

**Teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream
secondary schools in rural areas**

by

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DECLARATION

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“Teachers’ readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas.”

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



SIGNATURE

10/05/2023
DATE

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband, Victor Thabiso Sebuthuma, and to my son Kgantsho Pontsho Sebuthuma. You reinvigorated me with the strength that I needed to take the steps towards my dreams.

ABSTRACT

Teachers' skills and knowledge in supporting learners with learning impairments in Inclusive mainstream schools remain a prerequisite without which learners with learning impairments can be placed at risk of being marginalised. This study aimed to investigate whether teachers in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas were ready to support learners with learning impairments. The study used a qualitative research methodology, which focuses on comprehending the core beliefs, attitudes and motives that underlie how people construct their worlds and interpret their experiences. It is based on the methodological foundations and epistemic philosophy of the interpretivist paradigm. In-depth, face-to-face interviews, classroom observations and document analysis were used to gather data with the intention of gaining a thorough knowledge of teachers' readiness in supporting learners who have learning impairments. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select ten (10) mainstream secondary school teachers who were teaching learners with learning impairments in Grade 7 to Grade 12. The study's findings showed that even though teachers had attended workshops on Inclusive Education, and had learned about it during their on-the-job training, most teachers in mainstream secondary schools still struggle to support learners with learning impairments. The study recommends that all in-service and pre-service teachers should study and practice a combination of special needs and Inclusive Education teaching strategies, be equipped to meet the learning and participation needs of learners with different types of learning impairments, and that all in-service teachers must participate in ongoing and rigorous workshops on Inclusive Education. The study further recommends that all stakeholders in the education fraternity should provide adequate support to teachers for enhancement of support for learners with learning impairments, specifically in mainstream secondary schools of rural areas.

Keywords: teachers; readiness; secondary schools; learning impairments; mainstream schools; Inclusive Education; support; rural areas; learners; teaching strategies

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM/ABBREVIATION	MEANING
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements. (Curriculum for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements Grades R - 12)
DBST	District-Based Support Team
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FET	Further Education and Training
IE	Inclusive Education
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SCCF	Safe and Caring Child-Friendly Framework
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is a catalyst of change which equips people with skills, knowledge and confidence to contribute actively to the development of the community. Access to education is thus an indispensable right of every child. Education provides innumerable opportunities for people with disabilities to attain independent living and economic empowerment. According to studies conducted by Dube et al. (2021), many countries had good Inclusive Education policies, but they were impeded by inadequate training of teachers dealing with learners with disabilities. Inclusive Education is imperative, as it accommodates marginalised and excluded children in regular schools so that they can learn to reach their full potential from an early age and ensure that they enter adult life well-resourced to be dynamic citizens who will thus support the growth of their community and their country (Engelbrecht & Muthukrishna, 2018).

Teachers in most schools in rural settings have insufficient training in Inclusion practices, and thus struggle to handle learners with various disabilities (Dube et al., 2021). Mainstream schools around the world seem to be facing challenges in accommodating learners with diverse educational needs. This sprouts from challenges in implementing the Inclusion policy, and is augmented by teachers' inability to teach learners with diverse individual needs. It is alleged that teachers do not have the knowledge and skills sets to deliver differentiated education that accommodates the heterogeneous needs of learners. Furthermore, they are unable to adapt instructions and assessments to support learners with learning impairments. Teachers in countries such as Botswana and Lesotho seem to concur with these sentiments (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015). A study conducted by Engelbrecht and Muthukrishna (2018:4) indicates that many teachers in Botswana were strongly against the integration of learners with varied disabilities in mainstream classrooms, as they felt that they lacked the required skills to teach them. According to Chimhenga (2016:528), teachers in Botswana participating in Inclusive Education feel that there is insufficient time at their disposal for consultation and collaboration with other stakeholders to meet the needs of learners with learning impairments. As a result, these learners may struggle to receive quality support from their teachers.

In Lesotho, it was discovered that teachers are not trained to provide Inclusive Education, and thus have not attained the professional skills required for working or supporting learners in the Inclusive or mainstream classroom. The teachers' lack of knowledge, skills and expertise lead to frustration and feelings of inadequacy which interrupt effective teaching and successful learning (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015:290). In Southern Africa, countries such as Malawi, South Africa and Namibia have Inclusive systems which uphold good practice of Inclusiveness in mainstream schools. These countries place emphasis on accommodating and meeting the needs of individual learners who experience barriers to learning, and helping learners catch up through remedial classes, transition classes, resource rooms, and also special classes which are set up for 'failures' – that is, learners with learning difficulties and learners with limited English language proficiency (Engelbrecht & Muthukrishna, 2018).

The creation of remedial classrooms, as well as various separate classes for learners with learning impairments explicitly in the context at mainstream schools, may be perceived as contrary, as they are replicating the very same exclusionary practices that mainstream schools were envisioned to address. In South Africa, currently, most mainstream schools in rural areas are confronted with many challenges in providing support to learners' individual needs, due to overcrowding in the classrooms. According to Lepheana and Chisango (2022), teachers encounter challenges in time constraints, an overload of administrative work, as well as insufficient support and resources – which lead to feelings of incompetence in accommodating learners' experiencing learning impairments. It is worth noting that learners with diverse educational needs require a great deal of individual attention, support and guidance, which becomes virtually impossible in overcrowded classrooms.

Mainstream schools in rural areas are exceedingly under-resourced. As a result, they could face many challenges in curriculum implementation, discipline, and lack of support, leading to poor teacher morale. These teachers do not feel competent enough to accommodate learners with learning impairments (Lepheana & Chisango, 2022). Khoaeane and Naong (2015) emphasise that inadequate teacher training in Inclusive Education is a problem in developing countries. Most teachers have not been equipped to deal with diversified learners coming into the mainstream schooling system; as a result, teachers are unable to support these learners. According to Engelbrecht and Muthukrishna (2018), there is a lack of clear implementation goals as well as of adequate human, material and financial resources allocation, which has created a gap between idealistic policy pronouncements and their implementation. According to the researcher's personal experience, the curriculum implemented in these mainstream schools is content-heavy, learners do not have sufficient

time to construct a solid foundation of the concepts taught, and they gain superficial knowledge of the coursework as emphasis is placed on curriculum coverage with no space for a quality flow of feedback. The researcher strongly believes that a bloated curriculum propels teachers to move at a faster pace in order to complete it, and as a result, learners with learning impairments are left behind. It is only when barriers to learning are removed that the learner with learning impairments will be able to benefit from equity, quality and social justice in education, and feel a sense of belonging, while simultaneously, teachers will get to experience a sense of worth in the learning community. All children can learn, provided they receive support.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of what has already been cited in the background to the study, a large number of learners experiencing barriers to learning drop out of school primarily because of the inability of the system to identify and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs, typically through the inaccessible physical learning milieu, inflexible curriculum, non-differentiated assessment, inadequate learning and teaching support materials, and instructional methodologies that are not adapted to accommodate diverse learners, as stated in the Education White Paper 6 – the “primary South African policy document on Inclusive Education” (Department of Education, 2001). A decade ago, Mahlo (2017:8) attested that education support services were under-resourced and were not able to handle the large number of learners with diverse educational needs; thus, their barriers to learning were not being met. This research study endeavoured to establish whether the education support services in South Africa are still inadequate or not, with special reference to learners in rural areas who are experiencing learning impairments.

According to Landsberg et al. (2016), in nearly all classrooms in schools in South Africa there are learners experiencing learning difficulties. Some learners’ difficulties are so profound that these learners are unable to cope with any learning subjects at school. Some problems are less noticeable, and teachers are only vaguely aware that these learners ought to be in a position to perform at a satisfactory level (Landsberg et al., 2016). Teachers at mainstream schools are expected to support learners who are experiencing learning impairments, but they appear to be not ready in applying the skills and knowledge to accomplish their obligations. This study therefore investigated teachers’ readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments, and their roles in ensuring that such learners are accommodated in

teaching and learning situations. This study therefore attempted to answer the following main research question:

1.3 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How ready are teachers in mainstream secondary schools towards supporting learners with learning impairments in rural areas?

1.3.1 Sub-research questions

The present study answered the following sub-research questions:

1.3.1.1 What are teachers' understanding of support for learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas?

1.3.1.2 What factors determine teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas?

1.3.1.3 How can teachers' support for learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas be enhanced?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was steered by the following objectives:

1.4.1 To examine teachers' understanding of supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas.

1.4.2 To investigate factors that ascertain teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments.

1.4.3 To find out strategies that can enhance teachers' support for learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools.

1.5 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

During the first year of my teaching career in 2017, I came across learners who exhibited learning impairments, trademark physiognomies of language deficits, social skills deficits and academic difficulties. This frustrated me, as I had not been trained to deal with such learners during my in-service training. These learners exhibited discrepancies between their ability and aptitude. I strived to meet their learning needs within the lessons being taught through generating profound knowledge about their strengths and weaknesses, in order to employ different teaching styles to match their different learning styles. I taught an overcrowded Grade 4 classroom with 98 learners. The classroom was ethnically and linguistically diverse. This posed many challenges for learners with learning impairments, as they had to cope with

distinguished learning styles, unaccustomed learning settings, diverse experiences of assessment practices, different types of communication and interaction as well as linguistic plurality. Learners with learning impairments are no less intelligent than the average learners, and often require very simple accommodations to maximise their learning experience, depending on whether the impairment is extrinsic or intrinsic. These learners require guidance and understanding from their parents, families and teachers in order to reach their full potential and to succeed. It is imperative for all teachers to be trained to deal with children with learning impairments in mainstream schools, so that they can also develop new skills, attitudes and ways of relating to these learners.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study provided an opportunity for teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the fraternity of education to expand their understanding of how teachers in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas understand and support learners with learning impairments. The study aimed to add new insights into how teacher readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments can be enhanced. Furthermore, it provided a contribution to the database of existing literature on teacher readiness in providing support in Inclusive Education. The study's objectives recommended guiding principles to legislators and policymakers to improve teacher readiness in implementing Inclusion of learners with learning impairments.

1.7 AIM OF THE STUDY

The focus and purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas.

7.1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory adopted to guide and inform this study was Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development of 1962 (Woolfolk, 2010:45). According to the theory, children learn through social interactions and, through their culture, by means of "dialogues." Thus, children socially interact and communicate with others in order to learn the cultural values of a society. According to Vygotsky, "human activities take place in cultural settings and cannot be understood apart from these settings" (Woolfolk, 2010:45). A child's cognitive development is greatly affected by their social interactions and the cultural settings around them. Culture is the main influential factor for knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1962). It plays a significant role in shaping cognition. As the child intermingles with others, the principles and customs

that are entrenched in a culture are transmitted to the child, where it impacts their cognitive development. It is therefore imperative to comprehend the cultural milieu in which the child is reared, in order to understand the child's development. Learning takes place through interactions learners have with their peers, teachers and other experts (Vygotsky, 1962). Through social interaction, the child has the potential to solve problems and possess higher chances of using different approaches in the future (Vygotsky, 1962). One learns through one's cultural lens by interacting with others and following the rules, skills and abilities shaped by one's culture (Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky (1962) advocates that humans do not act directly on the physical world without the intermediary of tools. Whether symbolic or signs, tools, according to Vygotsky, are relics created by humans under specific cultural (culture-specific) and historical conditions. As such, they carry with them the characteristics of the culture in question and are utilised in problem solving and to accommodate the needs and ambitions of individuals and communities, and therefore exert an influence on individuals who utilise them (Vygotsky, 1962).

The development of a child relies upon the interactions between the child's individual maturation and a system of symbolic tools and activities that the child attains from their socio-cultural milieu (Kozulin et al., 2003). Vygotsky was of the notion that human activities ought to be comprehended in their cultural settings. He further posited that one's specific mental schemes and processes can be linked to one's interactions with others, that the tool of the culture, particularly the tool of language, is the main factor in development, and that the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the precinct wherein learning and development are feasible (Woolfolk, 2010).

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory helps one to better understand the manner in which people learn from each other in the social milieu and enlightens one on ways in which teachers can establish active learning communities by constructing learning environments that amplify learners' capability to interact with one another through shared activities. Elevated mental processes surface first among people, as they are co-created during shared activities. When children are engrossed in activities with grownups or more capable peers, they interchange notions and ways of thinking about or representing concepts (Woolfolk, 2010). Children then internalise these co-created ideas. Children's knowledge, notions, outlooks and principles develop through appropriating or "taking for themselves" the conduct and thinking established by their culture and by the more capable members of their communities (Woolfolk, 2010).

Disability is a socio-cultural developmental phenomenon, according to Dixon and Verenikina (2007). According to Dixon and Verenikina (2007), the child's social setting might immensely limit the course of development and lead to the delays or differences that are characteristic of many people with disabilities, such as in learners with learning impairments. Vygotsky argued that numerous behavioural characteristics such as passivity, dependence and lack of social skills that are assumed to characterize persons with intellectual impairments are outcomes of inability to access socio-cultural knowledge, lack of social interaction and a limited opportunity in obtaining psychological tools (Dixon & Verenikina, 2007). According to Vygotsky, if the course of development deviates from typical social development owing to the child's disability, then the child is socially disadvantaged. This leads to the emergence of delays and deficits – that is, secondary handicapping conditions and insufficient compensatory ways of coping (Gindis, 1999). Social interactions are not merely simple influences on cognitive development, they form our cognitive structures of thinking processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996:192).

