FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

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JEANTELLE THERON

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DECLARATION

Name: JEANTELLE THERON

Student number: 64007642

Degree: MASTERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT (CAPS) AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

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.

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2021/03/25

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DEDICATION

To all special school teachers who devote themselves to better education for learners with barriers to learning

I attribute my success to this… I never gave or took any excuses.
(Florence Nightingale)

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, special schools form an integral part of public basic education that is underpinned by an inclusive education philosophy and approach (at least in policy). Given the inclusive education context, some special schools in South Africa currently teach the mainstream curriculum, known as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) in the academic stream. This study explored the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers teaching CAPS in Home Language and Mathematics in the academic stream at one special school.

This study was underpinned by inclusive education philosophy as the theoretical framework. A qualitative approach with Phenomenology as the research design guided the research process. Data were gathered from a purposively selected sample of Foundation Phase teachers by means of semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and through the analysis of relevant documents.

The study's findings report on participants' qualifications and experiences teaching in a special school environment. Most participants were not in favour of CAPS implementation in the academic stream of the special school for various reasons. They therefore advocated for a revised curriculum appropriate for LSEN leaners.

Despite the many challenges experienced in the implementation of CAPS, participants attempted to implement the curriculum in an inclusive manner by trying to adapt the curriculum content and the pace of the curriculum to be more appropriate for the LSEN learners. Analysis of the lesson plans however indicated a lack of planning for curriculum adaptations. The findings suggest that the participants did not seem to have deep insight into IE polices and other official documents to inform their teaching within an IE approach.

Although the participants relied on internal and external support systems, the support mechanisms were limited, thus hindering the implementation of inclusive practices. Participants mentioned that support could be enhanced by them receiving appropriate in-service training on addressing the various barriers to learning. They also advocated for more resources and funding to enhance teaching and learning which should have been funded by the State as explicitly stated in the IE policy documents that were analysed. Therefore, a significant finding of the study was the apparent gap between IE policy and practice.

Key terms: Foundation Phase teachers; teacher's experiences; Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS); special schools; Home Language; Mathematics; teaching strategies; Education White Paper 6 (EWP6); policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS); barriers to learning; inclusive education.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FET	Further Education and Training
FP	Foundation Phase
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IE	Inclusive Education
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
SIAS	Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

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ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study focusses on foundation phase special school teachers' experiences of implementing the South African public schools' mainstream curriculum, the *Curriculum, Assessment and Policy Standards* (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011a) in the academic stream at one special school. The delivery of public basic education curricula in South Africa is supposed to occur within an inclusive education (IE) context as indicated in relevant policies (Department of Education [DoE], 2001; DBE, 2014). Therefore, this study is underpinned by IE as the theoretical framework of the study.

Basic education has been identified as a human right since 1966 by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Department of Education [DoE], 2003; Simmons & Du Preez, 2017:10). Dogan and Bengisoy (2017:121) and Tamakloe and Agbenyega (2017:29) agree that basic education should be a human right, and a right irrespective of learning disabilities. Therefore, inclusive education has been a "global movement" for the past 30 years (Engelbrecht, Nel & Nel *et al.*, 2015:1). This can be seen in copious international legislation, such as *Education for All* and the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs* (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994), as well as the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (DoE, 2005b). However, despite such legislation, issues such as policy and curriculum changes have been a continuing challenge towards accommodating diverse barriers to learning (Aydin *et al.*, 2017:76). It is thus evident that educational institutions worldwide still encounter challenges with regard to successfully implementing inclusive education in the system (Baldiris *et al.*, 2016:17; Taole, 2015:267). As mentioned by New & Kyuchukov, (2018:323), historically and internationally, it still seems to be a trend for countries all over the world to categorise learners with regard to specific disabilities and then place these learners in specific schools or institutions that cater for their diverse needs.

In South Africa, although inclusive education is a priority, authors argue that it has not been a primary concern, since political transformation, including educational change, has been the focus (Molapo & Pillay, 2018:1). Before 1994, discriminatory practices included inequalities in the delivery of education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014:2; McKinney & Swartz, 2016:309). However, after the 1994 governmental election, the publication of the South African Schools

Act 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996b) and the Department of Education National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (DoE, 1996a), the education system became responsible for providing education to all South African children (McKinney & Swartz, 2016:309). However, where learners with disabilities were segregated from mainstream schools' post 1994 with regard to race and category of disability, specialised teaching environments were developed in order to accommodate these learners (McKinney & Swartz, 2016:309).

Together with a policy change towards IE, many curricula changes have occurred since the dawn of democracy in 1994 in South Africa. The first curriculum to be introduced under the democratic dispensation was Curriculum 2005 (C2005) (DoE, 2001) to replace the previous curricula in South Africa, address political and educational change, and respond to barriers to learning in education (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.*, 2015:2). However, this curriculum encountered unforeseen problems. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was introduced in 2000, with the aim of supporting C2005, (Molapo & Pillay, 2018:2; Taole, 2015:268), but seemed to have been unsuccessful due to various implementation challenges (Ballard & Dymond, 2017:166; Dreyer, 2017:9; Engelbrecht, Nel & Nel *et al.*, 2015:6; Koopman *et al.*, 2018:151; Molapo & Pillay, 2018:4; Roiha, 2014:4; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016:150). Due to the unsuccessful implementation and many challenges, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011a) was developed (Hoadley, 2015:734). By 2009, CAPS (DBE, 2011a) progressively replaced all curricula and was to be successfully implemented by 2012 in all schools, special schools included (Khoza, 2015:182). CAPS (DBE, 2011a) "[implies] the need for a non-traditional pedagogy and more democratic relations in schools and classrooms" (Green & Condy, 2016:1) and was a government initiative after the previous unsuccessful curriculum efforts.

Nonetheless, according to Taole (2015:26), there has been evidence that the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) is again problematic, and as stated by Molapo and Pillay (2018:2), developing new curricula seems to be the government's solution to curriculum implementation challenges. Several concerns regarding the implementation of the CAPS (DBE, 2011a) have been mentioned by various authors. Challenges resulting in the poor implementation of CAPS include: inflexible curricula and assessment; lack of educator training, skills and knowledge; poor infrastructure and a lack of physical resources; large classroom sizes; inadequate time allocation for teaching and negative attitudes towards curriculum change and implementation (Engelbrecht, Nel & Nel *et al.*, 2015:3; Green & Condy, 2016:7; Koopman *et al.*, 2018:168; McKinney & Swartz, 2016:311; Molapo & Pillay, 2018:2).

Since a need towards a more inclusive education system and differentiation in teaching approaches developed, various education policies have been adopted in South Africa. One such policy is the framework policy issued by the Department of Education, namely, Education White Paper 6: *Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (EWP6) (DoE, 2001). This was South Africa's first inclusive education policy (McKinney & Swartz, 2016:311; Nel & Grosser, 2016:79). It serves as a guideline to the South African education system on how to implement change in order to accommodate diverse barriers to learning (Adams & Mabusela, 2015:82). All public schools, including special schools, are required to integrate EWP6 (DoE, 2001) within CAPS (DBE, 2011a). However, even though schools in South Africa do implement this policy, Wium and Louw (2015:2) and Walton (2018:32) are of the opinion that special schools and even mainstream schools still struggle with the successful implementation of EWP6 (DoE, 2001).

Engelbrecht, Nel and Nel *et al.* (2015:2) agree and see teachers as the important link to address barriers to learning; however, to accommodate all learners, inclusive education should be part of teachers' daily classroom practices. In light of this, it has become clear that the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in collaboration with EWP6 (DoE, 2001) is the teachers' responsibility. Donohue and Bornman (2014:11) also elaborate on the teachers' responsibility to implement inclusive education in CAPS (DBE, 2011a), stating that research has shown that EPW6 (DoE, 2001) did not specify how to fulfil this particular task (Shani & Hebel, 2016:4). Unsuccessful implementation of EPW6 (DoE, 2001) seems to be due to teachers' lack of training, insufficient funding and resources such as educational materials, inadequate time allocation of academic tasks to develop skills, lack of self-regulatory skills in special education and class sizes (Donohue & Bornman, 2014:2; Engelbrecht, Nel & Nel *et al.*, 2015:1; McKinney & Swartz, 2016:310; Rioha, 2014:4; Shani & Hebel, 2016:3).

Govender (2018: S4) highlights that, even though South Africa has put policies and programmes in place to promote effective curriculum implementation, it has been unsuccessful. The inventiveness of implementing a mainstream curriculum in special schools as proposed by the DoE (DoE, 2005), is problematic and encounters various difficulties. These challenges in turn result in South African teachers sharing negative attitudes towards the curriculum, thus hindering the implementation of inclusive practices in all classrooms, including special schools, following the mainstream curricula in the Foundation Phase (Adams & Mabusela, 2015:82; DoE, 2001).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

CAPS (DBE, 2011a) is the national curriculum used in South African schools (Maharajh *et al.*, 2016.372). The schools that implement this curriculum consist of public mainstream and special schools (in the academic stream), some private schools and some private special schools. However, as is the case in many other countries, it is usually a challenge to implement a mainstream curriculum in a special school (Green, 2018:168). As a Foundation Phase teacher, teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) on a daily basis, my experience has suggested that there are both advantages and challenges in implementing CAPS (DBE, 2011) in special school classrooms. In addition, there is a paucity of literature relating specifically to the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in special schools in South Africa. This is especially important given the low numeracy and literacy rates among young South African learners who have been taught using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in mainstream schools (Aunio & Räsänen., 2016:684). The situation may be even more dire in South African special schools.

Therefore, the study attempts to add to the rather lean body of knowledge about the implementation of the mainstream South African curriculum in a Gauteng special school.

