home so that I will understand that this child can do it on his or her own without any assistance. Those that are finding it difficult I bring them to my table, and I take my time to explain it to them again and I make sure that they do one example before they take it home. They write the same exam questions, and I follow the scheme. I don't base it on this one's ability or not.... They should write what they know ... write it the way you understand it. (T9NG)

T8NG indicated that she prepares her learners for the examination as the learners will have to write their assessments independently of their class teacher.

On the examination day, the teacher that taught the child will not be in the class. You will have to invigilate another class. So, you have to ensure that more than 90% of the learners are able to spell the words very well so that when they see it during the exam, they are not seeing it for the first time. We do not record or document our oral assessment (T8NG). We only document the written assessment.

T10NG stated that learners are assessed according to their abilities.

I assess them continuously after the day's work. We follow up with what is happening at home because their parents have a big role to play. Like I said these children differ; we have the excellent ones, we have the good ones, we have the average and the below average. We don't give them the same assessment because if we give them the same assessment, we are deceiving ourselves. We assess them based on what they can handle. (T10NG)

Similarly, T4NG stated that during an assessment, “the accepted method is written tests.” Notwithstanding, she “personally use[s] physical activities, play-way and oral assessments”.

T3NG indicated that in addition to assessing his learners continuously and regularly, his assessment is based on what the government requires for all learners. He added that he assists the weaker learners so that they do not get low scores.

They all do the same assessment I assess them generally...I give assistance to the ones that are not so good so that they don't have a bad score just to boost their scores that's why I give them special attention. For example, if it's during maths, I'll have to go to the learners and explain the process that they have to follow to arrive at the answer but for the others they know what to do. That is the kind of support I render. I assess my learners based on what I have taught them or I have given them in the class as classwork. There is a tablet given to us for teaching and assessment so whatever we assess our learners on is based on what is in the tablet. The tablet is given to us by the government. (T3NG)

According to T5NG,

In assessing learners in my classroom, I assess them through continuous assessment and at the end of the term they write their examination. At the end of

the sixth week, they write tests like twice in a term. The two special learners in my class what I do most times they learn by pictures, by what they see... or they can arrange the letters in alphabetical order. I will just display it for them to arrange them in alphabetical order. They also arrange numbers that is how I assess my special learners. The other ones I use continuous assessment and examination.
(T5NG)

In South Africa, T1SA stated that she aligns her assessment worksheets with the requirements of CAPS. She further stated that all the learners are required to attempt the same assessment worksheets. When she marks the worksheets and notices that some learners struggled with them, then she puts in more effort to teach the concept again. Similarly, T3SA, who is a Grade 1 teacher, stated:

We all have to do the exact same assessment. If the learner cannot write when you call him individually ... He wants to be more in a play mode than in the serious mode. We followed the curriculum. We follow the ATPs that they ask us to use, but for certain things we make it a bit easier for the children to understand. In Grade One, it's very hard for the children to read the questions on their own. So, we make it a bit easier for them by enlarging the assessments ... to make it bigger. Because a lot of these children are not used to small writing yet. (T3SA)

In addition to enlarging the size of the worksheets, the teacher expressed her concern regarding the amount of work the curriculum places on Grade 1 learners. Hence, they provide the learners with an intervention, individual support and homework. According to T3SA:

The Department expects us to teach all concepts. I think, and a lot of teachers think, that it is too much. If they allow us to break it down, then these children will grasp it better. What about the slow learners? When they are pushed too much it becomes too much for them to handle. If we shorten the amount of things, we have to teach it to be easier for us to assess them. In term one, how do you expect a learner to learn the time? Do you expect the learner to know capacity measurement? Still learning to write numbers from 1 to 5. That's still learning to write their vowel, so it is not easy for the child. Lots of them are small. We do repetition work and we do intervention. Work with them on a one-to-one basis, and we send extra homework home. (T3SA)

T2SA teaches in a Montessori school. She stated that she takes cognisance of her learners' abilities and interests during assessment.

I give them any option to present the work. I give them any option that as long as they still meet the criteria. Even if it is that I have to sit down with them, like a lot of the children who suffer with autism and stuff like that where they are not comfortable even doing a speech in front of a teacher. So, I'll just sit and ask them a few questions about it. Like, assessments in my classroom, its very child specific because I know that certain children are comfortable with certain things and some of are not. So, I try to be as accommodating as I can, but still within regulations of education or what they need to know at that age and what their capability should be, and ability should be at that age. (T2SA)

T5SA also agreed that assessment should be differentiated to align with the needs of learners:

Assessment should be a natural process. The learner should not be stressed because they are doing assessment. When you assess you see the gaps. In differentiation if the learner can't count then you can give them a paper to join the dots. And if they can join the dots then it's the same as the person that can count 1,2,3,4,5. So, if they can join the dots even though they are on the lower level. Some of the learners can talk to you, but they cannot put it on paper. Some of them, their eye-hand coordination is out. But with less kids, you can make magic. The assessment and rubric should meet the learners' needs. (T5SA)

Likewise, T10SA stated:

We do ongoing assessments. We do the cycle test at the end of each term but through the term there are different levels of assessment that takes place so if we see that a child is not coping with a certain form of assessment then we will try to approach it from a different angle and give it to them in a different format until we find something that actually suits them and then we go AHA!. Then it gives us a realistic indication of what they are actually capable of. You know that saying that if you want to judge an elephant's intelligence by its ability to climb a tree, they are going to be stupid. So, you cannot do across the board to the same assessment for every child in your class; it doesn't work that way. We just make sure that there are many opportunities with different forms of assessment. Whether it is verbal, whether it is written, or whether it is listening and speaking, we try and diversify as

much as possible because we all have different markers, we all have different things that catch our attention. T10SA

T8SA commented:

The grade one class has one or two learners that are still struggling to write properly. Then, we'll write the answers for them because otherwise we have they will fail, for they know what they're talking about they just have a problem reproducing it on paper. (T8SA)

T4SA stated that she assesses her learner with SEN differently from the other learners. According to her,

I cannot assess him the same way that I assess my other children. With the math I read for him, and then he does it, but with any reading related material, I will read for him. But he copies very well. I will tell him; you will draw me a story and tell me the story. If he has a written assignment that he has to read and write, then I will read to him because he listens; he learns from listening. I'll read to him, and then he would tell me this is a house, this is a tree house ... and then I will write for him. (T4SA)

However, when it comes to the other learners, “*they all do the same and the ones that cannot reach that standard you help and reassess until they do better*” (T4SA).

Question 4: How would you want to be supported and equipped by your school and the MoE to further enable you to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

The mainstream schoolteachers were asked how they would want to be supported to equip them further to differentiate their assessment to accommodate all learners.

In Nigeria, some teachers indicated that the primary support they need is the support of the parents, training and workshops. T9NG stated:

Firstly, we need assistance from the parents. Parents need to put in their own efforts. They should not leave them and say, 'I have sent you to school. Leave me alone; it is your teachers work.' From the school, we need someone to assist the teacher. Workshops and training are also important for the teacher and also for the parents. There should be a workshop to lecture the parents about those that are struggling how they can help them. There should be a seminar for the parents to

let them know that my child is not up to the learning capability of Child A. You need to take it slow and steady, miracles don't happen in a day. (T9NG)

Similarly, T8NG indicated:

The basic support we need it's from the parents. Most parents just want a miracle overnight ... like a child that came here unable to read ... we know that reading is a step-by-step thing. Some parents don't want to support like the child comes home and they should be able to say this is what you learned in class let me do my own bit from the home from. They just expect that's when their child comes to school the teacher should be able to perform the magic on the child. They don't want to play their own part. I remember a parent that complained it's the end of last year and I told them parents why not this and this book and by God's grace, when this child resumed this term he was really good. I had to tell the child that when you get home help me tell your mom thank you. It boosts the morale of the teacher to know that the parent is also involved in the learning of the child. You happy that you are not alone and what you are doing is appreciated. I think that is the basic support that we need. (T8NG)

T7NG emphasised the need for training and workshops on how to cater to learners with SEN and the need for support from the school. According to her,

I never knew that I would be in such a situation. We need training on mental health to know how to take care of ourselves because this thing is not easy. Imagine a child throwing tantrum, and then there's also a dyslexic child. It can be very frustrating and then you say God is my effort in vain? Teachers that have special needs children in their class need to go through training to know the best way to work with a child. Constant training to know that if the child has ADHD how to work with the child, the child with autism, how do you work with the child. Schools should not desert their teachers and say that they will find a way around it. To know how the teacher is doing and show support and be involved. Ask them how is it going in your class? Share the burden with the teacher, and you see that it will be less overwhelming for the teacher. Let the school be inclusive indeed and not just be about the money. (T7NG)

However, T4NG commented that “teachers [need] to be further trained in general child psychology and care of children with special needs.” She added:

The government should get experts in the field to identify kids with special needs and place them in schools specific for them. Even though it is not right to alienate

them, it also is wrong to mix them up with regular kids and assess them together, same way. We don't want children with special needs feeling they are failures.
(T4NG)

T10NG commented on the textbooks provided to the learners. According to her, *“the textbooks given to the children ... do not necessarily need them ... most of the textbooks cause more harm to the children”* (T10NG).

Thus, according to the mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria, the support they require includes parental support, support from the school, workshops and training on how to accommodate learners with SEN, textbooks that align with the needs of the learners, and identification and placement of SEN in special schools.

In South Africa, some of the teachers, such as T3SA and T5SA, emphasised the need for professional support by specialists such as psychologists. T3SA stated:

This is not only at our school but in most schools ... because in our district, we only have one psychologist, and there are lots of children that have a problem with learning...the psychology part that the kids need, we are not going to get it because there is only one psychologist. ... it is only one psychologist assigned to 250 schools, so by the time it reaches our turn, the learner has gone to other grades. How do we handle children that have learning disabilities? (T3SA)

In addition to the need for a specialist, T5SA added that parental support is important as *“the parents say we must hit them ... I can shout and scream, but they don't need that”*.

T2SA emphasised the need for a practical guide on how to accommodate learners with SEN.

A guideline that I can obviously, like, definitely stand behind and say that it does work if you have more time. Guideline that would give someone who has to deal with any even if it's one child who has a learning disability ... I think that there's a lot of emphasis placed on creating an environment that is, like, you know, accepting of all, but I don't think they give the practical skills on how to handle those children.
(T2SA)

T2SA further commented that she requires *“more training and workshops on how to help deal with children with certain learning disabilities ... I think, like, learning exactly, like, how to deal with them, like, what can you do? What can't you? Like, I feel like a*

more in-depth breakdown of that would help a lot of people, and it would help me a lot.” She added:

The need for a counselling system for teachers, but also kind of that. Like just like a space where you know. Because obviously, we as teachers; we can't just speak about this child or that child's problem and whatever and how it's impacted you. So, I would say, like emotional support as well as like obviously, the workshops.
(T2SA)

Question 5: What do you suggest needs to be put in place for assessment to be more inclusive to accommodate learners with SEN?

The FP teachers were asked to suggest ways to promote differentiated assessment in mainstream schools. Most of the teachers in Nigeria suggested that the curriculum be revised to accommodate the learners with SEN.

In addition to the curriculum being revised, T7NG emphasised the need for various methods of assessment:

The curriculum is all about writing and writing and writing. These children also need some practical. Many children with autism are often visual learners or kinesthetic learners. I feel like they need to update the curriculum to fit into 21st-century skills. Learning has evolved. The goal of every curriculum should be to build the 21st century skills, which are knowledge construction, critical thinking, collaboration, self-regulation ... In our lesson plan, let's be mindful of the awesome children. Assessment has gone beyond paperwork. There are several ways to assess children. You can assess them using [a]quiz you can access them through games. Whatever you do, you must make sure that the assessment is not overwhelming for that child. Make sure that the strategy you are using is effective. And it stimulates their interest and curiosity. Make it fun and you realise that progress is a process. (T7NG)

Similarly, T8NG stated:

Most of the children that have learning challenges ... There is no child there is a dullard. Is that a particular child needs, for example, the child I told you about likes music.....anything that has to do with music he is always there. It's just for us to know that this is how this child wants to learn. You know in our system, things have not been put in place to encourage these learners and every child's needs if we are going to be sincere. You know the different learning styles of children. Some

learn better when you use stories. But is it actually possible in our own system of education here in Nigeria? We are not yet there, but we believe that we will get there. If we were to get there, we will need to rewrite the curriculum from the beginning that is what I think is going to help. The educational system in Nigeria is too rigid. Something we can do maybe from the top. (T8NG)

Furthermore, T6NG commented on the need for “*instructional materials, a conducive learning environment ... a flexible curriculum and assessment to match the learner’s peculiarities and to curb discrimination in all spheres.*” T3NG believes that FP learners should be given more opportunities and time to practice at school and home.

Similarly, in South Africa, the teachers suggested ways to make assessments more inclusive. T1SA suggested parental support and assessing young learners individually.

It's always important to play with different strategies in the classroom. So, to accommodate the learners more. Communication with the parents is very important. Not changing the assessment, but either you do it one-on-one if you see it is too overwhelming for the child to do it on their own. Let's say we are assessing mathematics. Then I will tell the parents, prepare a bit for it at home, and then the child is also relaxed just to fill in the assessment when they come to school. (T1SA)

To reduce test anxiety, T2SA commented on the use of creative and diverse methods of assessment.

I feel like you need to be more flexible, and especially in this day and age ... But I feel like there's also methods especially, like Foundation Phase where you can, what's the word? You can alter that. So, and especially like to help with test anxiety and such because that's like a big thing with the Foundation Phases. They get too nervous to write tests and then they'll scribble some stuff. So, it's you, you can sit down with them and ask them more to like draw pictures and label the things ... if you can see that these kids are, like, more autistic, you try and play to their strengths of okay. For example, if they have to write out, like, grade 2 math, if they have to write out the numbers. Obviously, numbers into words. Then you can tell them to do it on a poster. There are different ways. I feel like with children especially with special needs and stuff like that, we need to make it more creative. (T2SA)

Likewise, T10SA suggested the use of technology to assess learners with SEN.

This is something that I instituted at the school I was teaching at when you see that children are not good at using their knowledge on paper, they are a little bit nervous

or scared to do an oral exam. This is something I have done because all children love computers they love games they love being on computers and technology So what I have done is with the special needs children or children with learning disabilities and they cannot deal with what is available, we can actually do a soft copy of the paper in a game form, and their children actually take it as they gain and they do very well so that will be an amazing thing if more schools can actually institute gaming as a way of assessment. (T10SA)

T8SA commented, *“Music and rhythm is also another way”*.

7.1 Conclusions

In this chapter, I presented the codes and biographical data of all the participants in the qualitative phase of the study. After that, I presented the data that emerged from this phase. I also presented the responses of the participants verbatim according to each question posed. In the following chapter, I combine and explore the results of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, thus offering a more comprehensive understanding of the contextualisation of differentiated assessment practices in Nigeria and South Africa.

CHAPTER EIGHT: INTEGRATION OF THE DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This chapter integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to the relevant literature and the conceptual framework. The purpose of adopting a sequential explanatory design for this study was to seek an in-depth understanding of the responses collected during the study survey and the analysis of the interview transcripts to expand and explain the survey data. Therefore, the presentation of the themes and categories involved integrating the quantitative findings with the qualitative findings of the study.

8.1 Themes and Categories

Thematic analysis of the data included aligning the data with the research sub-questions, which served as main themes. Through the responses of the participants in this study, the following themes and categories emerged from the data collected through the interviews, as well as the document data.

Table 8.1: Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of inclusive education	Sub-theme 1.1: Mainstream school context Sub-theme 1.2: Teachers' perception of inclusive education Sub-theme 1.3: Teachers' experience accommodating learners with special education needs
Theme 2: FP teachers' assessment practices in mainstream schools	Sub-theme 2.1: Teachers' assessment practices in the FP Sub-theme 2.2: Differentiated assessment strategies used in mainstream schools Sub-theme 2.3: Limitations
Theme 3: Teachers' support requirements to differentiate assessment	Sub-theme 3.1: Support mainstream schoolteachers receive to differentiate assessment Sub-theme 3.2: The support mainstream schoolteachers require to differentiate assessment
Theme 4: Contextual framework to promote differentiated assessment	Sub-theme 4.1: Teachers' views on promoting differentiated assessment in Nigerian mainstream schools

Sub-theme 4.2: Teachers' views on promoting differentiated assessment in South African mainstream schools

Sub-theme 4.3: Sharing best practices

8.1.1 Theme 1: Mainstream Schoolteachers' Perception of Inclusive Education

This theme corresponds with the first research question, which sought to investigate FP mainstream schoolteachers' perception of inclusive education. To comprehensively investigate this theme, it was further divided into subthemes.

The subthemes include Sub-theme 1.1, mainstream school context; Sub-theme 1.2, teachers' perception of inclusive education; and Sub-theme 1.3, teachers' experience accommodating learners with special education needs. The data sources under this theme were questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document data.

8.1.1.1 Sub-Theme 1.1: Mainstream School Context

Mainstream schools in Africa were established to foster an inclusive environment for all learners, addressing the continent's history of inequality and discrimination, where learners were segregated and educated based on race, socioeconomic status, and special education needs (Engelbrecht & Muthukrishna, 2019; Engelbrecht & Savolainen, 2018). Sen (1992, p. xi) argued that "human diversity is no secondary complication to be ignored, or to be introduced later on; it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality". Normalising and accepting the differences and diversity amongst learners are central to the capability approach in general and mainstream schools in particular. Sen (1992) further argued that individuals differ in three fundamental aspects. First, they have various personal characteristics, including gender, age, and physical and mental abilities. The quantitative findings of this study indicate that most teachers in Nigeria (86%) and South Africa (86%), agreed "a lot" that their learners differ in their cognitive abilities. The qualitative findings dug deeper into the contextual realities of mainstream schools' context. It was revealed that the learners progress in the curriculum at different paces as some learners require a more personalised teaching and assessment approach. In both countries, the learners further differ in interest, reasoning, personalities, and behaviour as "*they don't see things the same way*" (T7NG). Additionally, the South African context revealed the prevalence of linguistic and racial diversity with "*coloured children, black children,*

white children, and ... Indian children” (T10SA). These diversities are the realities that must be acknowledged in mainstream schools.

Second, Sen (1992) argued that they experience diverse external circumstances, such as socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural contexts. The findings affirmed this difference as 71% of teachers in Nigeria and 66% in South Africa acknowledged that their learners come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The qualitative findings in both countries further discovered that learners' socioeconomic backgrounds have a bearing on their academic achievement. In Nigeria, T3NG recounted an example of a learner who is used as a domestic worker and as a result, *“there's also no time for her to study”*. In South Africa, T5SA explained that some of her learners are from homes on hard drugs and social plans as they cannot afford a meal a day. *“So, it really influences their progress”* (T5SA). These findings are well-established in the literature as learners from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often perform worse on standardised assessments compared to their more advantaged peers (Liu et al., 2022; Perry & McConney, 2010). Therefore, teachers and learners must be supported to mitigate the negative effects of disadvantaged backgrounds.

Finally, and most importantly, Sen (1992) argued that individuals vary in their ability to utilise and convert resources into valued functioning (outcomes or achievements). The quantitative findings revealed that some of the mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria (42%) and South Africa (79%) cater to one or more learners with SEN. Some teachers (T7NG, T1SA) are accommodating and catering to learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and developmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder. Mainstream schoolteachers must recognise that learners' attainment of the learning outcomes cannot be evaluated based on the result of a standardised assessment which often acts as a discriminatory tool, particularly against learners with SEN. In this regard, Gardner proposed the need for assessment to be differentiated based on the theory of MI as learners demonstrate their knowledge and skills differently based on their dominant intelligence. Hence, differentiated assessment has been recognised as an invaluable resource in mainstream schools to promote equity and inclusion.

These findings imply that the contextual reality in mainstream schools is complex with the interplay of physical, social, educational and economic diversity. Mainstream schoolteachers should embrace and normalise these differences among learners to promote a truly inclusive and equitable environment for all learners. To achieve this, the DoE (2001) in South Africa identified two pillars, which include a process for identifying barriers to learning and establishing support needs to reduce these barriers and differentiation of the curriculum such that teachers can respond to diversity in their classrooms and schools (McKenzie, 2021).

8.1.1.2 Sub-Theme 1.2: Teachers' Perception of Inclusive Education

The Salamanca Statement of 1994 asserted that mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation “are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 45). Aligned with the capability approach, mainstream schools recognise that all learners have the innate potential to succeed irrespective of their differences in an inclusive environment (Andrews et al., 2020; Stofile et al., 2018). However, the quantitative data of this study revealed that fewer teachers in Nigeria (38%) and South Africa (35%) agree “a lot” that the inclusion of all learners, including those with SEN, in the classroom promotes quality education.

The qualitative data sought to excavate this view by delving deeper into the feelings and perceptions of mainstream schoolteachers regarding inclusive education. In both countries, the teachers commented that inclusive education can be overwhelming, frustrating, and challenging as some learners require more attention and time. This finding aligns with other studies conducted in Nigeria (Odebiyi, 2016; Oluremi, 2015; Olusodo & Farrow, 2021) and South Africa (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2020; Wahl, 2017). Literature suggests that most primary mainstream schoolteachers are not in favour of inclusive education due to factors such as heavy workload, poor classroom management, and demands on teachers' time to support learners. Often, these factors which influence the teachers' negative perception of inclusive education can be associated with insufficient support.

Inclusive education policies and frameworks, both internationally and nationally, have been established with a fundamental emphasis on interdisciplinary support (Frankel & Underwood, 2012). The capability approach argues that fostering equity and inclusion

in mainstream schools necessitates professional partnerships and collaboration. Lave and Wenger's (1991) community of practice further emphasise the critical role that support plays in inclusive education. A collaborative environment where teachers and relevant stakeholders can be supported and capacitated to implement inclusive education may promote a positive perception of inclusive education among mainstream schoolteachers.

The teachers (T8NG) in this study further indicated that with inclusive education, they are prone to focusing on the learners with SEN and neglecting the others “*and you can't just leave everything just for one child*”. Studies conducted in South Africa attest that mainstream schoolteachers are ambivalent to the practicality of inclusive education due to time constraints, as teachers consider time crucial to efficiency and effectiveness in covering the curriculum content (Hargreaves, 1994; Materechera, 2020). Thus, the lack of time and the feeling of not having finished one's work is a perpetual problem experienced by teachers (Materechera, 2020; Mpu & Adu, 2021). Learners who require more time are either left behind or seen as the pulling others behind in a bid by teachers to cover the curriculum content. Consequently, most teachers in this study believe that learners with SEN should be placed in special schools where they will be taught by special needs teachers. The capability approach recognises that every learner has the ability to learn, while Gardner's (1983) theory of MI reveals that learners possess different types of intelligence, each with its own way of understanding and processing curriculum content (Cavas & Cavas, 2020; Morgan, 2021). Mainstream schoolteachers might spend more time and effort trying to teach learners with SEN without an understanding of the capability and dominant intelligence of the learner. Moreover, Wray et al. (2022) and other scholars around the world have revealed in their studies that teachers' confidence levels, capacity, and skill in accommodating learners with SEN are significant in predicting their self-efficacy (Ahsan et al., 2012; Chao et al., 2016; Sokal & Sharma, 2014; Subban et al., 2021).

8.1.1.3 Sub-Theme 1.3: Teachers' Experience Accommodating Learners with Special Education Needs

The qualitative data sought to explore the teachers' experiences accommodating learners with SEN in their context. In both countries, some teachers (T2NG, T3NG, T7NG T8SA and T8NG) believe that although demanding, inclusive education should be encouraged as they have noted from their experiences that it is an advantage for

all learners. In Nigeria, T7NG stated from her experience that *“as time went by, I started seeing improvement. The other children became more tolerant.”* Similarly, in South Africa, T2SA revealed that *“So, in my experience, what I found is that the other kids do benefit from it. It acts as like a second leg for certain students who've already caught on to what we are busy doing or busy learning about during the day”*. This finding agrees with scholars such as Angwaomaodoko (2023) in Nigeria, who found that 57% of mainstream schoolteachers agreed that inclusive education improves the confidence and academic performance of learners with SEN. Additionally, 80% of the teachers believed that the social skills of learners with SEN improved while in an inclusive school. The finding further revealed that the inclusion of learners with SEN in a mainstream school does not negatively impact their more abled peers (Angwaomaodoko, 2023). Olusodo and Farrow (2021), also revealed that teachers saw the benefit of inclusive education for learners with and without SEN.

However, some teachers in both countries indicated from their experiences with learners with SEN that they should be placed in special schools. This study revealed that the teachers' first encounter with learners with SEN left them feeling incapable, as their formal education did not prepare them for these experiences. T7NG stated, *“I never knew that I would be in such a situation”*. According to T10NG, *“I don't have any experience with an autistic child ... I had to Google and make my research concerning that particular child”* (T10NG). These findings may denote that teachers' experiences accommodating learners with SEN vary according to their expertise, and prior experience. Several studies globally (Braksiek, 2022; Desombre et al., 2019; Scheer et al., 2015; Schwab et al., 2017; Yakut, 2021) have revealed that teachers' increased exposure and experiences with learners with SEN can increase their self-efficacy. In South Africa, scholars such as Engelbrecht and Savolainen (2018) and Malinen et al. (2013) also observed that teachers' experiences interacting with learners with SEN significantly influenced their perceptions of their self-efficacy, particularly in the area of collaboration. Only a few studies conducted in Nigeria indicated no significant difference between teachers' exposure to learners with SEN and their attitude towards inclusive education (Fakolade & Adeniyi, 2009; Olusodo & Farrow, 2021). Loreman et al.'s (2013) empirical findings revealed that when teachers' education programmes connected with practical experience, including an understanding of legislation and policy for IE, the teachers reported higher levels of self-efficacy for inclusion.

Furthermore, Parsons et al. (2016) noted that length of training improved self-efficacy for IE (more than 10 hours) and that those who had undertaken a university course in special education saw more significant gains. The research findings indicated that although South African teachers, in principle, support the justification of inclusive education on social grounds, they have serious doubts about their self-efficacy in its implementation, (Engelbrecht et al., 2013, 2015; Engelbrecht & Savolainen 2018; Makoelle 2012; Nel et al., 2014; Savolainen et al., 2012).

Additionally, some of the teachers (T4ND, T4SA, T5SA, T9SA) in both countries indicated that learners with SEN are prone to disruptive behaviour and are at risk of being discriminated against. In 2021, UNICEF revealed that compared with children without disabilities, children with disabilities are 47 per cent more likely to be out of primary school, and 41 per cent more likely to feel discriminated against. Although most countries, such as Nigeria and South Africa, have signed legal frameworks such as Article 24 of the CRPD, learners with SEN are still being discriminated against (Adelakun & Ajayi, 2020; Ngwena, 2013). Scholars in Lagos State, Nigeria, such as Egbedeyi and Babalola (2023), affirmed in their study of 35 FP teachers that most of them perceived the inclusive policy as unfeasible as learners with SEN would encounter stigmatisation and discrimination. Of concern is that if learners with SEN are discriminated against in mainstream schools, they are likely to be discriminated against in society. Thus, inclusive education must foster an environment that promotes acceptance, support, and accommodation for all learners, irrespective of their special educational needs.

The quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that most teachers in South Africa experience larger class sizes as a stressor in accommodating and catering to learners with SEN and thus plead for smaller classes. In addition to smaller class size, T3SA stated from her experience that insufficient facilities and resources make it difficult to accommodate learners with SEN. Several scholars in South Africa reiterated that insufficient human and infrastructural resources could impede the teachers' ability to implement inclusive policies and differentiate the curriculum, to which assessment is key (Andrews et al., 2020; Engelbrecht, 2020). The gap between the ideals of policy documents and the contextual realities mainstream schoolteachers face on a daily basis fosters negative perceptions and experiences in accommodating learners with SEN (Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Geldenhuys & Wevers 2013; Makoelle 2012).

8.1.2 Theme 2: FP Teachers' Assessment Practices in Mainstream School

This theme corresponds with the second research question, which sought to investigate FP mainstream schoolteachers' assessment practices. To comprehensively instigate this theme, it was further divided into subthemes. The subthemes include Sub-theme 2.1: Teachers' assessment practices in the FP, Sub-theme 2.2: Assessing learners with special education needs and Sub-theme 2.3: Differentiated assessment strategies used in mainstream schools. The data sources under this theme were questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis data.

8.1.2.1 Sub-Theme 2.1: Teachers' Assessment Practices in the FP

The quantitative finding revealed that less than 50% of the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa “always” consider the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use and design a variety of assessment tasks that allow learners to demonstrate learning. Moreover, 52% of teachers in Nigeria indicated that they “always” plan their class lessons and assessments in the same way for all learners. In South Africa, 64% of teachers use the same scoring rubric for all learners. The qualitative findings affirmed that in Nigeria and South Africa, most of the teachers support learners' writing the same assessment at the end of the term. T3SA stated that her learners all “*do the exact same assessment. We followed the curriculum. We follow the ATPs that they ask us to use*”. However, she added that she enlarges the font size of the assessment to make it easier for the young learners to see. Additionally, she provides her learners with intervention classes and additional work to practice at home when they do not perform well.

The reliance on written assessment was also emphasised in Nigeria. According to T9NG: “*They write the same exam questions and I follow the scheme. I don't base it on this one's ability or not. They should write what they know ... write it the way you understand it*” (T9NG). T8NG indicated that she prepares her learners for the examination as the learners will have to write their assessment independently of their class teacher because “*on the examination day, the teacher that taught the child will not be in the class ... We do not record or document our oral assessment. We only document the written assessment.*” Similarly, T4NG stated that during assessment, *the accepted method is written tests*. Notwithstanding, she confirmed, “[I] personally use physical activities, play-way and oral assessments”. In contrast, some teachers in

Nigeria and T8SA in South Africa commented that they allow their learners to demonstrate their knowledge orally. T8SA explained that, “... *otherwise, we have they will fail for they know what they're talking about they just have a problem reproducing it on paper.*” These findings suggest that Foundation Phase teachers' assessment practices do not consistently align with the diverse learning needs, abilities and interests of all learners which may limit their ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills optimally. Multiple intelligence theory guides teachers on effective ways to differentiate assessments without compromising the validity and reliability of the assessment.