Vygotsky's theory denotes that increased dynamic interactions among learners and teachers permit the teacher to support learners in the portions of the task they are unable to execute alone. His theory proposes that teachers ought to do more than merely arrange the teaching and learning milieu so that learners can learn on their own. Children cannot and should not be expected to reinvent or rediscover knowledge already available in their culture; rather, they ought to be guided and aided in their learning (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). Vygotsky holds the view that learning draws development to higher levels, and teachers play an important role in cognitive development. Teachers ought to focus on supporting learners with learning needs, and provide cultural tools as educational resources. They ought to provide for pair and peer learning for learners to support each other through the discovery process, particularly in today's diversified classrooms. It is imperative for teachers to be sensitive to learners' cultural backgrounds and their languages, while simultaneously being an active participant in their knowledge construction. The researcher therefore considered it appropriate to employ the socio-cultural theory to frame the study.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this study was to contribute to the understanding of teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments. It is important to first establish how teachers understand and implement their philosophy of Inclusion, and how they internalise and enact Inclusion in mainstream secondary schools, in order to provide Appropriate support to

learners with learning impairments. Teachers' interventions are vital because of the fundamental role they play in encouraging participation and reducing poor academic performance, especially with children who might be viewed as experiencing learning impairments (Grosser & Nel, 2016). The Education White Paper 6 on special needs education (EWP 6) (Department of Education, 2001) was launched as an Inclusion policy to address the Inclusion of learners with diversified educational needs through the provision of a broader spread of educational support services in South African schools. According to Conway (2017), Inclusion in schools incorporates acknowledging the right of learners to an education in the vicinity in which they reside, as well as enhancing the school experience for staff and learners. Inclusion requires teachers to accept accountability for establishing schools in which all children can learn and have a sense of belonging (Grosser & Nel, 2016).

According to Mahlo (2017), teachers do not conceptualise their roles clearly as stipulated in the Inclusive Education (IE) policy, in which they are expected to execute some duties with which they are not yet acquainted. Matlala (2015) states that teachers are not yet capacitated to support their own staff members and other teachers from neighbouring schools as prescribed in the EWP 6; thus, numerous learners with learning impairments are still found in mainstream schools with no form of support. According to a study conducted by Wahl (2017) on exploring effective teaching strategies for foundation phase teachers in mainstream primary schools to effect Inclusive Education, it was discovered that many teachers were not adequately qualified to cope with the diversity of learning needs and the barriers to learning that occur because of these challenges.

A study conducted by Adewumi and Mosito (2019) highlights that some teachers did not have skills, as they were not really trained for implementing Inclusion for learners with special education needs. This made it difficult for them to adequately accommodate learners with special needs, as they were not specialists in the area. Morelle and Tabane (2019:2) state that the Inclusion of learners with learning barriers in mainstream schools is not an easy task, as it is exacerbated by contextual factors such as teachers' lack of knowledge, an unadjusted environment, and a non-user-friendly schooling environment for learners with learning barriers. Grosser and Nel (2016) indicate that most of the teachers have a challenge of feeling incompetent in adequately identifying and supporting learners with learning impairments. Furthermore, most support structures on both the school level and district level are not functioning well. Mahlo (2017) highlights that the teaching of learners with diverse needs requires teachers with specific knowledge and skills to enable them to identify and help learners, thus cultivating a positive attitude and willingness to accept them in class and assist

them. According to Yaraya et al. (2018), effective implementation of Inclusion of learners, particularly for learners with learning impairments, relies significantly on teachers' commitment and attitude, the understanding of the Inclusive process, experience working with learners with special educational needs, and the continuous professional self-development. Developing effective Inclusive practices is not only about expanding teachers' knowledge but is also meant to encourage teachers to change their methodological approaches and to reassess their attitudes and views about children with learning impairments.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.10.1 Research approach and design

This study was grounded on the epistemological philosophy and methodological underpinnings of the interpretivism paradigm, which assumes that social context, conversations, customs and values of a specific person or community are vital elements in assessing and comprehending human conduct (Maree, 2013:21). This study therefore adopted a qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach is a method of inquiry which focuses on understanding fundamental reasons, opinions and motivations on how people construct their world and interpret their experiences. According to Leavy (2017:124), qualitative approaches to research value the depth of meaning, people's subjective experiences and their meaning-making processes. A qualitative research approach assisted the researcher in generating a comprehensive understanding and description of participants' perspectives, their experiences, and how they make sense of events in their everyday life.

The researcher firmly believes that human conduct, activities, beliefs and emotions are greatly affected by the settings in which they occur. Methodologically, qualitative approaches depend on inductive designs focused on creating meaning and constructing copious, descriptive data (Kumar, 2011). The transcendental, phenomenological, qualitative research design was used in this study as the most suitable mode of inquiry for the attainment of information and to draw the utmost valid, honest deductions from the answers to the set research questions on how ready teachers are in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas. A transcendental phenomenological study is a study that tries to comprehend peoples' understandings and views in relation to a situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016:255). This research approach, which puts emphasis on concepts, events or the lived experiences of people, is suitable for this study (Saldaña, 2011:9). The subjective experiences of the participants (Cohen et al., 2018) are at the heart of this research.

1.10.2 Population and sampling

According to Neuman (2014:247), 'population' is defined as the abstract notion of a large group of numerous cases whereby a researcher draws a sample, and whereby the results from a sample are generalised. Sampling is an essential aspect of research design whereby purposeful strategies are utilised. It is a process that involves choosing a portion of a bigger group of participants, with the intention of generalising from a smaller group to a larger group, whereby valid inferences about the population are conducted by selecting the sample so that it is representative of the total population (Gliner et al., 2017:137). Rich data is likely to be produced by participants who are better situated in relative to the topic (Morse, 2010; Patton, 2015).

In this study, the target group was in-service teachers in Mogalakwena District, Limpopo province, around the town of Mokopane, in mainstream secondary schools situated in previously disadvantaged areas. The sample for this study consisted of two (2) purposively selected teachers from each of the five (5) mainstream secondary schools in the Mogalakwena district who have learners in Grade 7 to Grade 12 who met the physiognomies of learning impairments. The total number of teachers selected and sampled for this study was ten (10). Non-probability purposeful sampling was applied to select participants who provided rich and significant data.

According to Yin (2015:339), purposeful sampling is the selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study. Patton (2015) states that this method is grounded by the belief that looking out for the best cases for the study yields the best data, and research results are a direct result of the cases sampled. The researcher used the knowledge of the populace to make a judgment about which individuals to be chosen to provide the most relevant data to address the aim of the study. De Vos et al. (2011:193) claim that the findings of a study can only be generalised when there is an assumption that what is observed in the sample group can also be observed in any other group of participants from the populace. Generalising the outcomes of a study, based on engaging with such a sample, means that it is assumed that any other portion of the same populace would produce similar observations (De Vos et al., 2011:204). The purposeful sampling method usually assures a high participation rate, as it is easy to administer, assuring receipt of needed information, and thus the researcher deemed it to be the most suitable sampling method for the study.

1.10.3 Instrumentation and data collection techniques

A qualitative inquiry is a research methodology which emphasizes the meaning in context and needs a data collection instrument that is dedicated to fundamental meaning when collecting and interpreting information. Humans are best suited to this task, especially because interviewing, observing, and analysing are activities central to qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:2). In this study, data was collected from in-depth, face-to-face interviews, as well as classroom observations where a reasonable social distance was adhered to in line with COVID-19 protocols, and from analysis of documents such as the learners' portfolios, school policies, departmental circulars, the school's vision and mission statement, learners' workbooks and teachers' minute books.

The researcher conducted interviews and observed the participants in order to gain a profound understanding of their perspectives on their everyday lived experiences regarding learners with learning impairments. The experiences of different individuals were grouped, evaluated and equated to identify the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An amalgamated explanation of the essence of the experience for all the individuals was then developed (Creswell & Poth, 2018:121). Prior to conducting in-depth interviews, the researcher evaluated, identified and acknowledged her own experiences, prejudices, perspectives and assumptions about the phenomenon, before conducting the study. The strategies stated above enabled the researcher to acquire reliable and detailed research material on the strategies utilised by teachers when dealing with learners experiencing learning impairments and determined their level of readiness in supporting such learners.

1.10.3.1 In-depth interviews

The interview method of collecting data comprises a presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses (Kothari, 2004). In this study, individual, in-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted, where in-service teachers were interviewed to gain a profound understanding of their ideas, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and behaviours regarding support for learners with learning impairments. The researcher employed in-depth interviews to obtain rich descriptive data to understand the participants' norms and standards, social conventions, and construction of knowledge regarding learning impairments. These elements are crucial in evaluating and understanding teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments. Furthermore, verbal and non-verbal behaviour were observed while interviewing the participants. The main disadvantages of interviews are the likelihood of subjectivity and bias, as well as lack of anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher,

2010). Interviews involve an individual conversing with another, and anonymity in this instance may be unfeasible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher thus had to accentuate confidentiality and be highly truthful and straightforward with the participants about the study and its intentions. Individual, face-to-face interviews created an environment for participants to feel more comfortable and less reserved to share information, unlike when they are in the presence of other colleagues or peers. The interviews were recorded on an audio recorder with the permission as well as the accord of participants, in order to make certain that vital information was not misled.

During the research process, the researcher took field notes consisting of a description of the researcher's reflections on conversations with participants, interviews, instincts, notions, behaviours of the participants, and any other relevant information, during the study. The in-depth interview data collection technique utilised in this study posed limitations in the sense that a long interview is inapt, and participants found certain content too sensitive to discuss, so the researcher refrained from discussing such sensitive topics in order not to disrupt rapport. Other alternative data collection methods were thus utilised. The researcher was careful when formulating interview questions and interviewing participants to avoid content that might be sensitive to the participants. The interviewer utilised clear, unambiguous, user-friendly questions that were aligned with the study's sub-research questions and objectives.

1.10.3.2 Observation

The observation method was engaged as a suitable means of collecting and recording data in this study, to corroborate the data collected from interviews. Observation is viewed as a systematic method of capturing behavioural patterns of persons involved in the research study, objects and occurrences, without questioning or conversing with them (Maree, 2013). Through the observation method, the researcher gained rich data about the participants' demeanour and interaction with the learners while in their natural teaching and learning environment. The observer played the role of non-participant (outsider), and was detached from the subjects' group or process, thus acting as a complete non-participating observer.

Leedy and Ormrod (2016:263) indicate that the main advantage of conducting observations is that the researcher can take advantage of unanticipated data sources as they surface, and from this data the researcher can establish a multifaceted and interconnected image of how particular people use their time. The observation method has limitations, however. The disadvantage of this method is that the presence of the researcher in the setting can affect

the behaviour of the subjects. It is thus imperative for the observer to adopt a relatively passive role in the initial phases of the observation process, and gradually build a relationship with the participants. According to Kumar (2011), if the researcher is not cautious, they can project their own biasness. The researcher therefore tried not to induce participants' behaviour but observe events as they occurred in the natural setting, to deduce whether the teachers were able to support learners with learning impairments, or not.

1.10.3.4 Document analysis

Documents such as policies, departmental circulars, the school's vision and mission statement, learners' profiles, workbooks, teachers' minute books, as well as any other documents that have the potential to add to the study's findings, were used as valuable sources to authenticate data collected through observations and the interview. The researcher made use of reflex records to make necessary changes that were applicable. Prior to engaging in data collection, the researcher conducted pilot studies to evaluate the data collection instruments employed in the study, and to make alterations where necessary. Clark-Carter (2019:30) defines a pilot study as a probationary run of the study, which should be carried out on a smaller-sized sample group than the one to be used in the actual study. Regardless of the technique the researcher adopts, it is imperative that the researcher carries out a pilot study beforehand. The key objective of a pilot study is to verify the basic features of the design and procedure of the research project. A pilot study was conducted with two (2) participants. The conclusions drawn from the pilot study were utilised as a system to detect possible faults within the data collecting instrument, and to make mandatory adjustments before conducting the actual research.

1.10.3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Maree (2010:99) stated that qualitative data analysis is built on an interpretive philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. Christensen and Burke (2017:271) advocate that qualitative data analysis is much more eclectic, and therefore there is no single accurate technique of analysing the data because of the nature of the data attained. Data collected from a qualitative study derive from observations, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials, according to Christensen and Burke (2017:271). In this study, analysis of the data was generated from transcribed verbatim observations made during the teaching and learning process, and documents utilised by teachers to support learners with learning impairments. Analysis of the large amount of data composed needed to be decreased to certain patterns, categories or themes, and interpreted by using some

schema. Qualitative data analysis needs coding and searching for relationships and patterns until a holistic picture surfaces (Christensen & Burke, 2017:271). In this study, the researcher utilised inductive data analysis to organise the data into categories and themes to form more abstract units of information and to achieve the objectives set out in the study. Inductive reasoning permits the researcher to observe a sample and then draw assumptions around the populace from which the sample derives (De Vos et al., 2011).

1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

1.11.1 Transferability

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), transferability is described as the degree to which the outcomes of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants. The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description, that is describing not just the behaviour and experiences, but their context as well, so that the behaviour and experiences become meaningful to an outsider. To promote transferability in this study, the researcher clearly described the research steps followed from the beginning of the research study to the advancement and reporting of the findings, and the records of the research route were kept throughout the study.