1.2.1 Research question

Taking into consideration the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at special schools, this research was guided by the following main research question:

What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of Mathematics and Home Language throughout the implementation of CAPS at a selected Gauteng special school?

The sub-questions were as follows:

- What are Foundation Phase special school teachers' views about the teaching of Home Language and Mathematics using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school?
- What teaching approaches do Foundation Phase special school teachers employ in the teaching of Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a)?
- In what ways are Foundation Phase teachers supported in teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school?
- How can the support of Foundation Phase special school teachers be enhanced in the teaching of CAPS-based (DBE, 2011a) Mathematics and Home Language?

1.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

According to Walton (2018:32) CAPS (DBE, 2011a) should be taught in collaboration with inclusive education practices. However, this author states that EWP6 (DoE, 2001) as an inclusive education policy lacks clarity, thus hindering the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in South African schools (Haug, 2017:211). Haug (2017:211) furthermore states that the implementation of inclusive practices was never specified by EWP6 (DoE, 2001) – neither was how to fulfil these practices within the classroom with disabled learners. In agreement, Wium and Louw (2015:2) are of the opinion that South African teachers struggle with the implementation of the existing curriculum. Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:6) are of the opinion that the implementation of the South African mainstream curriculum - CAPS in special schools (DoE, 2011a) is challenging and problematic. There is thus a gap between policy and implementation in practice.

The justification and rationale for the research began with being a Foundation Phase teacher teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school myself. Contact and communication with other teachers in special schools regarding the implementation of Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in a special school environment confirmed my personal experiences and challenges. The literature also suggests that teachers struggle in implementing CAPS (DBE, 2011a). I recognised the importance of further investigating the phenomenon of teachers' experiences, especially in special schools where unique needs exist.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research was to investigate the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at one Gauteng special school.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research was to investigate Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at one Gauteng special school. The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To explore the Foundation Phase special school teachers' views about the teaching of Home Language and Mathematics using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school.

- To explore the teaching approaches that Foundation Phase teachers employ in the teaching of Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school.
- To explore ways in which Foundation Phase teachers are supported in teaching Mathematics and Home Language using the CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school.
- To establish the support of Foundation Phase teachers in the teaching of Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school.

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The key concepts applicable to this study are discussed below.

1.6.1 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

After 1994, the DBE repeatedly revised the curriculum (Hoadley, 2015:735). In 1998, The National Curriculum Statements (NCS) for Grade R-9 was published and implemented in to replace previous curricula. In 1998, C2005 was introduced and implemented, led by the principles of outcomes-based education (OBE) that encouraged rote teaching and learning. By 2005, South Africa had another curriculum reform, namely RNCS, which was developed to strengthen and improve the implementation of C2005 (DoE, 2002; Molapo & Pillay, 2018:2). However, by 2009, CAPS (DBE, 2011a) was introduced to be implemented in all public mainstream schools and in the academic stream at public special schools (DBE, 2011a; Khoza, 2015:182).

Wiebesiek-Pienaar *et al.* (2014:160) state “that CAPS did not replace the NCS but gives clear guidelines as to what content has to be taught in a particular grade or subject”. However, according to (Taole, 2015: 268) and McKinney and Swartz (2016:311), CAPS (DBE, 2011a) only specifies the knowledge, concepts and skills that have to be taught and not explicably how they should be in special schools implementing the mainstream curricula and how that inclusive practices are to be incorporated.

In 2001, EWP6 (DoE, 2001) and later the *Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* (SIAS) (DBE, 2014) documents were introduced as South Africa’s first policies on inclusive education (McKinney & Swartz, 2016:311; Nel & Tlale *et al.*, 2016:2). These policies were specifically compiled with recommendations and outcomes to address education inequalities and to transform the education system to support learners with disabilities in South African

schools. They serve as a guideline to the South African education system on how to implement change in order to accommodate diverse barriers to learning (Adams & Mabusela, 2015:8).

Meltzer (2018:12) states that in a special education environment, there are several factors that result in optimal learning. These include recommendations and accommodations to the curriculum and assessment, as well as changing teaching and learning techniques. In light of this, Green and Condy (2016:1), Molapo and Pillay (2018:4) and Taole (2015:267) state that CAPS (DBE, 2011a) is challenging to implement in all classrooms. These authors agree that educators are exhausted by the constant changes in curriculum and implementation strategies, and political changes. Lack of adequate resources, time allocation and teacher training, and numerous administrative responsibilities are also factors that influence successful implementation. In conclusion, international research by Wai-yee Wong and Pik-yuk Chik (2016:197) support this contention as it also applies in the South African education context where CAPS is the mainstream curriculum and implementation thereof is still problematic.

1.6.2 Special schools

The SIAS policy defines special schools as follows: “Schools that are equipped to deliver a specialised education programme to learners requiring access to high-intensive educational support either on a full-time or a part-time basis” (DoE, 2014). In accordance with the previous definition, Moscardini (2015:44) defines special schools as identifying and removing learners who suffer from learning disabilities and placing them in an environment where their specific needscan be met. In that environment, it is expected that additional support may be provided (Dogan & Bengisoy, 2017:123). EWP6 (DoE, 2001) explains the role of special schools in the transformation towards inclusive education.

According to Tamakloe and Agbenyega (2017:30), “the theory of inclusive education is based on the rights of every child to have access to a least restrictive education environment with available resources to support their full participation”. These authors state that learners with barriers to learning need additional support for them to reach their potential. Special schools (can) develop an inclusive environment for learners with barriers to learning to receive the support they need (DoE, 2005b). However, on the contrary, Sulaiman *et al.* (2017:205) and Kempen and Steyn (2016:32) are of the opinion that there is a need for adaptations in policy and for training and assistance in classroom practices and approaches in order for teachers to become more competent in inclusive practices in special need environments. Dogan and Bengisoy (2017:122) and Tamakloe and Agbenyega (2017:30) emphasise that teachers

should be knowledgeable and equipped to be able to identify and accommodate barriers to learning within the classroom setting.

According to Meyer (2017:2), in 2009 the Department of Education developed a curriculum that all schools, including special schools, were to implement. Although it was set out by the DoE that all schools should follow the curriculum, some special schools in South Africa do not implement CAPS (DBE, 2011a). The setting where this research was conducted was at a special school where the academic phase does follow the full CAPS (DBE, 2011a) curriculum.

1.6.3 Teachers' experiences

According to Dimitrova-Radojichikj *et al.* (2016:185), attitudes can be generally defined as "a complex collection of beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions which characterise the way we think or feel about certain people or situations". In addition, beliefs can be defined as certain understandings of what we personally feel as being true in the world (Tondeur *et al.*, 2016:565). According to Uzair-ul-Hassan *et al.* (2015:897), experience can be directly linked to attitudes and beliefs. These authors state that "teachers' experiences and their training extensively influence their attitudes of educational practices". In light of the above, I chose to investigate teacher experiences.

According to Wolff, Sjöblom, Hofman-Bergholm and Palmberg (2017:4) teachers are key components in shaping the future both nationally and internationally. They lay the ground concepts or roots for learning (Fowler & Fowler, 1964:482). Therefore, in the South African context, teachers' experiences of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) play an enormous role in whether the implementation of CAPS will be successful (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2017:196). However, Osmanoglu and Oguzhan Dincer (2018:76) state that, although teachers' experiences are of value for the successful implementation of CAPS, teachers should adapt the curriculum appropriately in order to create an effective learning environment. Experiences are defined as the motivation to engage in activities (Harvey, Khan & Keefe, 2017:19) and relate to the understanding and acknowledgement of the teaching environment (Savić & Prošić-Santovac, 2017:142).

1.6.4 Foundation Phase teachers

Petersen (2017:1) states that Foundation Phase teachers are the people that mould young learners' minds for learning. According to the CAPS document (DBE, 2011a), Foundation Phase teachers are those who teach in the Foundation Phase – Grade R to Grade 3 – which forms the foundation of any child's academic school career (DoE, 2001). These teachers

should have in-depth knowledge and teaching skills for subjects such as Home Language, Mathematics, First Additional Language and Life Skills (DoE, 2012). Several authors emphasise that teachers should understand the importance of inclusive practices to be able to accommodate diverse learning needs (Petersen, 2017:2; Savić & Prošić-Santovac, 2017:142).

As mentioned by Meyer (2017:2), in 2012, schools in South Africa, including the academic stream in special schools, were to follow CAPS (DBE, 2011a). However, according to Petersen (2017:2), CAPS (DBE, 2011a) is a very demanding curriculum for teachers with regard to content and time allocations. Green and Condy (2016:7) continue by saying that "teachers are easily overwhelmed by the curriculum's practical demands". Uzair-ul-Hassan *et al.* (2015:904) and Roiha (2014:3) add to this, saying that teachers face numerous challenges when implementing the curriculum. As previously mentioned, a lack of time, large class numbers and insufficient resources and knowledge are all factors that contribute to teachers' lack of curriculum implementation. Taole (2015:268) affirms that, more than ever, teachers are confronted by these challenges while teaching CAPS (DBE, 2011a) to learners who suffer from barriers to learning.

I was motivated by my own context as a Foundation Phase teacher in a special school, and I agree with the statement of Sampson and Condy (2016:83) that the most important task of Foundation Phase teachers is to ensure that all learners learn. This statement aided as a motivation for this research, and I wanted to clarify the experiences of teachers within this context while implementing CAPS (DBE, 2011a).

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical underpinning of this study was inclusive education, since it is the framework within which public (both mainstream and special) education in South Africa is offered.

As previously mentioned, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. The advantages of inclusive education are that it improves learning for all children, including those with disabilities, promotes understanding, reduces prejudice and strengthens social integration. It ensures that learners with disabilities are equipped to work, contribute economically and socially to their communities and participate in public life (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015:289).