The qualitative findings indicate that while learners receive the same assessment task, some teachers (T10NG, T7NG, and T6NG) differentiate the cognitive levels and difficulty of their assessments “*based on what they can handle*” (T10NG). T7NG indicated:

We use differentiated method[s] in their classwork. For example, if I have taught English and the English questions have questions one to three, what I do is that I differentiate it with higher achievers attempting questions one to three, the middle achievers may be Questions 1 to 2 and the low achievers may be Question 1. We reduce the quantity so that they are not overwhelmed. (T7NG)

Although the assessment strategies expected of teachers are not stated in the curriculum, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) concisely emphasised that “educational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalised by their being in whole not in part”. It implies that the attitude, interests, and skills will contribute to the decisions made by the teacher on each learner's knowledge and skills (Idowu & Esere, 2010). Most of the time, assessment is differentiated only in the cognitive domain using Bloom's taxonomy. Consequently, most teachers rely on written assignments (Ikenyiri et al., 2022). Gardner's (1983) theory of MI emphasises the importance of recognising and assessing a wider range of learners' abilities and skills through differentiated assessment. Learners in the Foundation Phase are often assessed on their numeracy, literacy, and general knowledge competencies. These assessments primarily focus on verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligence, which mainly involves left-brain functions and skills (Altan, 2020). It is therefore imperative that teachers present classroom assessments in a manner that engages most, if not all, of the intelligences (Altan, 2020).

In South Africa, some of the teachers (T2SA, T5SA, T10SA) commented that they take their learners' abilities into consideration and ensure that the assessment is learner-centred. In this regard, T2SA stated that she tries to be *“as accommodating as I can, but still within regulations of education or what they need to know at that age and what their capability should be, and ability should be at that age”*. T5SA stated that assessment in the FP should be a *“natural process. The learner should not be stressed because they are doing assessment”*. Some teachers commented that they differentiate their assessments to align with the needs of the learners. T10SA reported, *“Whether it is verbal, whether it is written, or whether it is listening and speaking, we try and diversify as much as possible because we all have different markers, we all have different things that catch our attention”* (T10SA). Young learners are often motivated to demonstrate their knowledge and skills when assessment engages their dominant intelligence and interest.

Additionally, some teachers in both countries (T1SA, T3SA, T3NG, T4SA, T5NG, T8NG, T9NG, T10SA and T10NG) emphasised that they assess their learners regularly and continuously to foster their understanding of the content taught. The teachers (T1SA, 3NG, T5NG) further indicated that during continuous assessments, they assess the weaker learners individually. One of them commented: *Those who are finding it difficult I bring them to my table, and I take my time to explain it to them again, and I make sure that they do one example before they take it home*. The NPE (2004), regarding continuous assessment, advocates that assessment should be diversified by incorporating continuous assessment of the learners' progress. The findings of this study suggest that more teachers have embraced formative assessment rather than relying unduly on summative assessment to assess their learners' competencies.

T3NG indicated that in addition to assessing his learners continuously and regularly, his assessment is based on the government requirements for all learners: *“There Is a tablet given to us for teaching and assessment so whatever we assess our learners on is based on what is in the tablet”* (T3NG). Lagos State Government launched an initiative called “Excellence in Child Education and Learning”, popularly referred to as EKOEXCEL, in December 2019 as part of the Transformation Agenda of the State Government. As the largest-ever eLearning effort in Africa, EKOEXCEL aims to empower teachers to use the EKOEXCEL tablet in their classrooms (Olujuwon et al., 2022). This initiative, amongst others, aims to transform teaching and learning in all

public primary schools through innovative technology and data-driven platforms in order to enhance learning outcomes in schools and teachers' content delivery (Olujuwon et al., 2022). However, the EXOEXCEL tablet has been criticised by some scholars. Teachers teach and assess whatever the tablet brings without the opportunity to display their ingenuity (Adewale, 2024). Some teachers affirmed that the available time is too short for the enormous task per section, especially for the slow learners. (Olujuwon et al., 2021).

8.1.2.2 Sub-Theme 2.2: Differentiated Assessment Strategies for Learners with Special Education Needs

The quantitative finding revealed that 48% of the teachers in Nigeria and 24% of the teachers in South Africa ensure that learners with special needs are “always” provided with accommodations on all assessment tasks. In this regard, there are learners with SEN who are not accommodated in mainstream schools during assessment. As a result, assessment practices have sometimes prevented individuals from gaining access to high-quality education and reaching their full potential (OECD, 2008).

The CRPD states that:

Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all learners of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing learners with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion (CRPD, 2016, paragraph 11).

Differentiated assessment is therefore imperative for learners with SEN to be included in a mainstream school to provide equitable opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Few teachers (T4SA, T7NG, T10NG) in Nigeria and South Africa indicated that SEN learners have the capacity to perform certain tasks. According to T7NG, “*The boy in my class, the one with autism, the boy is intelligent... Sometimes, he's able to answer questions that the higher achievers cannot answer*”. Similarly, T10NG commented regarding the learner with SEN, “*this boy is a blessed child, and he's good with calculations*”. In SA, T4SA commented that “*he is severely learning disabled but not stupid, he is intelligent. For math, he found ways to do math,*

and he does it well". These findings which are aligned with the capability approach indicate that learners with SEN have the capacity to demonstrate their learning when the assessment aligns with their abilities and strengths. If learners with SEN can find ways to learn, then there are ways for them to demonstrate their learning.

In view of the learners' intelligences, the teachers (T2SA, T5SA, T10NG) indicated that they differentiate their assessment based on the learners' strengths and interests. According to T10NG, *"You don't expect a child with autism to be involved in drama presentations. Another strategy is to identify their strengths. I don't expect a child with autism to be involved in debate so that that child does not become uncomfortable"*. In South Africa, T2SA agreed that *"a lot of the children who suffer with autism and stuff like that ... here they are not comfortable even doing a speech in front of a teacher"*. T5SA further explained, *"for learners that cannot count, then you can give them a paper to join the dots. And if they can join the dots, then it's the same as the person that can count 1,2,3,4,5"*. T5SA added that she assesses her learners with SEN orally. Likewise, T10SA, who is the HOD of the FP at the school, commented that when the teachers notice that the learner is not coping with a form of assessment, *"[There] are many opportunities with different forms of assessment. Whether it is verbal, whether it is written, or whether it is listening and speaking"*.

The theory of MI was developed based on Gardner's belief that intelligence is not only determined by one type of intelligence but rather by various intelligences possessed by individuals (Nulhakim et al., 2019). In 1983, Gardner explained that there are nine types of intelligence: spatial-space, linguistic, interpersonal, music, physical-kinesthetic, interpersonal and logical-mathematical., naturalist, and existential/spiritual (Nulhakim et al., 2019). In line with this theory, teachers must be equipped with differentiated assessment strategies suited to the needs of learners with SEN (Arboiz, 2022; Çoruhlu & Çepni, 2010). In the study conducted by Ernawati et al. (2019) on assessments based on multiple intelligences, the researchers found that using these assessment activities for young learners can enhance their learning and make them more active participants in the process. Additionally, teachers have admitted that young learners seem to enjoy the learning process through song, games, drilling, riddles, and so forth (Ernawati et al., 2019). However, Ernawati et al. (2019) revealed that a flexible curriculum is required as the time allocated for assessment was insufficient to do activities such as games and riddles. T4SA

explained how she draws on the strengths of the learners with SEN. She stated that although the learner with SEN is unable to read and write sentences, he learns by listening, and he is able to draw. Hence, she reads to the learner, and the learner is able to solve mathematical problems. Understanding each learner's learning style enables teachers to assess their progress better and make informed decisions about how to teach the information (Priyadarshini, 2015).

In synthesis, differentiated assessment is imperative in mainstream schools to promote equitable assessment opportunities for all learners as it utilises diverse assessment methods aligned with learners' strengths and dominant intelligence (Almeida et al., 2010). Differentiated assessment inform teachers about learners' competencies to foster the transfer of those competencies to curriculum domains and focus on gathering information which is relevant to the teaching and learning process (Almeida et al., 2010).

8.1.2.3 Sub-Theme 2.3: Contextual Limitations to Differentiating Assessment

The quantitative findings revealed that inadequate training programmes and workshops (44%) needed to equip teachers on how to differentiate their assessment to accommodate all learners is a major barrier mainstream schoolteachers face in Nigeria. Therefore, if mainstream schoolteachers are void of practical strategies on how to differentiate their assessments, they will not be keen to do so. This challenge may foster the dominance of the traditional approach to assessment, which many teachers may consider a familiar ground and a comfortable zone to dwell in. Mokhtar and Ghania (2018) investigated 156 primary schoolteachers in Algeria regarding their classroom assessment methods and practices. The study revealed that the teachers mostly used traditional assessment methods as they were skilled in it (Mokhtar & Ghania, 2018). Training and workshops on how to differentiate assessment based on the theory of multiple intelligence can help Foundation Phase mainstream schoolteachers create assessment activities that reflect learners' knowledge and skills.

In addition to inadequate training and workshops, the teachers in Nigeria (36%) indicated that they are limited by an inflexible curriculum and lack of support from a specialist (29%). A mainstream school must operate as a community of practice to enable the effective implementation of inclusive policies and pedagogies such as

differentiated assessment. Support personnel such as speech therapists, psychologists, and social workers are required in mainstream schools to assist the teachers and learners in daily classroom activities (Adeniyi & Olufemi-Adeniyi, 2024).

In South Africa, most (59%) of the teachers indicated that they are limited by the curriculum workload. This finding is consistent with many studies conducted in South Africa. Many teachers in diverse studies have reported that they are under pressure with the amount of content in CAPS that they have to cover within a short time (Ramabulana, 2017). The teachers have indicated that the available instructional time per week in some subjects is inadequate, especially when they have to attend to over 60 learners in a class. In the Western Cape Province, most of the teachers further indicated that they are often tempted to teach to assess because of the amount of work they have to cover regardless of the learners' mastery of the content (Kileo, 2017). Consequently, learners are unable to focus and unable to read and write. Likewise, Maharajh et al. (2016) found in their study in three primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal that the teachers perceived CAPS as burdensome due to the workload and large class sizes. Hence, FP teachers have noted that CAPS encourages teachers to teach fast learners, leaving slower learners to cope on their own (Du Plessis & Marais, 2015).

Mentions of this concern were followed by mentions of overcrowded classrooms with 54% and lack of support from a specialist with 45%. Recent studies have reiterated that many South African classrooms are overcrowded, with some classes having over 60 learners (Meier & West, 2020; Zenda, 2020). It has been established in literature that large classes may have a negative bearing on learners' equitable access to the curriculum and quality education. Young learners require a classroom environment where they can be seen, heard and understood by their teachers in order to be provided with the opportunities they need to flourish (Ramabulana, 2017).

8.1.3 Theme 3: Teachers Support Requirement to Differentiate Assessment

This theme corresponds with the third research question. The theme is presented under two subthemes. Sub-theme 3.1: Support mainstream schoolteachers receive to differentiate assessment and Sub-theme 3.2: Support mainstream schoolteachers require to differentiate assessment.

8.1.3.1 Sub-Theme 3.1: Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Receive to Differentiate Assessment

The quantitative findings revealed that more than half of the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa collaborate and receive support from their colleagues regarding assessment. However, fewer teachers in Nigeria (30%) and South Africa (17%) indicated that they are always provided with workshops and training from the SBMC/DBST on how to accommodate all learners during assessment. Of concern is that there are teachers in Nigeria (24%) and South Africa (13%) that have never/almost never received workshops and training on how to accommodate all learners during assessment. The findings reveal that FP teachers receive more support and collaboration from colleagues regarding assessment than from the MoE personnel.

Literature has emphasised the key role played by MoE such as the DBSTs in achieving inclusive goals (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). In 2001, South Africa's DoE published “White Paper 6: Special Needs Education” to establish an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001). This policy document set out a national strategy to achieve an inclusive education system and required the formation of DBSTs in all education districts to support teachers in addressing diverse learning needs (DoE 2001). Additionally, in 2005, the DoE released “Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: District-Based Support Teams” (DoE 2005), outlining the key principles for the functioning of DBSTs in an inclusive education system. These policy documents confirmed that the essential functions of the DBSTs are to promote classroom and organisational support, provide specialised learner and teacher support, and facilitate curricular and institutional development as well as administrative support. Despite the intensified roles and increased expectations placed on teachers since the inception of inclusive education in South Africa, the provision of effective formal support services from the DBSTs in schools remains a challenge (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). This dearth of support negatively impacts teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to address the demands and challenges inherent in teaching within inclusive classrooms (Makhalemele & Payne-van Staden, 2018; Mfuthwana, 2016; Mkwanazi, 2023).

Moreover, the SBMC in Nigeria serves as a mechanism that allows communities and schools to collaborate to improve school governance and enhance education authorities' management, ultimately aiming for better learning outcomes for children in

basic education schools (Maina et al., 2020; UBEC, 2011). The primary purpose of establishing SBMCs is to create stronger connections between schools and their communities (Pinnock, 2012; Maina, Mohammed & Adeola, 2020). While SBMCs have been implemented in numerous schools in Southern Nigeria, only a small number are known to have functioned effectively. Some research studies have documented the progress and success achieved by the limited operational SBMCs in Nigeria (Pinnock, 2012). In Nigeria, the MoE supports the functioning of SBMCs primarily through the Education Sector Support Programme. Development partners and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have also put considerable effort into enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of SBMC (UBEC, 2011). The SBMC requires the combined efforts and contributions of stakeholders involved in the process to work towards making the school systems inclusive and effective (Maina et al., 2020).

Mutual engagement is a vital element of a Community of Practice. It highlights the collaborative nature of the CoP where teachers and relevant stakeholders can work together to implement differentiated assessment (Mortier, 2020). Mutual engagement through training and workshops provides FP teachers with the opportunity to learn from their more experienced peers and other professionals. Teachers can also observe firsthand the various ways their colleagues differentiate assessment in the classroom settings (Slatter & France, 2018). As members of the CoP share their expertise, resources, and best practices, they collectively enrich their professional journeys.

8.1.3.2 Sub-Theme 3.2: Support Mainstream Schoolteachers Require to Differentiate Assessment

The quantitative findings revealed that most of the teachers (T2SA, T4NG, T7NG) in Nigeria (30%) and in South Africa (53%) are in dire need of training and workshops tailored to capacitate them to cater to learners with SEN through their assessment practices. Recent research done in Nigeria and South Africa indicated that while all participants claimed that they had undergone a mandatory module on special education, they viewed such training as inadequate since they believed it was confined to children with disabilities in special schools (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2014; Ekpoh et al., 2013; Obi & Ashi, 2016; Oladunni, 2020; Walton & Rusznyak, 2017). As a result, they were worried since they were not well informed on inclusive education or the

inclusion of children with various needs in mainstream schools, but instead on the structures of special education (Oladunni, 2020).

During the semi-structured interviews conducted in this study, several mainstream schoolteachers expressed their surprise at having to accommodate learners with SEN, as they had expected the learners would be in special schools. Many teachers also reported feeling unprepared for the realities of inclusive education. T2SA further commented on the need for a counselling system for teachers in the form of emotional support. Teachers need constant training to acquire knowledge and skills to differentiate their assessment to accommodate all learners. The training often received by the teachers rarely focuses on the pedagogical practices of teachers in mainstream classrooms, such as differentiating assessment (Engelbrecht, 2020; Engelbrecht & Ekins, 2017; Walton & Rusznyak, 2017).

The teachers in Nigeria (24%) further reported the need for the curriculum to be modified to acknowledge and accommodate the needs of learners with varied abilities during assessment. T10NG further commented on the textbooks provided to the learners as causing more harm than good. It is imperative to create an inclusive culture in the classroom by addressing the curriculum, which includes modifying the syllabus, textbooks, teaching and learning resources, as well as assessment to effectively cater to the diverse needs of learners (Julka, 2016). Juniar et al. (2021) argued that providing reasonable accommodation and support is vital for promoting the right to education for all learners, as outlined in Article 24 of the CRPD.

Many of the teachers in Nigeria indicated the need for other teachers who can cater to learners with special education needs and the identification and placement of SEN in special schools. Research studies conducted suggest that there is still a distinction between regular and special schools and teachers in Nigeria (Adeniyi et al., 2010; Oladunni, 2020; Olagunju et al., 2021; Oluremi, 2015). The qualitative findings in Nigeria revealed that the primary support the teachers (T8NG, T9NG, T10NG) need is the support of the parents. T9NG stated that *“parents need to put in their own efforts. They should not leave them and say, ‘I have sent you to school. Leave me alone it is your teacher’s work”*. Studies conducted in Nigeria have emphasised the role of parental support in learners’ academics (Ossai et al., 2020; Ugwuanyi et al., 2020). Parents must collaborate with teachers to provide their young children with the needed

support at home. In South Africa, some of the teachers, such as T3SA and T5SA, emphasised the need for professional support by specialists as there is an acute shortage of specialists such as psychologists. T2SA emphasised the need for a practical guide on accommodating learners with SEN, which is the primary aim of this study. This finding indicates that while learners with SEN have access to mainstream schools, they may not experience inclusivity and equity due to the teaching and assessment methods employed.

8.1.4 Theme 4: Contextual Framework to Promote Differentiated Assessment

This theme correlates with the fourth research question. The theme is presented under three subthemes. Sub-theme 4.1: Teachers' views on promoting differentiated assessment in Nigerian mainstream schools, Sub-theme 4.2: Teachers views on promoting differentiated assessment in South African mainstream schools, and Sub-theme 4.3: Sharing best practices.

8.1.4.1 Sub-Theme 4.1: Teachers Views on Promoting Differentiated Assessment in Nigerian Mainstream Schools

The Foundation Phase teachers in Nigeria recommended the use of audio-visual resources, games, and hands-on assessment activities. The teachers also recommended that assessment cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. In addition, learners should be provided with multiple ways to demonstrate understanding, allowing for flexibility and accommodations based on individual needs. These findings align with the theory of MI. Using audio-visual and hands-on assessment activities engages more of the intelligence of young learners compared to relying solely on written assessments (Arum et al., 2018; Hasan & Maemonah, 2024). Learners understand concepts better when they are provided with opportunities to see, hear, taste, touch, and feel the content taught and assessed. This sensory engagement provides a level of understanding that traditional written assessments often fail to achieve.

Furthermore, the Foundation Phase teachers recommended a reduction of the curriculum workload as they are concerned about the overwhelming amount of content they are required to teach and assess in a limited time. Delving deeper into the teachers' views on promoting differentiated assessment in Nigeria, the qualitative findings revealed a grave need for the curriculum to be revised to accommodate all learners including learners with SEN. T8NG is of the view that although they are aware

as teachers that there are learners who strive when assessment aligns with their abilities and interests, the educational system is too rigid to allow such modification. In reality, the developmental stage of young learners may not be adequately aligned with the structured curriculum used in schools. The time allocated for the mastery of each concept may not accommodate learners who require additional time.

The provision of special education teachers was also recommended. Mainstream schoolteachers may experience increased confidence in accommodating learners with SEN when supported by a special education needs teacher who possesses the requisite training. CoP provides teachers with opportunities to collaborate and partner with other stakeholders making the implementation of differentiated assessment possible and beneficial to all learners.

8.1.4.2 Sub-Theme 4.2: Teachers' Views on Promoting Differentiated Assessment in South African Mainstream Schools

In South Africa, the Foundation Phase teachers recommended that learners be grouped and assessed based on their abilities, as some learners find it challenging to cope with the DBE books. This finding suggests that the DBE workbooks often used to assess learners may not address the diverse needs of all learners. Moreover, grouping learners by their abilities could lead to a subtle form of segregation. Numerous studies have shown that some learners learn and demonstrate their learning more effectively when they are mixed with or paired alongside their more capable peers (González-Treviño et al., 2020; Herpertz, 2022; Mendo Lazaro et al., 2017). Differentiated assessment, on the other hand, does not categorise learners solely by their abilities but aligns assessment with their strengths and dominant forms of intelligence.

The teachers suggested providing specialists, such as psychologists and teacher assistants, to help accommodate all learners due to large class sizes. One teacher emphasised that the DBE needs to be more actively involved in the day-to-day operations of schools rather than just focusing on the paperwork submitted by them. Some teachers recommended eliminating written assessments for Grade 1 learners, as young children often experience anxiety which could limit their performance. T2SA commented on the importance of using creative and diverse assessment methods. Similarly, T10SA suggested incorporating technology instead of traditional paper-and-pencil methods to assess learners with SEN. She noted that learners with SEN are

often more motivated and engaged when assessments involve technology, as young learners are particularly fond of computers and games.

It is evident from the teachers' views on promoting differentiated assessment that there is a need for support and collaboration among stakeholders as proposed by CoP. The Foundation Phase teachers who are faced with the realities of accommodating all learners have acknowledged the need for assessment practices to be upgraded and aligned with needs of the learners to promote equity for all. The theory of MI challenges traditional one-size-fits-all approach to assessment which is discriminatory and unfair to many learners.

8.1.4.3 Sub-Theme 4.3: Sharing Best Practices

In Nigeria, it was discovered that technology has been introduced in public schools to aid the teaching and learning process. This innovation can be broadened to incorporate diverse forms of assessment rather than establishing traditional norms. The use of technology in Nigerian schools may foster the learners' interest and willingness to learn and demonstrate their learning as it could take the form of visual and audio-visual material, thereby stimulating the learners. Thus, the South African educational system should invest in technology to aid teachers in differentiating their assessment practices.

The document analysis revealed that South Africa has come a long way in modifying and adapting their curriculum to accommodate learners with SEN. There is a section in the CAPS document that indicates how assessment can be modified and adapted. Instead of the Nigerian curriculum segregating learners with SEN in the NPE, they can revise the curriculum to show the teachers how to adapt their pedagogues and assessments to accommodate learners with SEN in mainstream schools. South Africa has also established support systems such as the SBSTs and the DBSTs, which are saddled with the responsibility of supporting teachers and learners in mainstream schools. Additionally, these support systems constitute professionals such as psychologists. Support structures need to be in place in Nigeria, and teachers should not be left alone relying solely on experience and Google.

CHAPTER NINE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

In Chapter 8, I discussed and presented the integrated findings and discussions that emanated from the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study. Furthermore, I presented the findings in relation to the relevant literature and the conceptual framework utilised in the study. In this concluding chapter, I present the summary of the empirical literature and conceptual framework utilised in the study. Additionally, I present the summary of the study's findings and demonstrate how the study answered the research questions posed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.6). I also state my recommendations, which are hinged on the results of the study and make recommendations for further research, policy and practice. Thereafter, I present a differentiated assessment framework to promote its implementation and contextualisation in Nigeria and South African mainstream schools. Finally, the limitations of the study and conclusions are presented.

9.2 Summary of Literature and Empirical Findings

The section below provides an overview of both the literature and the empirical results from this research study. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the literature results, while Chapters 6 and 7 describe, analyse, and interpret the data.

9.2.1 Summary of Literature Findings

The evaluated literature included results on the establishment of mainstream schools in Africa, particularly in South Africa and Nigeria (see Section 2.2). Section 2.3 provided an overview of assessment in the FP; Section 3.2 described differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework; Section 3.3 discussed teachers' perceptions of differentiated assessment; and Section 3.4 discussed the support requirements for mainstream schoolteachers to assess student learning.

9.2.1.1 Findings Related to the Emergence of Mainstream Schools Internationally and Locally

There is consensus amongst several scholars about the definition of mainstream schools and its emergence around the world. International and national scholars agree that mainstream schools are founded and built on the principles of inclusion, social justice, human right, and equity (see Section 2.2). Mainstream schools are inclusive schools that seek to end the discrimination which was rampant in society based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic background and any perceived

difference which gives an individual an unfair advantage over their peers. Hence, the emergence of mainstream schools globally stemmed from the transformation of countries around the world to promote human rights and equity. Therefore, the study examined literature on international laws, frameworks and policies such as the UDHR (1948) (see Section 2.2.1.1), the UN CRA (1989) (see Section 2.2.1.2), the Salamanca Statement (1994) (see Section 2.2.1.3), and EFA (2000) (see Section 2.2.1.4). These international frameworks and policies were significant in the transformation of societies to embrace all and not just a privileged few. The policies stood as a voice for the previously marginalised and excluded in the society and by extension, those with SEN.

As revealed in literature, African nations embraced international policies and became signatories to most of the frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (see Sections 2.2.1.3 and 2.2.2). African nations further adapted inclusive laws such as the ACHPR and the ACRWC to suit the African continent (see Sections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2). Of note is that most African nations were oppressed and colonised before fighting for their freedom and human rights. The study further explored the extent to which some African countries have established mainstream schools and their commitment to promoting inclusive education, particularly, differentiated assessment. I presented literature findings on the implementation of inclusive education and the establishment of mainstream schools in Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, Angola, Malawi, and Tanzania (see Sections 2.2.2.3.1 to 2.2.2.3.8). Literature findings revealed that these African nations have made commendable strides in the enactment of inclusive policies and the establishment of mainstream schools. However, there are still gaps to fill. The cost of the effective functioning of mainstream schools includes restructuring the physical buildings of regular schools to make them accommodative and the training and retraining of regular teachers to become mainstream schoolteachers. Additionally, it was also expedient to modify the curriculum, instruction and more specifically, assessment to cater to the diverse needs of learners and promote equitable access to the curriculum. Support systems with a transdisciplinary team of professionals such as psychologists and therapists became expedient. Literature findings suggest that additional efforts and investments have been tailored toward making school building more inclusive such as the provision ramps for wheelchairs and braille machines for visually impaired learners. These findings may imply that more efforts are channelled

towards learners with physical disabilities which are a part of learners with special education needs. However, not much is known about differentiating the curriculum and assessment to accommodate and cater to all learners in mainstream schools. Inclusive policies that guide mainstream schools should be reflected in teachers' pedagogical practices, and they should foster access to the curriculum and provide learners with meaningful learning experiences (see Section 2.2.2).

I also examined the literature on the emergence of mainstream schools in the Nigerian context (see Section 2.2.3). I explored the laws, frameworks and policies that fostered the contextualisation of inclusive education and the establishment of mainstream schools in Nigeria. These laws included the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), Child Rights Act (2003), NPSNE (2015), National Policy on Inclusive Education (2016), Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) and the revised National Policy on Inclusive Education (2023) (see Sections 2.2.3.1 to 2.2.3.5). These policies revealed the commitment of the Nigerian government to ensuring that all learners are included and accommodated in mainstream schools. The recent inclusive policy recognises that learners learn differently, and the curriculum should be adapted to suit the needs of the learners. However, the policy does not specify how teachers can practically accommodate all learners in their classrooms. Consequently, if teachers are not shown and supported to implement inclusive policy, they might not be keen on its implementation. The literature findings also suggest that there are contextual barriers and limitations encountered by mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria such as negative beliefs and attitudes of teachers towards learners with SEN, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of effective support systems.

Literature on the South African context was also explored. Following the end of the Apartheid rule, the nation enacted laws and policies to transform society and the school system. Thus, the emergence of mainstream schools in South Africa was discussed by examining the Constitution of South Africa (1996), The SASA (1996), The NCSNET, the NCESS, the DoE, White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and SIAS Strategy (2014) (see Sections 2.2.4.1 to 2.2.4.5). Similar strides in the establishment of mainstream schools were found between Nigeria and South Africa. However, literature findings suggest that the presence of support personnel such as speech therapists, psychologists, and social workers are more prevalent in South Africa. This finding may

be due to the availability of a comprehensive document dedicated to education support services (see Section 2.2.4.3).

9.2.1.2 Findings Related to the Overview of Assessment in the FP

The FP is a vital Phase in the development of a learner. It is at this phase that learners are exposed to formal education and where they develop their interest in learning (see Section 2.3). Literature findings have established that learners come into the school environment with an intrinsic desire and curiosity to learn and explore their world. They are natural seekers and finders of knowledge (see Section 2.3). It is, therefore, imperative that the schooling system is structured to align and build on these abilities and skills. Additionally, learners in this phase have varied abilities and capabilities and are at different stages of cognitive development (see Section 2.3). It is also a phase where the learners develop their self-concept and perception of their abilities and competencies (see Section 2.3). FP teachers must take cognisance of their learners' strengths and prior learning and experiences to aid their access to the curriculum. In this regard, young learners should not be remoulded to fit into a structured assessment that does not align with their needs. Traditional approaches to assessment have been shown to heighten learners' anxiety levels, which may significantly influence their ability to demonstrate their mastery of the content taught. Moreover, the learners may lose interest in schooling and demonstrate negative emotions and behaviours as they may become overwhelmed with the undue demand and pressure to prove their competency in an unfair manner.

The literature shows that failure to differentiate assessment in the FP may negatively impact the learners. As reported in the reviewed literature, the primary purpose of differentiated assessment in the FP is to acknowledge and accommodate the range of physical, psychological, cognitive, and environmental differences among learners in the classroom (see Section 2.3.2). Differentiated assessment provides learners with equitable opportunities to demonstrate their learning optimally (see Section 2.3.2). In this regard, differentiated assessment in the FP aims to promote curriculum accessibility for all learners, including learners with SEN.

I further delved into the presented literature findings on an overview of assessment across Africa (see Section 2.3.1). The findings revealed that there is an undue reliance on assessment for grading and accountability purposes. Additionally, the use of

standardised summative assessment is also prevalent in primary schools with limited understanding and use of formative assessments. Evidence of the literature shows that teachers are accustomed to the use of written assessments. Other forms of assessments are largely absent (see Section 2.3.1). Moreover, assessments are mainly teacher-centred without due consideration to the diverse needs and abilities of the learners. The learners are left with a narrow path to demonstrate their learning. Hence, some learners are disadvantaged due to the teacher's assessment practices (see Section 2.3.1). Consequently, disadvantaged learners are labelled as slow learners and underachievers, and they are unable to flourish in mainstream schools. When teachers acknowledge that their learners are diverse and their diversity has a bearing on how they learn and demonstrate learning, the teacher's assessment practices can be geared towards accommodating these differences (see Section 2.3.1). Across Africa, the emphasis has been on the move from summative assessment only to the inclusion of formative assessment. However, literature has ignored the importance of making these assessments more inclusive to cater to all learners (see Section 2.3.1). Similar findings emerged from Nigeria.

I presented a brief history of the assessment policies and guidelines in Nigeria to gain a comprehensive understanding of the shift from the traditional approach to an inclusive approach to classroom assessment (see Sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.2.2, 2.3.2.3 and 2.3.2.4).

As noted in the findings on assessment across African countries, it was revealed that the major shift in the assessment policies and guidelines in Nigeria was the inclusion of formative assessment and the use of technology. However, it is not evident in the policies how this assessment and the use of technology can foster equitable practices in mainstream schools. Although the recent inclusive policy in Nigeria addresses the need for assessment to be inclusive, assessment policies are yet to be updated to align with the key tenets of inclusive policies (see Section 2.2.3.6). In South Africa, on the other hand, the assessment policies have been revised to align with inclusive policies such as White Paper 6 (see Sections 2.2.4.4. and 2.3.3.5). Of note is the inclusion of differentiated assessment in CAPS and the formulation of a guideline for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS (see Sections 2.3.3.4 and 2.3.3.6). These documents create an awareness to teachers on the diverse needs of learners and present ways to accommodate these needs during assessments.