1.11.2 Credibility

Credibility comprises establishing that the outcomes of qualitative research are trustworthy or plausible from the viewpoint of individuals involved in the study. Korstjens and Moser (2018:121) define credibility as the certainty that can be placed in the accuracy of the research findings. In this study, the researcher took the findings of the study to the participants for authentication, comparison, evaluation and approval. The principal aim of a qualitative study is to explore the insights, experiences, beliefs and sentiments of people; thus, participants are the best judges to ascertain whether the research findings have captured their views and feelings accurately. To establish credibility in this study, the researcher took the findings of the study to the participants involved in the study for validation, comparison, evaluation and approval.

1.11.3 Dependability

Dependability is defined as the consistency of the research findings over time. According to the study conducted by Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are

supported by the data as received from the participants in the study. In this study, for others to replicate and evaluate the level of dependability, the researcher kept substantial, detailed records of observation notes, the process involved in analysing information obtained from observations, and data collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis, in order to make inferences and deductions.

1.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the research findings of the study could be corroborated by other researchers. Confirmability is about ensuring that data and interpretations of the research findings are not figments of the researcher's imagination but are derived evidently from the data. The researcher conducted a data audit which highlighted all the steps of data analysis that were taken to provide a basis for decisions made. This helped to establish that the findings of the research study accurately depicted the responses of the participants. Another strategy that was employed was documenting procedures for checking and rechecking data throughout the study.

1.12 RESEARCH ETHICS

According to Maree (2013), ethics in qualitative research ensures that the participants partaking in the study are not physically injured or endure psychological or emotional distress. The researcher did whatever was needed to minimise this danger. The researcher ensured that the privacy of research participants was protected. The participants in this study were offered protection by means of these practices: the declaration of confidentiality, anonymity, and proper storage of data.

1.12.1 Permission

The researcher first requested permission to conduct research from the institute of higher learning (university) under whose auspices the current study was conducted. Further, the researcher sought permission from the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education, the District Office, the Circuit Office, and from the principals of the mainstream secondary schools whose teachers were involved in the study. Permission was also sought from the parents of the learners, as well as from the teachers who participated in the study.

1.12.2 Consent form

Christensen and Burke (2017:305) maintain that the concept of informed consent denotes that an individual, once equipped with relevant information, is competent and legally bound to decide whether to partake in the study. Participants were not compelled, bullied or obligated to participate in this research. Participants thus volunteered to be observed or interviewed. The researcher obtained informed consent from all individuals involved in the research or in the vicinity of the research. Consent was obtained through written consent forms which included the main elements of the research, such as an explanation of the research, measures to be followed, duration of the study, risks involved, benefits of participation, and a clause signifying that participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could terminate their participation at any time during the process of the research. Participants were also informed verbally and in written form that interviews would be recorded on Microsoft Teams.

1.12.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is another means employed to safeguard the privacy of individuals taking part in a research study. Confidentiality in this context can thus be viewed as a contract between researchers and participants on what can be done with data gathered about participants in the study (Christensen & Burke, 2017:317). In this study, access to the participants' information, identity, responses, and supplementary data attained during the study, was restricted to the researcher and the supervisor involved, and would be destroyed instantly subsequent to the conclusion of the study.

1.12.4 Anonymity

Christensen and Burke (2017:317) maintain that respecting the privacy of participants in the study ought to be at the core of the conduct of ethical research. Anonymity can thus be regarded as the best way to protect privacy, as the identities of participants will be known only to the researcher. Anonymity was ensured by making certain that the data gathered could not be aligned to the identities of the participants or the institutes involved in the study. The researcher accomplished this by using a system to link names to the data by using pseudonyms or numbers.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The shortcomings of this study were that this study depended on having access to people (teachers, learners, principals and other stakeholders), organisations (schools) and documents (learners' books, school policies, and more); therefore, the researcher faced

challenges in having limited access to the documents such as school policies as well as learners' books. Denial or limited access to the factors mentioned above caused a delay in the progress of the study, which prolonged the conclusion of the study. This study employed in-depth individual interviews, observations and document analysis as instruments for collecting data. The data collection methods opted for in this study were time consuming and more costly, compared to other methods. In-depth interviews ought to have been conducted using Microsoft Teams; however, they were conducted face to face because of loadshedding, as well as poor network connectivity in some areas due to rife cable theft.

1.13.1 Overcoming limitations

The researcher scheduled and conducted interviews within a duration of five days: two interviews were to be conducted per day. This strategy endeavoured to alleviate financial constraints and helped the researcher to consolidate findings within a short period. The researcher requested permission timeously from individuals, stakeholders and organisations that were involved, and illustrated the benefits of taking part in the study.

1.14 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), delimitations are restrictions deliberately placed by researchers themselves. They are definitions the researchers chose to set as the restrictions or limits of their work so that the study's aims and objectives do not become impossible to attain. In this regard, it can be argued that delimitations are within the researcher's control. The study was delimited to five mainstream schools in disadvantaged areas within the town of Mokopane in Limpopo. The selected number of schools is small, thus having an influence on the generalisation of the findings of the study. The researcher is aware that data cannot be gathered from all the schools in Mokopane, but the results of the findings from the sample group can serve as the foundation for comparability of larger studies in other schools, and can be used to acquire comprehensive data from participants' standpoints on the phenomenal. The researcher understood that limited sample size and sampling technique may lead to outcomes being unfairly distributed regarding participants' parameters. Therefore, the researcher clustered some socio-demographic characteristics in order to create larger subgroups such as the ethnicity of the teachers.

1.15 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.15.1 Inclusive Education: According to the Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools (Department of Education, 2009:8), Inclusive Education is described as a process of eliminating barriers to and within learning by accommodating diversified educational needs of learners. In this study, Inclusive Education implies an education system based on the notion of a learning milieu that serves to promote the advancement of all individuals, academically, personally, and professionally irrespective of their sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic statuses, linguistic and gender, academic and physical abilities. Inclusion promotes quality and equity education for all.

1.15.2 Learner: An individual acquiring knowledge in a specific subject or a skill (Carver & Pantoja, 2015). This study will only put prominence on learners with learning impairments. This study will signify to learners enrolled in Grade 7 to Grade 12 in mainstream schools in rural areas.

1.15.3 Learning Impairment: Landsberg et al. (2016) define it as a general term for a diverse group of neurological disorders in the basic of psychological processes of the brain, which manifest in difficulties with language (speaking, reading, and writing) and/or mathematical calculations (Landsberg et al., 2016). This study will focus entirely on supporting educational needs of learners in Grade 7 to Grade 12 who display physiognomies of learning impairments.

1.15.4 Mainstream school: The Department of Education (2005) clarified mainstream schools as schools which places children with special educational needs or learning barriers into regular school classrooms. The study will focus on mainstream schools in rural areas within the town of Mokopane in Limpopo.

1.16 CHAPTER OUTLINES

Chapter 1: Orientation to the study

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis, and discussion

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

1.17 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the introduction and background to the study, statement of the problem, rationale for the study, theoretical framework, research methodology, trustworthiness, ethics of the study, limitations, delimitations, and definitions of concepts. The following chapter will present a review of interrelated literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature in relation to the following objectives of the study, to examine teachers' understanding of supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas, to investigate factors that determine teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments and to find strategies to enhance teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools. The review of literature was aimed at assisting the researcher to explore pertinent data relating to the study, and to encourage further research into the phenomenon being studied.

2.1.2 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

The goal of this study was to explore teachers' readiness in supporting mainstream secondary school learners with learning impairments in rural areas. The researcher therefore deemed it significant to firstly establish how teachers understand and implement the philosophy of Inclusion and how they internalise and enact Inclusion in mainstream secondary schools in order to provide Appropriate support to learners with learning impairments. The teachers' perceptions and interpretations of Inclusion served as a yardstick to determine how they understand Inclusive Education and the enactment thereof, which will ultimately determine how they provide support to learners with learning impairments. According to Yaraya et al. (2018:2), successful integration of learners with varied educational needs into the mainstream schools, and teachers' commitment, rely greatly on the teachers' understanding of the Inclusive process. According to Mangope et al. (2020), there is a lack of understanding which frequently exists amid mainstream education teachers in Botswana in relation to the implementation of Inclusive Education in mainstream schools. Ginja and Chen (2020:782) highlight that many teachers in Ethiopia are aware of how they learn best, but do not necessarily consider how their learners learn and if the way they teach is established on enabling learning to happen.

Forlin and Sin (2017) are of the view that teachers who are equipped with theoretical knowledge and teaching methodologies on Inclusive Education are able to work effectively in diverse classrooms; however, this narrative seem to be in contrast with sentiments shared by some South African teachers. Teachers who feel unprepared to teach in Inclusive settings,

may be anxious about the Inclusion of learners with different education needs in mainstream classrooms (Pit-Ten Cate et al., 2018). A research study conducted by Hooijer et al. (2021) discovered that teachers in South Africa still find it challenging to establish Inclusive learning environments, because they believe that they do not have the necessary skills and resources to teach learners with different learning needs, even though having attended numerous professional development courses on Inclusive Education. Saloviita (2020:271) emphasises that the existence of extra resources such as knowledge or assistance, and training alone, cannot guarantee successful implementation of Inclusive Education. There has to be a change in the way teachers perceive learners with learning impairments in mainstream schools. A change in commonly held beliefs will probably lead to transformation in teachers' practices. Teachers' personal interpretation and views of learning impairments reverberate in their teaching and support strategies in the classrooms.

According to Pit-Ten Cate et al. (2018), teachers' competence and attitudes influence the degree to which they are willing and able to implement Inclusive practices. Hooijer et al. (2021) state that teachers' attitudes in many schools are less positive towards learners with disabilities and towards varied learning needs. It can be argued that teachers' lack of acceptance may deter the principles and values of Inclusion from being translated into practice. Social integration policies, such as the Inclusion policy, rely significantly on positive attitudes of teachers towards integration of learners with and without learning impairments, for them to be successful. Saloviita (2020) emphasises that teachers' positive attitudes are essential for success when children with special educational needs are placed in mainstream classrooms. Concurrently, Yaraya et al. (2018:2) maintain that the acceptance or non-acceptance of teachers of the principles of a social phenomenon plays a significant role, as it is the first and most crucial step in the formation of the teachers' readiness to engage with learners with varied educational needs.

According to the results of a research study conducted in Finland by Saloviita (2020:279), it was discovered that the policy of Inclusive Education was hindered by attitudinal barriers amid teachers, particularly in the higher grades of basic schooling. Only a small minority of teachers warmly approved of Inclusion of learners with diverse educational needs in mainstream schools. In the same breath, an international study conducted by Mangope et al. (2020:6) shows that positive experiences with regard to teaching in Inclusive classrooms have some effect on teachers' willingness to include learners with disabilities. However, Lee et al. (2016; cited in Mangope et al., 2020) argue that the change in attitude and commitment of teachers will emerge as a result of teachers' increasing mastery of the skills required to teach learners

with a wide range of abilities. Vasileiadis et al. (2021:27) share similar sentiments and hold the view that teachers' training in Inclusion plays a significant role in ensuring that teachers adopt a positive attitude towards Inclusive Education curricula and to learners with and without disabilities.

2.1.3 FACTORS DETERMINING TEACHERS' READINESS IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

According to Beasy et al. (2020), in order to overcome societal inequities, teachers must be prepared to help learners with different learning needs to succeed in school. The professional and psychological preparation of teachers is critical to the successful implementation of Inclusive Education (Movkebayeva et al., 2016). The professional and psychological preparation of teachers is critical to the successful implementation of Inclusive Education (Movkebayeva et al., 2016). According to Kamalova and Raykova (2016), teachers' professional readiness is based on teachers' willingness to acquire knowledge on the fundamentals of psychology of learners with learning impairments, pertinent intervention strategies, and their understanding of learners' individual traits and their learning needs.

2.1.3.1 Teachers' professional preparedness

Teachers' professional preparedness reverberate in their practices through modelling of flexible lessons, having knowledge of individual traits of learners with special educational needs, and their keenness for professional interaction with learners with learning impairments. In South African schools, the situation of Inclusive pedagogy remains gloomy, and teachers are unsure of what defines Inclusive pedagogy in the country (Makoelle, 2017). Professional preparedness manifests itself in the teacher's conscious direction and in their ability to perform professional activities that fully address the educational needs of a child within the Inclusive Educational environment (Pilipchuk et al., 2021). Professional preparedness of teachers for Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schooling is portrayed in the teachers' understanding of the philosophy of Inclusive Education and reverberated in their practices through performing professional activities that fully address the diverse educational needs of children in their classrooms.

Teachers' professional preparedness is regarded as the elementary base for efficacious implementation of Inclusive Education (Pilipchuk et al., 2021). Denisova et al. (2020:4) substantiate this, and according to them, a teacher ought to have a high level of professional

integral methodological competence in Inclusive pedagogy. This competence will contribute to the teachers' intensive accumulation of academic knowledge about learners with learning impairments. and also enable them to create life competencies essential in their daily practice.

2.1.3.2 Psychological readiness

This incorporates complete acceptance of learners with distinct educational needs in their developmental phases into the educational environment, teachers' willingness to fully include learners with distinct educational needs into classroom tasks and teachers' satisfaction with their individual teaching competencies. (Kamalova & Raykova, 2016). Teachers have to attain competencies in pedagogical, professional personality and social competences in order to plan, organise and facilitate an Inclusive learning process. One of the requirements for effective professional preparedness is psychological readiness (Pilipchuk et al., 2021).