Taking into account the above advantages, educational inclusion recognises the need to change the culture, policy and practice of schools to accommodate all learners, including learners with all forms of disabilities (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015:289). Therefore, inclusive education involves transforming the whole education system – legislation and policy, curricula, systems for financing, administration, design, delivery and monitoring of education, and the way schools are organised – through interpersonal interactions which allow for the full learning potential of every learner to emerge (Rogers & Johnson, 2018:1). This includes effective participation through inclusive pedagogies, specialised classroom instructional strategies and a supportive environment for the learner and teacher (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020:35). Ongoing professional support and training must be assured and available to teachers (Russell *et al.*, 2019:3). The empowerment and competency of teachers could ensure that that all learners, regardless of background or personal circumstances, feel engaged and included.

Since this study only focused on teachers at special schools, it was envisioned that new knowledge would be constructed during the interaction with teachers who shared their ideas and understandings with me during this research. The study intended to inform new understandings surrounding the implementation of Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at special schools within an inclusive education context as prescribed by South African Basic education policies for public schools.

The key concepts of inclusive education that featured strongly during the conceptualisation of the theoretical framework are elaborated on in Chapter 2.

1.8 PARADIGM AND RESEARCH APPROACH

Most literature points out that "research methodology refers to the paradigm that underpins the research" (Creswell, 2014:4). Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010:59) are of the opinion that the research design refers to a series of approaches used in collecting and analysing measures of the variables specified in the research problem (Creswell, 2014:4; Ngozwana, 2018:21).

Gehman *et al.* (2017:284) and Kozleski (2017:24) state that qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in people's lived and subjective experiences. Therefore, I chose interpretivism as the research paradigm. Interpretivism is best described as how the world is observed and understood by others through their lived experiences and shared events (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:24). This paradigm guided the inquiry and informed the methodology of the research, which took a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2014:16). As Ngozwana

(2018:20) state, qualitative research provides the platform for shared experiences. Therefore, this approach was best suited to this research as the research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of Foundation Phase teachers' experiences. Furthermore, qualitative research involves interpretive and constructive methods. These practices inform our understanding of human experiences developed through social interaction (refer to Chapter 3 for further discussion).

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be generally defined as "a blueprint to guide the research process by laying out how a study will move from the research questions to achieving the research outcomes" (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018:238). Furthermore, Creswell (2014:9) is of the opinion that a research design is the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data to fully understand a specific topic. As stated by DePoy and Gitlin (2015:20), it is important to note that the research design forms the basis for the research, and according to Denscombe (2010:99), a research design explores different aspects related to the research question (see Chapter 3).

Phenomenology was the design of inquiry within this qualitative research, since I attempted to understand the perspectives and lived experiences of Foundation Phase teachers. Goulding (2003:302) explains that the main purpose of phenomenology is to gain a deeper comprehension of individuals' direct experiences in their reality. Bakanay and Çakir (2016:162) are of the opinion that a phenomenological approach has been utilised in education research and classroom applications. Therefore, phenomenology assisted me to gain deeper insight into the participants' views and experiences (Bakanay & Çakir, 2016:161; Creswell & Poth, 2017:5; Van Manen, 2015:9). As stated by Nazir (2016:181), this inquiry aided me to understand the deeper issues that the participants may not necessarily reveal on the surface since the Foundation Phase teachers explained their experiences of curriculum implementation as the central phenomenon. It assisted me to gain insight into how the participants constructed meaning of their experiences in teaching CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school. This could lead to better classroom implementation of the curriculum and better teaching and learning practices (Percy *et al.*, 2015:77) (refer to Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of the research design).

1.10 RESEARCH SETTING

The research setting chosen was a special school in the Gauteng area, South Africa. The school comprises 400 learners and 80 staff members who teach learners with several barriers to learning (Du Toit & Gaotlhobogwe, 2018:38; Moosa & Bhana, 2017:366; Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018:4). For the purpose of this research, the focus was only on the Foundation Phase (refer to Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion).

1.11 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The study population, according to Etikan *et al.* (2016:1), does not only have to refer to a number of people but can also indicate the number of subjects or cases related to a research. However, Van Rijnsoever (2017:4) is of the opinion that the population refers to and includes all the individuals of interest as indicated for the purpose of the research. The population for this study thus included all individuals teaching at a special school, and the sample was the chosen Foundation Phase teachers.

The sample, on the other hand, refers to those participants who were chosen from the population to be representative of the sample during the data collection process (Babbie, 2013:135). The sample refers to a portion of the population chosen to represent the population for data collection purposes (Etikan *et al.*, 2016:1). According to Creswell (2014:160), a sample in research can also be generally defined as a group of subjects that the researcher used during the research to answer the research question. The sampling method chosen during this research was purposive sampling. As defined by Hoeber *et al.* (2017:18), purposive sampling indicates selecting a group of participants that match a specific characteristic of interest. Mulatu and Bezabih (2018:33) propose that the researcher needs to take into consideration the purpose of selecting a specific sample and the availability of the sample in the specific research setting (refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the population and sampling).

The sample size was all five Foundation Phase teachers and one head of department (HOD) at the specific special school. Therefore, the Foundation Phase at this special school comprised six teachers. This was the complete number of teachers at this specific special school, and therefore this entire sample was selected (refer to Chapter 3).

1.12 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

It should be noted that, for the purpose of this research, I was the data collection instrument. I elaborate on this role in Chapter 3. I chose this method of data collection since I am also a teacher in the Foundation Phase at this special school and have experienced the same challenges as the participants.

Data collection comprised two phases. During Phase 1, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the participants. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the face-to-face interviews changed to semi-structured individual telephonic interviews. Phase 2 of the research consisted of conducting a document analysis. The analysed documents included the CAPS documents for Home Language and Mathematics (DBE, 2011a); EWP6 (DoE, 2001); the SIAS (DBE, 2014) policy framework; Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres (DoE, 2005a); guidelines for responding to learner diversity through CAPS (DBE, 2011b); the Foundation Phase school policy; and weekly lesson plans.

1.12.1 Phase 1: Individual semi-structured individual telephonic interviews

Semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were the method of data collection. According to Boote *et al.* (2017:2), conducting an interview "is a creative process in which the interactions and conversations of interviewer and respondent produce statements and formulations that draw upon the knowledge experience of both the researcher and participants".

I conducted semi-structured individual telephonic interviews with all five Foundation Phase teachers and one HOD who was also a Foundation Phase teacher at this school. Semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were used since they provided the opportunity for participants to share information, that they might not have felt comfortable sharing in the presence of their peers and HOD. These interviews were done telephonically during times that were convenient for the participants to share their views, and the interviews were digitally recorded. I asked a series of questions, made field notes and prompted where necessary. In-depth questioning was done until I felt satisfied that the information gathered answered the research questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). Enough time was allowed for the participants to share their knowledge, ideas, views and concerns. Using digital voice recorders ensured that all participants' comments were of importance and safeguarded the accuracy of the transcription of the data afterwards (Dohaney *et al.*, 2015:234).

According to McIntosh and Morse (2015:4), an interview schedule or interview guide refers to a list of questions or areas to be covered during semi-structured individual telephonic interviews. I composed this guide in advance of the interviews in a manner that allowed flexibility and variability in the questions and areas to be covered and the way to approach questioning and discussions. The interview guide was linked to the research questions and assisted and directed me to cover all areas likely to generate data, ensuring that the research questions were addressed and answered. "The interview guide underpins the interview process and therefore influences subsequent research stages" (Cridland *et al.*, 2015:80) (refer to Addendum 5 for the interview guide).

1.12.2 Phase 2: Analysis of relevant documents

The semi-structured individual telephonic interviews served as the primary source during data collection, while the document analysis was the secondary source. These documents not only gave me an additional objective perspective into the phenomenon but contributed to triangulation of data, which ensured a rigorous research process (refer to Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the document analysis that was conducted in this study).

1.13 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to Bryman and Bell (2015:13), data analysis is the stage where different elements are incorporated and analysed in the research. Babchuk (2019:2) recommends blending the steps in data analysis with the steps in research since the steps are interrelated. In addition, blending the steps ensures multiple levels of data analysis. As mentioned previously, qualitative data were collected through conducting semi-structured individual telephonic interviews using an interview guide. This allowed me to look at the data from different angles to identify key aspects that assisted in understanding and interpreting the data (Bengtsson, 2016:12; Walliman, 2017:102).

The semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were analysed by means of the six steps of thematic data analysis proposed by Braun, Clarke, Hayfield and Terry (2019:843). "Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3352). Data obtained from the digitally recorded and transcribed semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and field notes were transcribed and coded, and themes were derived from the identified categories (Andrew & Halcomb, 2009:41; Creswell & Poth, 2017:5; Silverman 2016:85; Vaismoradi, 2016:101) (refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion). Thereafter, relevant documents were analysed, and themes were

derived from the codes and categories identified. Data from the interviews and relevant documents were triangulated, which allowed me to gather important information that assisted in interpreting the data.

1.14 RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Rigour refers to various strategies used during qualitative research to prevent bias and enhance the reliability of the research findings (Hays *et al.*, 2016:173). In other words, as affirmed by Smith and McGannon (2018:3), rigour is the degree to which research methods are carefully and accurately conducted. Rigour is also called trustworthiness, and as agreed by Draeger *et al.* (2015:219), trustworthiness of results is the foundation of high-quality qualitative research. Trustworthiness can be increased by maintaining high levels of credibility and objectivity. For a qualitative research method to gain trustworthiness, the researcher must ensure that the study meets four criteria, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Elo *et al.*, 2014:2) (refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation).