Thus, Nigerian teachers will immensely benefit from a guideline that acknowledges the diversity of learners and suggest ways to differentiate assessment to accommodate all learners.

Irrespective of the strides that these countries have made in the formulation of assessment policies, there are still gaps in implementation. In Nigeria, the teachers have stated that the curriculum is not structured enough to differentiate assessment for all learners, particularly for learners with SEN. Hence, the traditional approaches continue to prevail. In South Africa, the teachers are concerned about the workload that the curriculum demands. Some teachers have further stated that CAPS is designed for 'fast learners' as young children require repetition and time to grasp certain concepts. In this regard, the teachers are often pressured to move on to the next content or skill as stipulated in the curriculum leaving some learners behind. Hence, FP mainstream schoolteachers are often caught in the dilemma of accommodating all learners and meeting up with the workload of CAPS.

9.2.1.3 Findings Related to Differentiated Assessment as an Inclusive Framework

Literature findings revealed the rationale for differentiated assessment in mainstream schools (see Section 3.2). The reality that an average classroom accommodates learners from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, races, and ethnic groups and with different physical abilities, cognitive abilities, and emotional and behavioural needs can no longer be ignored. In addition, learners vary in terms of their interests, developmental stages, learning profiles, and strengths, which may have a bearing on how they demonstrate their learning. To view learners as the same and to assess them the same way is to deny the prevailing reality in mainstream schools.

Differentiated assessment aligns assessment to the strengths, interests and learning needs of the learners. Empirical literature affirm that learners are better able to demonstrate their learning when they feel confident and motivated. Differentiated assessment also believes that learners have diverse forms of intelligence. It is expedient that FP teachers are equipped with the understanding of the intelligences present in their classroom to accommodate them. Evidence from literature show that by accommodating the dominant intelligence present in a learner, other intelligences can be developed. In this regard, learners' mastery should be gathered with a range of assessment tools. One assessment task is insufficient to make a conclusive

decision about a learners' ability. Many learners have been incorrectly labelled as low achievers due to their inability to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in a certain way. Differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework fosters learners' accessibility to the curriculum and quality schooling experience; it also promotes motivation and interest in schooling and promotes efficiency (see Section 3.2). In this regard, differentiated assessment seeks to eliminate diversity as a barrier and promote diversity as a resource for learning and equitable educational experiences.

The literature findings also revealed ways to differentiate assessment in the FP (see Section 3.2.1). It was found in literature that there are specific accommodations and adaptations for learners with SEN. Based on the needs of learners with SEN, they are provided with presentation accommodations, as well as response, setting and timing accommodations (see Section 3.2.1). However, to differentiate assessment for all learners and not only learners with SEN, assessment scholars have proposed that assessment should be differentiated based on learners' readiness, interest, and learning profile. Moreover, the findings of the literature revealed that formative and summative assessments should be differentiated for all learners in the classroom; otherwise, they can promote unfairness. Furthermore, misconceptions and assumptions about differentiated assessment were presented (see Section 3.2.2). A primary misconception is that it is not feasible for teachers to create different assessment tasks for each learner in the classroom. However, differentiated assessment scholars have argued that differentiated assessments do not refer to creating different tasks for all learners as most diverse learners' abilities and learning needs tend to fall within about three or four adaptable ranges.

Additionally, the emphasis on differentiated assessment is not on the provision of different tasks but on the provision for learners to demonstrate their learning optimally (see Section 3.2.2). Learners should not be disadvantaged based on their differences. When teachers understand their learners' readiness, interest and profile, they are better able to align their assessment practices to foster equitable practices. Furthermore, assessment scholars have argued that differentiated assessment must align with the specified objectives that have guided the instructional decisions, as well as the learning goals (see Section 3.2.2).

It was also revealed in the literature that differentiated assessment is misunderstood as providing learners with an unfair advantage. This misunderstanding has been clarified in the literature. Assessment scholars have demonstrated that inclusive education promotes equitable practices by levelling the playing field for all learners. In this regard, the removal of barriers to learning and learners demonstrating their learning should not be considered an unfair practice. The provision of ramps and wheelchairs for learners with physical disabilities does not give them an unfair advantage over their peers who can walk and use the staircase without assistance. The goal is to enable each learner to access the classroom without any barriers. Literature findings on the reliability and validity of differentiated assessment were also presented in Section 3.2.3. Differentiated assessment seeks to provide valid and reliable information about the learners' progress to inform further learning. It is imperative that inferences drawn from assessment data reflect the true abilities and skills of the learners.

9.2.1.4 Findings Related to Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Assessment

Literature findings suggest that there is a complex and multifaceted relationship between teachers' perception and their practices (see Section 3.3). It was found that there are several factors that may have a bearing on teachers' conceptualisation of differentiated assessment (see Section 3.3.1). Teachers' understanding of differentiated assessment depends on their level of understanding of its purpose and rationale in mainstream schools. The literature suggests that the assessment literacy of learners is relatively low.

Therefore, training and workshops are needed to reorient mainstream schoolteachers on the need to differentiate their classroom assessments. In addition, the prevalent assessment culture and expectations can shape teachers' conceptualisation of differentiated assessment (see Section 3.3.1). If the school community or the society where the school is situated is driven by the need to present learners' scores for accountability purposes, the teachers might conceptualise assessment as the accumulation of marks to know the high and low achievers (see Section 3.3.1). It was further found in the literature that teachers' conceptualisation of differentiated assessment may be influenced by their years of experience. The findings suggest that more experienced teachers may view differentiated assessment as vital to accommodate the diversity of all learners (see Section 3.3.1). Teachers' formal

training may also have a bearing on how they conceptualise differentiated assessment. If universities and colleges do not incorporate differentiated assessment as a course, several teachers may acquire their qualifications without the necessary knowledge and skills about differentiated assessment. Assessment policies and guidelines also have a bearing on how teachers conceptualise differentiated assessment. If assessment policies do not make provisions for assessment to be differentiated, teachers will continue to conceptualise assessment using traditional paradigms. Of note is that literature revealed that some teachers may conceptualise differentiated assessment as insignificant or unimportant in the learning process. Therefore, there is a need for teachers to undergo a paradigm shift in their understanding of differentiated assessment to foster its implementation.

In addition to teachers' conceptualisation of differentiated assessment, their assessment practices were also explored. Evidence from the literature suggests that Nigerian and South African mainstream schoolteachers have yet to embrace and implement formative assessments in their classrooms fully. It was found that the 70% weight allocated to summative assessment in Nigeria could have a bearing on teachers' undue reliance on summative assessment in their classrooms. Literature findings further revealed that teachers rely on one assessment task to evaluate the learners' level of mastery and skill. Nigerian and South African teachers are accustomed to the use of written assessments, which are commonly referred to as paper-pencil assessments. In this regard, learners are required to demonstrate their knowledge by writing the correct answers. Findings suggest that some learners might be disadvantaged with this mode of assessment, especially young learners with poor fine motor skills. Moreover, some teachers are unable to use assessment results to inform further learning. Evidence from the literature suggests that some teachers implement assessment as an event disconnected from the learning process.

Furthermore, findings from the literature revealed that contextual limitations such as large class sizes may have a bearing on teachers' assessment practices. Hence, it was discovered that some teachers use assessment scores as a disciplinary tool to maintain order in the classroom. The relationship between teachers' assessment practices and learners' academic achievements was explored in the literature. The findings revealed that when teachers' assessment practices take cognisance of the range of differences learners bring to the classroom, more equitable outcomes are

realised (see Section 3.3.3). Additionally, learners' interest and motivation to demonstrate their knowledge are found when the assessment is differentiated. However, literature on differentiated assessment in the Nigerian and South African contexts is scarce and almost non-existent.

9.2.1.5 Findings Related to Support Structures for Mainstream Schoolteachers to Assess Learning

It is evident in the literature that support structures can bridge the gap in the implementation of inclusive frameworks and practices such as differentiated assessment (see Section 3.4). Mainstream schoolteachers have to work collaboratively with support personnel and professionals. When teachers are left alone to accommodate and cater to all learners' needs, they feel overwhelmed and develop negative attitudes towards inclusive education and accommodating learners with SEN (see Section 3.4.1).

In Nigeria, the functions and roles of the SBMCs were explored. Evidence suggests the role of the SBMC is to provide community-based support to teachers and learners in the community. They are also saddled with the responsibility of improving learners' access to education and equitable schooling experiences for all learners, including learners with SEN. Additionally, the SBMCs are expected to review and update the curriculum and assessments to make it inclusive at all levels. The literature review revealed that although SBMCs have been established in many schools, their effectiveness has not been satisfactory. Findings on the support mainstream schoolteachers require from the SBMCs to implement differentiated assessments are almost non-existent. However, the literature revealed that the SBMCs monitor the activities of teachers in their classrooms to ensure adherence to inclusive policies and to provide the needed support to teachers. Additionally, they provide teachers with workshops and training to support their learners.

The role and functions of the DBSTs were explored in the South African context. The literature revealed that the DBSTs are interdisciplinary teams of experts such as LSEs, specialists in specific impairments, therapists and psychologists (see Section 1.9.4). Additionally, curriculum experts and government officials are part of the DBSTs. They are required to support mainstream schoolteachers and learners as specified in White Paper 6 and other policy documents related to inclusive education (see Section 3.4.4). Literature findings on the support mainstream schoolteachers require from the DBST

to differentiate assessment is also scarce. However, in the implementation of inclusive education, findings revealed that the DBST provide mainstream schoolteachers with workshops and training. In this regard, teachers have indicated that the workshops should be tailored to their needs and be followed up with hands-on practical support. In addition, the findings suggest that the DBSTs are more visible and effective in certain communities than in others. Additionally, the shortage of human resources, like psychologists and language therapists, within the DBST contributes to their ineffectiveness in some communities (see Section 3.4.5).

The lack of literature on the support provided to mainstream schoolteachers regarding differentiated assessment may imply that this phenomenon has not been given its deserved attention in Nigeria and South Africa. Although inclusive frameworks have been adopted in both countries, inclusive assessment has yet to attain a similar status as other inclusive policies.

9.3 Scientific and Emergent Findings Relating to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study comprised of three theories (see Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4). They include the capability approach by Sen (1992), which was used to evaluate the extent to which assessment policies and practices in mainstream schools are equitable. Gardner's theory of MI (1983) was utilised to investigate how differentiated assessment can promote equitable practices for learners with varied abilities. The CoP by Lave and Wenger (1991) was used as the lens to understand teacher support and professional partnerships. The conceptual framework was used in this study to investigate the phenomenon, analyse and interpret the findings, and answer the research questions.

9.3.1 Capability Approach

Within the context of this study, the capability approach was adopted as the lens to investigate the extent to which assessment policies and practices in mainstream schools are equitable and fair (see Section 4.2). Literature findings revealed the need for alignment between assessment policies and practices and the key principles of mainstream schools. Mainstream schools pledge to accommodate and cater to the needs of all learners by implementing the necessary transformation and restructuring to fulfil their pledges. However, it emerged from the literature that the assessment policies and guidelines in Nigeria are not aligned fully with inclusive policies that

embrace diversity. The matter of acknowledging the diverse needs of learners and providing equitable ways for the learners to demonstrate their learning is not visible in the assessment policies in Nigeria. Hence, it was not surprising that the literature on teachers' assessment practices did not refer to the extent to which they promoted equity in the classroom (see Section 3.3.2). The capability approach comprises three fundamental concepts: capabilities, functionings and differences (see Section 4.2).

Capabilities, as defined in the literature, are the abilities of learners to succeed when provided with the right opportunities. Mainstream schools acknowledge that every learner possesses the ability to learn when provided with the right support. In this vein, differentiated assessment is based on the belief that all learners can demonstrate their mastery when the assessment aligns with their abilities and strengths (see Section 4.2). The quantitative findings of this study revealed that 78% of mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and 55% of mainstream schoolteachers in South Africa strongly agreed that all learners can demonstrate their knowledge and skills when assessment aligns with their abilities (see Section 6.3). Hence, a learner's inability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills may be a result of the lack of equitable assessment opportunities in mainstream schools.

Functionings, as revealed in literature, refer to the attainments and what a learner is able to become or achieve. Literature findings revealed that learners are better able to flourish in mainstream schools when assessment accommodates their needs (see Section 4.2). Additionally, in this study, the quantitative data revealed that 80% of the mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and 82% of mainstream schoolteachers in South Africa agreed "a lot" that the needs of all learners must be accommodated during assessment. Hence, teachers' assessment perceptions and practices may foster and promote learners' attainments and achievements in mainstream schools. A difference, according to the capability approach, is the freedom a learner has to convert their capabilities to functionings. Evidence from the literature emphasises the need for mainstream schoolteachers to take cognisance of the learners' differences.

Differentiated assessment is based on the fact that learners have diverse interests, needs and learning profiles (see Section 4.2). The majority of the mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa acknowledged that most of their learners

come from different socioeconomic backgrounds and with different abilities and skills (see Section 6.3).

Literature findings revealed that the capability approach redefines the concept of disability and special education needs beyond a learner's physical or cognitive impairment and social barriers (see Section 4.2). The approach argues that a learner's disability is further shaped by their connections to the political, social, and economic structures. Hence, disability entails a lack or restriction in capability or functioning (see Section 4.2). However, the empirical finding of this study revealed that only 38% of mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and 35% of mainstream schoolteachers in South Africa agreed "a lot" that the inclusion of all learners, including those with SEN in the classroom, promotes quality education (see Section 6.3). This finding reveals that mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions and experiences of accommodating learners with SEN are not as positive as expected. Additionally, teachers have yet to accept the differences that exist amongst learners, particularly learners with SEN, as the new normal. Most mainstream schoolteachers still believe that learners with SEN are different and should be separated from their peers and placed in special schools.

According to literature findings and the empirical findings that emerged from this study, the implementation of inclusive frameworks, such as differentiated assessment, has been limited in mainstream schools due to several factors, such as large class sizes and lack of support (see Sections 2.2.3, 2.2.3.7 and 6.3). Additionally, the lack of a suitable curriculum and insufficient training and skill to accommodate learners with SEN limits teachers' ability to differentiate assessments. Furthermore, literature findings and the findings from this study revealed that some mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions and practices of assessment remain fixated on the traditional methods of assessment, which do not take cognisance of learner differences. Consequently, unfairness and inequality in assessment continue to prevail in mainstream schools.

9.3.2 Multiple Intelligences

Gardner's (1983) theory of MI was adopted to investigate how assessment can be differentiated to promote equitable practice. This theory is based on the notion that learners possess diverse forms of intelligence in varying degrees. Gardner opposed the view that there is one general intelligence, which is an inherent and unchangeable

trait that can be easily quantified (see Section 4.2). The theory of MI seeks to redefine the concept of intelligence and how teachers understand and assess the cognitive abilities of their learners. It is evident from the literature that for centuries, learners have been viewed as having the same type of intelligence and cognitive abilities. a (see Section 4.2). Consequently, learners were assessed mostly with paper and pencil to measure their cognitive abilities and to rank them according to the assessment results. This theory proposes that there are nine types of intelligences that learners possess to varying degrees (see Section 4.2). Additionally, these intelligences can be developed. The nine intelligences are: verbal, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist intelligence, and spiritual intelligence (see Section 4.2).

Evidence from the literature reveals that when teachers shifted their understanding of learners' cognition from the psychometric assumption to the theory of MI, they were willing to adjust their assessment practices. Further findings from the literature revealed that when assessment was aligned with the dominant intelligence of the learners, they were better able to demonstrate their mastery of the content taught. It was also revealed that when the dominant intelligence of learners was utilised in the teaching and learning process, the learners were able to perform better in subjects they were struggling with. In this regard, it was demonstrated in the literature that all learners in the class may not optimally demonstrate their knowledge when the assessment is based on verbal-linguistic intelligence., and others may not have the ability to demonstrate their knowledge optimally when the assessment is based on the logical-mathematics intelligence. However, by accommodating other intelligences, such as bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, learners may better demonstrate their numeracy and literacy knowledge. Moreover, literature findings have consistently demonstrated that many young learners learn and demonstrate their learning through play and movement.

The qualitative findings from this study revealed that some teachers in Nigeria (T7NG, T10NG) and South Africa (T4SA) acknowledged that the learners with SEN in their class possess a "different" form of intelligence from their peers. The teachers were amazed at the learners with SEN abilities to perform certain tasks (Section 8.1.2.2). Additionally, some of the teachers (T2SA, T5SA, T10NG, T10SA) indicated that they align their assessment tasks with the abilities of their learners with SEN. It was

revealed in this study that when a learner could not demonstrate their learning with a written assessment, provision was made for the learner to demonstrate their mastery orally. Of note is that some teachers in Nigeria (T6NG, T7NG, T8NG) commented during the semi-structured interview that the curriculum and assessment policies need to be revised to make provisions for differentiated assessment. A teacher (T7NG) stated that the curriculum is all about written assessments. Consequently, many learners are disadvantaged when assessments are narrowly designed and primarily based on one or two intelligences, such as verbal-linguistic and logic-mathematics intelligence (see Section 7.3). In South Africa, a teacher (T10SA) narrated her experience using technology to differentiate assessments according to the interests of the learners. T10SA assessed her learners with SEN by converting the assessment into a game.

In this regard, the literature findings and the empirical findings of this study revealed that differentiating assessment based on the theory of MI has immense advantages as the learners are motivated to demonstrate their knowledge and skills (see Sections 3.2.1 and 7.3). It was further revealed that assessing learners based on the theory of MI eliminates assessment anxiety, which often poses a barrier to young learners' ability to demonstrate their learning (see Sections 3.2.1 and 7.3).

9.3.3 Community of Practice

The CoP was adopted in this study to investigate the support requirements of mainstream schoolteachers in their implementation of inclusive frameworks, specifically differentiated assessment (see Section 4.3). CoP refers to a group of persons with common interests who come together to pursue a common goal or agenda. The founding theorist proposes that three key elements make up a CoP: having a joint enterprise (domain), mutual engagement (community), and a shared repertoire (practice) (see Section 4.3). Within the context of this study, the joint enterprise is the implementation of differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework to promote equitable practices in mainstream schools. Furthermore, mutual engagement in this study refers to the collaboration and engagement between support personnel and mainstream schoolteachers. Finally, the shared repertoire refers to the developments, new advances, and innovative ideas based on the mutual engagement between the mainstream schoolteachers and support personnel (see Section 4.3).

The literature findings on CoP suggest that without the effective presence of support structures in mainstream schools, the implementation of inclusive education will be significantly inhibited (see Section 4.3). Mainstream schoolteachers require a transdisciplinary team of experts to enable them to accommodate and effectively cater to the wide range of needs that learners come with. The CoP acknowledges that many variables have a bearing on learners' ability to learn and demonstrate their learning. Research findings reveal that learners' schooling experience may be inhibited due to their socioeconomic background, emotional and behavioural needs, traumatic experiences, and cognitive impairments. Hence, teachers have to collaborate with specialists and professionals such as psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, and curriculum experts to eliminate all possible barriers that impede effective learning (see Sections 1.9.4 and 3.4). Evidence from the literature revealed that mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa are dissatisfied with the level of support and collaboration from support personnel to implement inclusive frameworks. The role and functions of the SBMCs in Nigeria were investigated, while the role and functions of the DBSTs were investigated in South Africa (see Sections 1.9.4, 3.3 and 3.4).

Evidence from the literature suggests that studies on the support mainstream schoolteachers require, specifically in the area of differentiated assessment, are scarce and almost non-existent. However, based on similar research conducted on inclusive education and the empirical findings that emerged from this study, it was shown that teachers receive minimal support to differentiate assessments (see Sections 8.1 and 3.1). The quantitative findings from this study further showed that teachers receive more support from their colleagues in their school than from the district level. However, a few teachers in Nigeria (30%) and South Africa (17%) indicated that they are always provided with workshops and training from the SBMC/DBST on how to accommodate all learners during assessment. Conversely, some teachers in Nigeria (24%) and South Africa (13%) indicated that they have never/almost never received workshops and training on how to accommodate all learners during assessment. Regarding the support mainstream schoolteachers require from the SBMCs in Nigeria and DBSTs in South Africa to differentiate assessment, the empirical findings revealed that the teachers require parental support,

training and workshops, the need for special education teachers, a revision of the curriculum and specialists such as psychologists (see Section 8.1.3.2).

9.4 Summary of Empirical Findings

This section summarises the empirical findings presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. The findings reveal the extent to which FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiated assessment to accommodate and cater to all learners, including learners with SEN. Furthermore, the findings reveal the support the teachers require and get from the SBMC/DBSTs to differentiate assessments in their classrooms. Finally, the findings reveal how differentiated assessment can be contextualised in Nigeria and South Africa as an inclusive framework to promote equitable practices. The following sections are derived from the summative overview of the themes in this study.

9.4.1 Mainstream Schools in the Nigerian and South African Context

The empirical findings revealed that mainstream schools in Nigeria and South Africa accommodate and cater to diverse learners with diverse abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds (see Sections 6.3, 7.3 and 8.1.1). The findings further revealed that the learners in mainstream schools differ in interest, reasoning, personalities and behaviour. Additionally, the teachers commented that their learners progress at different paces, with some learners requiring additional support (see Sections 6.3, 7.3, and 8.1.1). The teachers acknowledged that the differences that exist among learners have a bearing on how they learn and demonstrate their learning.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that some of the teachers in Nigeria (42%) and South Africa (79%) are catering to one or more learners with SEN. Some of the teachers mentioned that they are accommodating learners with dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD and developmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder. Although some teachers indicated that they do not have learners identified with SEN, the findings revealed that the contextual reality in mainstream schools is complex with the interplay of physical, social, educational and economic diversity. In this regard, the definition of special education needs has been broadened to include learners faced with economic, social, linguistic, and psychosocial challenges.

This study also investigated the teachers' perception of inclusive education in mainstream schools. The findings revealed that mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa generally perceive inclusive education as challenging and

overwhelming (see Sections 6.3, 7.3 and 8.1.1). Moreover, the teachers commented on the need for mainstream schoolteachers to be patient and tolerant with their learners. It was further revealed that some teachers were concerned about the extra time and effort required by learners with SEN. Consequently, the teachers may focus more on the learners with SEN and neglect their peers. As a result, most of the teachers indicated that learners with SEN should be placed in special schools where they will be accommodated by special education teachers (see Sections 6.3, 7.3 and 8.1.1). Hence, it may be implied that many mainstream schoolteachers believe that learners with SEN should not be accommodated in mainstream schools.

Although most of the teachers preferred that their learners with SEN be placed in special schools, they noted from their experiences that inclusive education benefits all learners. Many teachers acknowledged that inclusive education comes with its challenges and undeniable gains. The findings revealed that the teachers' first encounter with learners with SEN left them feeling incompetent as their formal education did not prepare them for these experiences. The qualitative findings indicate that most teachers in South Africa experience larger classes as a stressor in accommodating and catering to learners with SEN and thus pleaded for smaller classes. In addition to smaller class sizes, it was also revealed that insufficient facilities and resources make it difficult to accommodate learners with SEN.

9.4.2 FP Teachers' Assessment Practices in Mainstream Schools

The empirical findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases revealed that fewer teachers in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools always consider the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use (see Section 8.1.2). Additionally, less than half of the teachers reported that they designed a variety of assessment tasks that allow learners to demonstrate learning (see Section 8.1.2.1) appropriately. It was also discovered that most of the teachers provide their learners with the same assessment task and use the same scoring rubric. However, there is also evidence that the teachers implement differentiated assessment. The teachers in both countries reported that they differentiated their written assessment based on the cognitive and difficulty level of their assessment task.

Aligned with Bloom's taxonomy, the teachers provide assessment tasks that encompass lower-order and higher-order thinking (see Section 8.1.2). Some learners

are allowed to complete assessments depending on their perceived capability. This finding implies that the traditional inclusive approach to assessment also still exists in mainstream schools. Moreover, differentiated assessment is wider in scope than differentiating the cognitive difficulty level of assessment items. Assessment should be differentiated based on the learners' interest, readiness and learning profile (see Section 3.2.1). Furthermore, the qualitative finding revealed that some teachers implement formative assessment, also known as continuous assessment. The teachers in both countries further indicated that during formative assessment, they assess the “weaker” learners individually.

With regards to assessing learners with SEN, the quantitative findings revealed that less than half of the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa ensure that learners with special needs are always provided with accommodations on all assessment tasks. Most of the teachers in both countries indicated during the qualitative phase that their learners with SEN can perform certain tasks when aligned with their strengths. Hence, some of the teachers in both countries indicated that they differentiate assessment for learners with SEN based on their strengths. Some learners are provided with oral assessment when they are unable to demonstrate their learning in a written form and vice versa. Fewer teachers in South Africa included that they allow their learners with SEN to demonstrate their learning by drawing. These findings imply that FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment mainly for learners with SEN.

Notwithstanding, the empirical findings revealed that the mainstream schoolteachers in both countries experience contextual barriers that pose a limitation to their ability to differentiate assessment. In Nigeria, most of the teachers indicated that their limitation is due to the inadequate training and workshops they have received on differentiated assessment. Hence, they are not equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to differentiate assessment. In addition to inadequate training and workshops, some of the teachers indicated that the curriculum limits them. The curriculum which guides the assessment practices of the teachers does not adequately provide for assessment to be differentiated.

Fewer teachers in Nigeria reported being limited by the lack of support from specialists, which may include psychologists, social workers and speech therapists. In South Africa, the contextual limitations experienced by the teachers in differentiating

assessment include the curriculum workload. The teachers commented that they are constantly under pressure to cover the content of the curriculum, leaving them with limited time to differentiate their assessment (see Sections 8.1.2.3). Additionally, the teachers reported that large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms without the due support from professionals and specialist limited their ability to differentiate assessments.

9.4.3 *Teachers Support Requirement to Differentiate Assessment*

Regarding the support that the FP mainstream schoolteachers in both countries require to differentiate assessment, training and workshops tailored to capacitate them to cater to learners with SEN was prioritised. Additionally, teachers in Nigeria reported the need for parental support and for the curriculum, textbooks and instructional materials to be revised to acknowledge and accommodate the diversity of all learners. Of note is the reference made by teachers in Nigeria for special teachers to accommodate learners with SEN. This finding may imply that although mainstream schoolteachers face the reality of inclusive education, they believe that special teachers must accommodate and cater to the needs of learners with SEN. In South Africa, some teachers reported that the workshops and training they receive from the DBSTs are not tailored to meet their needs. Hence, they requested workshops and training to address the challenges they face in their classrooms. Additionally, the DBSTs are short-staffed and unable to meet the demands of mainstream schools in the district. Consequently, some schools are left without effective support. Of note is that the teachers requested a practical guide on how to accommodate learners with SEN.

9.4.4 *Contextual Framework to Promote Differentiated Assessment in Nigeria and South Africa*

The teachers in Nigeria recommended the use of audio-visual resources in classrooms to implement differentiated assessment. Additionally, the teachers recommended the use of concrete objects and hands-on assessment tasks for FP learners. Most teachers suggested that assessment should cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain of learning. In addition, assessment should be flexible to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of the learners and provide them with diverse ways to demonstrate their learning. Continuous assessment for the learners and the provision of special education teachers were recommended. The

qualitative findings further revealed that there is a dire need for the curriculum to be revised to accommodate learners with SEN. Additionally, the teachers noted that the curriculum relies heavily on written assessment, which may pose a disadvantage to many learners with SEN, who are often visual or kinesthetic learners. It was also suggested that educational resources and instructional materials be provided to accommodate the needs of diverse learners.

To contextualise differentiated assessment in South Africa, the FP teachers recommended that learners be assessed according to their abilities, as the DBE books might be too challenging for some learners. The provision of specialists and teacher assistants to accommodate all learners, due to the large class sizes, was also recommended. It was further recommended that learners in Grade 1 should not be given written assessment tasks. Instead, young learners should be assessed individually to reduce test anxiety, which may have a bearing on their performance. The use of creative and diverse methods of assessment, such as the use of technology rather than paper- and pencil-based assessments, was recommended.

9.5 Research Question

The final conclusion of this study is drawn by answering the four sub-questions followed by the main research questions posed in Section 1.6.

9.5.1 Research Sub-Question 1

Research Sub-Question 1 was: What are the Perceptions of FP Mainstream Schoolteachers Regarding Inclusive Education?

The quantitative findings revealed that there is no significant difference between Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers' perceptions of inclusive education. The qualitative evidence revealed that the teachers in both countries perceive inclusive education as challenging and rewarding. With regard to the challenges, most of the teachers reported that accommodating and catering to the diverse learning needs of all learners in their classroom can be challenging and overwhelming. The teachers commented that inclusive education demands patience and tolerance. In addition, some learners, especially learners with SEN, may require additional time and effort from the teacher. The teachers are challenged with the demands of meeting up with the pace of the curriculum while ensuring that no learner is left behind. Furthermore, most mainstream schoolteachers believe that special

teachers are more capable and trained to accommodate and cater to learners with SEN. The teachers expressed their surprise when they were required to accommodate learners with SEN as they were not trained or prepared for it. Although the inclusive policies in Nigeria and South Africa state that learners with SEN should be mainstreamed, teachers are not trained and prepared to be mainstream schoolteachers. As a result, the teachers commented that learners with SEN are the responsibility of special teachers in special schools (see Section 8.1.1.2). They are trained to teach in “regular schools”, which are almost non-existent, as learners in mainstream schools are becoming increasingly diverse. Hence, many teachers commented on taking responsibility for educating themselves about SEN. Moreover, some teachers are of the opinion that learners with SEN are better accepted at special schools as they are prone to discrimination in mainstream schools. Some teachers also expressed their concerns regarding learners with SEN as they are sometimes prone to disruptive behaviour and poor social skills. Large class sizes were also reported by the teachers, especially teachers in South Africa, as an added stressor to inclusive education.

Despite the demands for inclusive education, most of the teachers in both countries perceive it as rewarding for all learners. Based on the teachers' experience of accommodating and catering to all learners, including those with SEN, the benefit of inclusive education becomes more evident with time and mastery. One of the benefits of inclusive education, according to the teachers, is that learners without SEN become more tolerant and accepting, while learners with SEN show improvement with time.

9.5.2 Research Sub-Question 2

Research Sub-Question 2 was: To what extent do Nigerian and South African FP mainstream schoolteachers differentiate assessment to promote equitable practices?