2.1.3.3 School readiness for Inclusivity

There are five fundamental facets to evaluate the school readiness for Inclusion: the views of the school's stakeholders, curriculum implementations, teaching and learning tasks, educational staffs, amenities, infrastructure and funding, connection between the community and school (Sari & Saleh, 2020). In countries such as Botswana, there has been some professional progress and increased personal gratification amidst mainstream teachers teaching in their classrooms, despite inadequate pedagogical knowledge and skills in Inclusive Education (Mangope & Kuyini, 2020:17).

The facts from literature reviewed resonate with the theoretical framework adopted to inform the study (Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory) in a sense that, according to Vygotsky's social-cultural learning theory (1995), the perspectives and attitudes of a social setting and the circumstances created by the society, exert an influence on the child's ability to access the socio-cultural knowledge, experiences, and opportunities which allow them to acquire "psychological tools". A child's social setting modifies their route of development. On the basis of this notion, one can argue that the social-cultural setting of a non-Inclusive school can perpetuate distortions and delays in learners with learning impairments.

Vygotsky refers to this as a "secondary disability", where a child experiences distortions of a higher psychological functions as a result of social factors. Thus, it is imperative for teachers to acquire integral methodological proficiencies and, adapt and modify the content and

learning space to promote self-realization of the individual and integration of learners into the socio-cultural space. Learning, according to Vygotsky, is a shared activity in a responsive social context, and so there is a link between socio-cultural activities in society and mental processes in people. The primary problem of a disability from the social perspective is not the sensory or neurological impairment itself but its social implications (Vygotsky, 1995:77). It can thus be argued that impairments not only alter children's relationship with the world, but above all affects their interactions with society. Disability should be understood as a socio-cultural developmental phenomenon rather than a "biological impairment having psychological consequences (Vygotsky, 1995:77).

2.1.4 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHERS'S READINESS IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIMENTS

Teachers' interventions are significant because they encourage participation and reduce poor academic performance, particularly in children who might be perceived as experiencing learning impairments (Grosser, 2016). According to Mavuso (2020:188), learning support processes are multiplex and challenging for many teachers. Moreover, not all teachers possess the necessary formal training, interest and skills to address issues relating to learning difficulties. Inclusive Education strives to bring about a methodological movement away from the old "one size fits all" concept and toward personalised teaching and learning as the foundation for educational equity (Bondie et al., 2019).

According to Mavuso (2020), many South African teachers are able to identify learners with learning impairments in their classrooms; but have inadequate pedagogical competencies and knowledge to support those learners. Teachers lack effective mechanisms to identify learners with different educational needs; they lack the ability to identify the complexity of psychological and physiological needs of learners which regulates the probability of their ability to learn in an Inclusive classroom with additional support (Kozibroda et al., 2020).

Ginja and Chen (2020:782) indicate that some teachers teach learners without having much formal knowledge of how to differentiate instructions, modify assessments and tailor classes to meet the requirements of individual learners needs in their lessons. Muzata et al. (2021) highlight that there is a lack of transformation in Inclusive Education methodologies among teachers in Zambia. According to Gibbs and McKay (2020), Australian mainstream classrooms are diversified. Australian teachers utilise a differentiated curriculum in mainstream classrooms as an effective teaching instruction suited to all learners.

Inclusionary approaches include organising, training and mobilising resources to provide a welcoming atmosphere for learning and enjoyment support (Kozibroda et al., 2020). The organisation of training and mobilisation of resources in order to create a conducive environment for study and recreation are examples of Inclusive support (Kozibroda et al., 2020). Schools cannot be Inclusive while teachers are still not fully prepared to teach in Inclusive classrooms.

According to Vygotsky and Rieber (1999), there are two major differences in the development of a child with a disability in comparison with that of a typically developing peer; that is, the formation of compensatory strategies (mechanisms) and the emergence of social complications of the disability. Teachers are the key resource and agents to achieve Inclusive Education; therefore, when teachers fail to understand the qualitative differences between a typically developing child and a child with a disability, effective remediation will not be feasible. Understanding the nature of learning impairments experienced by individual learners will enable teachers to support such learners.

Vygotsky's firm conviction concurs with this, according to him, only a truly differentiated learning environment can fully develop the higher psychological functions and an overall personality of a child with a disability by creating a learning environment which would provide learners with disabilities with alternative means of communication and development, where the entire education staff, particularly teachers, will be able to cater solely to individual needs of children with disability by employing specific methods which are modified to enable learners with disability to use "psychological tools" that are most appropriate to compensate for their particular disability (Vygotsky et al., 1993). We can prematurely conclude that learners with disabilities need teachers who are equipped to provide a differentiated curriculum and have a positive attitude towards the Inclusion philosophy. Changing negative societal attitudes towards the individuals with disabilities is paramount to the success of the Inclusive policy (Vygotsky, 1995).

2.2 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the literature under the following themes that were formulated in relation to the study's objectives: teachers' understanding of support to learners with learning impairments, factors determining teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments and strategies to enhance teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments. The subsequent chapter will discuss the research methodologies.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter's major goal is to describe and discuss the research design and methods utilized to collect data on teachers' readiness to support learners with learning impairments in secondary schools in rural areas. It also goes through the research method that went into this study, including the research paradigms chosen, approach, design, and participant sampling, as well as a full discussion of the data collection processes, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

Asenahabi (2019) defines research design as the overall plan for linking the conceptual research problems to the relevant and attainable empirical research. The essence of research design is to translate a research problem into data for analysis and provide relevant answers to research questions at a minimum cost. A critical decision in research design process is the choice to be made regarding the research technique to be used, as it affects the relevancy of how data will be obtained (Sileyew, 2019). A research approach is a plan as well as a technique that encompasses of steps from broad assumptions to detailed data collection, analysis, and interpretation procedures. As a result, it is determined by the nature of the research problem.

The researcher was convinced that human behaviour, activities, beliefs, and emotions are greatly influenced by the context in which they occur. Therefore, this study used a qualitative research method. A qualitative approach is a method of investigation that focuses on understanding the fundamental reasons, opinions, and motivations that people use to construct their world and interpret their experiences. According to Leavy (2017:124), qualitative research emphasises the depth of meaning as well as people's subjective experiences and meaning-making processes. A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to gain a thorough understanding and description of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and how they interpret events in their daily lives.

In this study, the transcendental phenomenological qualitative research design was used as the most appropriate mode of inquiry for obtaining information and drawing the most valid,

honest deductions from the answers to the sat research questions on how ready teachers are in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas. This research method was appropriate for this study, because it emphasised concepts, events or people's lived experiences. The participants' subjective experiences (Cohen et al., 2018) were central to this study.

The transcendental phenomenological research design focuses less on the researcher's interpretations and more on the description of the experiences of participants, allowing the researcher to set aside her experience and adopt a new perspective on the phenomenon under investigation based on the description of the lived experiences presented by the research participants.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm, according to Nel (2019), is a philosophy that comprises specific patterns, structures, frameworks, or systems of scientific and academic concepts, beliefs, and assumptions that a group of researchers share about the nature and conduct of research. The philosophical perspective informs the research methodology as well as how the findings will be perceived, and it connects method selection and application to the desired goals. Paradigmatic beliefs enable the researcher to choose or use certain qualitative methods.

This study was founded on the epistemological philosophical assumptions and methodological underpinnings of the Interpretivism paradigm, which holds that a person's or community's social context, conversations, customs and values are critical elements in assessing and comprehending human behaviour. As a result, the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods were used, allowing the researcher to gain additional insight by seeking experiences and perceptions of teachers' readiness to support learners with learning disabilities in secondary schools in rural areas. The interpretivist paradigm emphasises understanding individuals' interpretations of their surroundings (Creswell 2014; Pham, 2018). Through examining how teachers constructed meaning, the researcher was able to develop an understanding of the meanings teachers attach to their social context and phenomena and gained insight into the meanings conveyed by teachers in supporting learners with learning impairments, and thereby improving understanding of teachers' behaviour towards learners with learning impairments.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

A population is a distinct group of individuals with a common characteristic from which a sample is drawn for a study (Matsvange et al. (2020; as cited in Momoh, 2021). Sampling is an essential aspect of research design whereby purposeful strategies are utilised. It is a process that involves choosing a portion of a bigger group of participants with the intention of generalising from a smaller group to a larger group, whereby valid inferences about the population are conducted by selecting the sample so that it is representative of the total population (Gliner et al., 2017:137). Population sampling creates boundaries for the scope of a study and provides environmental and milieu cues for the reader. The target group for this study were in-service teachers in mainstream secondary schools in previously disadvantaged areas in Mogalakwena District, Limpopo province, in Mokopane.

The sample for this study thus consisted of two purposively selected teachers from each of the five mainstream secondary schools in the Mogalakwena district, constituting a total of ten teachers. The participants were teachers who had learners in Grade 7 to Grade 12 or taught in the Senior and FET phase and had dealt with the physiognomies of learning impairments. To select participants who provided rich and significant data, non-probability purposeful sampling method was used. The purposeful sampling method usually assures a high participation rate as it is easy to administer, assuring receipt of needed information; thus, the researcher thought it was the best suitable sampling method for this study. Furthermore, this sampling method provided the researcher with access to the necessary groups of people who were concerned with the interest of the study. The shortcomings of this sampling method are that the findings of the study are not generalisable to the broader population of interest (Casteel & Bridier, 2021).

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The analytical foundation for discovering solutions to a specific research question is provided by data-gathering devices, which are an integral aspect of the research process. Qualitative inquiry is a research method that emphasises meaning in context and necessitates the use of a data collection instrument that is sensitive to core meaning when collecting and evaluating data. In this study, data was collected from in-depth face-to-face interviews through audio recording, classroom observations where a reasonable social distance was adhered to in line with COVID-19 protocols and from analysis of documents such as the learners' portfolios, school policies, departmental circulars, the school's vision and mission statement,

learners' workbooks, and teachers' minute books. The researcher conducted interviews and observed the participants to get a profound understanding about their perspectives on their everyday lived experiences regarding support to learners with learning impairments.

An amalgamated explanation of the essence of the experience [and readiness of teachers in supporting learners who experience learning impairments] for all the individuals was then developed (Creswell & Poth, 2018:121). Prior to conducting in-depth interviews, the researcher evaluated, identified and acknowledged her own experiences, prejudices, perspectives, and assumptions about the phenomenon prior to conducting the study. This enabled the researcher to acquire reliable and detailed research material on the strategies utilized by teachers when dealing with learners experiencing learning impairments as well as determining their level of readiness in supporting such learners.

3.5.1 In-depth interview

The interview method of collecting data is defined as simply as a conversation with a purpose to gather information according to Lune and Berg (2017). In this study, structured, individual, in-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted and recorded audially, where in-service teachers were interviewed in order to get a profound understanding of their ideas, beliefs, perceptions, opinions and behaviours regarding support for learners with learning impairments. The researcher employed in-depth interviews to obtain rich, descriptive data to understand the participants' norms and standards, social conventions, and construction of knowledge regarding learning impairments. These elements are crucial in evaluating and understanding teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments. Furthermore, verbal and non-verbal behaviour was observed while interviewing the participants. The interviews were then transcribed into print by word-processing programs on Microsoft Office.

The researcher thus had to accentuate confidentiality and be highly truthful and straightforward with the participants about the study and its intentions. Individual face-to-face interviews created an environment in which participants felt more at ease and less hesitant to share information than if they were in the presence of other colleagues or peers. The interviews were recorded audibly with the permission as well as the accord of participants in order to make certain that vital information is not mislaid. During the research process, the researcher took field notes consisting of the description of the researcher's reflections on conversations with participants, interviews, instincts, notions, behaviours of the participants

and any relevant information during the study. These notes provided additional information on the context in which the interviews and observations were done.

The in-depth interview data collection technique that was utilised in this study may pose limitations in the sense that a long interview is inapt, and participants may find certain content too sensitive to discuss. The researcher refrained from discussing such sensitive topics in order not to disrupt rapport. It was imperative for the researcher to be careful when formulating interview questions and interviewing participants to avoid content that might be sensitive to the participants. The interviewer utilised clear, unambiguous, user-friendly questions that were aligned to the study's sub-research questions and objectives.

The disadvantage of conducting interviews acoustically is that external noise can easily obscure a key piece of detail, according to the source; additionally, recorders may make participants nervous, resulting in participants sharing limited information about the topic or abruptly withdrawing from the study. An early exit from the study jeopardises the research's quality. The researcher took a number of precautions to try to mitigate this, such as securing a quiet recording location and requesting verbal consent from participants to record the interviews at the beginning of the interview.

3.5.1.1 First interview

Prior to engaging in data collection, the researcher conducted pilot studies in order to evaluate the data collection instruments employed in the study and to make alterations where necessary. Clark-Carter (2019:30) defines a pilot study as a probationary run of the study and ought to be carried out on a smaller sample than that which will be used in the final version of the study. Regardless of the technique the researcher adopts, it is imperative that the researcher carries out a pilot study beforehand. The key objective of the pilot study was to verify the basic features of the design and procedure of the research project. A pilot study was conducted with two participants whereby two teachers were interviewed. The findings from the pilot study were used as a system to detect possible faults in the data collection instruments and to make mandatory adjustments before conducting the actual research.