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I adhered to various ethical aspects which confirm that the research abides by certain principles. The ethical considerations maintained during this research are elaborated on in Chapter 3. These are permission, informed consent, confidentiality, autonomy, justice and beneficence (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:1; Surmiak, 2018:19; Creswell & Poth, 2017:44; McKenna & Gray, 2018:147). Please refer to chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.

1.16 ADDRESSING POTENTIAL BIAS IN CONDUCTING THE STUDY

To evade potential bias, I conceptualised the research problem correctly to guarantee accurate interpretations and conclusions. This was done through an in-depth literature study (Hellevic, 2016:1971; Kallio *et al.*, 2016:2965). During data collection, intra-observer comparisons were applied to prevent observer bias (Hoeben *et al.*, 2018:221). Intrinsic bias did not play a role as data and method triangulation were part of the research process (Kallio *et al.*, 2016:2965). Since I conducted the research at the same school where I am also a teacher, I was keenly aware of the potential researcher bias and conflict that may taint the research process (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1411). To eliminate bias during data collection, I utilised specific strategies:

- I ensured that the potential participants were fully informed of the research aims, process and outputs prior to deciding on whether to participate in the study or not. This was done by means of a meeting which informed them verbally of what this research involved and what their participation included. They were also informed about how and why they had been selected to participate. All aspects of what was to occur and what might occur were disclosed to the participants so that they could comprehend the information and make a rational and mature judgement, since participants are autonomous agents and should have the right to choose whether or not to be part of research. Therefore, each teacher received an information letter to take home in order to consider participating in this research. Thereafter, the participants were presented with an informed consent document (Creswell & Poth, 2017:123). This document again explained what the research entailed and what exactly was required of them. Voluntary consent was obtained to provide justification for the purpose of the research, to ensure adequate protection from harm for participants, and to acknowledge the participants' right to withdraw from the research of their own will (Surmiak, 2018:19).
- Participants were protected from harm by means of anonymity since no names were attached to the participants' responses, and only the co-coder and I had access to the collected data from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015:1122). With regard to the discussions, participants' names were not used during transcriptions. They were referred to as 'Respondent 1', 'Respondent 2', and so on.
- Confidentiality of data obtained was pledged to the participants through stating that no information was to be shared with anyone who was not involved in the research without the explicit permission of the participants concerned. Data collected from individual teachers were not shared with the school management team (SMT) or any other party besides the research supervisor, if necessary (Chowdhury, 2015:152; Petrova *et al.*, 2016:4). Participants were assured that the study was independent of the school's functioning and was not used as an evaluation tool of participants' performance as teachers.
- Confidential and secure data storage was guaranteed. To abide by this principle, I kept all received data in a safe place to which only I had access. The security of computerised data was confirmed by means of a personal password; therefore, the data were protected from unauthorised access and information was used only for the purposes for which it had been collected.
- I submitted the transcripts and analysis of data to each participant in order to validate the accuracy of the findings, which counted towards member checking (Refer to

chapter 3.8.5) (Javadi & Zarea, 2016:37). Through this process, I shared “analytical thoughts” that also ensured that misinterpretations were recognised by participants and corrected (Varpio *et al.*, 2017:49).

- I strived to put my own assumptions aside to ensure that the true experiences of participants were reflected during data collection and analysis. I ensured that I was honest and vigilant about my own perspective and pre-existing thoughts, beliefs and experiences, and I set them aside through the self-reflective process of bracketing. I dealt with my own potential bias and conflict of interest through applying the following principles:
    - Bracketing was demonstrated in data collection and analysis through trustworthiness. This required me to made conscious efforts to distance my own knowledge, values and experience to remain impartial in the description of the phenomenon (Gregory, 2019:3). It was thus important for me to refrain from preconceived beliefs and to be focused on the participants’ experiences. I bracketed my own preconceived ideas and experiences to better understand the participants’ experiences.
    - I wrote memos and observational comments throughout the data collection and analysis process as a means of examining and reflecting upon my own engagement with the data (Newcomer *et al.*, 2015:493).
    - I also made use of a reflexive journal to enhance my ability to sustain a reflexive stance (Percy *et al.*, 2015:76; Smith, 2018:3). Reflexivity supported objectivity since it helped me to step outside the situation to gain a more objective standpoint. Reflexivity was achieved by not being overly involved and staying aware of my own perceptions and background. Reflexive notes and self-reflexivity were applied through capturing my own thoughts and feelings regarding observations.
    - Feelings and thoughts were discussed with the supervisor as a measure to deal with my own potential bias and conflict of interest.
    - During data collection, I kept the engagement with participants conversational by continuing to vary the wording of questions and ensure valuable collection of information. Questions were asked that enquired about the implication of a participant’s thoughts and actions without summarising the participant’s action into my own words. I also attempted to ask quality questions at the right time and remained aware of and focused on sources of bias throughout the data collection process. Furthermore, I maintained a neutral stance, limiting positive participant feedback or reinforcement of any answers. Throughout the data

collection process, I did not judge and weight responses or dismiss any evidence.

1.17 CHAPTER DIVISION

- Chapter 1: Introduction: This chapter provides a general outline of this research, including an introduction, background and justification for the research. The chapter also contains the research problem, research questions, purpose of the research, definitions of concepts, rigour, ethical considerations and how to evade bias.
- Chapter 2: Literature study: This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework for the research by providing literature about relevant aspects related to inclusive education practices and the implementation of mainstream curricula in special schools.
- Chapter 3: Research methodology and data collection: This chapter describes the research process in depth, including the research design and the methodology followed in the research. Data collection and analysis are clarified. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness are described.
- Chapter 4: Research results: In this chapter, the study's results are presented.
- Chapter 5: Discussion of findings: This chapter entails a discussion on the findings.
- Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations: In this chapter, I summarise the results of the research and present conclusions drawn from the research. Limitations and recommendations for additional research are also discussed.

1.18 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 introduced the background and outline of the research. It provided a brief description of the aim, research problem, objectives and justification for the study in a specific context. The methods used to execute the research were presented through a description and explanation of the research design and setting, rigour, ethical considerations and bias.

Chapter 2 provides the reader with the theoretical foundation and presents the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Literature on relevant key concepts and principles of inclusive education are discussed.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an orientation to the study. This chapter provides the theoretical underpinning of the study, with a focus on the implementation of the mainstream school curriculum in special schools. I present a brief overview of inclusive education (the framework within which public [both mainstream and special] education in South Africa is offered), current international and national literature related to curricula offered in special schools, the benefits of offering mainstream curricula at special schools and the ongoing challenges with regard to curriculum offerings at special schools. In the following section, I provide an overview of inclusive education as the theoretical framework guiding this study.

2.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS THE STUDY'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Introduction to inclusive education

Historically, special schools worldwide were separated from ordinary schools (Graham *et al.*, 2016:35). However, over time, many countries across the world have attempted to provide unitary education systems in their attempts to be inclusive (Pijl, 2016:556). Having a clear understanding of the theory of inclusive education offered me a strong base towards the research approach, and inclusive education therefore became the theoretical framework within which this study is framed. The theoretical framework can be described as the theory that supported my research. To ground this study in the established idea of inclusive education as theoretical framework, I elaborate on specific key concepts and important elements in this chapter.

It became clear through the literature that the philosophy of inclusive education is based on equal opportunities where all learners can reach their full potential if they are offered support through effective teaching methodologies, sufficient resources and an enabling environment (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020:35). Furthermore, the philosophy of inclusion "seeks to achieve education for all by restructuring schools as institutions that include everybody, support learning and respond to individual needs" (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015:289). It is a process that involves changes and modifications to structures and strategies, constantly finding better ways to respond to diversity and to positively identify and remove barriers through utilising a variety

of sources. To be able to achieve this goal, a cultural change with respect for diversity is necessary. This should be constructed through commitment, functional systems, partnerships with parents and communities, and constant monitoring of progress, embedded in a choice of models and theories to assist with the process and enhance quality education.

Taking into consideration the core concepts and elements of inclusive education, it became clear that inclusive education, as a pedagogical and philosophical approach to high quality learning, benefits and accommodates the diverse learning of all learners to assist them in reaching their full potential (Florian & Beaton, 2018:870), rather than being a marginal issue about how some learners can be integrated in mainstream education. It acknowledges diversity as an opportunity for learning, not only for all learners who might be at risk, but also for teachers, and is considered as the most efficient way of educating learners with disabilities.

Westwood (2018:6) is of the opinion that a fully inclusive education system should be able to adapt in order to create the necessary changes to enhance optimal learning. It is further said that learners see themselves reflected in their curriculum and physical surroundings in which diversity is honoured (Heath *et al.*, 2017:11). The primary goal of an adaptive education system should thus be to identify learners' disabilities, interests and backgrounds and to adapt curricula, policies, systems and structures in order to accommodate these disabilities (DoE, 2001). It requires commitment and investment from education ministries. This changing nature towards education and the approach to accommodate inclusive education globally has evolved rapidly during the past decades, as elaborated on in the discussions to follow.

2.2.2 International steps towards inclusive education

2.2.2.1 Brief history, legislation and important events that shaped inclusive education

Inclusive education has been a focal point since 1948, when inclusive practices were supported by the United Nations. Since then, a number of policies and legislation have been developed in order to promote inclusive education and reflect the rights to education for all (Florian *et al*., 2016:4). In 1954, in the United States of America, Brown vs Board of Education imposed that separate education with regard to race and disability should be put to an end (Knoester & Au, 2017:2). Between the period of 1970 and 1990, international legislation started to evolve to promote inclusive education for all, including learners with disabilities (Schwab *et al.*, 2015:2). Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975), today known as the Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997), and the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stipulated that all learners, regardless of race or disability, have the basic right to quality education.