The empirical findings revealed some similarities and differences in the manner in which the teachers in Nigeria and South Africa differentiate their assessments. Evidence from the quantitative findings suggests that there was no significant difference between the countries' assessment practices in relation to considering the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use. Planning assessments should be the same for all learners, and learners' performance data should be used to inform instructional planning. The qualitative

findings confirmed these similarities. In both countries, most of the teachers relied on written assessments, and all the learners were required to complete the same written assessment task. In this regard, the learning needs or abilities of the learners did not have a bearing on the type of assessment utilised. However, the teachers differentiated the assessment items to include questions on the lower and higher order levels, which is commonly associated with Bloom's taxonomy. All learners are required to attempt the written assessment task and complete it according to their ability. Additionally, teachers in South Africa commented that learners who are unable to write their assessment task are given the opportunity to demonstrate their learning orally while the teacher writes down the answers. Additionally, the teachers in both countries commented that they use the assessment scores to inform their instruction. Learners with poor scores are provided with intervention classes and extra work to take home.

On the other hand, there were significant differences between the countries' assessment practices regarding their design of a variety of assessments, the use of the same scoring rubric for all learners, and the provision of accommodations for learners with SEN. The qualitative findings confirmed that some of the teachers in South Africa differentiate their assessment by designing a variety of assessment tasks that align with the needs of their learners with SEN. Although the teachers in both countries acknowledge that their learners have diverse forms of intelligence, fewer teachers in South Africa indicated that they differentiated their assessments to align with the intelligence and strength of their learners.

Most teachers in Nigeria rely on Bloom's taxonomy to differentiate the cognitive level of the assessment and assess the weaker learners individually to promote equitable practices. However, the teachers in South Africa differentiate their assessment for learners with SEN by aligning the assessment task with their abilities. In this vein, differentiated assessment is practised at a basic level in Nigeria and a fair level in South Africa for learners with SEN. The teachers acknowledged that their ability to differentiate assessments was limited by various contextual factors. In Nigeria, the teachers are not trained to differentiate their assessment, and the curriculum does not make adequate provisions for assessment differentiation. In South Africa, large class sizes, the curriculum workload and inadequate support from the DBST posed limitations.

9.5.3 Research Sub-Question 3

Research Sub-Question 3 was: What support do teachers in mainstream schools require and get to implement differentiated assessment in their classrooms?

The research findings indicate that the majority of teachers in Nigeria and South Africa collaborate with and receive support from their colleagues at their respective schools. However, only a small number of teachers receive support from the district level, such as workshops and training. To effectively differentiate assessments, teachers need training and workshops from SBMCs to equip them with the required knowledge and skills (see Section 8.1.3.2). Teachers in both countries expressed a need for emotional support and counselling, particularly when accommodating learners with SEN. Additionally, Nigerian teachers highlighted the importance of parental involvement, while South African teachers emphasised the need for professional support from specialists, such as psychologists. One teacher stressed the necessity of a practical guide on accommodating learners with SEN, which aligns with the main goal of this study.

Furthermore, teachers are seeking closer collaboration and partnership with the SBMCs/DBSTs to enable a better understanding of their needs and challenges. The findings indicate that the DBSTs are unable to provide effective support because they do not fully comprehend the teachers' struggles (see Sections 8.1.3.1 and 8.1.3.2). Mainstream schoolteachers need to feel understood and supported, knowing that they are not alone in addressing the diverse learning needs of their learners in their classrooms (see Sections 8.1.3.1 and 8.1.3.2). In this regard, teachers mentioned that they require DBSTs to be present in their classrooms to understand their challenges better and tailor their support accordingly. Furthermore, the findings revealed the need for the curriculum, textbooks and resources to provide a guide on how the teachers can differentiate assessment.

9.5.4 Research Sub-Question 4

Research Sub-Question 4 was: What contextual framework can be utilised to promote differentiated assessment in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools?

To promote differentiated assessment in Nigeria, the teachers suggested the utilisation of audio-visual materials, reduction of the curriculum workload, and the incorporation of technology and hands-on activities (see Section 8.1.4.1). The

teachers also highlighted the importance of assessing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of learning rather than focusing only on the cognitive domain. The teachers further emphasised the need to provide learners with diverse avenues to demonstrate their understanding (see Section 8.1.4.1). Assessment should accommodate and cater to the individual needs and preferences of the learners. Furthermore, the recommendations included continuous assessment and a pressing need to revise the curriculum to account for learners with SEN. The teachers also noted that the current curriculum heavily relies on written assessments, which disadvantage learners with SEN (see Section 8.1.4.1). Moreover, the teachers expressed the need for inclusive instructional materials. Additionally, there was a consensus among the teachers that learners in the FP need more opportunities and time for assessment (see Section 8.1.4.1).

In South Africa, FP teachers have recommended that learners be grouped and assessed according to their abilities, as some learners may struggle with the DBE books (see Section 8.1.4.2). They have suggested the provision of specialists and teacher assistants to accommodate all learners due to the large class sizes (see Section 8.1.4.2). Additionally, the teachers requested practical assessment activities to differentiate assessment. One teacher proposed that Grade 1 learners should not have written assessments, while another suggested individual assessment of young learners to reduce test anxiety, with an emphasis on using creative and diverse assessment methods (see Section 8.1.4.2). The use of technology instead of traditional paper and pencil assessments for learners with special needs was also recommended.

9.5.5 Main Research Question

The main research question was: How can differentiated assessment be contextualised as an inclusive framework for equitable assessment practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools?

This study sought to investigate how differentiated assessment can be contextualised in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools as an inclusive framework. The findings revealed that for differentiated assessment to be contextualised, the curriculum and assessment policies must align with inclusive policies. Evidence suggests that inclusive policies in both countries acknowledge the diversity that exists

among learners and the need for schools to accommodate and cater to these needs. In this regard, the curriculum and assessment policies must acknowledge the diverse learning needs of learners and provide diverse pathways for learners to demonstrate their mastery and skills. This finding aligns with the capability approach, which holds that policies should acknowledge that all learners can learn and demonstrate learning when assessment is aligned with their needs and their differences accommodated. The curriculum is a vital document that guides the perception and practices of teachers. Hence, revising the current curriculum and assessment policies will encourage teachers to implement differentiated assessments without feeling out of order.

Furthermore, effective support from educational stakeholders is fundamental in the contextualisation of differentiated assessment. Evidence from the empirical findings suggests that parental support and involvement are important. In addition, the findings revealed that teachers benefit from their colleagues by sharing ideas and strategies to accommodate and cater to their learners with SEN. Most of the teachers commented that they receive more internal support from their colleagues than external support. Notwithstanding the support that the teachers receive from each other, the role of external support structures such as the SBMC in Nigeria and DBST in South Africa cannot be replaced. Collaboration and partnership between mainstream schoolteachers and professionals such as speech therapists, psychologists, and social workers were highlighted as key. The findings revealed that when teachers are not supported in implementing inclusive frameworks, they feel overwhelmed and may develop negative perceptions about inclusive education. A major requirement from external support structures is the need for training and workshops. Many teachers indicated that they did not have any prior knowledge or training on special education needs, which had a bearing on their competency level in accommodating and catering to the needs of the learners.

Additionally, it is important to redefine the concept of intelligence and to understand reliable and valid ways of measuring learners' mastery and skills. Mainstream schoolteachers possess both the psychometric definition of intelligence and the inclusive definition of intelligence. While some teachers acknowledge that their learners have diverse abilities, personalities, interest and learning needs, their assessment practices do not adequately accommodate these differences. Hence,

intelligence is defined and measured based on learners' performance in written assessments.

9.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conceptual framework used, I present my recommendations in this section.

9.6.1 Recommendation for Policymakers: Alignment of the Curriculum and Assessment Policies with Inclusive Policies

There is a need for the curriculum and assessment policies to align with the realities mainstream schoolteachers face. The school curriculum is a dynamic and open document that is constantly changing with the needs, challenges and aspirations of the society. The curriculum guides the body of knowledge and skills that shape learners' values and development as functional members of society while being sensitive to global imperatives. It can be argued that the curriculum is as important to a school as the constitution, which guides the affairs of a country, is to a country, as the curriculum guides the activities and practices of teachers and shapes the learning experiences of the learners. Therefore, my first recommendation is to revise the curriculum and assessment policies to align with the key tenets and principles of inclusive policies.

It is, therefore, imperative to revise assessments that are embedded in the curriculum and assessment policies to ensure they accommodate all learners, regardless of their special needs, and provide equitable opportunities for them to demonstrate their learning. To achieve this, mainstream schoolteachers should be actively involved in the revision process and offer their feedback on the current curriculum and necessary changes. Teachers have reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content they are expected to teach and assess each term. As a result, they often find themselves in a race to complete the curriculum, while some learners are left behind.

The curriculum should also recognise the diverse intelligences of learners and incorporate various assessment methods, rather than relying solely on written assessments. For assessment to promote equity, it must provide equitable opportunities for all learners to demonstrate their mastery of the content. As stated in the CRPD (2016, paragraph 11), "placing learners with disabilities in mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to the curriculum and teaching and

learning strategies does not constitute inclusion.” Furthermore, I recommend that textbooks and learning resources align with the revised curriculum. Often, textbooks and workbooks are structured to favour logical-mathematical intelligence and verbal-linguistic intelligence. Therefore, learning and teaching materials should accommodate a wider range of intelligences and learning needs.

9.6.2 Recommendation for SBMC/DBST: Partnership and Collaboration between Mainstream Schoolteachers and Stakeholders

It is essential to foster effective collaboration and partnership between mainstream schoolteachers and support personnel at both the school and district levels to implement differentiated assessment successfully. The involvement and support of the SBMCs in Nigeria and the DBSTs in South Africa, as outlined in policy documents, could potentially enhance the contextualisation of differentiated assessment. However, the study's findings indicate inadequate support and collaboration between teachers and SBMCs/DBSTs. Moreover, the limited support provided was found to be inappropriate and not easily applicable in classrooms. Consequently, I suggest a platform for teachers to communicate the challenges they encounter in implementing assessment policies and the support they require. This approach will ensure that the training and workshops provided cater to the specific needs of both teachers and learners, including learners with SEN. Additionally, I recommend that the training and workshops be followed by consistent and structured hands-on support. The study emphasises the necessity of the physical presence of support systems in classrooms to deliver practical contextual support relevant to the teaching environment.

9.6.3 Recommendation for Teachers: Adequate Training and Workshops

The research suggests that mainstream schoolteachers hold conflicting views about inclusive education. The teachers' perceptions and experiences in accommodating diverse learners, including those with SEN, are influenced by their perceived abilities and skills. Many mainstream teachers believe that only special education needs teachers should accommodate and cater to the needs of learners with SEN, as these teachers possess specific training and qualifications. To address this issue, I recommend that formal training and workshops be provided to better prepare in-service teachers to accommodate all learners, regardless of their differences. This training should focus on inclusive education policies, laws, and frameworks, both internationally and locally, which support the inclusion of learners in mainstream

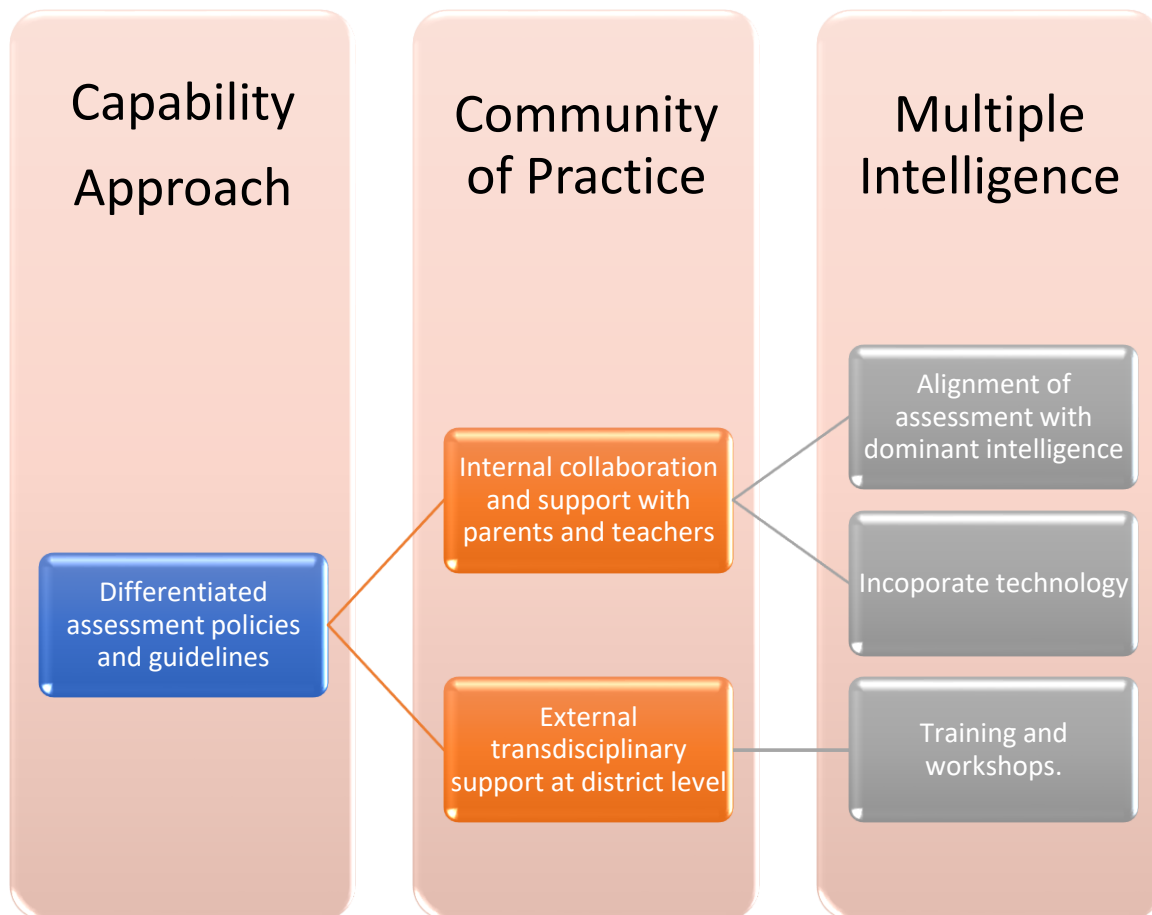
schools as a legal and social right. Furthermore, it is important to train teachers on the various types of diversity and learning needs among learners in mainstream schools. Some teachers are often surprised to find that a learner may not be at the same developmental stage as their peers. Additionally, the training should address myths and misconceptions about learners with SEN, such as the belief that they are incapable of succeeding or reaching their full potential. Importantly, teachers should be adequately informed about the support structures and personnel available to assist both teachers and learners.

The findings of this study also indicate that many teachers are unaware of effective strategies for accommodating learners with SEN in their assessments. Therefore, teachers need to receive training on differentiated assessment and practical methods to tailor their assessments to the needs of all learners, including those with SEN. This can be achieved by training teachers in the theory of multiple intelligences, helping them identify the dominant intelligence of their learners so that assessments can be aligned accordingly. Additionally, training should cover various assessment methods for young learners that engage their senses, readiness, interests, and individual learning profiles. Training and workshops for teachers should be ongoing and ideally held at the beginning of each academic term. These sessions should provide teachers with opportunities to share their challenges, expectations, and best practices with one another and the facilitators. It is important that mainstream schoolteachers do not feel isolated or ignored. Additionally, Ministry of Education personnel should participate in these trainings and workshops to offer necessary support and foster collaboration.

9.7 Framework for the Contextualisation of Differentiated Assessment (Izevbigie, 2024)

Based on the findings of this study, I have developed a framework for the contextualisation of differentiated assessment in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools. This framework integrates the three theories utilised in this study: the Capability Approach, Community of Practice, and Multiple Intelligences. I present a discussion of the framework below.

Figure 9.1: Framework for the Contextualisation of Differentiated Assessment (Izevbigie, 2024)



- **Capability Approach**

- **Differentiated assessment policies and guidelines**

The framework emphasises the need for assessment policies and frameworks to align with international and African inclusive legislations and policies of which most African nations are signatories. The capability approach redefines assessment as an inclusive and equitable tool that recognises and acknowledges that learners are different with diverse abilities and skills. The diversity among learners has a bearing on how they demonstrate their learning. Consequently, the implementation of standardised assessments in the Foundation Phase has been found to limit learners' access to the curriculum with results that do not reveal the true abilities of the learners. In this regard,

I argue that assessment in mainstream schools should be differentiated to accommodate all learners without giving an undue advantage over their peers.

- **Community of Practice**

- **Internal collaboration and support**

To bridge the gap between inclusive assessment policies and their implementation, I propose that mainstream schoolteachers should be internally and externally supported through a community of practice. A community of practice offers teachers the opportunity to support each other, share their expertise and experiences to implement differentiated assessment. In addition, parental support is required to promote home-school partnerships for the holistic development of the learners in mainstream schools.

- **External transdisciplinary support at the district level**

In both countries, it was revealed that external support systems such as the SBMC in Nigeria and the DBST in South Africa can promote the implementation of differentiated assessments. These external support systems constitute professionals and experts such as psychologists, therapists, social workers, specialised counsellors and community organisations. Hence, they provide interdisciplinary and community-based support to mainstream schoolteachers.

- **Multiple Intelligences**

- **Alignment of assessment with dominant intelligence**

To effectively differentiate assessments in mainstream schools, teachers must be knowledgeable the diverse intelligences present in their classrooms. This will enable their assessment practices to be more diversified to accommodate all learners and promote the paradigm shift from the traditional pencil and paper-based assessments to more equitable assessment practices.

- **Incorporate technology**

The incorporation of technology to differentiate assessment has shown promising results, especially for learners with SEN. Hence, mainstream schoolteachers in Nigeria and South Africa should be equipped with technological skills to accommodate, support and cater to the learning needs of their learners.

- **Training and workshops.**

I further propose through the framework, that teachers need continuous training and workshops on differentiated assessment. This will keep teachers abreast with the knowledge and skills to align their assessment practices with various learner intelligences in their classrooms.

9.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the findings of this study, this section discusses the recommendations for future research. The following recommendations are made for future research:

1. Investigate the perception and practices of mainstream schoolteachers in sub-Saharan Africa regarding differentiated assessment
2. Explore the extent to which the curriculum and assessment policies in sub-Saharan Africa promote equitable practices in mainstream schools
3. Examine the challenges and opportunities for the promotion of differentiated assessment in sub-Saharan Africa

9.9 Concluding Remarks

Nigeria and South Africa have made commendable strides in the implementation of inclusive education and the establishment of mainstream schools. However, many learners are still excluded from the benefits of inclusive education and marginalised from mainstream schools due to teachers' assessment practices that do not accommodate them. Hence, this study sought to investigate how differentiated assessment can be contextualised in an inclusive framework to promote equitable opportunities for all learners, including learners with special education needs. Data was gathered using a survey, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The finding revealed that teachers' assessment practices provided limited opportunities for differentiated assessment. In addition, teachers are unskilled and untrained to differentiate assessments effectively to accommodate all learners, including learners with SEN. Moreover, the lack of effective partnership and collaboration between mainstream schoolteachers and support structures further poses a barrier to differentiated assessment. Contextual constraints were also found to impede the teachers' ability to differentiate assessments. A framework was proposed to promote the contextualisation of differentiated assessment in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools drawing on the findings of this study.

REFERENCES

- Abba, U. M., & Rashid, A. M. (2020). Teachers' competency requirement for implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(3C), 60-69.
- Abdulumuni, Y. (2023). *Secondary School Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills in Nigeria* (No. 11220). EasyChair.
- Abduraheem-Mustapha, M. A. (2021). 4IR and Right to Education in Nigeria: Synergy between Legal Instruments and Stem Education. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*, 12(3), 2286-2295.
- Abedi, J. (2008). Classification system for English language learners: Issues and recommendations. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 27(3), 17-22.
- Adediwura, A. A. (2012). Teachers' perception of school-based assessment in Nigerian secondary schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 99-109.
- Adekunle, A. (2019). Emerging issues in the achievement of the mandates of the universal basic education programme in Nigeria. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(1), 15-26.
- Adelakun, O. S., & Ajayi, M. A. O. (2020). Eliminating discrimination and enhancing equality: A case for inclusive basic education rights of children with albinism in Africa. *Nigerian Journal of Medicine*, 29(2), 244-251.
- Adeniyi, S. O., Fakolade, O. A., & Tella, A. (2010). Perceived causes of job stress among special educators in selected special and integrated schools in Nigeria. *New Horizons in Education*, 58(2), 73-82.
- Adeniyi, S. O., & Olufemi-Adeniyi, O. A. (2024). Managing the Curriculum to Meet the Needs of Learners with Special Needs Education in Nigeria Rural Communities: Teachers as Critical Stakeholders in Inclusivity. In *Inclusive Pedagogy in Contemporary Education*. IntechOpen.
- Adewale, S. (2024). Is virtual learning still virtually satisfactory in the post-COVID-19 era for pre-service teachers? *Educational Technology Quarterly*.

- Adewumi, T. M., & Mosito, C. (2019). Experiences of teachers in implementing inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected Fort Beaufort District primary schools, South Africa. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1703446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2019.1703446>
- Adebowale, O. F., & Alao, K. A. (2008). Continuous assessment policy implementation in selected local government areas of Ondo state (Nigeria): Implications for a successful implementation of the UBE program. *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy*, 5(1), 3-18.
- Adeyemo, S.O. (2003). Evaluation of the Use of Continuous Assessment in State Joint Examination: A strategy for Good Academic Standard and Uniformity in Nigerian Primary Education. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*. 4(1).
- Adie, L., Stobart, G., & Cumming, J. (2019). The construction of the teacher as expert assessor. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(4)1-18.
- Adigun, O. T. (2021). Inclusive education among pre-service teachers from Nigeria and South Africa: A comparative cross-sectional study. *Cogent Education*, 8(1), 1930491.
- Afemikhe, A., & Omo-Egbekuse, J. (2011). Classroom assessment in secondary schools in Nigeria. *Educational Studies*, 12, 1-5.
- Agbenyega, J. S. (2008). Developing the understanding of the influence of school place on students' identity, pedagogy and learning, Visually. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 4(2), 52-66.
- Agbenyega, J. S., & Klibthong, S. (2014). Assessing Thai early childhood teachers' knowledge of inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(12), 1247-1261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2014.886306>
- Agundu, D. C., Njoku, C., & Okpala, O. L. (2024). Implementing school based management committee policy (SBMC) In Nigerian Secondary Schools For National Development. *Irish Journal of Educational Practice*, 7(3), 14-24.
- Agwu, P., Orjiakor, C. T., Odii, A., Onalu, C., Nzeadibe, C., Roy, P., Onjuwewe, O., & Okoye, U. (2022). “miracle examination centres” as hubs for malpractices in

- senior secondary school certificate examination in Nigeria: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 88, 102538. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102538>
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, 100051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>
- Ahsan, M. T., Sharma, U., & Deppeler, J. M. (2012). Exploring pre-service teachers' perceived teaching efficacy, attitudes and concerns about inclusive education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 8(2), 1e20. 2 http://www.wholeschooling.net/Journal_of_Whole_Schooling/articles/82%20Ahsan%20et%20al.pdf.
- Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: lessons from international experiences. *Nordic journal of studies in educational policy*, 6(1), 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587>
- Ajani, O. A. (2021). Curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) document: the challenges and limitations to its effectiveness in south african schools. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 11(3).
- Ajani, O. A. (2022). Exploring the teacher professional development activities: Perspectives of Nigerian high school teachers. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(6), 34-49.
- Ajuwon, P. M. (2008). Inclusive education for students with disabilities in Nigeria: Benefits, challenges and policy implications. *International Journal Of Special Education*, 23(3), 11-16.
- Alhassan, A. M. (2014). Teachers' implementation of inclusive education in Ghanaian primary schools: An insight into government policy and practice. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 1(2), 115-129. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.12.124>
- Ali, H. I. H. (2015). Toward differentiated assessment in a public college in Oman. *English Language Teaching*, 8(12), 27-36.

- Alkharusi, H. (2009). Correlate of teacher education students' academic performance in an educational measurement course. *International Journal of Learning*, 16, 1-15.
- Almeida, L. S., Prieto, M. D., Ferreira, A. I., Bermejo, M. R., Ferrando, M., & Ferrándiz, C. (2010). Intelligence assessment: Gardner's multiple intelligence theory as an alternative. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 20(3), 225-230.
- Alqahtani, A. (2023). *Saudi teachers' perceptions of accommodating diverse students, including those with special needs, in inclusive classrooms* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida).
- Altan, M. Z. (2017). Moral intelligence for more diverse and democratic world. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(3), 197-209. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.290617>,
- Altan, M. Z. (2020). Extrability and the theory of multiple intelligences as a phenomenon for an inclusive education renewal. *European Journal of Special Education Research*.
- Amucheazi, C., & Nwankwo, C. M. (2020). Accessibility to infrastructure and disability rights in Nigeria: an analysis of the potential of the discrimination against persons with disability (prohibition) Act 2018. *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*, 46(4), 689-710. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2018.1430685>
- Anastasiou, S., & Belios, E. (2020). Effect of age on job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion of primary school teachers in Greece. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 10(2), 644-655. doi:10.3390/ejihpe10020047
- Andersson, C., & Palm, T. (2018). Reasons for teachers' successful development of a formative assessment practice through professional development—a motivation perspective. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 25(6), 576-597.
- Andrade, C. (2019). The P-value and statistical significance: misunderstandings, explanations, challenges, and alternatives. *Indian Journal Of Psychological Medicine*, 41(3), 210-215.

- Andrews, C., Kakooza-Mwesige, A., Almeida, R., Swartling Peterson, S., Wabwire-Mangen, F., Eliasson, A. C., & Forssberg, H. (2020). Impairments, functional limitations, and access to services and education for children with cerebral palsy in Uganda: a population-based study. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 62(4), 454-462.
- Angwaomaodoko, E. A. (2023). The challenges and opportunities of inclusive education in Nigeria. *Path of Science: International Electronic Scientific Journal*, 9(7), 1001-1009.
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 5(2), 272-281 <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/256>
- Antonio, A., Mendes, G. M. L., & González, O. H. (2021). Special education policies in an inclusive perspective in Angola: context, advances and emerging needs (1979-2017). *Educar em Revista*, 37, e77723.
- Anyakorah, D. C., Oguejiofor, C. N., & Kasimanwuna, A. A. (2021). School-based management committee (SBMC) and management of junior secondary schools in Abuja, Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 22(1), 1-15.
- Anyanwu, S. U., & Iwuamadi, F. N. (2015). Student-centered teaching and learning in higher education: Transition from theory to practice in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(8), 349-358.
- Arboiz, A. C. (2022). Assessment strategies of teachers for learners with special educational needs in a regular classroom: A Phenomenological Inquiry. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(3), 8685-8691.
- Arimoro, A. E. (2019). Are they not Nigerians? The obligation of the state to end discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities. *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, 19(2), 89-109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1358229119846764>
- Armstrong, T. (1994). Multiple intelligences: Seven ways to approach curriculum. *Educational leadership*, 52(3), 26-28.

- Armstrong, T. (2000). *In their own way: Discovering and encouraging your child's multiple intelligences* (Revised and updated). Tarcher/Putnam.
- Armstrong, T. (2018). *Multiple intelligences in the classroom* (4th Edition). ASCD.
- Arum, D. P., Kusmayadi, T. A., & Pramudya, I. (2018, April). Students' logical-mathematical intelligence profile. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1008(1), IOP Publishing.
- Asenahabi, B. M., Busula, A. O., & Ronoh, R. (2019). A choice dilemma in selecting an appropriate research design. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Engineering & Technology (IJARCET)*, 8(8).
- Ashraf, H., & Zolfaghari, S. (2018). EFL teachers' assessment literacy and their reflective teaching. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(1), 425-436
- Asuru, V. A. (2006). *Measurement and evaluation in education and psychology*. Minison publishers.
- Ayaya, G., Makoelle, T. M., & Van Der Merwe, M. (2020). Participatory action research: A tool for enhancing inclusive teaching practices among teachers in South African full-service schools. *Sage Open*, 10(4), 2158244020963576.
- Ayeni, A. J., & Bamire, F. B. (2022). The role of school-based management and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Education, Teaching and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 2809-0489 (online).
- Ayodele, C. S. (2012). Transformation of continuous assessment scores among schools in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(26), 172-180.
- Azinar, J. A., Munzir, S., & Bahrin. (2020). Students' logical-mathematical intelligence through the problem-solving approach. In **Journal of Physics: Conference Series** (Vol. 1460, No. 1, p. 012024). IOP Publishing.. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1460/1/012024>
- Azuka, B. F. (2014). Assessment in primary school mathematics classrooms in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(30), 40-45

- Babatunde, E. G. (2015). Primary school environment trend, class-ratio and head teachers overcrowded classrooms management strategies in Northern Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(22), 4-9.
- Bakwai, B. A. L. A. (2017). Community participation in decision-making in North West Zone basic schools, Nigeria: The need for revitalizing school-based management policies. *International Journal of Topical Educational Issues*, 1(1), 49 - 62
- Banda, L. K. (2023). Inclusive education in private pre-primary schools in Lilongwe Urban City, Malawi: A case study. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 49(3), 328-338.
- Bandele, S. O., & Oluwatayo, J. A. (2013). Assessing assessment literacy of science teachers in public secondary schools in Ekiti State. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(28), 56-63.
- Bander, A. (2012). School-based management committee developments: challenges and impacts. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(6), 845-873
- Bandur, A. (2008). *A study of the implementation of school-based management in Flores primary schools in Indonesia*. University of Newcastle.
- Banks, L.M. & Zuurmond, M. (2015). *Barriers and enablers to inclusion in education for children with disabilities in Malawi*. Norwegian Association of Disabled.
- Barnes, N., Fives, H., Brighton, C. M., & Moon, T. R. (2019). Literacy teachers' beliefs about data use at the bookends of elementary school. *The Elementary School Journal*, 119(3), 511-533. <https://doi.org/10.1086/701655>.
- Barnes, N., Fives, H., & Dacey, C. M. (2017). US teachers' conceptions of the purposes of assessment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 65, 107-116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.02.017>
- Barnes, N., Gareis, C., DeLuca, C., Coombs, A., & Uchiyama, K. (2020). Exploring the roles of coursework and field experience in teacher candidates' assessment literacy: A focus on approaches to assessment. *Assessment Matters*, 14, 5-41.
- Bashir, K., & Mera, M. S. (2019). Refocusing assessment in education for peace and national security in Nigeria. *Journal of Teacher Perspective*, 14(1).