3.5.1.2 Follow-up(s)

A follow-up interview was conducted with the participants to give both the interviewer and the participants an opportunity to reflect on what was discussed or talked about in the first interview, allowing new insights or aspects to emerge. Follow-ups with participants were done to increase the overall effectiveness of the research effort. The researcher made a follow-up with the teachers who were interviewed and observed, especially after the completion of the research project, to ascertain whether the study's intervention had an impact on their ways of interacting with and supporting learners who experience learning impairments.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is a process in qualitative research, used by the researcher to categorise and evaluate electronic and physical documents to interpret them and gain an understanding of their meaning, and expatiate upon the information they provide. Documents such as policies, departmental circulars, the school's vision and mission statement, learners' profiles, workbooks, teachers' minute books as well as any other documents that have the potential to add to the study's findings were used as valuable sources to authenticate data collected through observations and the interview. The researcher made use of reflex records to make necessary changes were applicable.

3.5.3 Observations

This study employed observation method as a suitable means of collecting and recording data and, to corroborate the data collected from interviews. Ross (2018) regards the observation method as an active process of carefully and attentively capturing objects, occurrences and behavioural patterns of people involved in a research study, without questioning or conversing with them. Through the observation method, the researcher gained rich data about the participants' demeanours and interactions with the learners while they were in their natural teaching and learning environment. This study employed the direct, non-participation observation method whereby the observer played a role of a non-participant (outsider) and was detached from the subjects' group or process, but observed the events from the outside, thus acting as a completely non-participant observer. Gaille (2020) indicates that the main advantage of conducting observations is that the researcher can take advantage of unanticipated data sources as they surface, and from these data the researcher can establish a multifaceted and interconnected image of how particular people use their time.

The observation method has limitations, however. The disadvantage of this method is that the presence of the researcher in the setting can affect the behaviour of the subjects, thus it is imperative for the observer to adopt a relatively passive role in the initial phases of the observation process and gradually build a relationship with the participants. The researcher therefore endeavoured not to induce participants' behaviour, but observed events as they occur in the natural setting, to deduce whether the teachers are able to support learners with learning impairments or not.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is fundamental to credible qualitative research (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Data analysis in a qualitative study refers to the process of carefully searching and organising interview transcripts, observation notes, and other non-written resources gathered by the researcher to better understand the phenomenon. Christensen and Burke (2017: 271) advocate that qualitative data analysis is much more eclectic, and therefore there is no single accurate technique of analysing the data because of the nature of the data attained. Data collected from a qualitative study derive from observations, interviews, documents and audio-visual materials, according to Christensen and Burke (2017:271). In this study, analysis of the data was generated from verbatim interview transcripts, observations made during teaching and learning process, and documents utilised by teachers to support learners with learning impairments.

Analysis of the large amount of data collected needs to be decreased to certain patterns, categories, or themes and interpreted by using some schema. Qualitative data analysis needs coding and searching for relationships and patterns until a holistic picture surfaces (Christensen & Burke, 2017:271). This study employed pattern thematic data analysis strategy as it is an apt qualitative method used when analysing large qualitative data sets (Nowell et al., 2017). The goal of a thematic analysis was to identify themes or interesting or relevant patterns in data, and then use those themes to address the research topic or make a point about teachers' readiness to support learners in mainstream secondary school in rural areas. A strong thematic analysis does more than simply summarise the data; it analyses and makes meaning of it (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework to organise data into categories and themes in order to produce more abstract units of information and meet the study's objectives. The researcher familiarised herself with the

entire body of data, or data corpus, by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) perceive this stage as the most critical stage for making notes and jotting down early impressions. The researcher organised data in a meaningful and systematic way through generating initial codes. Coding ensures that a large amount of data is broken down into morsels of information. Coding allowed the researcher to uncover insights that were really representative of the facts and human experiences that underpin them, while also ensuring transparency, reflexivity, and reducing potential biases.

This study adopted theoretical thematic coding which allows the researcher to structure the codes and categories that emerged from qualitative data into theory. This study was concerned with addressing specific research questions thus each segment of data that was relevant to or captured something interesting about the research question was coded. There were no pre-set codes, so the researcher generated and modified them as she advanced through the coding process. The codes were then organised into bigger themes that spoke to the study issue specifically. All necessary data for each theme were gathered, and themes and sub-themes were refined as a result.

Braun & Clarke’s six-phase framework

Table 3.1: The six-phase framework for conducting a theme analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke

Step 1: Become familiar with the data	Step 4: Review themes
Step 2: Generate initial codes	Step 5: Define themes
Step 3: Search for themes	Step 6: Write-up

(**Source:** Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and procedures employed to ensure the quality of a study.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the assurance that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. It establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), credibility is defined as the certitude that can

be placed in the accurateness of the research findings. In order to establish credibility in this study, the researcher took the findings of the study to the participants for authentication, comparison, evaluation, and approval. Participants are the best judges to ascertain if the research findings have captured their views and feelings accurately. This was imperative because it helped to strengthen the data as it allowed the researcher and participants to look at the data with a different lens.

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability is defined as the consistency of the research findings over time. According to the study conducted by Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study, such that all are supported by the data as received from participants in the study. In this study, for others to replicate and evaluate the level of dependability, the researcher kept substantial detailed records of observation notes, the process involved in analysing information obtained from observations and data collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis to make inferences and deductions.

3.7.3 Confirmability

It is the degree to which the research findings of the study could be corroborated by other researchers. Confirmability is about ensuring that data and interpretations of the research findings are not figments of the researcher's imagination but are derived evidently from the data. The researcher conducted a data audit which highlighted all the steps of data analysis that were made to provide a basis for decisions made. This helped to establish that the findings of the research study accurately depicted the responses of the participants. Furthermore, throughout the study, the researcher documented procedures for checking and rechecking data.

3.7.4 Transferability

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), transferability is described as the degree to which the outcomes of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants. The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description; that is, describing not just the behaviour and experiences, but their context as well, so that the behaviour and experiences become meaningful to an

outsider. To promote transferability in this study, the researcher clearly described the research steps followed from the beginning of the research study to the advancement and reporting of the findings, the records of the research route was thus kept throughout the study.

3.7.4.1 Reflexivity

The researcher acknowledges the importance of self-introspection and being reflexive about her own role in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data, and in the pre-conceived assumptions she might have brought to the research. Therefore, the interviews, observations and all analytical data were supplemented with reflexive notes.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. Ethical norms foster research goals such as knowledge, truth and error avoidance, and prohibitions on creating, manipulating, or misrepresenting research data such as fabricating, falsifying or misrepresenting research data, norms promote the truth and minimise error. Resnik (2020) holds the view that while a qualitative research study often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards thus promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness as well as guidelines for authorship, copyright and patenting policies, data sharing policies, and confidentiality rules in peer review, which are designed to protect intellectual property interests while encouraging collaboration. It is critical for researchers to adhere to ethical guidelines because ethical standards make it possible for them to be held accountable to the public. According to Resnik (2020), ethical standards promote a number of other important moral and social values, including social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, legal compliance, and public health and safety.

3.8.1 Permission

The researcher firstly requested permission to conduct research from the institution of higher learning (university) under whose auspices the current study was conducted. Furthermore, the researcher sought permission from the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education, the District Office, Circuit Office, and from principals of the mainstream secondary schools whose teachers would be involved in the study. Permission was also sought from the parents of the learners, as well as from the teachers who were taking part in the study.

3.8.2 Informed consent

Christensen and Burke (2017:305) maintain that the concept of informed consent denotes that an individual, once equipped with relevant information, is competent and legally unbound to decide whether to partake in the study. Participants were not compelled, bullied, or obligated to participate in this research. Participants therefore volunteered to be observed or interviewed. The researcher obtained informed consent from all individuals involved in the research or in the vicinity of research. Consent was obtained through written consent forms which were included in the main elements of the research, such as an explanation of the research, measures to be followed, duration of the study, risks involved, benefits of participation, and a clause signifying that participation in the study was voluntary and participants could terminate their participation at any time during the process of research.

The researcher explained fully the nature of the project and the potential risks and benefits at the beginning of each interview. Next, the researcher asked the participants if they understood the information and were still willing to take part in the interview. Participants were also informed verbally and in written form that interviews would be audibly recorded. Consent was requested from the person legally authorised to represent the minor's interests in circumstances where the minor's exercise of choice was governed by law.

3.8.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects' identities. Confidentiality is another means of method that is employed to safeguard privacy of individuals taking part in a research study. Thus, confidentiality in this context can be viewed as a contract between researchers and participants on what can be done with data gathered about participants in the study (Christensen & Burke, 2017:317). In this study, access to the participants' information, identities and responses and supplementary data attained during the study was restricted to the researcher and the supervisor involved, and these documents will be destroyed instantly subsequent to the conclusion of the study.

3.8.4 Anonymity

Christensen and Burke (2017:317) maintain that respecting the privacy of participants in the study ought to be at the core of the conduct of ethical research. Anonymity can thus be regarded as the best way to protect privacy as the identities of participants will be known only by the researcher. Anonymity was ensured by making certain that the data gathered cannot be allied to the identities of the participants or the institutes involved in the study. The researcher accomplished this by using a system to link names to the data by using pseudonyms and numbers.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the research paradigm, research design, sample, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical consideration issues. The qualitative research approach, design and paradigms discussed in this chapter served as the foundation for the researcher's engagement into an inquiry about teachers' readiness to support learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary school in rural areas. The following chapter discusses data presentation, an analysis and discussions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyses data collected from the research study using observations, interviews and documents analysis tools. The demographic profiles of the participants are presented, and the primary research findings are discussed as per the following objectives: To examine teachers' understanding of supporting learners with learning impairments; to investigate factors that determines teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments and to find out strategies that can enhance teachers' support for learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools. This study targeted in-service teachers from mainstream secondary schools located in rural areas in Mogalakwena district in Limpopo province. Ten (10) in-service teachers were purposively selected from five (5) mainstream secondary schools that had learners in Grade 8 to Grade 12 who were in the Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) phase, experiencing challenges that were classified as learning impairments. Among the ten (10) participants selected for the study's in-depth interviews and observations, five (5) were males and the other five (5) were females.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

In the presentation of the biographical information, T1 represents Teacher 1, T2 represents Teacher 2, and so forth. Research was conducted at five (5) mainstream secondary schools which are represented on the table below as School A, B, C, D and E.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants involved in the study.

Mainstream Secondary Schools		Gender	Teaching Experience	Highest Qualification	Grade taught
	T 1	Female	15 years	Honours Bachelor of Education in Education Management	Grade 12

School A				(Hon B.Ed.), with Inclusive Education modules	
	T2	Male	2 Years	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), with Inclusive Education modules	Grade 12
School B	T3	Male	30 Years	Secondary school Teachers Diploma (STD). Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) coordinator.	Grade 9
	T4	Male	7 years	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), with Inclusive Education modules	Grade 12
School C	T5	Female	5 years	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), with Inclusive Education modules	Grade 12
	T6	Female	6 months	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), with Inclusive Education modules	Grade 12
School D	T7	Female	1 year	Honours Bachelor of Sciences specialising in Medical Sciences (Hon B.Sc.). Higher Certificate in Inclusive Education. Post Graduate Certificate in Education) (PGCE)	Grade 12
	T8	Female	17 years	Honours Bachelor of Education in Management	Grade 10

				(Hon. B.Ed.), with Inclusive Education modules	
School E	T9	Male	23 years	Advanced Certificate in Education in School Management and Leadership (ACE), with special needs modules	Grade 12
	T10	Male	25 years	Secondary school Teachers Diploma (STD). School Based Support Team (SBST) coordinator	Grade 12

(Source: Own).

4.2.1 Although the participants in the study have been selected purposely with the aim of collecting information on their preparedness in supporting learners with learning impairments, they do not possess actual qualifications in Inclusive Education but have been workshopped on Inclusive Education and on policies such as the Education White Paper 6 (EWP 6) (Department of Basic Education, 2001), the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (Department of Basic Education, 2014b), and Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom: National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2014a).

4.3 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Qualitative data analysis is a process of gathering, structuring, and interpreting data to understand what it represents (Dye, 2021). It is the descriptive and conceptual findings collected through interviews or observations (Ivan, 2021) which illuminate the complexity of human behaviour, inform interventions, and give voice to people's lived experiences (Raskind et al., 2019). This section presents data collected from various tools that were used in this study. The data presented was analysed in accordance with the objectives of the study that are outlined in Chapter 1 and has answered the main research question on teachers' readiness to support learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in

rural areas. The data collected through observations and interviews were transcribed into protocols and transcripts (Busetto et al., 2020:5). In this study, data collected from interviews with participants was transcribed verbatim, with no phonetic transcription of dialects or filler words, and no annotations for behaviour. Data was grouped and summarised into themes that emerged from the data analysis process.

4.3.1 DATA COLLECTED FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

An in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique used to conduct detailed interviews with a small number of participants. The purpose of an in-depth interview is to get detailed information that shed light on an individual's perspective, experiences, feelings, and the derived meaning about a particular topic or issue (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). In-depth interviews are mostly long-duration, face-to-face interviews conducted to achieve desired goals, most effective in collecting primary data, and are used to explore concepts for further investigation and descriptive analysis (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). In this section, the data was analysed in accordance with the themes that emerged from the study's sub-research questions and the participants' responses.