In 1990, *Education for All* (UNESCO, 1990) stipulated that education is a basic human right and therefore initiated an international directive for placing learners with barriers to learning, depending on the degree of disability, in either ordinary or special schools (Buchner & Proyer, 2019:86; Daniel, 2019:131; Majid & Fuada, 2020:250). After the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in 1994, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994:11) declared that education for all learners, regardless of disability, is essential. Magnússon (2019:667) and Daniel (2019:132) are of the opinion that the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) resulted in many countries considering policy reforms and changing current education systems in order to incorporate and implement inclusive practices. This implied that all children should have access to, opportunities for and participation in quality education (Ainscow *et al.*, 2019:674; De Vroey *et al.*, 2015:110; Maciver *et al.*, 2018:1708; Tiwari *et al.*,2015:129).

Since 1994, inclusive education has been evolving in transforming education systems worldwide to accommodate every learner, regardless of disability. Some countries have made the necessary changes to meet the needs of all individuals to cope and learn in an ordinary school following a mainstream curriculum (Haug, 2017:214; Hornby, 2015:242). However, Tiwari *et al.* (2015:129) are of the opinion that many countries have not yet shifted to an education system where inclusive practices are incorporated in classrooms.

2.2.2.2 The move from the medical model to the social model

Buchner and Proyer (2020:86) are of the opinion that in the 1990s (and before), learners were diagnosed based on the medical model of disabilities. The medical model was utilised to identify each learner's barriers to learning (Kirby, 2017:176). According to Buchner and Proyer (2020:86), the medical model suggests that a learner's disability is situated "from within" the learner, and the learner should therefore be placed in a special educational environment (McKinney & Swartz, 2016:311).

As part of a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive model of education, learners are now evaluated according to the social model. However, it should be noted that some countries, including South Africa, still somewhat depend on the medical model when identifying specific disabilities. Within the South African context, Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al*. (2015:2) state that after EWP6 (DoE, 2001) was introduced in 2001, it was pointed out that the medical model failed to explain the extent to which barriers to learning were being experienced. McKinney

and Swartz (2016:311) support the above by stating that in light of this, identification of barriers to learning needed to move from a medical model to the social model. The social model emphasises that disabilities do not exist only from within the learner, as set out by the medical model, but that several ecological factors, such as family and the environment, play a role in identifying and addressing these barriers (Adams & Mabusela, 2015:81; Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.*, 2015:2; Hoadley, 2015:733; McKinney & Swartz, 2016:311; Nel & Grosser, 2016:80). Furthermore, Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al*. (2015:4) are of the opinion that the social model supports participation for all learners, including those with barriers to learning, within the classroom context. According to Degener (2016:2), the social model was developed to replace the medical model of disability. Degener (2016:2) furthermore states that the social model is seen as a social construct, and that barriers do not derive from within individuals, but rather from environmental factors.

In South Africa, inclusive education has been the cornerstone of equal educational opportunities. In light of this, human rights have formed part of South Africa's transformation towards education for all. According to Degener (2016:2), the human rights model was derived after the social model and is directly linked to that model. The human rights model forms part of a shift towards promoting education that meets individual needs rather than an education system that seeks to exclude learners due to disability. Therefore, inclusion in education became a fundamental human right – a national commitment to equal education opportunities for all (Nanjwan et al., 2019:722).

2.2.3 Principles of inclusive education

Inclusive education is characterised by and associated with different principles (DoE, 2001; Haug, 2017:210; Nel & Engelbrecht, 2015:2), which are grounded in the values of full participation of all learners. Adhering to these principles will enrich the experience for all learners in any classroom setting and entails the provision of different experiences, which foster the development of support and assessment to meet their specific, different needs. These principles, which are discussed below, are as follows: full participation; education as a basic human right; equality in education; embracing diversity in classrooms; social justice; and support through adequate resources.

2.2.3.1 Full participation

Through the principle of full participation of all learners, opportunities to holistically develop learners are created. This entails a safe classroom atmosphere that promotes an individualised approach towards education where different learning styles are applied, supported and valued. All learners are educated in an environment that promotes social, cultural and physical activities to develop all skills in accordance with the curriculum requirements. This also entails that adequate support is provided by means of flexible curriculum and assessment delivery (Tang *et al.*, 2018:353). In special schools, EWP6 (DoE, 2001) elaborates that certain methods (such as flexible curriculum and assessment delivery) are put in place, making it more possible to accommodate and support a full range of learning needs.

2.2.3.2 Education as a basic human right

Having the basic right to quality education implies that learners should have an environment created that is free of abuse and neglect and that fosters a sense of well-being while promoting experiential learning. This entails creating a stimulating atmosphere where learners can explore and develop their individuality and personal strengths (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2016:2). Education as a basic human right implies that the specific needs of all learners are at the centre of curriculum planning and delivery. This constitutes that all learners are given the opportunity to fulfil their potential by considering individual requirements and needs. A fully inclusive education system, where all learners with barriers to learning in special schools are accepted and given the necessary support to reach their full potential, is at the heart of basic human rights (EWP6, 2001).

2.2.3.3 Equality in education

Inclusive education fosters the ideal that all learners have an equal opportunity and a basic human right to receive the education of their choice. Within equality of education, classrooms should promote this ideal in order to enhance a positive teaching and learning environment, as well as to encourage the trust, respect, collaboration and engagement of all. Learners with barriers to learning are included in the practices of an inclusive education system through adequate encouragement and support (Chen, 2017:238).

Khoaeane and Naong (2015:289) and Florian *et al.* (2016:249) agree that the principles of inclusion, as indicated above, aim to accomplish “education for all” by supporting learning and

addressing all individual needs. Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.* (2015:2) and Hall and Theron (2016:1) are also of the opinion that education should be adapted towards accommodating each individual disability and that that these principles should become part of the education system and classroom practices to promote inclusive education. The process of adapting education in this manner should consider an all-inclusive education system, knowledge construction and interaction with learners with disabilities. Within a special school environment, equality in education should reinforce that learners' diverse disabilities should be met to ensure that they progress with their peers.

2.2.3.4 Embracing diversity in classrooms

Diversity of all learners must be embraced since learners are unique in their own way. Diversity encompasses learners with different abilities, learning styles, interests and barriers to learning, as well as learners from different ethnic, racial, socio-economic, cultural, religious and language groups (Celik, 2019:31). Diversity in the classroom is described as utilising different teaching and learning approaches to ensure that all learners' needs are met equally.

Furthermore, through diversity, communities are enriched and strengthened. This implies that, because all learners form part of a society, as previously mentioned, learners with disabilities are given the opportunity to flourish and succeed within an educational environment. This can be achieved through promoting the health and welfare of all learners through adapting education and teaching learners how to be citizens who form part of a community (Samuels, 2018:25). Diversity within the community can be fulfilled through learners in special schools being accepted as part of their society (Celik, 2019:31).

2.2.3.5 Social justice

Inclusive education links "a rights-based approach to education that seeks social justice by resisting exclusion within and from school communities and promoting the access, participation, and achievement of all learners" (Walton, 2018:33). The principle of social justice promotes learner engagement, since social justice implies learners have equal rights and deserve equal opportunities. Social justice is linked to the notion that segregation with regard to educational equality is unacceptable (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018:1). This indicates that all learners have a voice. Social justice should form part of creating a healthy environment where learning is successfully supported and promoted (DBE, 2017; DoE, 2001; Nanjwan *et al.*, 2019:723). Therefore, South Africa should strive towards creating a framework within which social justice is embraced in all schools, including special schools.

2.2.3.6 Support through adequate resources

Within an inclusive education system, learners with barriers to learning should be educated and supported through the use of appropriate and necessary resources. Resources include physical resources, such as assistive devices, the correct infrastructure and schools; social resources, where learners have the opportunity to be educated alongside their peers; and educational resources, which include teaching and learning materials and the different role-players necessary for effective support during teaching and learning (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2016:3). According to EWP6 (DoE, 2001) within a special school environment, having adequate resources entails all means, as mentioned above, as well as individual interventions to ensure the support necessary for learners to progress.

2.3 TEACHING STRATEGIES TO MAKE CLASSROOMS MORE INCLUSIVE

A variety of teaching approaches and strategies create the opportunity for teachers to optimally support learners with barriers to learning and to have a more inclusive and diverse means to teaching and learning (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020:10; Wahl, 2017:6). Wahl (2017:6) is also of opinion that different teaching approaches and strategies play a significant role in adapting mainstream curricula and aids in addressing barriers to learning due to diversity within the classroom setting. Dicke, Elling, Schmeck and Leutner (2015:8) contend that teachers who have integrated teaching approaches and strategies are more effective in the teaching and learning experience. However, Habók and Nagy (2016:8) mention that, although teachers practice different teaching approaches and strategies to facilitate a more inclusive classroom environment, teachers still struggle to adapt the prescribed learning programmes and curriculum for learners with barriers to learning because they feel that they are not adequately trained to support learning disabilities optimally (Ngcezulla, 2018:42).