- Bazeley, P. (2018). *A Practical Introduction to mixed methods for business and management*. SAGE.
- Benko, S., Guise, M., Earl, C., & Gill, W. (2016). More than social media: Using Twitter with preservice teachers as a means of reflection and engagement in communities of practice. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 16(1), 1-21.
- Bennett, R. E. (2011). Formative assessment: A critical review. *Assessment in education: principles, policy & practice*, 18(1), 5-25.
- Bešić, E. (2020). Intersectionality: A pathway towards inclusive education? *Prospects*, 49(3), 111-122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09461-6>
- Bhana, D., & Moosa, S. (2016). Failing to attract males in foundation phase teaching: An issue of masculinities. *Gender and Education*, 28(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2015.1105934>
- Biddle, C., & Schafft, K. A. (2015). Axiology and anomaly in the practice of mixed methods work: Pragmatism, valuation, and the transformative paradigm. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 9(4), 320-334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689814533157>
- Biesta, G. (2021). Pragmatism and the philosophical foundations of mixed methods research. *SAGE Handbook Of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*, 95.
- Bipath, K., Tebekana, J., & Venketsamy, R. (2021). Leadership in implementing inclusive education policy in early childhood education and care playrooms in South Africa. *Education Sciences*, 11(12), 815.
- Birnie, B. F. (2015). Making the case for differentiation. The Clearing House. *A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 88(2), 62-65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2014.998601>
- Boland, R. J., & Amonoo, H. L. (2021). Types of learners. *Psychiatric Clinics*, 44(2), 141-148

- Bold, T., Filmer, D., Martin, G., Molina, E., Rockmore, C., Stacy, B., Svensson, J., & Wane, W. (2017). What do teachers know and do? Does it matter? Evidence from primary schools in Africa. *Does it Matter*.
- Bomia, L., Beluzo, L., Demeester, D., Elander, K., Johnson, M., & Sheldon, B. (1997). The impact of teaching strategies on intrinsic motivation. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.
- Booth, T., Ainscow, M. & Kingston D. (2006). *Index for Inclusion: developing play, learning and participation in early years and childcare*. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.
- Boparai, J. K., Singh, S., & Kathuria, P. (2018). How to design and validate a questionnaire: a guide. *Current clinical pharmacology*, 13(4), 210-215.
- Botha, J., & Kourkoutas, E. (2016). A community of practice as an inclusive model to support children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in school contexts. *International journal of inclusive education*, 20(7), 784-799.
- Braksiek, M. (2022). Pre-service physical education teachers' attitude toward, and self-efficacy in, inclusive physical education: Measurement invariance and influence factors. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109, Article103547. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103547>.
- Brando, N. (2020). Children's Abilities, freedom, and the process of capability-formation. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 21(3), 249–262.
- Brasfield, E. (2024). *Preparing 3rd Graders for addition & subtraction using differentiated instructional & assessment methods*. University of Nebraska Omaha
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Briggs, A. R. J., Coleman, M., & Morrison, M. (2014). *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Brinkmann, S. (2018). The interview. In *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 576-599). Sage.

- Brinkmann, S., Jacobsen, M. H., & Kristiansen, S. (2014). Historical overview of qualitative research in the social sciences. P. Leavy, (Ed), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 17-42). Oxford University Press
- Britannica (2022). *South Africa. History, capital, flag, map, population, & facts*
<https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Africa>
- Broderick, A. (2018). Equality of what? The capability approach and the right to education for persons with disabilities. *Social Inclusion*, xi, 29-39.
<https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v6i1.1193>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2011). Educational assessment knowledge and skills for teachers. *Educational Measurement. Issues and Practice* 30, 1, 3–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-3992.2010.00195.x>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2017). *How to use grading to improve learning*. ASCD.
- Brown, G. T. (2004). Teachers' conceptions of assessment: Implications for policy and professional development. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 11(3), 301-318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594042000304609>
- Brown, G. T. (2006). Teachers' conceptions of assessment: Validation of an abridged instrument. *Psychological Reports*, 99(1), 166e170.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2466/pr0.99.1.166-170>
- Brown, G. T. L. (2021). Evaluation in teacher training: An analysis of theoretical conceptions. In W. dos Santos & R. Stieg (Ed.), *Educational assessment in the development of teachers: Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Spain, England, New Zealand, and Uruguay*. Appris Editora.
- Brown, G. T., Andersson, C., Winberg, M., Palmberg, B., & Palm, T. (2024). Swedish teacher conceptions of assessment: a focus on improving outcomes. *Education Inquiry*, 1-21.
- Brown, G. T., Gebril, A., & Michaelides, M. P. (2019, March). Teachers' conceptions of assessment: A global phenomenon or a global localism. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 4, p. 16). Frontiers Media SA.
- Brydges, C., & Mkandawire, P. (2017). Perceptions and concerns about inclusive education among students with visual impairments in Lagos,

- Nigeria. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 64(2), 211-225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2016.1183768>
- Buckley-Walker, K., & Lipscombe, K. (2021). Validity and the design of classroom assessment in teacher teams. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-021-00437-9>
- Bujang, M. A., Omar, E. D., Foo, D. H. P., & Hon, Y. K. (2024). Sample size determination for conducting a pilot study to assess reliability of a questionnaire. *Restorative Dentistry & Endodontics*, 49(1).
- Burkett, J. A. (2013). *Teacher perception on differentiated instruction and its influence on instructional practice*. (Doctoral Thesis, Oklahoma State University). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/teacher-perception-on-differentiated-instruction/docview/1427918798/se-2>
- Bursuck, W. D., Munk, D. D., & Olson, M. M. (1999). The fairness of report card grading adaptations: What do students with and without learning disabilities think? *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(2), 84-105.
- Campbell, L. M. (2000). *The unspoken dialogue: Beliefs about intelligence, students, and instruction held by a sample of teachers familiar with the theory of multiple intelligences*. The Fielding Institute.
- Campbell, C. (2013). Research on teacher competency in classroom assessment. In J. H. McMillan (Ed.), *Sage handbook of research on classroom assessment* (pp. 71–84). Sage.
- Casely-Hayford, L., Seidu, A., Campbell, S., Quansah, T., Gyabaah, K., & Rukayatu, A. (2013). *The quality and inclusivity of basic education across Ghana's three northern regions: A look at change, learning effectiveness and efficiency: Research under the tackling education needs inclusively (TENI) project*. VSO.
- Cavas, B., & Cavas, P. (2020). Multiple intelligences theory—Howard Gardner. *Science Education in Theory and Practice: An Introductory Guide to Learning Theory*, 405-418.

- Chan, C., & Lo, M. (2017). "Exploring inclusive pedagogical practices in Hong Kong Primary EFL Classrooms." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(7), 714–729.
- Chao, C.N.G., Forlin, C., & Ho, F. C. (2016). Improving teaching self-efficacy for teachers in inclusive classrooms in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(11), 1142-1154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1155663.8>.
- Chappuis, J., Stiggins, R. J., Chappuis, S., & Arter, J. A. (2012). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right-using it well*. Pearson.
- Charter, A. (1990). *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. AU. Addis Ababa.
- Chen, J., Moran, S., & Gardner, H. (2009). *Multiple intelligences around the world*. Jossey-Bass
- Chibwe, F. (2021). Challenges Faced by Administrators in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Selected Primary Schools in Kitwe District. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 5(6), 319-324.
- Child Rights Act. (2003). *Concluding Observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, CRC/c/15/Add.61 30/10/96;
- Chimwaza, E. S. (2016). *Challenges in implementation of inclusive education in Malawi: A case study of Montfort Special Needs Education College and selected Primary Schools in Blantyre* (Master's thesis).
- Chirwa, G., Lingolwe, F., & Naidoo, D. (2021). An investigation of school-based challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in the primary schools in Malawi: A case study of four primary schools in Zomba district. *International Journal of Online and Distance Learning*, 1(1), 16-47.
- Chiziwa, W. K., & Kunkwenzu, E. D. (2021). Investigating teacher assessment practices in the teaching of social studies in Malawian primary schools. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(7), 480-495.
- Christie, P., & Lingard, B. (2020). *Teachers and schooling making a difference: Productive pedagogies, assessment and performance*. Routledge.

- Chung, L., & do Prado Leite, J. (2009). Non-functional requirements in software engineering. Conceptual modelling: foundations and applications. In A. T. Borgida, et al. (Eds.). *Mylopoulos Festschrift, Lecture notes in computer science*, Vol. 5600 (pp. 363–379). Springer-Verlag.
- Coetzee-Van Rooy, S. (2021). Being English in multilingual South Africa. *World Englishes*, 40(1), 98-120
- Cohen, C. P. (1989). United Nations: Convention on the rights of the child. *International Legal Materials*, 28(6), 1448-1476.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion. L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. (2017). Social inequality, power, and politics: Intersectionality in Dialogue with American Pragmatism. *Pragmatism and Justice*, 147-62.
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Understanding research: Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, 25 (6), 435-456.
<http://www.medsurnursing.net/cgi-bin/WebObjects/MSNJournal.woa>
- Cook, T. D., & Reichardt, C. S. (Ed.) (1979). *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation..*
- Cook, L. D., Thompson, C., Weaver, S., & Weaver, L. (2020). Mixed methods research: Exploring its complexities and challenges. *Caribbean Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 167-190.
- Çoruhlu, T. Ş., & Çepni, S. (2010). Reflection of an in-service education course program: Pedagogical content knowledge about alternative measurement and assessment techniques and attitude development. *Elementary Education Online*, 9(3), 1106-1121.
- Courtney, M., & McCutcheon, H. (2010). *Using evidence to guide nursing practice* (2nd ed.). Elsevier.

- Cowley, S. (2018). *The ultimate guide to differentiation : achieving excellence for all*. Bloomsbury
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The SAGE*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson.
<https://books.google.com.na/books?id=4PywcQAACAAJ>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage
- Creswell, J. W., & Tashakkori, A. (2007). Journal of mixed methods. *Sage*, 1(4), 303-308.
- CRPD (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). 2016. *General comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education*. CRPD/C/GC/4. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/GC/RighttoEducation/CRPD-C-GC-4.doc>
- Croll, P., & Moses, D. (2000). Ideologies and utopias: Education professionals' views of inclusion. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 15(1), 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/088562500361664>
- Dalkilic, M., & Vadeboncoeur, J. A. (2016). Re-framing inclusive education through the capability approach: An elaboration of the model of relational inclusion. *Global Education Review*, 3(3) 122-137.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1114861.pdf>
- Dankar, F. K., Gergely, M., & Dankar, S. K. (2019). Informed consent in biomedical research. *Computational and Structural Biotechnology Journal*, 17, 463-474.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csbj.2019.03.010>

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). Research on teaching and teacher education and its influences on policy and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 45(2), 83-91.
- Darmadi, H. (2012). *Kemampuan Dasar mengajar (Landasan Konsep dan Implementasi)*. Alfabeta
- Datta, P. (2015). An Exploration into the support services for students with a mild intellectual disability. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(3), 235–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2014.929185>
- Davis, K., Christodoulou, J., Seider, S., & Gardner, H. E. (2011). The theory of multiple intelligences. In Davis, K., Christodoulou, J., Seider, S., & Gardner, H. (2011). *The theory of multiple intelligences*. In RJ Sternberg & SB Kaufman (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence*, 485-503.
- Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: A discussion on its types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25-36.
- Daneshfar, S., & Moharami, M. (2018). Dynamic assessment in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory: Origins and main concepts. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 9(3), 600-607. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0903.20>
- De Boer, A., Pijl, S. J., & Minnaert, A. (2011). Regular primary schoolteachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: A review of the literature. *International journal of inclusive education*, 15(3), 331-353.
- Daniels, B. (2010). Developing inclusive policy and practice in diverse contexts: A South African experience. *School Psychology International*, 31(6), 631-643. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034310386536>
- Deneen, C. C., & Brown, G. T. (2016). The impact of conceptions of assessment on assessment literacy in a teacher education program. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1225380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2016.1225380>
- Deneen, C. C., Fulmer, G. W., Brown, G., Tan, K., Leong, W. S., & Hui, Y. T. (2019). Value, practice and proficiency: Teachers' complex relationship with assessment for learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 80, p. 39-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.12.022>

- DeLuca, C. (2012). Preparing teachers for the age of accountability: Toward a framework for assessment education. *Action in Teacher Education*, 34(5-6), 576-591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2012.730347>
- DeLuca, C., Coombs, A., & LaPointe-McEwan, D. (2019). Assessment mindset: Exploring the relationship between teacher mindset and approaches to classroom assessment. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 61, 159-169.
- DeLuca, C., LaPointe-McEwan, D., & Luhanga, U. (2016). Teacher assessment literacy: A review of international standards and measures. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 28, 251-272.
- DeLuca, C., Rickey, N., & Coombs, A. (2021). Exploring assessment across cultures: Teachers' approaches to assessment in the US, China, and Canada. *Cogent Education*, 8(1), 1921903. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1921903>
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa) (2011). Curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS): Foundation Phase Mathematics Grade R-3.
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa) (2012). *National protocol for assessment grades R – 12*. Pretoria: Government Printers. <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Policies/NatProtAssess.pdf>
Department of Basic Education
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa) (2014). *Policy on screening, identification and support*. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/sias-revised_final-comment.pdf
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa). (2015). *Education Statistics and School Realities*.
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa). (2017). *Responding to diversity In Grades R To 9: Practical approaches to English & Mathematics Curriculum Differentiation*. http://www.aut2know.co.za/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/DBE_Curriculum_Differentiation.pdf

Department of Education (South Africa) (1997). *Curriculum 2005: Specific Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Range Statements, Discussion document of the Ministerial Committee for Development Work on the NQF*. Pretoria: The Department of Education.

Department of Education (South Africa). (1998). *Assessment policy in the general education and training band: Grades R to 9 and ABET*. Government Gazette, no 19640.

https://books.google.co.za/books/about/Assessment_policy_in_the_general_educati.html?id=QJsIAQAAIAAJ&redir_esc=y

Department of Education (South Africa) (2000). *A South African Curriculum for the 21st century: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*. Pretoria.

Department of Education (South Africa). (2001). *Education White Paper 6: Special needs education: building an inclusive education and training system*.

https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/educ61.pdf

Department of Education. (South Africa) (2002). *Policy Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools)*.

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/GET/doc/overview.pdf?ver=2006-11-21-100143-000>

Department of Education (South Africa). (2005). *Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: District Based Support Teams*.

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Policies/Inclusive%20Education/Guidelines%20for%20District%20Based%20Support%20Teams.2005.pdf?ver=2016-04-16-203834-000>

Denecke, D. D., Kent, J. D., & Wiener, W. (2011). *Preparing future faculty to assess student learning*. Council of Graduate Schools.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The Research Act*, (2nd ed). Aldine. (3rd edn. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

- DeSantis, L., & Ugarriza, D. (2000). The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22, 351–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019394590002200308>
- Desombre, C., Lamotte, M., & Jury, M. (2019). French teachers' general attitude to ward inclusion: The indirect effect of teacher efficacy. *Educational Psychology*, 39(1), 38e50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2018.1472219>
- Dewey, J. (1931). George Herbert Mead. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 28(12), 309-314.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry*. Henry Holt.
- Dieleman, S., Rondel, D., & Voparil, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Pragmatism and justice*. Oxford University Press.
- Dixon, S. (2005). Inclusion—Not segregation or integration is where a student with special needs belongs. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET)/Revue de La Pensée Éducative*, 33-53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23767481>
- Dixon, R., & Roux, T. (Eds.). (2018). *Constitutional Triumphs, Constitutional Disappointments: A Critical Assessment of the 1996 South African Constitution's Local and International Influence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Donohue, D., & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.15700/201412071114>
- Doubet, K., Hockett, J. A., & Tomlinson, C. A. (2018). *Differentiation in the elementary grades : strategies to engage and equip all learners*. ASCD.
- Doyi, E. M. (2023). *The implementation of inclusive education with regard to curriculum transformation in the primary schools* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).
- Doyle, L., McCabe, C., Keogh, B., Brady, A., & McCann, M. (2020). An overview of the qualitative descriptive design within nursing research. *Journal of Research In Nursing*, 25(5), 443-455.

- Dreyer, L. M. (2014). Exploring collaboration between mainstream and learning support teachers. *Education as Change*, 18(1), 179-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2013.847018>
- Dreyer, L. (2017). Inclusive education. In L, Ramrathan; L, Grange & P, Higgs. *Education for initial teacher training* (pg. 383-400) Juta & Company.
- Drost, E. A. (2011). Validity and reliability in social science research. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 38(1), 105-123. <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.491551710186460>
- Dunn, R. & Dunn, K. (1993). Teaching secondary students through their individual learning styles: Practical approach for grades 7-12. Allyn and Bacon.
- Du Plessis, E., & Marais, P. (2015). Reflections on the NCS to NCS (CAPS): Foundation Phase teachers' experiences. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 10(1), 114-126.
- Du Plessis, E. C., & Letshwene, M. J. (2020). A reflection on identified challenges facing South African teachers. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 15(2), 69-91.
- Du Plessis, P., & Mestry, R. (2019). Teachers for rural schools—a challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39.
- Du Plooy, L., & Zilindile, M. (2014). Problematizing the concept epistemological access with regard to foundation phase education towards quality schooling. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 4(1), 187-201. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/problematizing-concept-epistemological-access/docview/2101887817/se-2?accountid=14717>
- Eboatu, V. N., Golu, J. A., & Ugwu, I. (2018). Assessment of school based management committees'(SBMCs') inclusion practices in secondary schools management in anaocha local government area of Anambra State, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education Studies*.
- Eburikure, O. J. (2013). Overcoming the challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria: A focus on South-South geopolitical Zone. *Journal of Exceptional People*, 2(3), 7.

- Eide, A., Khupe, W., & Mannan, H. (2014). Development process in Africa: Poverty, politics and indigenous knowledge', *AJOD* 3 (2), 1-6.
- Education International. (2021). report on the Global Status of teachers and the teaching profession. https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2021_ei_research_statusofteachers_eng_final
- Eduwem, J. D., & Tommy, U. E. (2021). School type and compliance with continuous assessment modalities in secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research Methods*, 8(1), 23-35.
- Egbedeyi, T. F. (2020). Teachers' knowledge of inclusive lower primary education in Ifako-ijaiye local government area of Lagos State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Emerging Issues in Early Childhood Education*, 2(2), 116-126.
- Egbedeyi, T. F., & Babalola, A. E. (2023). Availability and challenges of inclusive lower primary education schools. *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 3(2), 93-102.
- Ekpoh, U. I., Edet, A. O., & Nkama, V. I. (2013). Staff development programmes and secondary school teachers job performance in Uyo metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(12), 217-222.
- Ekuri, E. E., Egbai, J. M., & Ita, C. I. (2011). Teacher factors and perceived assessment practices needs of social studies teachers in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 23, 307-319. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-011-9129-z>
- Ekwueme, L. O., & Ajie, I. A. (2024). Implementation of inclusive education for Nigerian Children: Librarian's roles and challenges. *International Journal of Vocational Studies and Library Science*, 2(2), 35-46.
- Elder, B. C., & Kuja, B. (2019). Going to school for the first time: inclusion committee members increasing the number of students with disabilities in primary schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(3), 261-279.

- Elshawa, N. R. (2016). *English language instructors' assessment beliefs and practices in the Malaysian tertiary context*. (Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral Thesis). Universiti Putra Malaysia).
- Engelbrecht, P. (2020). Inclusive education: Developments and challenges in South Africa. *Prospects*, 49(3), 219-232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1095250>
- Engelbrecht, P., & Ekins, A. (2017). International perspectives on teacher education for inclusion. *The Wiley handbook of diversity in special education*, 423-444.
- Engelbrecht, P., & Green, L. (2001). *Promoting learner development: preventing and working with barriers to learning*. Van Schaik
- Engelbrecht, P., & Muthukrishna, N. (2019). Inclusive education as a localised project in complex contexts: A South African case study. *Southern African Review of Education*, 25(1), 107-124. <https://journals.co.za/journal/sare>
- Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2015). Enacting understanding of inclusion in complex contexts: classroom practices of South African teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(3), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v35n3a1074>
- Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Smit, S., & Van Deventer, M. (2016). The idealism of education policies and the realities in schools: The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(5), 520-535. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1095250>
- Engelbrecht, P., & Savolainen, H. (2018). A mixed-methods approach to developing an understanding of teachers' attitudes and their enactment of inclusive education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 33(5), 660e676. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2017.1410327>.
- Engelbrecht, P., Savolainen, H., Nel, N., & Malinen, O.-P. (2013). How cultural histories shape South African and Finnish teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: A comparative analysis. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(3), 305–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2013.777529>

- Engelbrecht, P., Savolainen, H., Nel, M., Koskela, T., & Okkolin, M. A. (2017). Making meaning of inclusive education: Classroom practices in Finnish and South African classrooms. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2016.1266927>
- Ernawati, E., Tsurayya, H., & Ghani, A. R. A. (2019). Multiple intelligence assessment in teaching English for young learners. *REID (Research and Evaluation in Education)*, 5(1), 21-29.
- Eyers, G. (2014). *Preservice teachers' assessment learning: Change, development and growth* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). The University of Auckland.
- Eyo, M., & Nkanga, E. (2020). Teachers' competence in identifying pupils with learning disabilities: A study in Nigerian primary schools. *Issues in Educational Research*, 30(3), 883-896.
- Fafunwa, A. B. (2004). *History of education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NPC Educational Publishers Ltd.).
- Fakolade, O. A., & Adeniyi, S. O. (2009). Attitude of teachers toward the inclusion of children with special needs in the general education classroom: The case of teachers in selected schools in Nigeria. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 10(1).
- Faleye, B. A., & Adefisoye, B. T. (2016). Continuous assessment practices of secondary school teachers in Osun State, Nigeria. *Journal of Psychology*, 4(1), 44-55.
- Fataar, A. (2000). Engaging the narrowing education policy trajectory in South Africa. *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production*, 6(1), 19-30.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1999). *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*.
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (2006). *9-Year basic education curriculum*. Lagos, Nigeria: NERDC.
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (2018). *Discrimination against persons with disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018)*

- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). National policy on education (Revised 1977/1981). UBEC.
- Federal Ministry of Education. (2012). *4-Year strategic plan for the development of the Education Sector (2011-2015)*. Nigeria: Federal Ministry of Education Publication.
- Federal Ministry of Education. (2016). *National policy on inclusive education in Nigeria*. (6th ed.). NERDC.
- Federal Ministry of Education. (2023). *National policy on inclusive education in Nigeria*. (7th ed.). NERDC.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2013). *National policy on education* (6 ed.). Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). *National policy on education*. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2015). *National policy on special needs education* (1 ed.). Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Feilzer, M. Y. (2024). A pragmatist approach to mixed methods research. In *Philosophical Foundations of Mixed Methods Research* (pp. 13-29). Routledge.
- Fehintola, J. O. (2019). *Assessment of challenges facing children with special needs in Oyo State. Dynamics of special education practice*. Department of special education, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Fernández-López, Á., Rodríguez-Fórtiz, M. J., Rodríguez-Almendros, M. L., & Martínez-Segura, M. J. (2013). Mobile learning technology based on iOS devices to support students with special education needs. *Computers & Education*, 61, 77-90.
- Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs—principles and practices. *Health services research*, 48(6pt2), 2134-2156.

- Fishman, D. B. (1991). An introduction to the experimental versus the pragmatic paradigm in evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 14(4), 353-36
- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Sage.
- Förster, N., Kawohl, E., & Souvignier, E. (2018). Short- and long-term effects of assessment-based differentiated reading instruction in general education on reading fluency and reading comprehension. *Learning and Instruction*, 56, 98-109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2018.04.009>
- Frankel, E. B., & Underwood, K. (2012). The developmental systems approach to early intervention in Canada. *Infants & Young Children*, 25(4), 286-296. <https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.0b013e3182673dfc>
- Fulmer, G. W., Lee, I. C. H., & Tan, K. H. K. (2015): Multi-level model of contextual factors and teachers' assessment practices: An integrative review of research. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 22, 475-494.
- Furuta, H., & Alwis, K. A. C. (2017). Teaching Students with Special Educational Needs in an inclusive educational Setting in Sri Lanka: Regular Class Teacher'View. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 19(2), 1-18.
- Gable, R. A., Hendrickson, J. M., Tonelson, S. W., & Van Acker, R. (2000). Changing disciplinary and instructional practices in the middle school to address IDEA. *The Clearing House*, 73(4), 205-208.
- Gajendrabhai, V. S., & Saini, B. K. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities for Inclusive Education of Persons with Disabilities. *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology*, XII(III).
- Gao, J. (2019). Credal pragmatism. *Philosophical Studies*, 176(6), 1595-1617. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-018-1081-z>
- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind. The theory of multiple intelligences*. Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st Century*. Basic Books.
- Gardner, H., & Hatch, T. (1989). Educational implications of the theory of multiple intelligences. *Educational researcher*, 18(8), 4-10.

- Gcelu, N. (2019). The effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration in preventing learner pregnancy in secondary schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa: Implications for leadership. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(3), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39n3a1650>
- Gebriel, A., & Brown, G. T. L. (2014). The effect of high-stakes examination systems on teacher beliefs: Egyptian teachers' conceptions of assessment. *Assessment in Education Principals. Of Policy in Practice*, 21, 16–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2013.831030>
- Geldenhuys, J. L., & Wevers, N. E. J. (2013). Ecological aspects influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(3), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.15700/201503070804>
- Genovesi, E., Jakobsson, C., Nugent, L., Hanlon, C., & Hoekstra, R. A. (2022). Stakeholder experiences, attitudes and perspectives on inclusive education for children with developmental disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *Autism*, 26(7), 1606-1625 <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221096208>
- Ghana Ministry of Education. (2003). *Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003–2015: Policies, targets and strategies (Vol. 1)*. Ministry of Education.
- Ghana Ministry of Education. (2015). *Inclusive education policy*. Ministry of Education, Republic of Ghana.
- Gibbs, A. L. (2018, July). Building a foundation in statistics in the era of data science. In *Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference on Teaching Statistics (ICOTS10)*.
- Gipps, C. (2012). *Beyond Testing (Classic Edition) Towards a theory of educational assessment*. Routledge
- Goldkuhl, G. (2012). Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research. *European journal of information systems*, 21(2), 135-146.

- González-Treviño, I. M., Núñez-Rocha, G. M., Valencia-Hernández, J. M., & Arrona-Palacios, A. (2020). *Assessment of multiple intelligences in elementary school students in Mexico: An exploratory study*. *Heliyon*, 6(4).
- Goodall, C. (2018). Mainstream is not for all: the educational experiences of autistic young people. *Disability & Society*, 33(10), 1661-1665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1529258>
- Gore, C. (1997). Irreducibly social goods and the informational basis of Amartya Sen's capability approach. *Journal of International Development*, 9(2), 235-250.
- Gottlieb, M. (2006). *Assessing English language learners: Bridges from language proficiency to academic achievement*. Corwin Press.
- Graham, L. J., White, S. L. J., Cologon, K., & Pianta, R. C. (2020). Do teachers' years of experience make a difference in the quality of teaching? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 96, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103190>
- Greaves, K. (2019). *Exploring teachers' emotions: narratives of teachers teaching learners with disabilities in an independent preparatory school* (Doctoral dissertation, University of UKZN) dspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/17751
- Greco, L. M., O'Boyle, E. H., Cockburn, B. S., & Yuan, Z. (2018). Meta-analysis of coefficient alpha: A reliability generalization study. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55(4), 583-618. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12328>
- Greene, J. C., & Hall, J. N. (2010). Dialectics and pragmatism: Being of consequence. *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*, 119-144.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communications and Technology Journal*, 29, 75-92.
- Guetterman, T. C., & Fetters, M. D. (2018). Two methodological approaches to the integration of mixed methods and case study designs: A systematic review. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(7), 900-918.
- Guild, P. B. (2001). Diversity, Learning Style and Culture. New Horizons for Learning. Retrieved from <http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/Learning%20Styles/diversity.html>

- Guralnick, M. J. (2008). International perspectives on early intervention: A search for common ground. *Journal of early intervention, 30*(2), 90-101.
- Gürkan, T., Dincer, C., and Cabuk, B. (2019). Integrating Multiple Intelligences into Daily Plansa Preschool Example. *Turkish Online Journal of Quality Inquiry, 10*, 321–345. <https://doi.org/10.35235/uicd.646975>
- Hager, A. E. A., & Inko-Tariah, D. C. (2021). An investigation of secondary school teachers' assessment literacy in Rivers-East senatorial district, Nigeria: Implication for classroom assessment. *Saudi Journal of Humanities Social Sciences, 6*(7), 212-219.
- Hajjar, S. T. (2018). Statistical analysis: Internal-consistency reliability and construct validity. *International Journal of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods, 6*(1), 27-38.
- Hali, N. I. (2017). The actualization of literary learning model based on verbal-linguistic intelligence. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, 5*(4), 42-48.
- Handayani, R., Sakkir, G., & Kasman, R. (2021). The influence of verbal-linguistic intelligence on students learning outcomes in English at SMA Negeri 1 Sidrap. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation, 1*(2), 141-148.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. London: Cassell.
- Hart, C. S., & Brando, N. (2018). A capability approach to children's well-being, agency and participatory rights in education. *European Journal of Education, 53*(3), 293–309
- Hartmann, E. (2015). Universal design for learning (UDL) and learners with severe support needs. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 11*(1), 54-67.
- Harvey, J., Dodd, D., Deegan, C., Freeman, O., MacMahon, C. H., & Williams, H. (2021). Cultivating a Community of Practice model to support and encourage innovative T&L practices to engage practitioners and enhance student success. *Irish Journal of Academic Practice, 9*(2), 3. <https://doi.org/10.21427/8TG2-QF02>

- Hasan, M. F., & Maemonah, M. (2024). Effectiveness of experiential learning based on multiple intelligence to increase mi student learning interest. *Ideguru: Jurnal Karya Ilmiah Guru*, 9(1), 165-173.
- Hassan, H. (2020). The effect of using a program based on multiple intelligences theory in teaching geometry on developing preparatory stage pupils' habits of mind. *Journal of Research Curriculum Instructions for Educational Technology*, 6, 149–174.
- Hasselbring, T. S., & Williams, C. H. (2000). Use of computer technology to help students with special needs. *Children and Computer Technology*, 10(2), 102–122.
- Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Hattie, J. A. C. (2014). The last of the 20th century test standards. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 33(4), 34–35
- Heacox, D., & Cash, R. M. (2020). *Differentiation for gifted learners: Going beyond the basics*. Free Spirit Publishing.
- Heale, R., & Twycross, A. (2015). Validity and reliability in quantitative studies. *Evidence-based nursing*, 18(3), 66-67.
- Hebron, J., & Humphrey, N. (2014). Mental health difficulties among young people on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools: A comparative study. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 14(1), 22-32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2012.01246.x>
- Hegarty, S., & Finlay, S. (2020). Publications and dissemination. *Reliability and Validity of International Large-Scale Assessment: Understanding IEA's Comparative Studies of Student Achievement*, 221-230.
- Hehir, T., Grindal, T., Freeman, B., Lamoreau, R., Borquaye, Y., & Burke, S. (2016). A summary of the evidence on inclusive education. *Abt Associates*.
- Hernández-Torrano, D., Somerton, M., & Helmer, J. (2020). Mapping research on inclusive education since Salamanca Statement: A bibliometric review of the

- literature over 25 years. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 26(9), 893-912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1747555>
- Herpertz, S. C. (2022). Interpersonal intelligence. In *Intelligence-Theories and Applications* (pp. 147-160). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Hertberg-Davis, H. (2009). Myth 7: Differentiation in the regular classroom is equivalent to gifted programs and is sufficient: Classroom teachers have the 167 time, the skill, and the will to differentiate adequately. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53(4), 251-253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986209346927>
- Hess, S. A. (2020). *Teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy in mainstream schools* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University). <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/107997>
- Heugh, K., Stroud, C., & Hickey, R. (2020). Multilingualism in South African education: A southern perspective. *English in multilingual South Africa. The linguistics of contact and change*, 2016-238.
- Hidayat, M. T. (2020). Teachers' assessment literacy impact on learners' writing achievements. *English Education and Applied Linguistics (EEAL) Journal*, 3(2), 1-11.
- Hill, M. F., Ell, F., Grudnoff, L., Haigh, M., Cochran-Smith, M., Chang, W. C., & Ludlow, L. (2017). Assessment for equity: Learning how to use evidence to scaffold learning and improve teaching. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 24(2), 185-204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2016.1253541>
- Hinchcliffe, G., & Terzi, L. (2009). Introduction to the special issue 'Capabilities and education'. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 28, 387-390.
- Hoerr, T. (1994). How the New City school applies the multiple intelligences. *Educational Leadership*, 52(3), 29-33.
- Hoerr, T. (2004). How MI informs teaching at New City school. *Teachers College Record*, 106, 40-48.