4.3.1.1 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

(a) Teachers views about learners with learning impairments

The findings of the study demonstrates that teachers had an overall positive attitude towards learners with learning impairments, as well as a strong awareness that learners with learning impairments need an education that is appropriate for them. They went on to say that such learners are not different from other learners, they only need to be supported, in order for them to realise their full potential. In contrast, the findings established that while teachers' attitudes towards learners with learning impairments were favourable, they however were not keen on having such learners in their classrooms. They believed that these learners should be supported, but the support should come from teachers who have received training on special needs education or in Inclusive Education. The quotes below expressed teachers' views.

“Learners with impairments need support, since they learn at different level, it means they need support at different levels”. (T2)

“My view is that learners with learning impairments experience very serious challenge in terms of learning in normal schools. The impairments affect them negatively in a sense that they are either left behind or do not grasp the essence or matter or whatever topic that is being taught and obviously, affect their performance in class”. (T9)

“I think such learners need to be identified and, at least there should be something that should be done to help such learners”. (T1)

“Such learners are also potential citizens in the country whereby their learning impairments do not reduce them, through labelling them as useless in this universe”. (T4)

“My view is that they are learners just like other learners. They also deserve an education just like any other learners”. (T5)

(b) Types of support teachers give to learners with learning impairments

It arose from the in-depth interviews that the teachers understood that learners with learning impairments required support in order to perform satisfactorily in their schooling; however, teachers seemed to have a lack of understanding on what type of support is required to assist such learners. The participants in this study proclaimed that they have not been adequately workshopped on how to identify and support learners with learning impairments, that is why they find it difficult to identify and support such learners. The verbal quotes below echoed the teachers' sentiments.

“The majority of teachers in the mainstream secondary schools aren't ready to support learners with learning impairments. We need to be thoroughly workshopped in especially identifying such learners”. (T3)

“If we receive some form of rigorous workshop specifically that could help us be able to identify, recognize them, identify them in accordance with the Policy on SIAS, and then perhaps also after identifying them, be told what to do with such learners, where to take them, the way forward thereof, things that we are supposed to do to in order to help such learners so that they don't end up leaving school, dropping out of school because they are impaired in that way”. (T1)

“Mostly it's difficult to help them. Sometimes even to identify them, it becomes a challenge”. (T4)

“The support that we can give to learners with learning impairments are that we need to refer them to relevant specialist”. (T7)

(c) How teachers identify learners with learning impairments

Participants in the study indicated that because they were not rigorously trained in Inclusive Education, the only way they could recognise the possibility of a learner having learning impairments was by examining the learner's ability to execute certain academic activities in learning areas. Failure to complete the assigned assignment indicated that the learner might be having learning impairments. Poor academic performance in specific academic subject matter was regarded as an overall predictor of having learning impairments.

The disadvantage of this viewpoint is that the barriers to learning appear to be overlooked, and the emphasis is only on the learner's abilities. Education systems are gradually shifting away from identifying problems with learners and toward recognising and supporting learners with barriers to learning. For this transformation to be complete, education institutions need to provide teacher education and professional learning opportunities that refute established beliefs that some learners are defective and incapable of learning (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2020). The quotes below illustrate how teachers recognised learners with reading problems (dyslexia), writing difficulties (dysgraphia), experiencing problems with mathematical calculations (dyscalculia) and participating at a very slow pace in handling classroom activities.

“Normally they are easily identifiable when we do read. Through reading it is when you are able to see that this particular learner cannot comprehend at all. The very first letter that they are supposed to read, they can't read such a letter. That's when you see that this type of learner obviously has a learning impairment”. (T1)

“When they are not being able to read or write, having poor memory, having problems paying attention and unable to follow directions and having problems with maths”. (T8)

“Learners with impairments struggle, like when it comes to their marks, they will just tell that this particular learner is struggling”. (T2)

“By poor performance like decimally performing poorly with no sign of improvement”. (T5)

They usually struggle with completing their work, you find that you have given them seven questions and the learner would have written only one question. At times they can't even write their own names, some of them can't even read simple things". (T7)

4.3.1.2 FACTORS DETERMINING TEACHERS' READINESS IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

a) Teachers' professional preparedness

In order to promote development towards quality basic education for all, teachers ought to be equipped to meet the learning and participation needs of learners with a variety of learning needs. Thus, it is imperative for teachers to have a clear understanding of the philosophy of Inclusive Education so that they can align their teaching practices with the philosophy. The findings showed that there was a grey area in the practices of Inclusion. The participants' findings indicated that there were issues with the implementation of the Inclusion education policies. This was brought about by insufficient workshops in the ideologies of Inclusive Education.

"Teachers in the mainstream lack the necessary skills, they do not have the capacity. They were not adequately workshopped. The Department has never provided any in-depth workshops for educators to deal with such situations. Therefore, that is the main challenge. If the Department of Education can take this matter seriously and make sure that educators in the mainstream schools are taken through rigorous workshops, I think that will also help. It will enable educators to deal with such situations and help these learners". (T9)

"We were not well workshopped to deal with such learners and its usually time consuming because those learners, they take time to understand simple things". (T10)

"In most cases, we are not supported on how we can assist these learners. There are no regular workshops about these learners with learning impairments, everything is just teaching". (T2)

"There is a need for adequate workshops to work with learners with special educational needs (LSEN learners). Educators need to be taught on how to treat these learners and these

learners need educators who studied Inclusive Education to be able to know their level of understanding, knowing what they should do and what they should not". (T8)

b) Psychological readiness

Any policy must have a positive outlook from all stakeholders to be implemented successfully. The Inclusion policy is not an exception to this; in order for it to be successful, teachers must get involved, as its execution is paramount. Teachers' acceptance of learners with learning impairments in mainstream schools is crucial. The findings of the study revealed that teachers have not fully accepted the concept of having learners with learning impairments in their teaching and learning spaces, with some even suggesting that learners with learning impairments be relocated to other institutes outside of mainstream schooling where they will be given appropriate support in alignment with their educational needs. This sentiment is supported by these quotes.

"Because this type of learners cannot function well in the mainstream, there should be perhaps a facility where this type of learners is taken to, where they can be able to be dealt with accordingly, perhaps be given activities or the learning that is equivalent to their IQs".

(T1)

"They should be given special attention and then, like being taught separately, maybe be given extra classes or they can be referred to special schools". (T5)

"Learners with learning impairments must be admitted to the correct school and not the mainstream". (T7)

"It is true that the institution to which I am attached, there are such learners with impairments. It might not be a surprise why do we have such learners who must be attending the special schools". (T3)

c) School readiness for Inclusivity

The Inclusive Education idea requires schools to adopt a new perspective on the Inclusion of learners with disabilities. Schools must be Inclusive and accommodate learners with diverse academic needs. As a result, it is critical that the atmosphere and infrastructure of schools be Inclusive, allowing diverse learners to access quality education. Participants in the study

lamented that overcrowding in classrooms was one of the main impediments to providing support to learners with learning impairments. The quotes that follow reflect their concerns.

“When learners are overcrowded it is difficult to identify them, it is difficult to know who has a learning impairment and who has not. It is difficult to also give them individual attention”. (T5)

“The classrooms here are so over-crowded you would not be able to identify if this learner has an impairment or if this learner is okay”. (T6)

“The fact that our classes are overcrowded, sometimes we get so busy that we only recognize such learners or identify such learners at a later stage, perhaps towards the end of the year, that we have had this type of learners”. (T4)

“We have more than forty learners in class, and then being forty like that, we have perhaps two or three learners that have got this learning impairment and then we normally focus on those thirty-seven learners that participate or function like the way they are supposed to function in class. We focus on such learners, and we normally do not have time to follow up on such learners who have difficulty in reading and understanding other things”. (T1)

4.3.1.3 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHERS’S READINESS IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIMENTS

Determining the level of preparedness of teachers play a major role in successfully planning for the implementation of Inclusive Education. According to Karynbaeva et al. (2020), most mainstream education teachers are not well oriented in the principles of Inclusive Education. Teachers have only a smattering of the professional knowledge, skills, and abilities required to organise the educational process in Inclusive Education. According to the study's findings, teachers had only a hazy understanding of the specifics of Inclusive Education, however, some showed a tinge of knowledge about handing learners who were differently gifted, with different learning styles. The quotes below back up the teachers' claims.

“When coming to the methods that one must apply when or employ while teaching the learners, the educator or the teacher must select, must be Inclusive while selecting the method. In cooperative learning, the role of the teacher is to ensure that every learner in that group participates, every learner provides a content which will eventually make sure that all of them participated towards the product that they shall have produced”. (T3)

“Use audio-lingual to that learner. That’s when you give that learner an audio recording because he only understands when someone is talking. In other words, he does not understand a written text”. (T6)

“Visual learning, learners with hearing impairments, if you use pictures for such learners to present your lesson, they will be able to understand. They can’t hear very well but with the caption of visuals they will be able to understand what is transpiring. We also have learners with eye-sight problems, we also support them with your verbal and visual learning. Both verbal and visual learning in a sense that when you teach those learners you must make sure that you use big letters and in terms of written documents, we encourage that you increase the font.”. (T7)

“Strategies which can be used in most cases is integration methods and the use of gargets, for example, we can use different chalk in class to demonstrate like in mathematics on some graphs, or we can use some charts, come with charts like in Life Sciences to demonstrate the heart there. we can use videos where other teachers are teaching, you must be creative, so that you can attract their attention”. (T2)

4.3.2 DATA COLLECTED THROUGH OBSERVATIONS

Observations allow the researcher to gain insights into a particular setting, learn about cultural aspects of setting and describe genuine behaviour of the participants as they occur (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020:3). This study employed the non-participant observation method to collect data from ten (10) purposively selected teachers from mainstream secondary schools within the parameters of Mogalakwena District. Non-participant observations enabled the researcher to observe participants in their natural settings (the classroom) without influencing their settings with her presence.

Table 4.2: Findings from the observation sheet on teachers’ readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas.

Criteria for observation	Findings
Displays evidence of teacher preparation.	Participants demonstrated a high level of preparedness for their lessons.

Differentiated teaching.	The study found that participants were still employing the traditional teacher-centered teaching technique.
Teacher focuses on teaching and supporting individual learners and not just on the learning area.	Individual learners who were having difficulty with the lessons or the assessments were offered further assistance.
Evidence of differentiated assessments.	Learners received the same assessment tasks. Assessments were not modified to accommodate learners with learning impairments.
Visual, auditory, and tangible aids used.	Teaching aids such as chalk, textbooks, and boards were used. There was no incorporation of additional materials to supplement the lesson. Learners with learning impairments were thus left unaccommodated.
Provides Appropriate praise and encouragement.	Learners were commended for their efforts.

(Source: Own).

4.3.3 DATA OBTAINED FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The table below, Table 4.3, presents and outlines the data generated from documents analysis.

Table 4.3: Findings from document analysis.

	Policy documents	Findings
Types of documents	1. Education White Paper 6, Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (EWP 6) (2001).	<p>The policy outlines how the education and training system ought to transform to accommodate a variety of learning needs with particular attention to approaches for instructional and curriculum transformation.</p> <p>The EWP policy was partially implemented in all five sampled schools, and teachers who</p>

	participated in the study were familiar with the policy's mandate.
2. Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (2014)	<p>SIAS is a policy which provides a framework for standardised procedures for identifying, assessing, and providing programmes for each learner requiring additional support to improve their participation and Inclusion in school.</p> <p>All study participants were aware of the existence of the policy; however, some were unsure of how to carry it out even though they have been workshopped on it.</p>
3. Safe and Caring Child-Friendly framework (SCCF) (2008)	<p>Is a framework that looks at quality in education in a holistic way. It aims at translating children's rights in the Constitution of South Africa and other laws and policies into classroom practice and school management.</p> <p>Two schools had this policy which its mandate was unknown by the participants from those schools. Other participants had never had of this policy.</p>
4. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) (SASA)	<p>The Act is based on the principle that promotes access, quality, and democratic governance in the schooling system. Its goal is to ensure that all learners have access to quality education without discrimination.</p> <p>The mandate of SASA was understood by all the participants, they expressed that they were guided by principles of this policy.</p>
5. Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the	A National policy that guides teaching, learning and assessments process in South African public schools. Its main aim is to provide teachers,

	classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements Grades R-12 (CAPS) (2011)	principals, subject advisors, administrators, and other personnel in the education sector with parameters and strategies on to respond to divert in the classroom through the curriculum. This policy was implemented in all schools, and teachers who participated in the study stated that they adhered to the policy's principles and guidelines on a daily basis. However, classroom observations and in-depth interviews refuted this, it arose from the study that teachers appeared to implement this policy partially, they seem reluctant to cater for the diverse needs of learners.
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(Source: Own).

South Africa's constitution has established the foundation for subsequent legislations and policies that recognize the principle of equal opportunities for all learners. The values of equity are promoted by laws and practices asserted in the Bill of Rights and reaffirmed in SASA, SCCF, SIAS and in EWP 6. Though the constitution lays the grounds for successive legislation and policies that recognizes the principle of equality of opportunity for all children, there seem to be a grey area when it comes to the implementation and understanding of those policies. All the schools that had partook in the study, had all the above-mentioned policies, however, some teachers were unaware of what the policies entails and how to translate the mandate of the policies to into practice. This is shown in the lack of creativity in their teaching methods. Though the participants stated in the interviews that they use varied teaching strategies to accommodate different learning types, the classroom observation findings contradicted their statements. The classroom observations exhibited that the majority of teachers follow the same traditional approach of teaching.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section will critically examine the data collected. The study's findings will be presented under each primary theme and supported by literature and aligned with the theoretical framework that drives the study.