Different teaching approaches and teaching strategies will now be elaborated on:

Inclusive classroom practice ought to have curriculum differentiation at the core of the planning and delivery of the curriculum. For special schools, this entails the process of adapting the curriculum according to the different needs and levels of readiness of individual learners in the classroom. This provides teachers in special schools with the opportunity to provide purposeful learning experiences for all learners in her class. As part of an inclusive environment where learners with barriers to learning are taught using the mainstream curriculum, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:7) state that curriculum differentiation is key to providing optimal support to these learners. According to Taylor (2017:55) “differentiation is a framework

or philosophy to enable students of all levels to attain their full potential". Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:7) elaborate that different teaching approaches and strategies are needed to provide adequate differentiation to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Differentiation, as stated by Ngcezulla (2018:7), can be generally defined as utilising different teaching strategies to have a more hands-on approach and to include all learners, regardless of disability, within the teaching and learning process. Differentiation can also be utilised in terms of cognitive levels. This implies that lessons should be structured to serve different learning styles and consider learners' individual cognitive levels. According to Ellis, Bianchi, Griskevicius and Frankenhuis (2017:562), teachers educating learners with barriers are to construct lessons in such a way that it motivates learning but also challenges learners' cognitive demands. Lessons should enable learners to engage in the learning content without feeling overwhelmed or anxious and should include a variety of strategies to make learning fun. It should also encourage learners to set their own standards, utilise different resources to reach learning outcomes, take their time during informal learning and to utilise communication skills to solve problems. In addition, the pace of teaching learning content should be adjusted, and classroom activities and assessment should take the different disabilities in the classroom into account.

Within a special school environment, a learner-centred approach is often the essence of teaching as it focuses on developing learners' individual abilities. A learner-centred approach is an important learning approach that is favoured in inclusive education classroom practice. A learner-centred approach is described by Wahl (2017:6) as learners being "active participants" within their own learning experience, where they bring prior knowledge, skills and ideas to the classroom. Wahl (2017:6) is of opinion that in order to promote effective and meaningful learning, a learner-centred approach should be adopted. Dębiec (2017:2) is of the opinion that a learner-centred approach to teaching enhances curiosity and motivation to learn within individuals and encourages all learners to be active participants of their own learning. This approach also views learners as being responsible for their own learning and therefore should facilitate various learning strategies to ensure learning outcomes are met.

The universal design for learning is another approach to teaching and learning that gives all students equal opportunity to succeed. This approach can be generally defined as being an inclusive teaching pedagogy focusing on eradicating barriers to learning within classrooms as much as possible (Waitoller & King, 2016:366). As defined by Al-Azawei, Serenelli and Lundqvist, (2016:40), the universal design for learning attempts to remove barriers within the learning environment rather than the barrier within the learner. According to Boothe, Lohmann, Donnell and Hall (2018:2), the universal design for learning has three main principles, namely engagement, representation, and action and expression. Engagement refers to measures

taken by the teacher by adapting activities to meet the needs of all learning to ensure full participation within the classroom setting. Representation is described as how learners gain information. This entails that different instructional strategies are utilised during activities to ensure that all learners obtain and understand the learning content optimally. Lastly, action and expression are described as how learners apply and demonstrate their understanding of learning content. With regard to these principles, Waitoller and King (2016:367) mention that curricula should be delivered in an adapted and supportive manner and that the curriculum and its content should transform in such a way that teachers incorporate different teaching strategies on a daily basis to improve learning to meet the needs of learners in the classroom. An example of using the universal design for learning within an inclusive education classroom is where learners create a poster with current learning content and present it to the class. Waitoller and King (2016:367) contend the universal design for learning emphasises supporting all learners to such an extent that curriculum content and learning outcomes develop and foster a flexible teaching and learning environment that encourages individuality.

Collaboration is also an important consideration in an inclusive education classroom. To ensure collaboration within a special school environment, all staff have to work together to meet each individual child's needs holistically. According to Asari (2017:185), the collaborative teaching approach indicates collaboration between different role-players. Role-players include schools, parents, colleagues as well as the learners. This creates the opportunity to identify the specific barriers to learning and addressing them by means of support from these role-players. In addition, collaborative teaching and learning also includes group work that develops communication, creating a productive teaching and learning environment where full participation of all learners is supported within an inclusive classroom. As part of affirming and embracing diversity, teachers, schools and other role-players should acknowledge, accommodate and support individual abilities and celebrate learners' achievements through developing educational opportunities (DoE, 2001). Parental involvement, as part of the role-players pertaining to collaborative teaching, is viewed as being vital in the learning process of learners with barriers to learning. Parents should support their child's individual barriers to learning and attempt to address their child's specific needs. They should also be made aware that they are to take responsibility with regard to assisting in the education programme to ensure optimal learning (Ngcezulla, 2018:43).

Another approach that may enhance learning in inclusive education classrooms is the multimodal and multisensory teaching approach. In special schools, a multimodal and multisensory approach is utilised to enhance learners' memory and their ability to learn. According to Cruz, Parisi, Twiefel and Wermter (2016:260), a multimodal approach utilises

visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modalities to learning, which promotes memory and learners' potential to learn efficiently. Within utilising a multimodal approach, multisensory techniques are comprised into activities and assessments. Incorporating visual, auditory and kinaesthetic senses provide all learners with the opportunity to construct meaning within learning content since utilising multiple senses during activities is more likely to be stored in long-term memory. As learners with disabilities struggle to fully comprehend all aspects of learning, the use of these approaches allows for integration with prior knowledge and enables learners to meet learning outcomes. When learners with barriers to learning struggle to process one strategy, such as an auditory strategy, visual or kinaesthetic strategies can be utilised during the teaching and learning process. Applying these strategies keeps learners engaged during classroom activities. Strategies encouraged by the multimodal and multisensory approach are integrating visual, auditory and kinaesthetic teaching styles within the classroom setting. Examples of integrating different teaching styles are utilising strategies such as having group discussions, making lists to order learners' thoughts, demonstrating and participating in experiments, using images and videos during teaching, having plays and playing board and memory games, and using music within lessons. (Ngcezulla, 2018:5). These strategies make differentiation and accommodation possible within an inclusive classroom environment.

Assessment is an important aspect of teaching and learning and requires thorough deliberation and preparation to enhance learning in inclusive education classrooms. Assessment at special schools needs to be carefully considered, appropriate, fair and differentiated, given the extent of the learning barriers that learners at special schools experience. Assessment is best described by Ngcezulla (2018:42) as "assessment of learning" and "assessment for learning". Assessment of learning refers to summative assessment where learners are evaluated at the end of the term to see if they have achieved the prescribed learning outcomes. Assessment for learning is referred to as formative assessment and can be is viewed as teaching that encourages and assists learning throughout the term by means of constructive feedback and support. Assessment should aid in adapting curricula content, differentiating teaching strategies, providing the opportunity to diagnose barriers to learning, as well as providing parents with constructive feedback regarding learners' progress. In an inclusive education environment, this includes concessions where tasks are adapted in order to provide learners with barriers the opportunity to participate fully.

Concessions are an integral part of assessment in inclusive education classrooms. A concession is granted for individual learners based on the specific needs and circumstances. This entails additional time or any additional alternative or adapted method of examination in

order to be able to fulfil the assessment requirements for a particular grade. Concessions involve aspects such as: additional time during tasks, amanuensis where a teacher reads or writes for the individual experiencing certain barriers to learning such as dyslexia, prompting where the teacher refocuses the learner constantly during tasks, braille or enlarged print to give learners with specific barriers the opportunity to complete tasks, as well as specialised resources to assist learners with physical barriers during the assessment (Ngcezulla, 2018:42). Within an inclusive education classroom, the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2014) implemented the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy to address individual barriers to learning (DBE, 2014). Within this policy, a form can be completed pertaining to individual barriers to learning. This form is known as an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and is completed by various role-players (teachers, educators, specialists). It is reviewed every six months and ensures that the teacher is aware of a learner's individual needs and how best to address said needs (Ngcezulla, 2018:42).

Cooperative group teaching may also enhance learning in inclusive education classrooms. This strategy can be utilised in special schools to promote active learning for students with different (dis)abilities. When students work together, they learn together to enhance academic progress whilst enhancing acceptance of all. This strategy is referred to as learners working in small groups in order to promote effective learning. This strategy improves learners' academic and emotional performance, promotes participation and ensures that learners with different abilities support and assist each other during the learning process (Ngcezulla, 2018:42). According to Wu and Liu (2020:51), teachers should support, assist and encourage learners within different learning activities. Teachers should motivate learners to participate in solving problems within the group, however, within cooperative group teaching, independence is vital to participation. Since each learner reaching the desired outcome is of importance, independent thinking should be fostered in classroom activities. As stated by Wu and Liu (2020:51), cooperative group teaching can be defined as "cultivating students' ability of critical thinking, communication and coordination through independent thinking in class teaching and communication and cooperation among group members". Within cooperative group teaching, Abramczyk and Jurkowski (2020:2) are of opinion that principles exist. These principles are heterogeneous grouping, teaching collaborative skills, group autonomy, peer interactions, equal participation, individual accountability, positive interdependence and cooperation as a value. Heterogeneous grouping refers to forming groups with learners that are diverse in culture, academic performance and abilities. Teaching collaborative skills involves giving learners the time to develop certain skills such as problem solving, reasoning and communication. Group autonomy refers to assisting learners to depend on each other, rather than on the teacher during tasks. Peer interactions include the use of group-guided activities

that develop intricate thinking skills. Equal participation requires all learners to participate equally within the activity. Individual accountability refers to equal opportunities to provide information and knowledge during tasks while cooperation as a value refers to motivating independence within group work whilst still relying on others to complete activities (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020:7; Tirta, Prabowo & Kuntjoro, 2018:1465).

Peer tutoring may also be useful in inclusive education settings. Within a special school environment, this strategy is useful as it provides all learners with the opportunity to help and support each other to reinforce academic content. This approach entails that the teachers utilise one student, “the tutor”, to assist and teach specific learning content to another learner, “the tutee”. This strategy is effective since it can be used in all learning areas and promotes communication and social skills (Ngcezulla, 2018:80). Moliner and Alegre, (2020:2) are of the opinion that in some cases, peer tutoring has caused learners to achieve higher results as is fosters an atmosphere of inclusion and participation within the classroom. This strategy has also been effective in addressing learning barriers as learners feel more comfortable around each other and therefore ask certain questions pertaining to the curriculum content that leads to effectively achieving learning outcomes (Moliner & Alegre, 2020:2). However, even though this strategy is effective, learners’ age, cognitive levels and relationships should be considered before this strategy is implemented within classrooms.