- Hofman, R. H., & Kilimo, J. S. (2014). Teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian schools. *Journal of Education and Training, 1*(2), 177-198.
- Hothersall, S. J. (2019). Epistemology and social work: enhancing the integration of theory, practice and research through philosophical pragmatism. *European Journal of Social Work, 22*(5), 860-870.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2018.1499613>
- Hunt, P., Soto, G., Maier, J., Liboiron, N., & Bae, S. (2004). Collaborative teaming to support preschoolers with severe disabilities who are placed in general education early childhood programs. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 24*(3), 123-142.
- Idowu, A. I., & Esere, M. O. (2010). Assessment in Nigerian schools: a counsellor's viewpoint. *International Journal of Education Economics and Development, 1*(4), 338-347.
- Igbokwe, C. O. (2015). Recent curriculum reforms at the basic education level in Nigeria aimed at catching them young to create change. *American Journal of Educational Research, 3*(1), 31-37.
- Ighoshemu, B. O., & Ogidiagba, U. B. (2022). Poor governance and massive unemployment in Nigeria: as causes of brain drain in the Buhari administration (2015-2020). *Insights into Regional Development, 4*(2), 73-84.
- Ihedioha L. N. (2021) Influence of school-based management committees (SBMCS) on school administration of senior secondary schools in Abia Education Zone, Abia State National Institute of Nigerian languages
- IIEP-UNESCO. (2019). *On the road to [inclusion](#): highlights from the UNICEF and IIEP Technical Round Tables on Disability-[inclusive Education](#) Sector Planning*. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO. Retrieved from:
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372193>
- Ikenyiri, E., Ordua, V. N., & Ezechukwu, I. R. (2022). Evaluation of teachers' assessment practices in the three domains of learning in public primary schools

- in Owerri Education Zone, Imo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Guidance*, 6(1), 24-36.
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7613843>
- Ikpeze, O. V., & Oti-Onyeama, L. A. (2021). The child rights act: a critical appraisal of the child's rights act/laws in Nigeria: How effective it is in South-Eastern states. *Journal Of International Human Rights And Contemporary Legal Issues*, 1.
- Ilyas, S. N. (2019). Aplikasi Multiple Intelligences System (MIS) dalam Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini Studi Kasus di Rumah Sekolah Cendekia Makassar. *PAUDIA Jurnal Penelitian Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 8(2), 50–56.
<https://doi.org/10.26877/paudia.v8i2.4882>
- Imam, H. (2012). Educational policy in Nigeria from the colonial era to the post-independence period. *Italian Journal of sociology of education*, 4(1).
- INE. Projeção da população 2014-2050.(2016).
<https://www.ine.gov.ao/inicio/estatisticas>. Accessed on: Nov. 03, 2021.
- INEE. (2006). *Plano estratégico de desenvolvimento da educação especial em Angola 2007-2015*. Instituto Nacional de Educação Especial. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/angola_estrategiaparaeducacaoespecial.pdf.
- Irinoye, J., & Eyengho, T. (2022). Assessment Of the implementation of equity and inclusive education curriculum in Nigeria. *International Journal Of: Educational Research And Library Science*. 8(8), 126-140
- Isnawati, I. (2023). EFL Teachers' assessment Literacy. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 26(2), 760-769.
- Itimu, A. N., & Kopetz, P. B. (2008). Malawi's special needs education (SNE): perspectives and comparisons of practice and progress. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 8(3), 153-160.
- Izevbigie, E. (2015). *Strategies to eradicate examination malpractice as perceived by secondary school students in Benin, City* (Unpublished Research project, University of Benin).

- Izevbigie, E. (2021). *Perceptions of Foundation Phase mainstream schoolteachers regarding differentiated assessment* [Master's Dissertation, University of Pretoria].
- Jacobs, M. K. (2015). *An evaluation of the implementation of Education White Paper 6 in selected full-service schools in KwaZulu-Natal* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zululand).
- James, W. (2000). What pragmatism means. In J. J. Stuhr (Eds.), *Pragmatism and classical American philosophy: Essential readings and interpretive essays*. (pp. 193-202). Oxford University Press.
- Jančaříková, K. (2019). Naturalist intelligence: how to recognize and support of pupils and students gifted in natural sciences in the Czech Republic. *Envigogika*, 14(2).
- Janis, I. (2022). Strategies for establishing dependability between two qualitative intrinsic case studies: A reflexive thematic analysis. *Field Methods*, 34(3), 240-255.
- Johnson, B., & Green, L. (2007). Thinking differently about education support. In P. Engelbrecht & L. Green (Eds.), *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in southern Africa* (pp. 159-174). Van Schaik.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Julka A. (2016). Concept of curriculum adaptation. In S. S. Abhiyan, editor. *Curriculum Adaptations for Children with Special Needs*. IGP Printers Pvt Ltd.
- Junaidu, I. (2018). *Trends in African Linguistics and Language Development*. The Linguistic Association of Nigeria
- Juniar, M. W., Amang, B., Pawennei M. (2021). Reasonable accommodation and support for inclusive education in Asia. *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*. 24(6):1-15
- Kachali, N. K. (2020). *Understanding education policies from formulation to implementation. The case of inclusive education in selected secondary schools in Malawi* (Master's thesis, Høgskulen i Volda).

- Kamble, A. D. K., & Gaikwad, H. V. (2021). How should the education system approach children with special needs? *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 1(1), 15-18.
- Kandeel, R. A. A. (2016). Multiple intelligences patterns among students at King Saud University and its relationship with mathematics' achievement. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(3), 94. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n3p94>
- Kanjee, A., & Croft, C. (2012, April). Enhancing the use of assessment for learning: Addressing challenges facing South African teachers. In *Annual American Educational Research Conference*, Vancouver, Canada (pp. 13 17).
- Kanjee, A., & Mthembu, J. (2015). Assessment literacy of foundation phase teachers: An exploratory study. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 5(1), 142-168. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v5i1.354>
- Kanno, T. N., & Onyeachu, A. E. (2018). On instructional resources for teaching special needs children in Abia state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education*, 7(2), 1318- 1321
- Kaplan, I., & Lewis, I. (2013). *Promoting inclusive teacher education: Introduction*. UNESCO.
- Kaur, A., Noman, M., & Awang-Hashim, R. (2019). Exploring and evaluating differentiated assessment practices of in-service teachers for components of differentiation. *Teaching Education*, 30(2), 160-176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2018.1455084>
- Kaushik, V., & Walsh, C. A. (2019). Pragmatism as a research paradigm and its implications for social work research. *Social sciences*, 8(9), 255.
- Kavua, M. M. (2018). Special and Inclusive Education Policy and Practice in Kenya, 1963 to 2016: The journey. in *Challenging Inclusive Education Policy and Practice in Africa* (pp. 104-117). Brill.
- Kearney, C. A., & Rede, M. (2021). The heterogeneity of selective mutism: A primer for a more refined approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 700745. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.700745>

- Kellaghan, T., & Greaney, V. (2004). *Assessing student learning in Africa*. World Bank Publications.
- Kgothule, R. J. & Hay, J. (2013). Educators' views on management practices in the implementation of inclusive education: An ecosystemic approach. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 42(1): 33–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09709274.2013.11906579>
- Khoza, S. B. (2020). Academics' "Why" of knowledge-building for the fourth industrial revolution and COVID-19 Era. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(6), 247-258. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n6p247>
- Kiiza, K. A. (2019). *Pull-push factors and international student experiences in Uganda: a case study of two universities* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
- Kileo, M. K. (2017). *A capabilities analysis of teachers' perceptions of caps in a Cape Town low-income school community in the Western Cape Province*. University of the Western Cape.
- Kim, T. K. (2015). T test as a parametric statistic. *Korean Journal of Anesthesiology*, 68(6), 540-546. <https://doi.org/10.4097/kjae.2015.68.6.540>
- King, N. (2004). Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research* (pp. 257–270). Sage.
- Kirul, E., & Cooc, N. (2018). A comparative analysis of access to education for students with disabilities in Brazil, Canada, and South Africa. *Journal of International Special Needs Education*, 21(2), 34-44. <https://doi.org/10.9782/16-00024r4>
- Kivunja, C. (2015). Creative engagement of digital learners with gardner's bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to enhance their critical thinking. *Creative Education*, 6(06), 612.
- Klingner, J. K., & Boardman, A. G. (2011). Addressing the "research gap" in special education through mixed methods. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 34(3), 208-218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731948711417559>

- Knoblauch, H., & Pfadenhauer, M. (2023). Construction versus realism? The unrealized potential of communicative constructivism. *Sociologica*, 17(1), 119-136. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/16725>
- Koenig, T., Spano, R., & Thompson, J. (2019). *Human behavior theory for social work practice*.
- Köpfer, A., & Óskarsdóttir, E. (2019). Analysing support in inclusive education systems—a comparison of inclusive school development in Iceland and Canada since the 1980s focusing on policy and in-school support. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(7-8), 876-890.
- Kozleski, E. B., & Siuty, M. B. (2016). The complexities of inclusive education: How cultural histories shape the ways teachers respond to multiple forms of diversity. *Capacity Building Network*, 2, 1-16.
- Kubiszyn, T., & Borich, G. D. (2024). *Educational testing and measurement*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2 edition). The University of Chicago Press.
- Kumar, R. (2018). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (5th ed.): Sage.
- Kusimo, A. O., & Chidozie, F. C. (2019). Inclusive education and sustainable development goals: A study of the physically challenged in Nigeria. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 6(1), 1684175.
- Kwashabawa, B. B. (2017). School-based management committee strategies, community participation and effectiveness of basic schools in North-West Zone, Nigeria. *Community Participation and Effectiveness of Basic Schools in North-West Zone, Nigeria* (October 14, 2017).
- Laher, S. (2016). Ostinato rigore: Establishing methodological rigour in quantitative research. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(3), 316-327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246316649121>

- Lam, R. (2019). Teacher assessment literacy: Surveying knowledge, conceptions and practices of classroom-based writing assessment in Hong Kong. *System*, 81, 78-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.01.006>
- Lantz-Andersson, A., Lundin, M., & Selwyn, N. (2018). Twenty years of online teacher communities: A systematic review of formally-organized and informally-developed professional learning groups. *Teaching and teacher education*, 75, 302-315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.07.008>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Legitimate peripheral participation. Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, 29-43. Cambridge University Press.
- Lawal, S. (2022). Implementation of inclusive education in nigerian schools: challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Formal Education*, 1(3), 32-41.
- Lawal, O. T., Olusola, D. J., & Ajagbe, M. O. (2022). Equal basic education for all in Nigeria: Is it a reality for children with disabilities in basic schools in Southwest Nigeria. *International Journal Of Contemporary Issues In Education*, 4(1), 77-82.
- Lawrence, A. O., & Oba, R. B. (2022). Influence of continuous assessment on students' academic performance. *KWASU Journal of the Business of Education*, 3(1), 81-87.
- Le Fanu, G., Schmidt, E., & Virendrakumar, B. (2022). Inclusive education for children with visual impairments in sub-Saharan Africa: Realising the promise of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 91, 102574. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.1025>
- Ledwaba, R. G. (2017). *Teacher training guidelines for curriculum differentiation in a Foundation Phase programme*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria). <http://hdl.handle.net/2263/65439>
- Lee, S., Wehmeyer, M. L., Soukup, J. H., & Palmer, S. B. (2010). Impact of curriculum modifications on access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 76, 213–233

- Lero, D. (2010) *Assessing Inclusion Quality in early learning and child care in Canada with the special link child care inclusion practices profile and principles scale*. A Report Prepared for the Canadian Council on Learning. SpecialLink
- Lestari, I. (2018). Pengembangan bahan ajar matematika dengan memanfaatkan Geogebra untuk meningkatkan pemahaman konsep gauss [Development of mathematics teaching materials by utilizing Geogebra to improve understanding of the gauss concept]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika*, 1(1), 26-36.
- Lesotho Ministry of Education. (1989). *Operations plan: clarification of Lesotho's education policies and priorities, part II*. Ministry of Education.
- Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training. (2005). *Education sector strategic plan 2005–2015*. BeePee Printers and Stationers Ltd.
- Levy-Vered, A., & Alhija, F. N. A. (2018). The power of a basic assessment course in changing preservice teachers' conceptions of assessment. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 59, 84-93.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2018.04.003>
- Liberman, J., & Clarke, M. (2012). *Review of World Bank support for student assessment activities in client countries, 1998-2009*. World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Lietz, C. A., & Zayas, L. E. (2010). Evaluating qualitative research for social work practitioners. *Advances in Social work*, 11(2), 188-202.
- Lim, S. (2020). The capabilities approach to inclusive education: Re-envisioning the individuals with disabilities education act's least restrictive environment. *Disability & Society*, 35(4), 570-588.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage
- Lindner, K. T., & Schwab, S. (2020). Differentiation and individualisation in inclusive education: a systematic review and narrative synthesis. *International journal Of Inclusive Education*, 1-21.
- Lindholt, L. (2019). *Questioning the Universality of Human Rights: African Charter on Human and People's Rights in Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique*. Routledge.

- Liu, J., Peng, P., Zhao, B., & Luo, L. (2022). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement in primary and secondary education: A meta-analytic review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(4), 2867-2896. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09689-y>
- Lohse, S. (2017). Pragmatism, ontology, and philosophy of the social sciences in practice. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 47, 3-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393116654869>
- Loreman, T., Sharma, U., & Forlin, C. (2013). Do pre-service teachers feel ready to teach in inclusive classrooms? A four country study of teaching self-efficacy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(1), 1e19. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n1.10>.
- Lucas, B., & Spencer, E. (2020). *Zest for Learning: Developing curious learners who relish real-world challenges (Pedagogy for a Changing World series)*. Crown House Publishing Ltd.
- Lumadi, R. I. (2013). *Challenges in classroom management of Vhembe secondary schools in the Limpopo Province* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa).
- Lumadi, M. W., & Khoza, S. B. (2022). Equality, Equity and Justice in Curriculum: Envisioning a Transformative Pedagogy. *Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*, 39(sed), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2022/sp39a1>
- Maarouf, H. (2019). Pragmatism as a supportive paradigm for the mixed research approach: Conceptualizing the ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances of pragmatism. *International Business Research*, 12(9), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v12n9p1>
- Mabaso, R. G. (2019). *District-based support team professional preparation in supporting the implementation of inclusive education in schools: the case of Gauteng Province in South Africa*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa). <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/26288>

- MacJessie-Mbew, S., Ndala, K. K., Kamchedzera, E. T., & Chiwaya, P. (2023). A comparative study of the implementation of Malawi national strategy on inclusive education between primary and secondary schools. *Educational Planning*, 30(2), 55-72.
- Macy, M. G., Bagnato, S. J., Macy, R. S., & Salaway, J. (2015). Conventional tests and testing for early intervention eligibility: Is there an evidence base? *Infants & Young Children*, 28, 182-204. <https://doi.org/10.1097/iyc.0000000000000032>
- Magnusson, E., & Marecek, J. (2015). *Doing interview-based qualitative research: A learner's guide*. Cambridge University Press.
- Maharajh, L. R., Nkosi, T., & Mkhize, M. C. (2016). Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in three primary schools in KwaZulu Natal. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 4(3), 371-388.
- Mahlo, D. (2017). Teaching learners with diverse needs in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng Province, South Africa. *SAGE Open*, 7(1), 2158244017697162.
- Magagula, S. W. (2015). *The township schools foundation phase teachers' experiences in the implementation of CAPS*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Witwatersrand). <https://core.ac.uk/reader/188771770>
- Maina, B., Mohammed, A., & Adeola, A. K. (2020). Influence of school-based management committee activities on the management of public senior secondary schools in Nigeria. *Alhikmah Journal of Educational Management and Counseling*, 2(1), 10-22.
- Majoko, T. (2018). Teachers' Concerns about Inclusion in Mainstream Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Special Education*, 33(2), 343-365.
- Majuddin, C., & Khambari, M. N. M. (2019). 068: The impact of differentiated assessment on teaching and learning: multi-case studies of putrapacer application in a higher education institution. *GREduc 2019*, 53.
- Makalela, L. (2022). *Not Eleven Languages: Translanguaging and South African multilingualism in concert* (Vol. 107). Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

- Makgato, M. J. (2018). *The implementation of curriculum and assessment policy statement at the foundation phase: A case of Koloti Circuit in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province*. (Doctoral dissertation: University of Venda, Limpopo). <http://hdl.handle.net/11602/1225>
- Makhalemele, T. J., (2011). *The changing role of district-based education support services in establishing the inclusive school settings: An 172 ecosystemic approach*. (Doctoral thesis, North-West University). <http://hdl.handle.net/10394/10291>
- Makhalemele, T., & Nel, M. (2016). Challenges experienced by district-based support teams in the execution of their functions in a specific South African province. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(2), 168-184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1079270>
- Makhalemele, T., & Payne-van Staden, I. (2018). Enhancing teachers' self efficacy within full-service schools: A disregarded aspect by the District Based Support Team. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(9), 983-996. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1413687>
- Makhalemele, T., & Tlale, L. D. (2021). Managing inclusive schools in South African schools: A transformational leadership perspective. In *School leadership for democratic education in South Africa* (pp. 149-171). Routledge.
- Makoelle, T. M. (2012). The state of inclusive pedagogy in South Africa: A literature review. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 3(2), 93-102.
- Makuya, D. (2021). *Exploring the challenges that are faced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education at Grade 9 Level in Johannesburg North District Schools in South Africa*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Malinen, O.-P., Savolainen, H., Engelbrecht, P., Xu, J. J., Nel, M., Nel, N., et al. (2013). Exploring teacher self-efficacy for inclusive practices in three diverse countries. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 33, 3 4e44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.02.004>.
- Maree, K. (2016). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.

- Marais, P. (2016). "We can't believe what we see": Overcrowded classrooms through the eyes of student teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(2), 1-10.
<https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v36n2a1201>
- Marishane, M. A., Marishane, R. N., & Mahlo, F. D. (2015). Teacher capacity for curriculum differentiation in teaching foundation phase mathematics. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 11(3), 253-262.
<https://doi.org/10.31901/24566322.2015/11.03.03>
- Marshall, G. (2005). The purpose, design and administration of a questionnaire for data collection. *Radiography*, 11(2), 131-136.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radi.2004.09.002>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Marloth, E. (2022). *A collaborative approach to support teachers to address learning barriers in the Foundation Phase in rural schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa).).
- Materechera, E. K. (2020). Inclusive education: why it poses a dilemma to some teachers. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 771-786.
- Matsepe, D., Maluleke, M., & Cross, M. (2019). Re-imagining teacher's experience with overcrowded classrooms in the public secondary schools in South Africa. *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa (JGIDA)*, 8(Special Issue 2), 81-93.
- Marumo, J. M. (2018). *Strategies used by teachers for supporting mathematically gifted learners in ten selected high schools around Bloemfontein*. (Doctoral dissertation, Bloemfontein: Central University of Technology, Free State).
<http://hdl.handle.net/11462/1952>
- Mbaebie, J. N. (2018). The Child's Right Act and the Right of Nigerian Children. *Call for papers Ideal International Journal Of Igbo Scholars*, 39.
- Mbanugo, E. O. (2019). Perspectives and legal implications of inclusive access to the environment for children living with disabilities in Nigeria under the discrimination

- against persons with disability (prohibition) Act 2018. *JL Pol'y & Globalization*, 85, 133.
- Mbewe, N. (2021). *The contextual nature of learning in community schools in Lusaka*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria (South Africa).
- Mbwambo. A. B (2015). *Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in regular primary schools in Tanzania*. (Master Thesis. Hedmark University College: Norway.)
- McKenzie, J. (2021). Intellectual disability in inclusive education in South Africa: Curriculum challenges. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 18(1), 53-57.
- McKenzie, J., Kelly, J., Moodley, T., & Stofile, S. (2020). Reconceptualising teacher education for teachers of learners with severe to profound disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1837266>
- McLeod, S. (2019). *What a p-value tells you about statistical significance*. Simply Psychology.
- McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (2014). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Meier, C., & West, J. (2020). Overcrowded classrooms—the Achilles heel of South African education?. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1), 1-10
<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v10i1.617>
- Meijer, K., Baartman, L., Vermeulen, M., & De Bruijn, E. (2023). Teachers' conceptions of assessment literacy. *Teachers and Teaching*, 29(7-8), 695-709.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2190091>
- Mellati, M., & Khademi, M. (2018). Exploring teachers' assessment literacy: Impact on learners' writing achievements and implications for teacher development. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(6), 1-18.
<https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n6.1>

- Mendes, G. M. L., & González, O. H. (2021). Special education policies in an inclusive perspective in Angola: context, advances and emerging needs (1979-2017). *Educar em Revista*, 37.
- Mendo-Lázaro, S., Polo-del-Río, M. I., Amado-Alonso, D., Iglesias-Gallego, D., & León-del-Barco, B. (2017). Self-concept in childhood: The role of body image and sport practice. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 853.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. Revised and Expanded from " Case Study Research in Education*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mertens, D. M. (2016). Navigating the terrain of social justice: Multiple voices in mixed methods research. In *Global dimensions of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 181-193). Routledge.
- Mettetal, G., Jordan, C., & Harper, S. (1997). Attitudes toward a multiple intelligences curriculum. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 91(2), 115-122.
- Meyer, M. (1998). Learning and Teaching through the Naturalist Intelligence. *Clearing*, 102, 7-11.
- Mfuthwana, T. (2016). *Teachers' perceptions regarding the role of district-based support teams as well as inclusive education teams in establishing inclusive schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Mfuthwana, T., & Dreyer, L. M. (2018). Establishing inclusive schools: Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education teams. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n4a1703>
- Michelaki, E., & Bournelli, P. (2022). Assessing the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence of pre-schoolers. *European Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science*, 8(5).
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods*. Sage.
- Miles, S., & Singal, N. (2010). The Education for All and inclusive education debate: conflict, contradiction or opportunity? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(1), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802265125>

- Miles, S., & Singal, N. (2010). The Education for all and inclusive education debate: conflict, contradiction or opportunity? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(1), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802265125>
- Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture Namibia. (1992) *Language Policy*. National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Okahandja.
- Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (Namibia) (1993). *Towards education for all: A development brief for education, culture, and training*. Gamsberg Macmillan.
- Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture. (2016). *The national curriculum of basic education*. NIED: Okahandja, Namibia
- Ministry of Education Ethiopia. (2012). *Guideline for curriculum differentiation and individual education program*. Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education Namibia. (2013). *Namibia Sector policy on inclusive education*. JohnMeinert
- Ministry of Education Malawi. (2007). *Special needs education policy (Revised)*. Republic of Malawi Government: Office of Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, Science And Technology Malawi. (2013). *National inclusive education strategy*. Lilongwe: Government Printer.
- Ministry of Education, Kenya. (2013). *The Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.go.ke>
- Minott, M. A. (2021). Diversity and Inclusion in the Music Classroom [LinkedIn Post]. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/diversity-inclusion-music-classroom-dr-mark-aminot>
- Minow, M. (1985). Learning to live with the dilemma of difference: Bilingual and special education. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 48(2), 157-211.
- Mislevy, R. J., Haertel, G., Cheng, B. H., Ructtinger, L., DeBarger, A., Murray, E., Rose, D., Gravel, J., Colker, A.M., Rutstein, D. & Vendlinski, T. (2018). A “conditional” sense of fairness in assessment. In *Fairness Issues in Educational Assessment* (pp. 33-52). Routledge.

- Mitra, S. (2006). The capability approach and disability. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 16(4), 236-247.
- Mkandawire, M. T., Maphale, S. P., & Tseeke, M. R. (2016). A comparative assessment of special education situations between Lesotho and Malawi. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 4(5), 171-184.
- Mkhuma, I. L., Maseko, N. D., & Tlale, L. D. N. (2014). Challenges teachers face in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning: Reflection on essential support structures. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(27), 444-451.
- Mkwanazi, B. N. (2023). *A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention*. (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).
- Modupe, A. V., & Sunday, O. M. (2015). Teachers' perception and implementation of continuous assessment practices in secondary schools in Ekiti-State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(29), 17-20.
- Mokhtar, K., & Ghania, O. (2018). Teacher's perceptions of classroom assessment practices in the Algerian primary school. *Revue de Traduction et Langues*, 17(1), 93–102.
- Molapo, M. R., & Pillay, V. (2018). Politicising curriculum implementation: The case of primary schools. *South African Journal Of Education*, 38(1), 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n1a1428>
- Molina, E., Carter, E., Luna Bazaldua, D., Pushparatnam, A., & Singal, N. (2024). Teaching for all? Measuring the quality of inclusive practices across eight countries. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 1-19.
- Molina-Azorín, J. F., & López-Gamero, M. D. (2016). Mixed methods studies in environmental management research: prevalence, purposes and designs. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 25(2), 134-148.
- Momanyi, J. M., & Rop, P. K. (2020). Teacher preparedness for the implementation of competency based curriculum in Kenya: A survey of early grade primary school

- teachers' in Bomet East Sub-County. *The Cradle of Knowledge: African Journal of Educational and Social Science Research*, 7(1), 10-15.
- Monteiro, V., Mata, L., & Santos, N. N. (2021). Assessment conceptions and practices: Perspectives of primary school teachers and students. *Frontiers in Education*, 6(631185), 1-15.
- Motsoeneng, T. J., & Moreeng, B. (2022). Accounting teachers' understanding and use of assessment for learning to enhance curriculum implementation. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 8(3), 288-302.
- Moodley, G. (2013). *Implementation of the curriculum and assessment policy statements: Challenges and implications for teaching and learning*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa).
- moon, t. r. (2005). the Role of Assessment in Differentiation. *Theory into Practice*, 44(3), 226-233. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/role-assessment-differentiation/docview/218813566/se-2>
- Moon, T. R., Brighton, C. M., & Tomlinson, C. A. (2020). *Differentiated classroom assessment enhances student learning (Ser. Student assessment for educators)*. Routledge.
- Moosa, S., & Bhana, D. (2017). Men managing, not teaching: Foundation Phase: teachers, masculinity and the early years of primary schooling. *Educational Review*, 69(3), 366-387.
- Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 48-76
- Morgan, D. L. (2014). Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 20(8), 1045-1053.
- Morgan, H. (2021). *Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory and his ideas on promoting creativity*.
- Morris, A. (2011). *Student standardised testing: Current practices in OECD countries and a literature review*.

- Mortier, K. (2020). Communities of practice: a conceptual framework for inclusion of students with significant disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(3), 329–340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1461261>
- Mortier, K., Hunt, P., Desimpel, L., & Van Hove, G. (2009). With parents at the table: Creating supports for children with disabilities in general education classrooms. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 24(4), 337-354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250903223021>
- Mortier, K., Hunt, P., Leroy, M., Van De Putte, I., & Van Hove, G. (2010). Communities of practice in inclusive education. *Educational studies*, 36(3), 345-355.
- Mosia, P. A. (2014). Threats to inclusive education in Lesotho: An overview of policy and implementation challenges. *Africa Education Review*, 11(3), 292-310.
- Mpanza, L. P., & Govender, S. (2022). Primary school-based support teams' experiences and practices when supporting teachers. *Multicultural Education*, 8(2), 272-285.
- Mphanda, E. G. (2018). *From main-stream to full-service schools: an exploration of teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners living with physical disabilities in South African schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/67822/Mphanda_Mainstream_2018.pdf?sequence=1
- Mphwina, A. M. (2022). *No child left behind: The implementation of inclusive education in Southern Africa*. (Master's dissertation, Jönköping University).
<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1655588/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Mpu, N. Y. (2018). *Educators' perceptions of inclusive education for learners with physical disabilities* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Fort Hare).
- Mpu, Y., & Adu, E. O. (2021). The challenges of inclusive education and its implementation in schools: The South African perspective. *Perspectives in Education*, 39(2), 225-238.
- Mullis, I. V., & Martin, M. O. (2017). *TIMSS 2019 Assessment Frameworks*. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. H

- Mundy, K., & Manion, C. (2021). The education for all initiative and the sustainable development goals: History and prospects. *Education and International Development: An Introduction*, 57.
- Munro, J. (2012). The expert knower model as a conceptual tool for understanding gifted and talented knowledge. *Occasional Paper (in press)*. East Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education.
- Muris, P., & Ollendick, T. H. (2015). Children who are anxious in silence: a review on selective mutism, the new anxiety disorder in DSM-5. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 18, 151-169. DOI 10.1007/s10567-015-0181-y
- Murray, R. (2019). *The African Charter on human and peoples' rights: A commentary*. Oxford University Press.
- Mustafa, M. B. M., & Manaf, U. K. A. (2019). Educators' conception of student assessment and their practices in an institution of education in MARA. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(10), 292-300. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v9-i10/6492>
- Muthukrishna, N., & Engelbrecht, P. (2022). A Reflexive critique of inclusive education policy and practice in south africa: towards a decolonising, transformative praxis. *Africa Education Review*, 19(4-6), 59-72.
- Muyungu, E. G. (2015). *Towards Inclusive education in Tanzania: A study of pre-service student teachers training and perceived needs to practice inclusive education*. (Master's thesis).
- Naicker, S. M. (2018). The history of special education and the challenges for inclusive education. In *Inclusive Education in South Africa and the Developing World* (pp. 27-56). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Naqvi, R. (2009). Building bridges: Acknowledging children's first languages. *Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*, San Diego, CA.
- Naudé, M., & Reda, D. (2017). *Assessment in the foundation phase*. Van Schaik Publishers.