Inclusive teaching requires teachers to recognise each learner's experiences and skills, accept the premise that each learner's learning capacity is limitless, and be open to diversity (UNESCO, 2020). Though learners' educational needs differ, they all have the right to equitable learning opportunities and access to the general curriculum. Learners should be able to learn in ways that are convenient for them; thus, teachers must be able to use effective and efficient teaching techniques, resources and instructional evaluations to accommodate variances in learning. According to the research findings, there is still a long way to go in terms of implementing the Inclusion policy. To achieve Inclusion, teachers must be empowered agents of change with principles, expertise and attitudes that allow every learner to succeed.

The findings showed that, while some teachers support the Inclusion policy, many are hesitant to execute it because they feared it would add to the workload they already had to deal with, thus they believed that learners with learning impairments should be sent to special schools. Teachers also mentioned that their inability to apply the policy was because they believed that they were unprepared due to a lack of rigorous workshops. A study conducted by UNESCO (2020) revealed that teachers' lack of preparedness for Inclusive teaching was caused by gaps in their knowledge of pedagogies and other facets of Inclusion.

4.4.1 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

For any policy to be successfully implemented, the custodians of such a policy must apply it; even if application may not be perfect, an application must be done (Matolo & Rambuda, 2022). Studies conducted by Zwane and Malale (2018) indicate that teachers became more willing to participate in Inclusion when they perceived themselves as competent and prepared to teach learners with difficulties in learning. The study's findings showed that teachers understood that learners with learning impairments in mainstream schooling need to be supported, but they perceived themselves as insufficient and unprepared to support such learners because they perceived them as belonging to special schools. Teachers implied that assisting such learners was time consuming and took valuable time away from more capable learners.

According to Vygotsky et al. (1993:66), learning impairments should be viewed as a social anomaly rather than a biological primateship. The psychological makeup of an individual with a learning impairment is formed not primarily from the impairment itself, but by the social

consequences of the defect (Vygotsky et al., 1993:67). The findings of the study indicated that teachers continued to focus on the shortcomings or deviations of learners rather than on embracing and empowering individual skills and proficiencies of learners through Inclusive learning. One could argue that the findings also showed that teachers were not attempting to remove barriers to learning as outlined in the EWP 6 and reaffirmed in CAPS (Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements Grades R-12), but rather are perpetuating the exclusion of learners with learning impairments.

4.4.2 FACTORS DETERMINING TEACHERS' READINESS IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

For Inclusive Education to be a reality in South African primary and secondary schools, teachers in South Africa (SA) are required to be well capacitated regarding the implications involved in the application of policies (Matolo & Rambuda, 2021). This can be achieved by providing teachers with Appropriate initial training, ongoing training and professional development and ongoing access to adequate support and advice from specialist personnel (Zwane & Malale, 2018). The study's findings revealed that teachers had challenges identifying and supporting learners with learning impairments which was ascribed by their inadequate training in the Inclusive Education doctrines. Traditional teachers' training for ordinary teachers, according to Zwane and Malale (2018), rarely prepare teachers for working in diverse classrooms, and in particular, does not equip them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to successfully support learners with impairments. Most teacher education programmes do not appear to be tailored to meet the needs of teachers, particularly concerns related to Inclusive Education (Paramit et al., 2020).

a) Teachers' professional readiness

Inclusive Education is used across the country, and it is important for teachers to adhere to this policy. Teachers must be ready to adapt to a common education system to fulfil the needs of learners with learning impairments. A teacher of Inclusive Education, according to Yakovleva (2019), needs to be conversant with the technological innovations that make it possible to efficiently plan the instruction of learners with learning impairments. Participants in this study outlined that they were not adequately trained to teach learners with learning impairments, hence they are unable to implement the mandate of Inclusivity. However, according to the documents analysed from different schools where the participants hail from,

it was discovered that majority of the participants had been either to the EWP 6, school-based support team (SBST) or the SIAS workshops which were organised by the district-based support team (DBE). The objectives of the workshops were to capacitate teachers with knowledge and skills to handle learners with various learning impairments prevalent in mainstream schooling.

Participants agreed that they were workshopped, but they believed that the workshops were insufficient to allow them to run with the baton. They required extensive training in order to be adequately prepared to teach learners with learning impairments in mainstream schools. According to VanCleeef (2019), many teachers in mainstream schools were opposed to Inclusion because of a lack of training in Inclusive teaching approaches. According to VanCleeef (2019), the majority of mainstream education teacher training programmes lacked special education and Inclusive practices coursework and practical experience. Teachers also observed a substantial absence of professional development opportunities to assist them in learning strategies and procedures for teaching learners with moderate to severe disabilities in the mainstream education classroom (Anderson, 2020). To be effective in Inclusive classroom settings, teachers must be trained in ways that will assist them in being successful in Inclusive classroom settings in order to develop all learners (Anderson, 2020).

b) Psychological readiness

According to Pershina et al. (2018:2), the most crucial component for the successful implementation of Inclusion principles is teachers' psychological preparation. According to Ketrish et al. (2019), psychological readiness is defined as a collection of mental formations (ideas and concepts, methods of thinking and abilities, motives, and personality traits) that offer motivational-semantic preparedness and the teacher's ability to carry out professional duties. Teachers' psychological preparation includes their emotional acceptance of students with various sorts of learning disabilities, their desire to engage and accommodate such students in their class activities, and their happiness with their own pedagogical practice (Pershina et al., 2018:2). The stage of psychological and value changes in its specialists (teachers) and their degree of professional competence is an important step in preparing the school system for the completion of the Inclusion process (Mordvintseva et al., 2020).

The study showed that, there were still issues with the acceptance of learners with learning impairments in the mainstream system. The majority of teachers who participated in the study believed that these learners should be weeded out and transferred to special schools since

they are not suitable for mainstream. According to Mordvintseva et al. (2020), teachers are already under additional pressure to improve their pedagogical skills because modern education forces them to constantly update their teaching and qualifications. Any added workload may make them anxious and stressed out. Mainstream teachers seemed hesitant at the thought of having learners with learning impairments, because they believed that their incorporation comes with additional workloads, as such learners require additional support in the mastery of skills which others effortlessly achieve. Many teachers reported that they already do not have enough time to plan for academic instruction. Planning the accommodation of learners with learning impairments limited the amount of time that they had to focus on the majority of the learners in their classroom. Teachers recognised the importance of Inclusive practices for learners with learning impairments, even though they were reluctant to implement them (VanCleeef, 2019). The average teacher is apparently neither prepared nor ready to teach learners of Inclusive classrooms effectively. However, it is commendable that the overwhelming majority of educators were open and willing to learn more about Inclusive Education.

c) School readiness for Inclusivity

Physical and social environments are both key in the implementation of Inclusive Education' teachers require both social and cultural context to serve learners effectively (Owino, 2019). A study conducted by VanCleeef (2019) indicated that teachers were willing to implement Inclusive Education, however there were barriers which hindered their desired intentions. They claimed that they were not allotted sufficient time to adequately plan for learners with special needs, especially when they had larger class sizes, teachers want to include learners with special needs but do not have the resources or experience to do so. Physical and social contexts are equally critical in the implementation of Inclusive Education; teachers need both social and cultural context to properly serve learners (Owino, 2019). Overcrowding in the classrooms was cited by participants as one of the factors that increased their workload; as a result, they were unable to provide individual support to learners with learning impairments because the classroom sizes were not favourable for individual support intervention.

According to VanCleeef (2019), teachers were willing to adopt Inclusive Education, but there were impediments that prevented them from doing so. They believed that they were not given enough time to appropriately plan for learners with learning impairments, especially when class numbers are large. Teachers want to incorporate learners with learning impairments but lack the tools and experience to do so. Despite various challenges such as overcrowded

classrooms and a lack of resources, teachers are creating alternative approaches to include everyone, and they are developing different techniques to involve everyone, despite many constraints such as overcrowded classrooms and a lack of resources (Themane & Thobejane, 2019). Vygotsky recognised that social settings and learning are closely entwined. Therefore, teachers must identify and implement strategies that are effective in a social context (Kurt, 2020).

4.4.3 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHERS'S READINESS IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIMENTS

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory advocates that education should be concerned with not just the theories of instruction, but with the process of learning, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the learners, as well as developing learners holistically. The Inclusion policy ensures that learners with learning impairments are not left on the ledge, but should be supported with their shortcomings, this implies that teachers' selections of methodologies should be Inclusive, meet the learning needs of individual learners and develop learners holistically, particularly those with learning impairments. To achieve this, there is a need to renew the entire educational structure, leaving behind traditional teaching (Porto et al., 2019).

According to responses from the interviews, participants indicated that they use various methods to support learners with learning impairments; however, the findings from classroom observations contradicted this, revealing that there were partial pedagogical adaptations made to the curriculum. The majority of teachers employed a single teaching method to address multiple learning needs at the same time. In addition, assessments were also not modified to meet the needs of learners with learning impairments. Teachers, often through insufficient workshopping, use teaching methods that may not meet the needs of some learners (Zwane & Malale, 2018). Given the foregoing, one could argue that some of the methods used by the participants may be insufficient to accommodate learners with learning impairments; this could be attributed to participants' lack of rigorous workshops in Inclusive Education. To be able to cater to all learners in a variety of classes, teachers must master a variety of teaching styles and be foregrounded in the value of Inclusivity in order to avoid paranoia and pessimism in appreciating and embracing Inclusive Education (Mamabolo et al., 2021).

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented, examined, and discussed the findings of the study on teachers' readiness to support learners with learning impairments, their perception of support towards such learners, as well as the strategies of enhancing their readiness towards supporting learners with learning impairments.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas. This final chapter will provide a summary of the preceding chapters. An overview of how the study answered the research questions, the theoretical framework supporting the study, findings from the literature review, limitations of the study, overcoming the limitations that emanated from the study, recommendations, and the conclusion of the study, will be presented.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the study's findings, the majority of learners from rural areas with learning impairments are excluded daily from the learning process within mainstream schools. This evidently indicates that they are not being given the opportunity to become empowered as individuals, and their right to basic education has thus been infringed. Teachers' lack of preparedness and motivation for Inclusion has a direct impact on the admission, participation, and achievement of all children, but can be predominantly disadvantageous to the education of learners with learning impairments, who may simply need some extra encouragement or support to reach their educational potential.

Learning impairments, according to Vygotsky and Rieber (1999), are caused by a rigid environment that does not support the developmental stages of learners. Learners with learning impairments experience numerous hurdles throughout their learning journey; they require a customised learning environment in which they can develop holistically. South African schools are still struggling to create such settings, owing to teachers' lack of enthusiasm as a result of retaining unfavourable views about the Inclusion policy and lacking the necessary skills for transformation. Children's social environment influences their developmental path, thus non-Inclusive school settings have the potential to perpetuate distortions and delays in such learners. Learners with learning impairments need teachers who are capable of offering differentiated teaching and who support the Inclusion ethos. Learners with learning impairments should be regarded as less of a burden, but should be encouraged to progress within their areas of potential development. All learners are capable of learning; some only require the guidance of teachers to access a range of abilities and

skills that they are unable to accomplish on their own. Individual learners can build new skills in the zone of proximal development. This could only be possible if teachers fully understood their learners' ZPD phases and provided suitable scaffolding.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In African countries, there seem to be a lack of transformation in Inclusive Education methodologies amongst teachers. Teachers appear to have a lack of understanding of theoretical knowledge and teaching methodologies in Inclusive Education (Yaraya et al., 2018; Ginja & Chen, 2020; Mangope et al., 2020). This seems to be perpetuated by teachers' lack of preparedness (Makoelle, 2017; Pit-Ten Cate et al., 2018; Beasy et al., 2020; Denisova et al., 2020; Hooijer et al., 2021; Pilipchuk et al., 2021).

Teachers continue to find it challenging to create Inclusive learning environments because they believed that they lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with learners who had varying learning needs (Markova, 2018; Hooijer et al., 2021). It can be argued that lack of skills and knowledge are not the only hindrances to the establishment of Inclusive classrooms, teachers' views and beliefs played a critical role in the successful implementation and practise of Inclusion (Pit-Ten Cate et al., 2018; Yaraya et al., 2018; Saloviita, 2020).

When teachers have a positive attitude towards the policy, they will accept it, resulting in transformative improvements in their practices; when they have a negative attitude towards the policy, they will be unwilling to implement it and transform their practices, despite being equipped with all of the necessary skills and resources (Yaraya et al., 2018; Mangope et al., 2020; Saloviita, 2020; Pilipchuk et al., 2021). According to international studies, teachers' acceptance of the Inclusion of learners with learning impairments in mainstream classrooms can be accelerated by providing teachers with the required skills, resources, and grounds of support, as well as positive experiences with the Inclusion policy (Movkebayeva et al., 2016; Mangope et al., 2020).

5.4 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.4.1 Population and Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of ten teachers chosen purposively from five mainstream secondary schools in the Mogalakwena district, Limpopo province. Participants were teachers

who had learners in grades 7 to 12 or who taught in the Senior and FET phases and had some knowledge about Inclusive Education. Purposeful sampling ensures a high participation rate as it is simple to administer, thus the researcher deemed it the best sampling method for this study as it provided the researcher with access to appropriate groups of people who provided rich data in relation to the study's topic.