Behavioural barriers to learning are a real concern within special school environments. Schoolwide positive behaviour support is a strategy that is utilised when dealing with behavioural barriers to learning. It aids in preventing and reducing behaviour challenges, introducing consequences for problem behaviour, as well as strategies and skills to be adapted to best address these types of behaviour (Borgen, Kirkebøen, Ogden, Raaum & Sørlie, 2020:6). As stated by Borgen *et al.* (2020:6), schoolwide positive behaviour support attempts to identify and remove behavioural barriers within classrooms and schools. Strategies pertaining to this approach are supporting learners and staff through recognising and addressing behavioural problems as well as training teachers regarding behavioural barriers. According to Luthuli (2016:3), schoolwide positive behaviour can be reinforced through teachers demonstrating the preferred behaviour for learners. In this regard, learners are able to observe the expected behaviour and respond appropriately.

Indoor environmental quality entails the provision of a physical environment that enables learning. Indoor environmental quality ensures that the ideal environment is developed in which teaching and learning are encouraged. The idea behind this strategy is that all elements

that influence the physical environment, such as lighting and furniture, suit individual needs (Schweiker, Ampatzi & Andargie *et al*., 2020:3)

Teachers in special schools know how important it is to plan teaching activities that match each learner's individual developmental needs. Learners in special schools have different disabilities and therefore teachers need to make special accommodations or modifications in the classroom climate to ensure optimal participation. Classroom climate is crucial in promoting inclusivity in classrooms. This strategy supports a positive and encouraging classroom environment where social and emotional aspects of teaching and learning are developed to meet individual needs (Whitley, 2020:9). A positive classroom climate can be achieved by reinforcing classroom rules and standards, strengthening peer relationships, addressing individual needs and celebrating individual and group achievements (Whitley, 2020:9). Within a positive classroom climate, social skills training is a strategy utilised that aids in assisting learners to interact and participate effectively and constructively. This strategy refers to effective communication with peers, active listening to teacher instructions, classroom management where students are motivated to stay focused on tasks, and conflict resolution where positive reinforcement is supported within an inclusive classroom. It is expected of the teacher to teach learners with barriers to learning to interact successfully with other learners as well as to respond and react to certain social cues in an appropriate manner (Tanaka, Negoro, Iwasaka & Nakamura, 2017:2).

Self-regulated learning is another inclusive education strategy. In special school classrooms, learners with barriers to learning often struggle to master certain skills. Self-regulated learning is an important skill to nurture in learners attending special schools so that they develop a level of independence and responsibility for their own learning. Self-regulated learning aids learners in achieving their individual learning goals through identifying their own goals and regulating their learning environment. Self-regulated learning supports the process of learning through enabling learners to make goal-orientated decisions in order to achieve the respective learning outcomes. In order to meet this strategy, self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-determined learning should be incorporated (Hessels-Schlatter, Hessels, Godin & Spillmann-Rojas, 2017:111). In addition, to achieve self-regulated learning, mnemonics is a strategy best defined as teachers assisting learners to recall information (Mocko, Lesser, Wagler & Francis, 2017:2). Memory strategies are ways to promote remembering the learning content and is utilised by means of images or verbal cues (Mocko, Lesser, Wagler & Francis, 2017:2). Activities, such as using the first letters in a list of items to name an object, create the opportunity to improve and develop memory skills. It is mentioned by Jangid, Swadia and Sharma (2017:23) that teachers should include and assist learners with different teaching

strategies that promote memory. Since learners with disabilities struggle more with recollection of information, teachers are to especially focus on incorporating this teaching strategy by means of patterns and associations.

Direct instruction is a strategy used in all classrooms, including those in special schools. This strategy is a teacher-centred strategy that focuses on teaching from a lesson plan and incorporating continuous assessment. This strategy also implies the use of materials and demonstrations to effectively teach a set of specific skills (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020:188). Within an inclusive education classroom, direct instruction can be used to teach learners with disabilities specific skills and knowledge. As stated by Eratay (2020:442), direct instruction typically refers to teachers demonstrating certain content and processes before it is expected of learners to imitate and illustrate the instruction.

Review and practice as another teaching strategy, directs teachers to use various opportunities within different contexts to teach the same skills and knowledge. Within a special classroom environment, this strategy enables learners with barriers to learning to recall this information, since this strategy develops these skills in short- and long-term memory (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020:195).

Assistive technology is a strategy that is particularly relevant to special schools. Assistive technology relates to all technological devices and equipment utilised to support and improve the functional abilities on learners with disabilities. This strategy has the potential to greatly improve learner access to the curriculum. This strategy refers to the use of assistive devices, services and equipment to assist learners with barriers to learning. Assistive technology is utilised to engage learners with disabilities in everyday classroom activities. As inclusive education forms the basis of “education for all”, all learners, regardless of their disability, have the basic right to full participation within the classroom setting. Assistive devices aid in adapting learning content, skills and assessment for all to engage optimally (Ngcezulla, 2018:15; Visser, Nel & De Klerk *et al.,* 2020:12). As part of assistive technology, augmentative and alternative communication can be utilised to ensure optimal learning. It is stated that learners with various disabilities often struggle to convey their thoughts and feelings through verbal instruction. Therefore, the two strategies utilised to support and assist these learners in enabling them to communicate effectively are augmentative communication and alternative communication. Augmentative communication implies that the communication, verbal or written, of the learners with disabilities, is replaced by technological assistive devices such as a voice output aid. Alternative communication is referred to as utilising different techniques,

such as sign language, to support spoken communication and provide an additional means of communication (Ngcezulla, 2018:6).

Scaffolding of learning is important in any learning context. Scaffolding in special schools is used by teachers where new content is gradually introduced that builds on prior knowledge until the learners fully understands the new content. According to Anggadewi (2017:214), “scaffolding provides a gradual amount of assistance to the students and then reduces aid and provides opportunities for students to take on greater responsibilities”. Therefore, scaffolding can generally be defined as building skills and comprehension of content in learners with barriers to learning, until mastering a specific skill or meeting specific outcomes. In an inclusive education classroom, teachers assist learners with barriers to learning to such an extent that they gradually reduce the amount of assistance until learners are able to learn independently (Anggadewi, 2017:214). This enables teachers to provide learners with barriers the opportunity to develop positive discipline towards learning, encouraging self-discipline and independence.

2.4 NATIONAL STEPS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

After the 1994 South African election, inclusive education was supported by several policies (Adams & Mabusela, 2015:81). These polices were the White Paper on Education and Training in South Africa (DoE, 1995), the South African Schools Act (1996), the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (DoE, 1997), the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training ([NCSNET] DoE, 1997) and the National Committee on Education Support Services ([NCESS] DoE, 1997). Lastly, EWP6 was introduced in 2001 (DoE, 2001). These policies were identified as aiding in promoting inclusive education for all learners with different abilities and encouraging a more “Education for All” approach towards education (UNESCO, 1990).

According to Heeralal and Jama (2014:1500) and Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al*. (2015:2), policies such as EWP6 (DoE, 2001) were introduced and implemented for the purpose of adding value to educational and personal differences, supporting participation in learning, creating equal opportunities for all learners, and most importantly, identifying barriers to learning (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.*, 2015:1; Hoadley, 2015:734; Nel & Grosser, 2016:80; Santos & Lima-Rodrigues, 2016:506). EWP6 (DoE, 2001) provides the framework for inclusive education and how to address inclusivity (Penney *et al.*, 2018:1064).

Policy transformation aided in altering the education system in South Africa. The Department of Education compiled the SIAS policy (DoE, 2005). This policy is a nationally accepted tool used to optimally assess the degree to which an individual needs support (DoE, 2005:14). The policy enables learners to be optimally screened and assessed on various levels (diagnostic and curriculum based). The ultimate goal of these assessments should be to support the whole teaching and learning process, taking into consideration the extent of the individual's disability (DoE, 2005; Nel & Grosser, 2016:87). Through the assessment of learners, it is possible to decide on the most suitable supportive, individualised educational environment.

As part of an inclusive approach to learning and optimally supporting learners with disabilities, EWP6 (DoE, 2001) further suggested the establishment of ordinary schools that function as full-service schools, working together with special schools as resource centres (discussed later in the chapter) in order to accommodate learners with barriers to learning (Florian and Beaton, 2018:878; Nel & Hugo, 2013:4). Depending on the individual level of support required, learners are currently being placed in ordinary schools, full-service schools, special schools or special schools as resource centres as stated in EWP6 (DoE, 2001). However, Mittler *et al.* (2019:10) are of the opinion that learners with disabilities should rather be placed in special schools, with specialised curricula, where education can be provided to equip them with the necessary skills to lead a normal life in society.

Furthermore, Nel and Engelbrecht (2015:2) are of the opinion that inclusion has been a difficult task, even in special schools, since the implementation of EWP6 and inclusive practices have been "questionable". EWP6 (DoE, 2001) therefore requires a new approach to identifying barriers to learning, since various challenges, including the lack of clarity in this policy, contribute to EWP6 not being implemented efficiently (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.*, 2015:4). As stated by Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit *et al.* (2015:522), "the advent of democracy and the development of idealistic policies were not in itself a sufficient condition for the elimination of historical and structural inequalities in education with as recurring theme the dissonance between the government's socio-political imperative for change and existing economic realities". Therefore, to fully understand the South African contextual development towards the philosophy and implementation of inclusive education, and before discussing the challenges of implementing inclusive education in South Africa, it is important to first provide a brief discussion on the historical events leading towards the development of further policies.