- Ndubueze, M. O., Iyoke, J. O., Okoh, S. C., & Akubuilu, B. N. (2015). Trends in educational evaluations in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(21), 71-76.
- Nel, G. (2018). *Teachers' experiences regarding peer support and coaching in creating an inclusive school environment*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/67839/Nel_Teachers_2018.pdf?sequence=1
- Nel, M., Engelbrecht, P., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2014). South African teachers' views of collaboration within an inclusive education system. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(9), 903-917.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2013.858779>
- Nel, M., Nel, N., & Lebeloane, O. (2016). 'Assessment and learner support'. In Nel, N., Nel, M., & Hugo, A. (eds.). *Learner support in a diverse classroom: A guide for foundation, intermediate and senior phase teachers of language and mathematics*, (2nd edn., pp. 59-90). Van Schaik
- Ngubane, P. R. (2019). *The experiences of educators in implementing inclusive education in rural schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
<http://hdl.handle.net/2263/71742>
- Ngwaru, J. M., & Dreyer, L. M. (Eds.). (2021). *Inclusivity in Response to Diversity and Equal Human Rights: A Special Publication to Celebrate the 1st International Symposium on Inclusion (ISI)*. Reformed Church University of Zimbabwe.
- Ngwena, C. G. (2013). Human right to inclusive education: Exploring a double discourse of inclusive education using South Africa as a case study. *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 31(4), 473-504.
- Niemeyer, J., & C. Scott-Little. (2001). *Assessing kindergarten children: A compendium of assessment instruments*. SERVE.
www.serve.org/publications/rdakcc.pdf.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2016). Introducing qualitative research. In Maree, K. (Ed.) *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.

- Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council. (2006). *9-Year basic education curriculum*. NERDC.
- Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (2008). *The 9- Year Basic Education Curriculum at a Glance*. NERDC Press. www.nerdcnigeria.org
- Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council. (2013). *About the Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)*. NERDC. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/NERDC/posts/734776969881272>
- Nketsia, W. (2018). Inclusive education policy and practice in Ghana: Air castle or realistic goal? In *Challenging inclusive education policy and practice in Africa* (pp. 69-86). Brill.
- Nketsia, W., Opoku, M. P., Saloviita, T., & Tracey, D. (2020). Teacher educators' and teacher trainees' perspective on teacher training for sustainable development. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 22(1), 49-65.
- Noman, M., & Kaur, A. (2014). Differentiated Assessment: A New Paradigm in Assessment Practices for Diverse Learners. *International Journal of Education and Applied Sciences*, 1(4), 167-174. https://www.academia.edu/download/54083761/1-Injoeas_September_2014-14.pdf#page=5
- Nomlomo, V., Stofile, S., & Sivasubramaniam, S. (2018). Signposting foundation phase teachers' professional identities in selected Western Cape primary schools, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 38, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38ns2a1416>
- Norwich, B. (2014). How does the capability approach address current issues in special educational needs, disability and inclusive education field? *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 14(1), 16-21.
- Nowell, L. S. Norris¹, J. M., White D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–13.
- Nthia, O.N. (2009). *Constraints facing inclusive education for children with special needs in public primary schools in Embu East district, Embu County, Kenya*.

- [Unpublished master's thesis]. School of Education, Kenyatta University, Nairobi.
- Nulhakim, L., Wibawa, B., & Erwin, T. N. (2019, March). Relationship between students' multiple intelligence-based instructional areas and assessment on academic achievements. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1188(1), 012086). IOP Publishing
- Nunalall, S. (2012). *The effect of continuous curriculum policy changes on the professional lives of foundation phase teachers in post-apartheid South Africa*. (Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal).
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1997). Flawed foundations: the philosophical critique of (a particular type of) economics. *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 64(4), 1197-1214.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*(1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2006). Education and democratic citizenship: Capabilities and quality education. *Journal of human development*, 7(3), 385-395.
- Nwachukwu, P. O., & Ogudo, A. P. (2014). The standard of teachers' assessment practices in three domains of learning in Nigerian secondary schools. *Developing Country Studies*, 4(14), 179-184.
- Nwana, O. C. (2007). *Educational measurement and evaluation*. Bomaway Publishers.
- Nwokeocha, S. (2017). Assessment of teaching and learning in Nigeria: Some methodological issues. *African Educational Research Journal*, 5(2), 135-147.
- Nworgu, B. G. (2014). Continuous assessment in Nigeria: The Case of a failed reform. In *A Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of College of Education, Abia State University Uturu*.
- Obi, F. B., & Ashi, M. M. (2016). Inclusive education in Nigeria: Access and equity. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(5), 168-171.

- Obi, E., & Onyilibe, N. G. (2024). Analysis Of Principals' interaction With School Based Management Committee (SBMC) For Competency In Public Secondary Schools In South Eastern Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies*, 12(1), 69-81.
- Obiakor, F. E., Obi, S., & Carrington, A. T. (2021). Traditional and innovative assessment techniques for students with disabilities: Moving forward. In *Traditional and innovative assessment techniques for students with disabilities* (Vol. 36, pp. 209-223). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Obisesan, O. (2020). *Teacher attitudes, cultural beliefs, and problems experienced teaching children with disabilities in Nigeria*. (Master's thesis).
- Odebiji, O.M. (2016). Introduction of Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Curriculum in Nigerian School System: Do Teachers Perception, Willingness anddemography Matter? *International Journal of Education and Research*, 4(5), 309-320.
- Oduwaiye, R. O., Bakwai, B., & Yisa, H. M. (2016). Improving School Based Management Committee strategies for the development of basic schools in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, 1(2), 101-108.
- Offerdahl, E. G., & Tomanek, D. (2011). Changes in instructors' assessment thinking related to experimentation with new strategies. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(7), 781-795.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2010.488794>
- Ofuani, A. I. (2011). The right to economic empowerment of persons with disabilities in Nigeria: How enabled? *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 11(2), 639-658.
- Ogba, F. N., Ugodulunwa, C. A., & Igu, N. C. (2020). Assessment of training needs of teachers and administrators for effective inclusive education delivery in secondary schools in South East Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 15(1), 72-91.
- Ogbu, E. (2019). Migration and the philosophy of brain drain in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 2(4).

- Ogbuka, L. U. (2019). *Physical facilities and quality education in secondary schools in Aba North Local Government Area Of Abia State*. (Doctoral dissertation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka).
- Ogidi, R. C. (2018). Evaluation Of Teachers'competencies In The Implementation Of School Based Assessments In Secondary Schools In Rivers State. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas*, 26(2), 400-411.
- Ogidi R. C. & Udechukwu J. (2020). Attitude of lecturers towards online formative assessment in Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 4(3), 20 – 22.
- Ogundele, J. A. & Adelabu, M. A. (2009) Improving pupils quality through community advocacy: the role of school-based management committee (SBMC) Illuslararast Sosyal Arastirmal Dorgisi. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 2(8). <https://www.sosyalarastimlar.com>
- Ogunjimi, M. O., & Lawal, B. M. (2020). Assessment of lecturers' perceptions of postgraduate students' academic motivation and emotions in South-West, Nigeria. *Anatolian Journal of Education*, 5(2), 51-58.
- Ogunode, N. J., & Chijindu, O. E. (2022). Implementation of school-based management committee of public secondary schools in Nigeria: Contribution, challenges and way forward. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 5(6), 185-193.
- Ogunrinbokun, B. E., Salawu, M. A., & Oluwole-Moses, O. (2023). Congestion in classrooms and academic achievement of junior secondary school business studies students in Lagos. *Akoka Journal Of Vocational Education*, 13(1), 40-50.
- Okechukwu, J. N., & Oboshi, B. C. (2021). Influence of overcrowded classroom on pupils'academic achievement in public primary schools in Idemili South Local Government Area Of Anambra State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Research & Development*, 4(2).
- Okeke, E. C., & Ohia, N. C. (2011). Teachers' perception of continuous assessment: a mechanism for quality assurance in Enugu State Primary Schools, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 6(1), 93-103.

- Okeke, E. C., Van Wyk, M., & Phasha, N. (2014). *Schooling, society and inclusive education : an afrocentric perspective*. Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Okoro, C. C., Ekanem, I. E., & Udoh, N. A. (2012). Teacher gender and the academic performance of children in primary schools in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and social Research*, 2(1), 267-273.
- Orubite, A. K., & Maigida, A. Y. (2000). Inclusive education in Nigeria: Lessons from the United States Of America (USA), 1-9.
- Okyere, C., Aldersey, H. M., & Lysaght, R. (2019). The experiences of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in inclusive schools in Accra, Ghana. *African Journal of Disability*, 8(1), 1-11.
- Okyere, M., & Larbi, E. (2019). Senior high school mathematics teachers' perception and use of assessment in the classroom. *African Journal of Educational Studies in Mathematics and Sciences*, 15(2), 43–54
- Oladunni, D. O. (2020). *Professional Preparation Of Primary School Teachers For Inclusive Education In Nigeria*. (Doctoral Dissertation, University Of South Africa).
- Olagunju, A. T., Akinola, M. A., Fadipe, B., Jagun, O. O., Olagunju, T. O., Akinola, O. O., & Chaimowitz, G. A. (2021). Psychosocial well-being of Nigerian teachers in special education schools. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 51, 1131-1141.
- Olateru-Olagbegi, A. (2015). A critical review of the revised 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in Nigeria. *SFU Educational Review*, 8.
- Olujuwon, T., Bamiro, N. B., Akudo, K. O., & Anagun, A. M. (2021). Teachers' characteristics as predictor of the adoption of Eko excel pedagogical innovation in public primary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria. *Ife Journal of Educational Management and Policy Analysis*, 2(1), 14-33.
- Olujuwon, T., Bamiro, N. B., Akudo, K. O., & Anagun, A. M. (2022). The 21st century classroom teachers' readiness towards the use of Eko Excel handheld technology in public primary schools. *Sokoto Educational Review*, 21(1), 111-126.

- Oluremi, F. D. (2015). Inclusive education setting in Southwestern Nigeria: Myth or reality? *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 3(6), 368-374.
- Olusodo, F., & Farrow, B. (2021). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Journal of Exceptional People*, 10(19), 29-49.
- Olutola, A. T., Daramola, D. S., & Ogunjimi, M. O. (2016). A paradigm shift in assessment: From assessment of learning to assessment for learning in Nigerian schools' system. *FUDMA Journal of Science & Educational Research (FJSER) Special Edition*, 2(1), 10-15.
- Omebe, C. A. (2014). Continuous assessment in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts, Medicine and Sciences*, 2(9), 89-96.
- Onuka, A.O.U. (2005) Continuous assessment as an instrument of achieving learning objectives. *A paper presented at the annual conference of the International Association for Educational Assessment at the Nicon-Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria*
- Onuora-Oguno, A. C. (2019). Right to development and education: An introductory note. *Development and the Right to Education in Africa*, 1-7.
- Onyachom, A. O. (2023). The place of school-based management committees (SBMC) in improving access to basic education in Fagge local government area Of Kano State, Nigeria. *Watari Multidisciplinary Journal of Science & Technology Education*, 7(2), 39-44.
- Onyilibe, N. G., & Obi, F. E. (2024). Enhancement of principals' relationship with school based management committee (sbmc) in public secondary schools in the south east region of Nigeria. *Unizik Journal of Educational Management and Policy*, 6(2), 39-45
- Opre, D. (2015). Teachers' conceptions of assessment. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 209(July), 229–233.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.222>
- O'Regan, C. (2018). The universal declaration of human rights at 70: a time to look back, and a time to look forward. *Journal of the British Academy*, 6, 259-279.
<https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/006.259>

- Oresajo, N. O. (2021). School-based management committee resource mobilization, availability and utilization on public primary school performance in Ekiti State Nigeria: Artificial Intelligence Neural Network Approach. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 22(2), 35-59.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). (2005). *Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2008). *Improving School Leadership*.
- Orlunga, B. G., & Alikor, O. (2023). Inclusive education and policy implementation in Nigeria: an implication for educational development in the 21st century. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 10(11), 245-256. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v10i11.5076>
- Osadebe, P. U. (2015). Comparative analysis of senior secondary school students' performance with school-based assessment scores of continuous assessment and promotion examination in Delta State. *International Journal of Education*, 7(1), 154-164. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ije.v7i1.7112>
- Ossai, O. V., Ezurike, C. A., & Idoko, E. J. (2020). Parental support and socio-cultural belief as predictors of school enrolment of upper basic students in Nsukka urban area of Enugu state, Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigerian Council of Educational Psychologists*, 12(1), 228-235.
- Osuji, C. U. (2014). Capacity building of teachers as a strategy in bridging the gap in Nigerian educational system. *African Education Indices*, 7(1), 1-15.
- Oswald, M., & De Villiers, J. M. (2013). Including the gifted learner: Perceptions of South African teachers and principals. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v33n1a603>
- Ottevanger, W., Van den Akker, J. J. H., & De Feiter, L. (2007). *Developing science, mathematics, and ICT education in sub-Saharan Africa: Patterns and promising practices* (No. 101). World Bank Publications.

- Oyedemi, S. O. (2016). Educational assessment in Nigerian secondary schools: Historical analysis, challenges and prospects. *International Advanced Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 2(4), 43-54
- Oyinloye, G. O. (2002). Examination malpractice in Nigerian Educational Institutions: A concern to curriculum theorists. *Journal of Contemporary Issues In Education*, 1(1), 11-19.
- Pangesty, D. A. R., Arief, Z. A., & Hartono, R. (2022). The development of multiple intelligence-based e-books on Grade V science learning in elementary schools. *International Journal on Engineering, Science & Technology (IJonEST)*, 4(3).
- Pappas, G. F. (2017). Empirical approaches to problems of injustices: Elizabeth Anderson and the Pragmatists. In *Pragmatism and justice*. Oxford University Press, pp. 81–96.
- Paquette, K. R., & Rieg, S. A. (2010). *Striving for the perfect classroom: instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of today's diverse learners*. Nova Science Publishers.
- Park, Y. S., Konge, L., & Artino Jr, A. R. (2020). The positivism paradigm of research. *Academic medicine*, 95(5), 690-694.
- Parker, M., Patton, K. (2017). What research tells us about effective continuing professional development for physical education teachers. In: Ennis CD (ed.) *Routledge handbook of physical education pedagogies*. Routledge, 447–460.
- Parra, G. C., & López, A. A. (2024). Examining the assessment practices of foreign language novice teachers. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development*, 26(1), 97-113. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v26n1.106384>
- Parsons, L. D., Miller, H., & Deris, A. R. (2016). The effects of special education training on educator efficacy in classroom management and inclusive strategy use for students with autism in inclusion classes. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 1e10. 41 <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1129741.pdf>.

- Parvaiz, G. S., Mufti, O., & Wahab, M. (2016). Pragmatism for mixed method research at higher education level. *Business & Economic Review*, 8(2), 67-79.
- Pasaribu, M. A., & Suprpto, N. (2020). Experiences in Chinese class for Indonesian elementary students in Taiwan. *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 12-17.
- Pastore, S. (2023, July). Teacher assessment literacy: a systematic review. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 8, p. 1217167). Frontiers Media SA.
- Pastore, S., & Andrade, H. L. (2019). Teacher assessment literacy: A three dimensional model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 84, 128-138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.05.003>
- Patton, M.Q. (2002), *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edn, Sage.
- PEER [Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews] (2020). *Country profiles*. Paris: UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report. <https://education-profiles.org/>.
- Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., Culkin, M. L., Howes, C., Kagan, S. L., & Yazejian, N. (2001). The relation of preschool child-care quality to children's cognitive and social developmental trajectories through second grade. *Child development*, 72(5), 1534-1553.
- Perry, A. D. F. (2013). *Equitable spaces in early career teachers' mathematics classrooms*. North Carolina State University.
- Perry, L. B., & McConney, A. (2010). Does the SES of the school matter? An examination of socioeconomic status and student achievement using PISA 2003. *Teachers college record*, 112(4), 1137-1162.
- Petersen, N. (2017). The liminality of new foundation phase teachers: Transitioning from university into the teaching profession. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(2). <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v37n2a1361>
- Phasha, N., Mahlo, D., & Dei, G. J. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Inclusive education in African contexts: A critical reader*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-803-7>
- Pietersen, J., & Maree, K. (2010). Standardisation of a questionnaire. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research* (214–223).

- Pinnock, H. (2012). Performance analysis of School Based Management Committees supported by ESSPIN: Findings from programme data 2010-2011. ESSPIN
- Polesel, J., Dulfer, N., & Turnbull, M. (2012). *The experience of education: The impacts of high stakes testing on school students and their families*. Sydney,: The Whitlam Institute.
- Polit, D.F., & Beck, C.T. (2014). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (8th ed.). Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Popham, W. J. (2009). Assessment literacy for teachers: Faddish or fundamental? *Theory into Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802577536>
- Popham, W. J. (2018). *Assessment literacy for educators in a hurry*. ASCD. <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5495770>.
- Possi, M. K., & Milinga, J. R. (2017). Special and inclusive education in Tanzania: Reminiscing the past, building the future. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 6(4), 55-73.
- Postareff, L., Virtanen, V., Katajavuori, N., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2012). Academics' conceptions of assessment and their assessment practices. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 38(3-4), 84-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2012.06.003>
- Poth, C. (2013). What assessment knowledge and skills do initial teacher education programs address? A Western Canadian perspective. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 58(4), 634-656.
- Prensky, M. (2010). *Understanding the Digital Generation*. Hawker Brownlow Education.
- Prinsloo, E. (2001). Working towards inclusive education in South African classrooms. *South African Journal of Education* , 21 (4), 344-348.
- Priyadarshini, S. S. (2015). Multiple intelligence among low vision children—an analysis. *Educational Quest-An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences*, 6(2), 105-110

- Pyle, A., & Deluca, C. (2013). Assessment in the kindergarten classroom: An empirical study of teachers' assessment approaches. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(5), 373-380. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-012-0573-2>
- Rahman, M. M. (2018). Teachers' perceptions and practices of classroom assessment in secondary school science classes in Bangladesh. In M. M. Rahman, *Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Classroom Assessment in Secondary School Science Classes in Bangladesh*. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 7(6), 254-263.
- Rahmat, A. (2021). Standards for dimensions of space and environment in buildings for people with special needs (i.e. Wheelchairs, crutches, canes for the visually impaired). *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 1(1), 19-24.
- Raji, M. O. (2023). *Conceptions and practices of assessment: case studies of Nigerian teacher educators*. (Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa).
- Raji, M. O., Daramola, D. S., & Oladele, J. I. (2020). Teachers' conceptions and choices of assessment tasks in a Nigerian postgraduate teacher training. *Asian Journal of Assessment in Teaching and Learning*, 10(2), 82-93. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ajatel.vol10.2.9.2020>
- Ramabulana, N. S. (2017). *Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the curriculum assessment policy statement in the Nzhelele West Circuit*. (Master of Education Dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria.)
- Ramollo, J. K., & Kanjee, A. (2023). Supporting teachers to develop formative assessment knowledge and skills in no-fee schools. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 13(1), 1247. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v13i1.1247>
- Raynor, J. (2007). *Education and capabilities in Bangladesh*. In Amartya Sen's *capability approach and social justice in education* (pp. 157-176). Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Rebekić, A., Lončarić, Z., Petrović, S., & Marić, S. (2015). Pearson's or Spearman's correlation coefficient-which one to use? *Poljoprivreda*, 21(2), 47-54.

- Reindal, S. M. (2016). Discussing inclusive education: An inquiry into different interpretations and a search for ethical aspects of inclusion using the capabilities approach. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 31(1), 1-12.
- Reisdorfer, C. (2020). *Differentiated assessments in a social studies middle school class*. (Master's Dissertation, Hamline University).
- Remesal, A. (2011). Primary and secondary teachers' conceptions of assessment: A qualitative study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(2), 472-482.
- Renard, L., & Vandeputte, S. (2018, October 10). Creative testing-11 examples of differentiated assessment. Book Widget Teacher Blog: <http://www.bookwidgets.com/blog/2018/10/creative-testing-11-examples-of-differentiated-assessment>.
- Republic of Kenya. (2007). *Kenya Vision 2030*. Retrieved from <http://www.vision2030.go.ke/>
- Republic of Kenya. (2010). *The Constitution of Kenya*. Retrieved from http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/support-files/the_constitution_of_kenya.pdf
- Republic of Kenya. (2012). *A policy framework for education and training. Reforming education and training in Kenya*. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science Technology.
- Revelian, S., & Tibategeza, E. (2022). Effective Implementation of inclusive education in enhancing quality education in public primary schools in Tanzania: The role of school culture. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development*, 4(1), 190-199.
- Robeyns, I. (2021). The capability approach. In *The Routledge handbook of feminist economics* (pp. 72-80). Routledge.
- Rofiah, N. H. (2016). Menerapkan multiple intelligences dalam pembelajaran di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Dinamika Pendidikan Dasar*, 8(1), 69–79. <http://jurnalnasional.ump.ac.id/index.php/Dinamika/article/view/937/875>
- Rogoff, B. (1990). Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context.

- Rohrbacher, C. M. (2015). *Humanities professors' conceptions of assessment in general education*. (Doctoral Thesis). Northeastern University, U.S.
- Romero-Contreras, S., Garcia-Cedillo, I., Forlin, C., & Lomelí-Hernandez, K. A. (2013). Preparing teachers for inclusion in Mexico: How effective is this process? *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 39(5), 509e522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2013.836340>
- Republic of South Africa. (1996a). Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. *Government Gazette*, <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/images/a108-96.pdf>
- Republic of South Africa. (1996b). *The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act84of1996.pdf
- Rose, J., & Johnson, C. W. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(4), 432-451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042>
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: a guide to theory and practice*. Sage.
- Rule, P., & John, V. (2011). *Your guide to case study research*. Van Schaik.
- Rwomire, A. (1998) Education and development: African perspectives. In J. Nwomonoh (Ed.) *Education and Development in Africa*, 3-23. International Scholars Publications.
- Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.
- Sadler, I., & Reimann, N. (2018). Variation in the development of teachers' understandings of assessment and their assessment practices in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(1), 131-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1344199>
- Salami, I. A. (2013). Inclusive early childhood education in Nigeria: the journey so far. *The Journal of International Association of Special Education*, 15(2), 118-126

- Salami, I. A & Egbedeyi, T. F. (2018). Inclusive lower primary education: parents' awareness of the economic and social benefits. *Journal of Positive Psychology Counselling*, 2(1), 33- 45.
- Sale, J. E., Lohfeld, L. H., & Brazil, K. (2002). Revisiting the quantitative-qualitative debate: Implications for mixed-methods research. *Quality and quantity*, 36, 43-53.
- Sanga, P. L. (2016). Implications of teacher educators' practices in assessment for student learning in Tanzania. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), 3-24.
- Sayed, Y., & Kanjee, A. (2013). Assessment in Sub-Saharan Africa: challenges and prospects. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 20(4), 373-384
- Schachner, M. K. (2019). From equality and inclusion to cultural pluralism—Evolution and effects of cultural diversity perspectives in schools. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 16(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2017.1326378>
- Scheer, D., Scholz, M., Rank, A., & Donie, C. (2015). Inclusive beliefs and self-efficacy concerning inclusive education among German teacher trainees and student teachers [Educational Administration & Personnel 3510]. *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology*, 14(3), 270e293. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1945-8959.14.3.270>.
- Schleicher, A. (2021). *Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future: Excellence and Equity for all*. OECD.
- Schoeman, M. (2012, September). Developing an inclusive education system: changing teachers' attitudes and practices through critical professional development. In *National Teacher Development Conference at the University of Pretoria, September* (pp. 17-19).
- Schuld, N., Kanjee, A., & White, T. (2017). Tinder or flint: Igniting Grade 2 teachers' understanding of learning, teaching and assessment. *Journal of Education*, (70), 109-132.

- Schwab, S., Hellmich, F., & G€orel, G. (2017). Self-efficacy of prospective Austrian and German primary school teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 17(3), 205e217. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12379>.
- Schwenck, C., Gensthaler, A., & Vogel, F. (2021). Anxiety levels in children with selective mutism and social anxiety disorder. *Current Psychology*, 40(12), 6006-6013. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00546-w>
- Sefotho, M. (2018). *Philosophy in education and research*. Van Schaik.
- Seigfried, Charlene Haddock. 1996. Pragmatism and feminism: Reweaving the social fabric. The University of Chicago Press.
- Selesho, J. M., & Monyane, T. (2012). Analyzing views of Intermediate Phase educators with regard to their experiences of the Revised National Curriculum Statement. *The Anthropologist*, 14(2), 107-112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2012.11891227>
- Sellars, M. (2006). The role of intrapersonal intelligence in self-directed learning. *Issues in Educational Research*, 16(1), 95-119.
- Šerbetar, I., & Sedlar, I. (2016). Assessing reliability of a multi-dimensional scale by coefficient alpha. *Journal of Elementary Education*, 9(1/2), 189-196.
- Sen, A. (1985). Social Choice and Justice: A Review Article. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 23(4), 1764-1776.
- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality re-examined*. Oxford University Press <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198289286.001.0001>
- Sen, A. (1999). *Commodities and Capabilities*. Oxford University Press.
- Sethusha, M. J. (2012). Primary school teachers' conceptions of classroom assessment: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education*, 3(2), 699-706. <https://doi.org/10.20533/ijcdse.2042.6364.2012.0099>
- Sewell, J. P., Frith, K. H., & Colvin, M. M. (2010). Online assessment strategies: A primer. *MERLOT journal of online learning and teaching*, 6(1), 297-305.

- Shabalala, N. I. (2023). *Inclusive assessment practices in the Western Cape primary schools for learners with diverse educational needs* (Doctoral dissertation, Cape Peninsula University of Technology).
- Shannon-Baker, P. (2016). Making paradigms meaningful in mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 10(4), 319-334.
- Sheehy, D. A., Bohler, H. R., Richardson, K., & Gallo, A. M. (2015). Professional learning community: Thriving while facing the challenges of faculty life together. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, 8(1).
- Sheetheni, T. T. (2021). *An exploration of teachers' views on the implementation of the inclusive education policy in selected mainstream schools in the Oshana Region, Namibia* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Shepard, L. A. (2000). The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational Researcher*, 29(7), 4-14.
- Shepard, L. (2001). The role of classroom assessment in teaching and learning. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed., pp. 1066-1101). American Educational Research Association.
- Shepard, L. (2019). Classroom assessment to support teaching and learning. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 683(1), 183-200.
- Shepard, L., Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., Rust, F., Snowden, J. B., Gordon, E., Gutierrez, C., & Pacheco, J. (2005). Assessment. Chapter 8 in Darling-Hammond, L. & Bransford, J. (Eds) *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should know and be able to do*. Jossey-Bass (pp. 282-284).
- Sichula, N. (2018). *Pedagogical practices in non-formal adult literacy classes*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria). UPSpace <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/67904>
- Side, A. S. (2019). Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education and Supporting Marginalised Groups in Ethiopia. *Challenging Inclusive Education Policy and Practice in Africa*, 148-156.

- Silva, M., Munk, D. D., & Bursuck, W. D. (2005). Grading adaptations for students with disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 41*, 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512050410020901>
- Simamora, R. M. (2022). Analyzing multiple intelligence theory in Taiwan elementary school: Tongmen elementary and Tabalong elementary school. *Studies in Learning and Teaching, 3*(1), 1-15.
- Singal, N. (2015). Education of children with disabilities in India and Pakistan: An analysis of developments since 2000. *Retrieved on January, 13, 2017.*
- Singal, N. (2019). Challenges and opportunities in efforts towards inclusive education: Reflections from India. *International Journal Of Inclusive Education, 23*(7-8), 827-840.
- Singhal, R., & Rana, R. (2015). Preeminence and Prerequisites of Sample Size Calculations in Clinical Trials. *Journal of the Practice of Cardiovascular Sciences, 1*(3), 285-288.
- Sireci, S. G., & Faulkner-Bond, M. (2015). Promoting validity in the assessment of English learners. *Review of Research in Education, 39*(1), 215-252. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X14557003>
- Skae, V. A., Brown, B. J., & Wilmot, P. D. (2020). Teachers' engagement with learners in inclusive foundation phase classrooms. *South African Journal of Childhood Education, 10*(1), 11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v10i1.873>
- Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 85*(4), 571.
- Slatter W., France B. (2018). Community of practice: pedagogical strategies for linking communities of practice to the classroom. In de Vries M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Technology Education*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-44687-5_49
- Smit, S., Preston, L. D., & Hay, J. (2020). The development of education for learners with diverse learning needs in the South African context: A bioecological systems

- analysis. *African Journal of Disability (Online)*, 9, 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v9i0.670>
- Sokal, L., & Sharma, U. (2014). Canadian in-service teachers' concerns, efficacy, and attitudes about inclusive teaching. *Exceptionality Education International*, 23(1), 59e71. <https://doi.org/10.5206/eei.v23i1.7704>.
- So-Oabeb, J. H. (2023). *School Leadership Competencies for Teacher Professional Development: A Namibian Case Study* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria (South Africa)).
- Soukup, J. H.; Wehmeyer, M. L.; Bashinski, S. M.; Bovaird, J. A. (2007). Classroom variables and access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 74, 101–120.
- Spaull, N. (2015). Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap. *South African Child Gauge*, 12(1), 34-41.
http://ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2015/Child_Gauge_2015_Schooling.pdf
- Spaull, N. (2016). Disentangling the language effect in South African schools: measuring the impact of 'language of assessment' in grade 3 literacy and numeracy. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 6(1), 1-20.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1186993.pdf>
- Spreen, C. A., & Vally, S. (2006). Education rights, education policies and inequality in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(4), 352–362.
- Ssenyonjo, M. (2012). *The African regional human rights system: 30 years after the African charter on human and peoples' rights* (Ser. International studies in human rights, v. 107). Martinus Nijhoff. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004218154>
- Statistics South Africa (2024, July 30). *South Africa's population surpasses the 63 million mark* (statssa.gov.za) <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=17430>
- Stanford, P. (2003). Multiple intelligence for every classroom. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 39(2), 80-85.