5.4.2 Research approach and design

The qualitative approach was used in this study because it allowed the researcher to create an extensive comprehension and depiction of teachers' perspectives, their experiences with having learners with learning impairments in their midst and their readiness to support such learners. This approach concentrated on understanding the underlying motives, perceptions, and motivations that people use to construct their world and how they interpreted their experiences. In this qualitative study, the transcendental phenomenology research design was used as the most appropriate mode of inquiry for obtaining information and drawing the most valid, honest deductions from the answers to the sat research questions on teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas. This research method was chosen as the best fit for this study because it focused on concepts, events, or people's lived experiences. The transcendental phenomenology research design emphasizes the description of participants' experiences rather than the researcher's interpretations, allowing the researcher to get a new perspective on the topic under inquiry based on the description of the actual experiences.

To explore the participants' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments, their social conventions, and knowledge creation regarding learning impairments, an in-depth individual face-to-face interview method was used to collect comprehensive descriptive data. Individual face-to-face interviews foster a setting in which participants feel more at ease and less hesitant to share information, as opposed to when they are in the presence of other colleagues or peers. Documents such as policies, departmental circulars, the school's vision and mission statement, learner profiles, workbooks, teachers' minute books, and any other documents that have the potential to add to the study's findings were used as valuable sources to authenticate data gathered through observations and interviews. The researcher also used reflex records to make modifications where necessary.

The direct, non-participation observation method was also used in the study to collect and record data as well as to validate data collected from interviews. The observation method

allowed the researcher to collect detailed information about the participants' demeanours and interactions with learners while they were in their natural teaching and learning environment. The context in which human behaviour, events, views, and feelings occur has a significant impact on them. Through the utilization of unexpected information sources as they occurred, the researcher was able to construct a comprehensive and interrelated portrayal of how specific individuals use their time to offer support to learners with learning impairments. The presence of the researcher may impact the participants' behaviours, so the researcher felt it critical not to stimulate the participants' behaviours but to allow teachers' readiness to support learners with learning impairments to unfold naturally in the classroom setup.

5.5 Limitations of the study

This study was intended to conduct in-depth interviews through Microsoft Teams in order to collect data, however the majority of participants voiced doubts about using Microsoft Teams. They expressed that they were not confident with the usage of it and thus the researcher opted for an alternative means of collecting data. Due to the sample size being small, larger generalisation of the study's findings is not feasible.

5.5.1 Overcoming limitations of the study

Data was gathered through in-depth face-to-face interviews that were audio recorded and saved in a password-protected file on Google Drive in accordance with the Covid-19 requirements. The researcher acknowledged that while the sample size is small and it may not be possible to collect data from all of the schools in the Mogalakwena district, the findings from the sample group can serve as the basis for comparability of larger studies in other schools and can be used to obtain comprehensive data from participants' perspectives on the same phenomenon.

5.6 RECAP OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS IN ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section of the chapter gives a summary of how the study answered each research question.

5.6.1 The first research sub-question: How do teachers understand support for learners with learning impairment in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas?

There is an extensive range of experiences and perceptions brought to school by the integration of learners with learning impairments in mainstream schooling. The Inclusion of such learners in mainstream schools presents problems for both teachers and learners who must deal with distinct learning styles, unfamiliar learning environments, and varying experiences of assessment procedures, as well as various sorts of communication and interactions. There are still concerns about the acceptability of learners with learning impairments being Included, which perpetuates barriers to learning for learners with learning disabilities.

Many mainstream teachers appear to be opposed to the Inclusion of learners with learning impairments in mainstream schools; they regard learners with learning impairments as an extra burden. Despite attending numerous professional development workshops and courses on Inclusive Education, these teachers conceal their dissatisfaction with having such learners in their classrooms by claiming that they have not been adequately trained or workshopped in the field of Inclusion or special needs teaching. Teachers' compliance with the policy is not evident in their practices; they are seemingly uninterested in the Inclusion policy. Learners with learning impairments should be viewed as a great resource for everyone to learn more in new ways and in new settings, not as a mammoth task for teachers.

5.6.2 The second research sub-question: What are the factors that determine teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary school?

The study's findings suggested that teachers were uneasy about including learners with diverse learning needs in mainstream classrooms. They argued that such learners should be transferred to special schools where they would be better accommodated. Due to gaps in knowledge and skills, teachers believed they had not yet acquired the skills required to accommodate such learners. These teachers appeared hesitant to study various policies that were available to them in order to equip themselves with the information and skills needed to promote Inclusion. They appeared uninterested in learning more about the Inclusion of learners with impairments. If teachers do not shift their beliefs, learners with learning disabilities will continue to be ostracised because they will not receive the type of education suitable for them.

Teachers must begin to shift their attitudes and behaviours toward learners with various learning needs. Teachers must renounce old thinking and adopt a new perspective on

teaching. Teachers, on the other hand, require a high level of support. By doing so, teachers will begin to create positivity in the policy's execution and will not feel overwhelmed by the process. Teachers are already frustrated with their existing burden, and any additional load will exacerbate their dissatisfaction, leading them to oppose any modifications in curriculum or techniques.

5.6.3 The third research sub-question: How can teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments be enhanced?

According to the study's findings, teachers do not feel adequately prepared to include learners with diverse educational requirements in mainstream classrooms. They bemoan the fact that they only have a rudimentary understanding of Inclusive Education from one-day workshops and thus believe they are unable to support such learners. Teachers stated that even though they had not been rigorously workshopped, they still attempted to employ multiple intervention strategies to suit diverse learning requirements; however, this was not apparent during data collection.

Data gathered from observations suggested that teachers continue to rely heavily on traditional teacher-oriented strategies during lesson presentations; adjustment and alteration of assessments were also lacking, implying that learners with learning impairments were left on the ledge. Teachers' lack of interest in Inclusive Education policy demonstrates that more needs to be done to improve their perspectives on the policy. Teachers are critical to the successful implementation of the Inclusion policy; without their support, the policy will just exist on paper.

5.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Inclusive Education is critical because it integrates previously marginalized and excluded learners into mainstream schools from an early age, allowing them to learn to their full potential and ensuring that they enter adulthood well-equipped to be dynamic citizens who will contribute to the growth of their community and the republic. Inclusive Education policy is a social policy that requires the support of all stakeholders, notably the teachers who will be implementing it on the ground level, in order to be successful. It is critical that such individuals be sufficiently prepared to carry it out. Furthermore, they must completely comprehend it and acquire the abilities required to successfully apply this policy. The study's findings revealed that more work has to be done to guarantee that teachers follow this strategy. Teachers

continue to believe that this policy should be enforced by other teachers who have received training in Inclusive Education. Despite having completed several courses (modules) in Inclusive Education during their in-service training and attending multiple workshops on Inclusive Education, they still believed that they were not capable of implementing it since they lacked actual qualifications in that sector. In this perspective, one could interpret this as teachers rejecting the policy, possibly because they did not completely comprehend it or its ramifications in the lives of learners with learning impairments. Teachers' opinions on the regulation can stymie its successful implementation. Teachers' negative sentiments regarding the policy influence how they view learners with learning impairments. As a result, they are opposed to their Inclusion in the mainstream education system.

In doing so, they are causing what Vygotsky (1999) referred to as a secondary disability. A child's sociocultural milieu is critical in their acquisition of psychological tools, which influences their developmental trajectory. It shapes their views on teaching and learning, as well as how they gain knowledge. Learners with varied learning difficulties require assistance in order to realise their full potential. Policymakers must still lay the framework to ensure that this is executed. Teachers are the primary change agents, and their perspectives and attitudes must be altered in order for them to fully accommodate learners with diverse needs. The Inclusion policy will be in effect for several years, so teachers must begin to modify their beliefs.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study recommends that teachers should study a combination of special and Inclusive Education and practice them concurrently during pre-service training and in-service training to develop the skills and confidence needed to promote and accurately execute Inclusion as well as function in a diverse setting.
- Teachers must be equipped to meet the learning and participation needs of learners with different types of disabilities and learning impairments in order to promote development toward quality basic education for learners with learning impairments. To accomplish this, teachers must go through rigorous and continuous workshops, as well as professional development and ongoing access to satisfactory high-quality support and assistance from specialist personnel in Inclusive Education and special needs teaching.

- Inclusive Education and special needs concepts are not competitive but complementary to each other; thus, it is pivotal for all in-service and pre-service training teachers to learn more about them. This might change teachers' views about learners with learning impairments being solely the responsibility of special schools, but of all teachers in in-service teaching.
- The DBE should hold regular and rigorous workshops on Inclusive Education, as well as provide adequate support to teachers through the presence of DBST in schools.
- An annual teachers' skills audit should be conducted in which they can complete a self-guided survey, questionnaire or interviews based on their capabilities in relation to their overall roles in policy implementation.
- Based on teachers' concerns that they were unable to fully support learners with learning impairments due to classroom overcrowding, teacher assistants can be hired on a permanent basis to assist with the administrative workload while the teachers focus on teaching and learning.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented summaries of the previous chapters followed by summaries of how the study answered the research questions. The chapter also explained how the study resonates with the theoretical framework. A summary of literature reviewed in relation to the study's research topic was given, as well as the limitations that emanated from the study and how those limitations were overcome. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations of the study were discussed.

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Appendix A: Registration letter



1009 MIRST

MADIBA S R MS
P O BOX 34
MOKOPANE
0600

STUDENT NUMBER : 6358-853-6

ENQUIRIES NAME : MR P FOLKARD
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411

DATE : 2023-02-21

Dear Student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. Kindly activate your Unisa mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources.

DEGREE : MED (INCLUSIVE EDUCATION) (98443)

TITLE : Teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments
in mainstream schools in rural areas

SUPERVISOR : Dr MK MALAHLELA (malahmk@unisa.ac.za)

ACADEMIC YEAR : 2023

TYPE: DISSERTATION

SUBJECTS REGISTERED: DFIED95 MED - Inclusive Education

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

You must re-register online and pay every academic year until such time that you can submit your dissertation/thesis for examination.

Students registering for the first time for a dissertation or thesis must complete a research proposal in their first year of study. Guidelines will be provided by your supervisor/contact person.

If you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination you have to submit an Intention to submit form (available on the website www.unisa.ac.za) at least two months before the date of submission. If submission takes place after 15 November, but before the end of January of the following year, you do need not to re-register and pay registration fees for the next academic year. Should you submit after the end of January, you must formally reregister online and pay the full fees.

Please access the information with regard to your personal librarian on the following link:
<https://bit.ly/3hdNqVr>

Yours faithfully,

Prof M S Mathata
Registrar



University of South Africa
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Johannesburg
PO Box 382, UNISA 0003 South Africa
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Appendix B: Ethical Certificate



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/11/10

Ref: **2021/11/10/63588536/21/AM**

Name: Ms SR Madiba

Student No.:63588536

Dear Ms SR Madiba

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2021/11/10 to 2024/11/10

Researcher(s): Name: Ms SR Madiba
E-mail address: Sewelaruth@gmail.com
Telephone: 0765008858

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr MK Malahlela
E-mail address: malahmk@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 481 2755

Title of research:

Teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas.

Qualification: MEd Inclusive Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/11/10 to 2024/11/10.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/11/10 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/11/10**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2021/11/10/63588536/21/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Activate \
Go to Setting

Appendix C: Interview Schedule



Interview schedule

School	Teacher	Date		Mode	Notes
School A	Teacher 1			Audio recording	
	Teacher 2				
School B	Teacher 3				
	Teacher 4				
School C	Teacher 5				
	Teacher 6				
School D	Teacher 7				
	Teacher 8				
School E	Teacher 9				
	Teacher 10				

Appendix D: Interview Questions



Interview questions

1. Teachers' understanding of the support for learners with learning impairments:

- 1.1 What is your view about learners with learning impairments?
- 1.2 What type of support do you think can be given to these learners with learning impairments?
- 1.3 How would you know that a learner in your class has a learning impairment?

2. Factors determining teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments:

- 2.1 What are the obstacles that you know, which can interfere with your support for learners with learning impairments? Please tell me why you say so.
- 2.2 Why do you think teachers in mainstream secondary schools are not ready, or are ready to support learners with learning impairments?

3. Strategies to enhance support for learners with learning impairments:

- 3.1 Which learning support strategies can be used to support learners with learning impairments? Please substantiate your answer.

Appendix E: Observation Sheet



Observation Sheet

School _____ Teacher _____

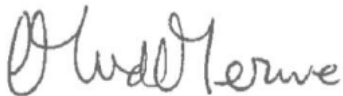
Date _____ Time _____

Criteria for observation	Yes/ No (Y/N)	Comment
Displays evidence of teacher preparation.		
Differentiated teaching.		
Teacher focuses on teaching and supporting individual learners and not just on the learning area.		
Evidence of differentiation assessments.		
Visual, auditory, and tangible aids used.		
Provides Appropriate praise and encouragement.		
Support learners' use of resources.		
Classroom setting allows for smooth physical movement of learners and educators		

Appendix F: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

13 May 2023

I, Marlette van der Merwe, hereby certify that the text and list of references in the master's dissertation titled "Teachers' readiness in supporting learners with learning impairments in mainstream secondary schools in rural areas", have been edited by me, according to the latest (2021) international Harvard referencing method, as used by the Humanities faculties at the University of South Africa.



Marlette van der Merwe

BA, HDipLib (UCT)

Activ
Go to 5