- Stefanakis, E. H., & Meier, D. (2010). *Differentiated assessment: How to assess the learning potential of every student* (Grades 6-12). John Wiley & Sons.
- Steyn, H. J., Wolhuter, C. C., Vos, D., & De Beer, Z. L. (2017). *The South African education system: Core characteristics in focus*. Keurkopie.
- Stofile, S. Y., Green, L., & Soudien, C. (2018). Inclusive education in South Africa. In P. Engelbrecht & L. Green (Eds.), *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in southern Africa* (pp. 75–90). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Stronge, J. H. (2018). *Qualities of effective teachers*. ASCD.
- Subban, P., Round, P., & Sharma, U. (2021). 'I can because I think I can': An investigation into Victorian secondary school teacher's self-efficacy beliefs regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(3), 348e361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1550816>.
- Subramoney, K. A. (2017). *Assessment of support strategies in inclusive education in the Foundation Phase in the Umlazi District*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zululand). <http://hdl.handle.net/10530/1725>
- Sulochini, P., & Slee, R. (2019). Exploring Inclusive Education and “Inclusion” in the African Context. *Challenging inclusive education policy and practice in Africa*, 1-14.
- Suwanto, & Purba, A. (2021). The Development of multiple intelligence based textbook. *Malikussaleh Journal of Mathematics Learning*, 4(1), 34–40.
- Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in science education*, 48, 1273-1296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>
- Takahashi, J. (2013). Suggestions for a teacher training program for inclusive education in a Japanese University. *Creative Education*, 4(08), 509. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2013.48074>
- Taole, M. J. (2020). Diversity and inclusion in rural South African multigrade classrooms. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(12), 1268-1284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1520310>

- Tarrant, C., Angell, E., Baker, R., Boulton, M., Freeman, G., Wilkie, P., Peter, J., Fatimah, Wo., & Ketley, D. (2014). Developing and piloting the questionnaires (pilots 1 and 2). In *Responsiveness of primary care services: development of a patient-report measure—qualitative study and initial quantitative pilot testing*. NIHR Journals Library.
- Taylor, M. (2013). *Student perceptions of standardised testing: Survey exploring the attitudes of university undergraduate students towards the traditional methods of student evaluation in formal education*.
- Taylor, S. C. (2017). Contested knowledge: A critical review of the concept of differentiation in teaching and learning. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 1, 55-68. <https://exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/article/download/44/2> 38
- Tebid, A. C. (2019). Support strategies to assist foundation phase teachers with implementation of inclusive education: a case of selected Johannesburg West schools. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 14(2), 108-124.
- Terzi, L. (2004, September). On education as a basic capability. In *4th International Conference on the Capability Approach, University of Pavia, Italy* (pp. 2-7).
- Terzi, L. (2007). Capability and educational equality: The just distribution of resources to students with disabilities and special educational needs. *Journal of philosophy of education*, 41(4), 757-773.
- Terzi, L. (2010). What metric of justice for disabled people? Capability and disability. *Measuring Justice: Primary Goods And Capabilities*, 150-173.
- Terzi, L. (2014). Reframing inclusive education: Educational equality as capability equality. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44(4), 479-493.
- Thandeka, N. K. (2021). The Sen-Nussbaum diagram of article 11(3) of the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child: facilitating the relationship between access to education and development. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 21(1), 7–28. <https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2021/v21n1a2>
- Thompson, J. R., Bradley, V. J., Buntinx, W. H., Schalock, R. L., Shogren, K. A., Snell, M. E., Wehmeyer, M. L., Borthwick-Duffy, S., Coulter, D. L., Craig, E. P. M.,

- Gomez, S. C., Lachapella, Y., Luckasson, R. A., Reeve, A., Spreat, S., Tassé M., J., Verdugo, M. A., & Yeager, M. H. (2009). Conceptualizing supports and the support needs of people with intellectual disability. *Intellectual and developmental disabilities*, 47(2), 135-146.
- Thorndike, R. M. (1997). The early history of intelligence testing. In D. P. Flanagan, J. L. Genshaft, & P. L. Harrison (Eds.), *Contemporary intellectual assessment: Theories, tests, and issues* (pp. 3–16). The Guilford Press.
- Thuketana, N.S. (2018). *Creating meaningful learning opportunities for children with Cerebral Palsy in South African rural schools*. (Doctoral thesis, University of Pretoria). UPSpace <http://hdl.handle.net/2263/67919>
- Thuketana, N.S. Ledwaba, G., & Mophosho, M. (2023). Assessment approaches for learning support. In *Inclusion, learner support and assistive technology*. Van Schaik.
- Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 48(4), 388-396.
- Tohara, A. J. T. (2021). Exploring digital literacy strategies for students with special educational needs in the digital age. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*, 12(9), 3345-3358.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2005). Grading and differentiation: Paradox or good practice? *Theory into practice*, 44(3), 262-269.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2015). Teaching for excellence in academically diverse classrooms. *Society*, 52(3), 203-209. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-015-9888-0>
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Imbeau, M. B. (2023). *Leading and managing a differentiated classroom*. ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction & understanding by design: Connecting content and kids*. ASCD.

- Tomlinson, C. A., & Moon T. R. (2013). *Assessment and student success in a differentiated classroom*. ASCD.
[https://www.teachsoutheast.co.uk/assets/documents/nqt/nqt6/assessment and-di-whitepaper.pdf](https://www.teachsoutheast.co.uk/assets/documents/nqt/nqt6/assessment-and-di-whitepaper.pdf)
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Moon, T. R., & Imbeau, M. B. (2015). *White paper: assessment and student success in a differentiated classroom*. ASCD.
- Tomaševski, K (2003). *Human rights obligations: Making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable*. Right to Education Primers
- Trust, T. (2015). Deconstructing an online community of practice: Teachers' actions in the Edmodo math subject community. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 31(2), 73–81.
- Tsagari, D., & Vogt, K. (2017). Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers around Europe: Research, challenges and future prospects. *Papers in Language Testing and Assessment*, 6(1), 41-63.
- Tuckett, A. (2005). Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher's experience. *Contemporary Nurse*, 19, 75–87
- Udim, D. K., Abubakar, U. & Essien, J. O. (2018). An in-depth evaluation on the issue of examination malpractice in Nigeria. *Research in Pedagogy*, 8(2), 204–213.
[https:// doi.org/10.17810/2015.84](https://doi.org/10.17810/2015.84)
- Udofia, N. A., Ijeoma, P. P., & Chukwuemeka-Nworu, E. E. (2021). The new educational curriculum in Nigeria. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, 10(1), 1-12.
- Ufuoma, O. (2011). *The Provision of Basic Education in Nigeria-Challenges and Way Forward*. (Master's thesis, University of Pretoria (South Africa).
- Ugochukwu, K., & Goodhope, I. G. W. E. (2023). The role of school management committees in the improvement of secondary schools and students in rural areas In Rivers State, Nigeria. In *3rd International Conference on Institutional Leadership and Capacity Building in Africa* (p. 1007).

- Ugwu, E. O., & Ezeokoli, F. (2022). Assessment literacy and practices of Literature-in-English teachers in Nigeria. *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 11(2), 29-52.
- Ugwu, C. J., & Onukwufor, J. N. (2018). Investigation of principals' attitude towards inclusion of special needs students in public and private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. *American Journal of Applied Psychology*, 6(1), 1-7.
- Ugwuanyi, C. S., Okeke, C. I., & Njeze, K. C. (2020). Parenting style and parental support on learners' academic achievement. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 11(3-4), 198-205. <https://10.31901/24566764.2020/11.3-4.352>
- Underwood, K., Valeo, A., & Wood, R. (2012). Understanding inclusive early childhood education: A capability approach. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 13(4), 290-299.
- United Nations Development Programme (2023, July 25). *South Africa National Human Development Report 2022*. <https://www.undp.org/south-africa/publications/south-africa-national-human-development-report-2022>
- UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/Salamanca_Statement_1994.pdf
- UNESCO. (2002). *Education for all global monitoring report*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000129053>
- UNESCO. (2004). *The quality imperative: education for all global monitoring report 2005*.
- UNESCO (2009). *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000177849>
- UNESCO. (2015). *Education for all 2000–2015: Achievements and challenges. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232205?posInSet=3&queryId=0982e5de-1a08-49c3-bf68-92d5e7351c40>
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report 2020: inclusion and education: all means all*. <https://doi.org/10.54676/JJNK6989>

UNESCO International Bureau of Education. (2019). 'Mainstreaming (in special needs education)'. In: *Glossary of Curriculum Terminology*. 23 August 2021: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/m/mainstreaming-special-needs-education>

UNESCO International Bureau of Education. (2021). 'Mainstreaming (in special needs education)'. In: *Glossary of Curriculum Terminology*. 23 August 2021: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/m/mainstreaming-special-needs-education>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2012). *International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011*. Canada: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/internationalstandard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2019). *Education in Africa*.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2023, 13 September). *Education Data Release 2023* <https://uis.unesco.org/en/news/education-data-release>

UNICEF (2021, 9 November). *Nearly 240 million children with disabilities around the world*. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/nearly-240-million-children-disabilities-around-world-unicefs-most-comprehensive>

UNICEF (2022). *Country office annual report 2022*. <https://www.unicef.org/media/142201/file/Nigeria-2022-COAR.pdf>

United Nations. (1948). *General assembly, universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 december 1948, 217 a (III)*. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html>

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1. https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- Unterhalter, E. (2003). The capabilities approach and gendered education: An examination of South African complexities. *Theory and research in education*, 1(1), 7-22.
- Unterhalter, E. (2013). Educating capabilities. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 14(1), 185-188.
- Uvie, O. M. (2021). Teachers' competency towards the implementation of school-based assessment in secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*, 9(2), 51-59.
- Vaughan R. P. (2016) Education, Social Justice and School Diversity: Insights from the Capability Approach. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17, 2, 206-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2015.1076775>
- Van As, F. (2018). Communities of practice as a tool for continuing professional development of technology teachers' professional knowledge. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, 28, 417-430. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10798-017-9401-8>
- Vandenbroeck, M. (2012). Evidence-based practice, professionalism and respect for diversity: a tense relation. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 6(1), 1–20.
- Vandeyar, S., & Killen, R. (2007). Educators' conceptions and practice of classroom assessments in post-apartheid South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(1), 101-115.
- Van der Nest, A. (2012). *Teacher mentorship as professional development: experiences of Mpumalanga primary school natural science teachers as mentees*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa). <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.863.3831&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Van Gelder, T. (2001). How to improve critical thinking using educational technology. In *Meeting at the Crossroads* (pp. 539-548). The University Melbourne, Department of Philosophy

- Van Wyk, M. G. (2018). *Teacher perceptions on mathematically gifted: A survey of mathematics teachers in Motheo and Xhariep districts' primary schools of Free State Province*. (Doctoral dissertation, Bloemfontein). <http://hdl.handle.net/11462/1953>
- Van Zyl, M. S. M. (2023). *Full-service school teachers' experiences of support*. (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University). <https://scholar.sun.ac.za>
- Varsavsky, C., & Rayner, G. (2013). Strategies that challenge: Exploring the use of differentiated assessment to challenge high-achieving students in large enrolment undergraduate cohorts. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(7), 789-802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2012.714739>
- Vaughan R. P. (2016) Education, social Justice and School Diversity: Insights from the Capability Approach. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17,2, 206-224, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2015.1076775>
- Vogt, K., & Tsagari, D. (2014). Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers: Findings of a European study. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 11(4), 374-402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2014.960046>
- Volante, L., & Beckett, D. (2011). Formative assessment and the contemporary classroom: Synergies and tensions between research and practice. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 34(2), 239-255.
- Von der Embse, N., Barterian, J., & Segool., N. (2013). Test anxiety interventions for children and adolescents: A systematic review of treatment studies from 2000–2010. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50,1.
- Wahl, R. A. (2017). *Exploring effective teaching strategies for foundation phase teachers in mainstream primary schools to effect inclusive education*. (Doctoral North-West University).
- Wald, A. (2014). Triangulation and validity of network data. *Mixed methods social networks research: Design and applications*, 65-89.
- Waliaula, K. W. (2009). Negotiating local knowledge II: Kiswahili and attitudes toward disability. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 29(4).

- Walker, M., & Unterhalter, E. (2007). *Amartya Sen's capability approach and social justice in education*. Springer.
- Walton, E. (2018). Decolonising (through) inclusive education? *Educational research for social change*, 7(SPE), 31-45. <https://doi.org/10.17159/22214070/2018/v7i0a3>
- Walton, E., & Rusznyak, L. (2017). Choices in the design of inclusive education courses for pre-service teachers: The case of a South African university. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 64(3), 231-248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2016.1195489>
- Walton, E., & Engelbrecht, P. (2022). Inclusive education in South Africa: Path dependencies and emergences. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2022.2061608>
- Wassenaar, D. R. (2006). Ethical issues in social science research. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*, 2, 60-79.
- Wegerif, R. (2015). Technology and teaching thinking: Why a dialogic approach is needed for the twenty-first century. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Research on teaching thinking* (pp. 427-440). Routledge.
- Wenger-Trayner, E. & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2020). levels-of-participation. Retrieved from: <https://wengertrayner.com/project/levels-of-participation>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning and identity*. University Press.
- Wenger, E. (2011). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Harvard Business Press.
- Westbrook, R. B. (1991). *John Dewey and American Democracy*. Cornell University Press.
- Westhof, L., & Thuketana, N. S. (2018). Group work during visual art activities to reduce indecisiveness. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 8(1), 1–8. <https://sajce.co.za/index.php/sajce/article/view/447>

- Westwood, P. (2013). *Inclusive and Adaptive Teaching*. Routledge
- White, K. (2017). *Softening the Edges: Assessment Practices that Honor K-12 Teachers and Learners:(using Responsible Assessment Methods in Ways that Support Student Engagement)*. Solution Tree Press.
- White, D. E., Oelke, N. D., & Friesen, S. (2012). Management of a large qualitative data set: Establishing trustworthiness of the data. *International Journal Of Qualitative Methods*, 11(3), 244-258.
- Williams, M. L. (2010). *Teacher collaboration as professional development in a large, suburban high school*. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Willis, J., Adie, L., & Klenowski, V. (2013). Conceptualizing teachers' assessment literacies in an era of curriculum and assessment reform. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 40(2), 241-256.
- Wilson, L. O. (1998). *Journeys: Inside out, outside in*. Zephyr Press.
- Wilson, L. W. (2013). *What every teacher needs to know about assessment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315854144>
- World Bank. (2011). "*Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development*." World Bank.
- World Bank. (2024, March 21). Nigeria overview: Development news, research, data. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/overview>
- Wormeli, R. (2018). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing & grading in the differentiated classroom*. Stenhouse. <https://files.hbe.com.au/samplepages/SHP7422.pdf>
- Wormeli, R. (2023). *Differentiation: From planning to practice, Grades 6-12*. Routledge.
- Wray, E., Sharma, U., & Subban, P. (2022). Factors influencing teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education: A systematic literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 117, 103800.
- Xu, Y., & Brown, G. T. (2016). Teacher assessment literacy in practice: A reconceptualization. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 58, 149-162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.010>

- Yakut, A. D. (2021). Students with specific learning disabilities in inclusive settings: A study of teachers' self-efficacy. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 36*(2), 136e144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12241>.
- Yan, Z., Li, Z., Panadero, E., Yang, M., Yang, L., & Lao, H. (2021). A systematic review on factors influencing teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 28*(3), 228-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2021.1884042>
- Yan, Z., & Pastore, S. (2022). Are teachers literate in formative assessment? The development and validation of the Teacher Formative Assessment Literacy Scale. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 74*, 101183.
- Yende, S. J., & Yende, N. E. (2021). Rhetoric versus the reality of the 'Rainbow Nation': A content analysis of racial tension in post-1994 South Africa. *Journal of Nation-Building and Policy Studies, 5*(2), 75.
- Yessingeldinov, B. T., Ashirbayev, N. K., Zhumykbayeva, A. K., Sarsekenov, R. M., Ismailova, G. M. & Kanysh T. Bibekov, K.T. (2022). Investigation of teachers' understanding of differentiated approach in teaching mathematics. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science, 17*(5), 1671-1679. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i5.7337>
- Yin, R. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage. <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjpe>
- Yu, K., & Frempong, G. (2012). Standardise and individualise—an unsolvable tension in assessment? *Education as Change, 16*(1), 143-157.
- Yusuf, H. T. (2017). Teachers' classroom Assessment strategies and curriculum implementation in Nigerian Secondary Schools. *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management, 3*(4), 50-62.
- Zaffini, E. J. (2018). Communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation: A literature review. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, 36*(3), 38-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123317743977>

- Zenda, R. (2020). Impact of the learner-educator ratio policy on learner academic achievement in rural secondary schools: A South African case study. *Africa Education Review*, 17(3), 37-51.
- Zhou, J., & Deneen, C. C. (2016). Chinese award-winning tutors' perceptions and practices of classroom-based assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(8), 1144-1158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1066306>
- Zigmond, N., & Thornton, H. (1985). Follow-up of postsecondary age learning disabled graduates and drop-outs. *Learning Disabilities Research*.
- Zimba, Z. (2011). *Managing an Inclusive School: A case study of a pilot school in Swaziland*. (Doctoral dissertation, Rhodes University).
- Zwane, S. L., & Malale, M. M. (2018). Investigating barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools in Gege branch, Swaziland. *African journal of disability*, 7(1), 1-12.

APPENDICES

9.10 Appendix A: Request to Conduct Research, Education Department

02 November 2022

The Head of the Department,
Gauteng Department of Education, PO BOX 7710,
Johannesburg, 2001.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GAUTENG

I am Etinosa Izevbigie, a Doctoral student at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study towards my Doctoral degree is: ***“differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.”*** Your permission is hereby requested to conduct my research in primary schools in Gauteng.

The aim of this study is to investigate and compare Nigerian and South African Foundation Phase mainstream schoolteachers’ assessment practices to promote equitable practices for all learners in their classrooms and their support requirements to differentiate the assessments. More specifically, the study will explore how differentiated assessment can be contextualized as an inclusive framework in these countries to promote effective implementation. The findings of this study will contribute to the literature on the phenomenon and provide practical ways to differentiate assessment.

50 teachers from five schools will be requested to complete a questionnaire, and participate in a semi-structured interview. Interviews with teachers will take place at the identified schools and will last for approximately 30 minutes each. Due to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, I will adhere to all safety measures identified by the South African government and the school to prevent the spread of the virus.

Data from the teachers will only be collected after school to avoid interfering with the daily running schools daily program. Teachers will be expected to sign consent forms if they agree/not agree to participate in the study. The study will comply with the following ethical principles:

- Participation will be voluntary, and the participants may withdraw at any time.
- Participants will be asked for their informed consent.
- The participants will not be harmed or put at risk in any way.
- The confidentiality and anonymity of participants and the names of participating schools will be protected.
- The participants will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal.

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

To this end, please sign the attached form that you give permission, are aware and support the use of the identified research sites for data collection. Should you have any queries in this regard, please contact me or my supervisor at:

Researcher: Etinosa Izevbigie

+27693185759

etizevbigie@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. N.S Thuketana

Department of Early Childhood Education

susan.thuketana@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby grant/do not grant permission to Etinosa Izevbigie to use the five schools as research sites to collect data for her Doctoral research study titled ***Differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.***

The Head of the Department,

Gauteng Province

Signature: _____

9.11 Appendix B: Request to Conduct Research, Principals

25 October 2022

Dear Principal

I am Etinosa Izevbigie a Doctoral student in the department of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study towards my Doctoral degree is “***Differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.***” The study aims to investigate and compare the assessment practices and support requirements of Nigeria and South Africa Foundation Phase mainstream schoolteachers and to make recommendations to improve equitable practices for all learners in the Foundation Phase. Dr SN Thuketana, from the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria, supervises the study.

I kindly request for permission to administer questionnaires, and conduct semi-structured interviews, with the Foundation Phase teachers at the school under your jurisdiction. The interview will be scheduled as per the availability of the teachers and will take place at a venue convenient to them. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes.

The participation of the teachers in this study is voluntary and confidential. They have the right to withdraw during the research study without any consequences or explanations. The teachers’ decision will be respected, I guarantee confidentiality and anonymity will, and will use pseudonyms to identify the teachers and the school during the research process. I will also not reveal personal information when reporting my findings. Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

In participating in this research study, the teachers will be asked for permission by the researcher to audio record of the semi-structured interview. The purpose thereof is to make data transcription valid and authentic. The recording will be safely kept at the University of Pretoria, only my supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings. If you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please

notify me or my supervisor. The school will have the opportunity to access and verify the recorded views and the transcriptions of interviews made in case there is a need to do so.

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

Due to COVID-19 and to minimize the spread of infection, the research may be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

Please indicate by signing the consent slip below that you understand the information shared above, the purpose of the research study, and that you give permission for me to access the school and interview the teachers and observe them teaching in the Foundation Phase classes.

Kind regards,

Etinosa Izevbigie

E-mail address: etizevbigie@gmail.com

Contact number: +27693185759

Supervisor: Dr NS Thuketana

E-mail address: susan.thuketana@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I _____ understand that the researcher will administer questionnaires to teachers, and conduct interviews.

Principal's signature

Date

9.12 Appendix C: Request to Conduct Research, Foundation Phase Teacher

18 October 2022

Dear Foundation Phase teacher,

I am Etinosa Izevbigie, a Doctoral student at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study towards my Doctoral degree is: “***differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.***” This study aims to investigate and compare the assessment practices and support requirements of Nigeria and South Africa Foundation Phase mainstream schoolteachers and to make recommendations to improve equitable practices for all learners in the Foundation Phase.

I kindly invite you to participate in this study. This research has two parts: completing a questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. The interview will be scheduled for approximately 30 minutes per your availability and will take place at a convenient venue for you.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, I will use pseudonyms from data transcription to the results reporting stage. You have the right to withdraw during the research process without any consequences or explanations, and I will respect your decision. Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

I will record the semi-structured interview to make the data transcription valid and authentic. The recording will be safely kept at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. You will have access to the data on request and I will also ask you to verify transcriptions of interviews.

I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data

analysis using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Due to COVID-19 and to minimise the spread of infection, the research may be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

Please indicate by signing the consent slip below if you consent to participate and understand the study's purpose.

Kind regards, Etinosa Izevbigie

E-mail address: etizevbigie@gmail.com

Contact number: +27693185759

Supervisor: Dr NS Thuketana

E-mail address: susan.thuketana@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I _____, hereby give permission to Etinosa Izevbigie to include me as a participant in her research on ***differentiated assessment as an inclusive framework for equitable practices in Nigerian and South African mainstream schools.***

Signature: _____

Date: _____

9.13 Appendix D: Questionnaire – Nigeria

Questionnaire questions

Part I. Demographic Information Please

answer all the questions below;

1. Gender

Male _____ Female _____

2. Age

Less than 25 _____ 25-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ over 60 _____

3. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

4. Did not complete upper secondary education _____

Upper secondary education _____

Diploma or equivalent level _____

Bachelor's or equivalent level _____

Master's or equivalent level _____

Doctor or equivalent level _____

5. How many years have you been teaching? _____

6. Choose the current grade level that you are teaching.

Year 1 _____

Year 2 _____

Year 3 _____

7. How many learners are in your class? _____

8. How many learners in your class have been identified with special education needs? _____

Part II.

9. Thinking about your current learners, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The learners have different cognitive abilities and skills				
Learners in my classroom come from different socioeconomic backgrounds				
The inclusion of all learners including those with special educational needs in the classroom promotes quality education				
All learners can demonstrate their knowledge and skills when assessment aligns with their abilities				
The needs of all learners must be accommodated during assessment				

10. Thinking about the purpose of assessment in the Foundation Phase, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The primary purpose of assessment is to promote effective teaching and learning				
The primary purpose of assessment is to know the slow, average, and gifted learners				
Assessment is not important in the Foundation Phase				
Determine how much learners have learnt from the content taught				
To provide feedback on learners' learning				
To identify learners' strengths and weaknesses				

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the curriculum and the assessment guidelines.

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The curriculum is assessment-oriented				
The curriculum guides teachers on what to teach and assess				
The curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate all learners.				
The curriculum guides me on how to adapt my assessment practices to accommodate learners with special education needs.				
My assessment practices align with established curriculum expectations.				

12. Thinking about your classroom assessment practices. How often do you implement the following.

	Always	Most of the time	sometimes	Never
Consider the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use.				
Design a variety of assessment tasks that allow learners to appropriately demonstrate learning.				
Plan class lessons and assessments that are the same for all learners and encompass the curriculum expectations				

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Use the same marking guide for all learners.				
Ensure learners with special needs are provided with accommodations on all assessment tasks.				
I use learners' performance data to inform instructional planning and next steps for individual learners and the class as a whole.				

13. Please give at least one example of how you modify and adapt your classroom assessment to assist learners with special education needs.

14. Please rank your level of competence in each area below.

	Very competent	Competent	Moderately competent	Not competent
I am able to use assessment evidence to guide instructional decisions and support learners learning				
I am able to design assessment activities that are responsive to the educational needs of all learners				
I am able to use assessment information to locate my learners' current knowledge level				
I create assessments that accommodate learners with special needs				

15. How do you ensure that your assessment questions are reliable and valid?

16. In your view, to what extent do the following limit how you modify and adapt your classroom assessment to meet the learning needs of learners with special education needs in your class?

	A lot	Sometimes	a little	Not at all
Inadequate training programs and workshop				
Inflexible curriculum				
Overcrowded classrooms				
Lack of support from a specialist				
Teacher aide/assistant				
Curriculum workload				
Insufficient knowledge and skill				

17. How often do you collaborate with other teachers regarding classroom assessment?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
I observe other teachers' assessment practices				
I share my challenges and/or successes in assessing learning with special education needs				
Work together with colleagues to improve how to assess learners with special education needs				

18. How often do you interact with the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) regarding assessment?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
I am provided with workshops and training on how to accommodate all learners during assessment				
I share my challenges and/or successes in assessing learners with special educational needs				
Work together to improve how to assess learners with special education needs				

19. What type of support do you receive from the SBMC to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

20. What type of support do you require from the SBMC to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

21. What would you recommend as a Foundation Phase teacher to promote classroom assessment that accommodates the diverse learning needs of all learners in your classroom?

Would you like to be contacted for a 10-minute interview?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, please write your contact number. _____

9.14 Appendix E: Questionnaire – South Africa

Part I. Demographic Information Please

answer all the questions below;

1. Gender

Male _____ Female _____

2. Age

Less than 25 _____ 25-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ over 60 _____

3. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

4. Did not complete upper secondary education _____

Upper secondary education _____

Diploma or equivalent level _____

Bachelor's or equivalent level _____

Master's or equivalent level _____

Doctor or equivalent level _____

5. How many years have you been teaching? _____

6. Choose the current grade level that you are teaching.

Year 1 _____

Year 2 _____

Year 3 _____

7. How many learners are in your class? _____

8. How many learners in your class have been identified with special education needs? _____

Part II.

9. Thinking about your current learners, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The learners have different cognitive abilities and skills				
Learners in my classroom come from different socioeconomic backgrounds				
The inclusion of all learners including those with special educational needs in the classroom promotes quality education				
All learners can demonstrate their knowledge and skills when assessment aligns with their abilities				
The needs of all learners must be accommodated during assessment				

10. Thinking about the purpose of assessment in the Foundation Phase, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The primary purpose of assessment is to promote effective teaching and learning				
The primary purpose of assessment is to know the slow, average, and gifted learners				
Assessment is not important in the Foundation Phase				
Determine how much learners have learnt from the content taught				
To provide feedback on learners' learning				
To identify learners' strengths and weaknesses				

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the curriculum and the assessment guidelines.

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
The curriculum is assessment-oriented				
The curriculum guides teachers on what to teach and assess				
The curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate all learners.				
The curriculum guides me on how to adapt my assessment practices to accommodate learners with special education needs.				
My assessment practices align with established curriculum expectations.				

12. Thinking about your classroom assessment practices. How often do you implement the following.

	Always	Most of the time	sometimes	Never
Consider the specific learning needs of learners before determining which type of assessment to use.				
Design a variety of assessment tasks that allow learners to appropriately demonstrate learning.				
Plan class lessons and assessments that are the same for all learners and encompass the curriculum expectations				

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Use the same rubric for all learners.				
Ensure learners with special needs are provided with accommodations on all assessment tasks.				
I use learners' performance data to inform instructional planning and next steps for individual learners and the class as a whole.				

13. Please give at least one example of how you modify and adapt your classroom assessment to assist learners with special education needs.

14. Please rank your level of competence in each area below.

	Very competent	Competent	Moderately competent	Not competent
I am able to use assessment evidence to guide instructional decisions and support learners learning				
I am able to design assessment activities that are responsive to the educational needs of all learners				
I am able to use assessment information to locate my learners' current knowledge level				
I create assessments that accommodate learners with special needs				

15. How do you ensure that your assessment questions are reliable and valid?

16. In your view, to what extent do the following limit how you modify and adapt your classroom assessment to meet the learning needs of learners with special education needs in your class?

	A lot	Sometimes	a little	Not at all
Inadequate training programs and workshop				
Inflexible curriculum				
Overcrowded classrooms				
Lack of support from a specialist				
Teacher aide/assistant				
Curriculum workload				
Insufficient knowledge and skill				

17. How often do you collaborate with other teachers regarding classroom assessment?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
I observe other teachers' assessment practices				
I share my challenges and/or successes in assessing learning with special education needs				
Work together with colleagues to improve how to assess learners with special education needs				

18. How often do you interact with the District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) regarding assessment?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never or almost never
I am provided with workshops and training on how to accommodate all learners during assessment				
I share my challenges and/or successes in assessing learners with special educational needs				
Work together to improve how to assess learners with special education needs				

19. What type of support do you receive from the DBST to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

20. What type of support do you **require** from the DBST to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?

21. What would you recommend as a Foundation Phase teacher to promote classroom assessment that accommodates the diverse learning needs of all learners in your classroom?

Would you like to be contacted for a 10-minute interview?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, please write your contact number. _____

9.15 Appendix F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Thinking about your current learners, how are they different in terms of their socioeconomic background and academic abilities?
2. What are your views and experiences regarding the inclusion of learners with special education needs in a regular classroom?
3. What strategies and methods do you use to assess your learners, including learners with special education needs?
4. How would you want to be supported and equipped by your school and the MoE to further enable you to modify and adapt your classroom assessment for learners with special education needs?
5. What do you suggest needs to be put in place for assessment to be more inclusive to accommodate learners with SEN?