2.5 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.5.1 Historical overview

In 1948, the Afrikaner National Party formalised racial discrimination under apartheid, linking it to different race groups, namely, White, Black, Coloured and Indian (Population Registration Act, 1950, as cited by Russell *et al.*, 2019:3). During this era, education in South Africa was based on the rules and regulations set out by the apartheid regime, which implied separate curricula for separate racial groups. This escalated into a "oppressed" school sector which seemed to be a race-based education system, characterised as discriminating and exclusive. (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015:204; Soudien, 2016:573). In addition, learners with disabilities did not receive the education to which they were entitled. "Provisions made for children with disabilities were clearly both inefficient and inequitable" (DoE, 2001). McKinney and Swartz (2016:310) also opine that, due to apartheid policies and additional challenges, only 20% of learners with disabilities were able to go to a special school.

After the UNESCO conference in 1994, the NCSNET (DoE, 1996) and the NCESS (DoE, 1996) initiated a research programme into the field of special education. The NCSNET and NCESS recognised the need for the apartheid-based, fragmented South African education systems to unite in order to meet the individual needs of every individual. In 1997, a combined report of the NCSNET and NCESS (DoE, 1996) was published that outlined the underpinning issues regarding the education of learners who experience barriers to learning (Magnússon, 2019:667; Nel & Hugo, 2013:21). In line with the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), IDEA (1997) furthermore stipulated that educational systems and school policies be revised and developed in order to support an inclusive environment that promotes and provides quality education to all learners, regardless of disability (Rogers & Johnson, 2018:1).

Prior to 1994, development of all legislative policies was "government-led and the majority of the people of South Africa played no role in the process" (Pandor, 2018:8). However, since then, South Africa has strived for an education system that promotes inclusivity. After the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, one of the main transformation issues was to right post-apartheid educational inequalities (Ogunniyi & Mashayikwa, 2015:72). White schools were well equipped and resourced, while black schools had underqualified teachers and were poorly staffed, underfunded and under resourced (McKeever, 2017:120). To support this, Molapo and Pillay (2018:1) state that part of this education transformation was to undo apartheid history and change the current curriculum to meet the needs of all South African

learners. Hoadley (2015:733) elaborates by saying that South Africa has undergone many policy and curriculum changes in order to right the educational wrongs because of apartheid.

In 1996, The Bill of Rights in South Africa's new Constitution (RSA, Act 106 of 1996) initiated education reform through acknowledging and promoting basic human rights. One of these rights is the right to basic education (Becker & Du Preez, 2016:55; DoE, 1996; Schwab, Gebhardt *et al.*, 2015:2; Tiwari *et al.*, 2015:129). Policies such as Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training (DoE, 1995) were published with the aim to promote democracy as part of the new curricula transformation. In addition, the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996) and the National Policy Act 27 (DoE, 1996) were also introduced to address educational discrimination (Ndimande, 2016:36). Where schools were segregated in the past with regard to race and funding, policies were written to unite the education systems and to transform the education segregation of the past.

In line with several new policy introductions, the first post-apartheid curriculum was introduced in 1997 as C2005, also known as OBE. This curriculum was introduced in order to address apartheid inequalities. This curriculum was outcomes based as opposed to being content driven. C2005 attempted to promote a more "learner-centred pedagogy" and to decrease the memorisation of textbooks as set out by previous curricula (Booyse & Chetty, 2016:136; Chetty, 2015: 2; Molapo & Pillay, 2018:1; Khoza, 2015:182).

However, C2005 was later described as being "result-orientated" and as recognising the desired learning outcomes and teaching to achieve the desired results (Su & Wang, 2018:51). This, as noted by Majid (2016:11), did not prepare learners for everyday life, and C2005 was more about the process of teaching than the process of being educated. Positively, however, it identified each learner as an individual and was against past discrimination (Gumede & Biyase, 2016:70).

Following C2005, the NCS was introduced in 2002 (DoE, 2002). The NCS attempted to support the implementation of C2005; however, it became prominent that challenges still occurred with teacher training and little time being spent on specific subjects, and the curriculum was revised again (Russell *et al.*, 2019:3). The NCS (DoE, 2002) was replaced by the RNCS in 2004. However, challenges still occurred, such as a lack of resources and unskilled teachers, and in 2012, CAPS (DBE, 2012) was introduced, replacing the RNCS. CAPS (DBE, 2012) was "born" in order to, yet again, address historical challenges expressed in the RNCS (Hoadley 2015:733; Makhalemele & Nel, 2015:2; Molapo & Pillay, 2018:1). However, CAPS (DBE, 2012) is not a new curriculum, but an improvement of the RNCS.

Historical segregation led to a lack of inclusive practices in schools not only for black and coloured learners, but most of all, for learners with disabilities (DoE, 2001). However, the right to an education is a basic human right, and thus the DoE came to revise policy again in order to benefit all learners in South Africa. Becker and Du Preez (2016:55) are of the opinion that EWP6 (DoE, 2001) and the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2005) emphasise the importance of inclusive education in South African education systems. A brief discussion on the different schools in the South African school system follows next.

2.5.2 Different types of schools within the current South African schooling system

Although special schools are the focus of this research, it might be prudent to first define the different types of schools that are available within an education system where all learners can be placed (Nel, Tlale *et al.*, 2016:11).

Schools in the South African public education system can be categorised as ordinary schools, full-service schools, special schools and special schools as resource centres. **Ordinary schools** are identified as primary and secondary schools that deliver the curricula as set out by the South African DoE (DoE, 2005; DBE, 2012). Most of these schools do not cater for learners with physical disabilities due to the infrastructure of the school (McKinney & Swartz, 2016:311). **Full-service schools** are schools described as being much like ordinary schools, but are able to provide the necessary support, with regard to specialised resources, for learners with disabilities in an inclusive education environment (DoE, 2005). **Special schools** are schools that can follow mainstream curricula or a specific programme and cater for learners who require high-intensity support (DoE, 2005). **Special schools as resource centres** are schools that offer specialised services and additional support to ordinary schools and offer specific support and programmes to learners with disabilities (DoE, 2005).

The focus of this study relates to special schools, which admit learners who are identified as having disabilities and who cannot be accommodated by ordinary or full-service schools, as they require extensive support. “Special schools accommodate learners with disabilities that require high levels of support” (DoE, 2005). These schools can deliver the ordinary curricula, with necessary adaptations made to meet the needs of each individual, or curricula for special schools as set out by the Department of Education (DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al*., 2015:3).

2.5.3 Challenges in implementing inclusive education in South Africa

Learners with special education needs are at the heart of inclusive education (Florian, 2017:248). Due to educational inequalities and neglect of learners with disabilities (DoE, 1995), EWP6 (DoE, 2001) was developed specifically to address historical inequalities among learners with disabilities and to promote a more inclusive education system.

Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:2) are of the opinion that, in order to promote inclusive education, EWP6 (DoE, 2001) has to be part of daily classroom interaction. However, the education system has and still faces several challenges every day that hinder the implementation of EWP6 (DoE, 2001; Heelal & Jama, 2014:1503). In support of the above, Molapo and Pillay (2018:2) and Dreyer (2017:1) recognise a gap between what this policy envisions and what is realistically being achieved in classrooms.

As elaborated on by Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:48), Nel and Grosser (2016:83) and Heelal and Jama (2014:1503), challenges and obstacles identified in the implementation of inclusive education include the following:

- Insufficient resources
- Lack of human resource development and Insufficient education and training of educators by the Department of Basic Education
- Overcrowded classrooms
- Negative attitudes displayed by teachers

These challenges are elaborated on next.

2.5.3.1 Insufficient resources

According to Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:12), the lack of and the availability of resources contributes towards the ongoing barriers that hinder implementation of successful teaching and learning. As mentioned previously, learners with disabilities are mostly reliant on teaching and several learning resources to assist and support them during the learning process. However, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:12) and Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et a*l. (2016:6) concur that funding, which contributes towards providing teaching and learning materials required for adequate support and implementation of inclusive practices, is lacking. As stated by EWP6 (DoE, 2001), funding was to be made available specifically for schools in need of physical resources, adapted learning materials, upgraded infrastructure, and equipment to provide the necessary support to learners with barriers to learning. However, the lack of resources and lack of upgrading of

infrastructure in schools add to this stress (Nel, Tlale *et al.*,2016:3; Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.*,2016:6).

Furthermore, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:11), state that in order for South African education to be fully inclusive, the education system needs to transform to a point where upgraded infrastructure, appropriate resources and adequate support is provided. Within special schools, the need for appropriate resources and devices are crucial in appropriately supporting learners with barriers to learning. To elaborate, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:7) agree with Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.* (2016:12) that adequate support includes the provision of assistive devices such as wheelchairs and technological devices to enhance teaching and learning. Zwane and Malale (2018:10) are also of the opinion that an additional barrier to successful implementation of inclusive education is that some schools do not have disability-friendly infrastructure. Thus, learners with barriers in the neighbourhoods surrounding such schools are unable to attend school and never receive the opportunity to basic education. Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.* (2016:12) state that the lack of disability-friendly facilities is cause for concern and ultimately hinders the successful implementation of inclusive education.

2.5.3.2 Lack of human resource development and Insufficient education and training of educators by the Department of Basic Education

Teachers at special schools should have the necessary skills and knowledge to understand the needs of learners in order to promote effective teaching and learning to take place. Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:10) state that human resources are necessary for effective support to take place. Human resource development indicates skilled and specialised staff to teach learners with barriers to learning. This includes psychologists, therapists and social workers, who aid and assist teachers in the learning and teaching process and are therefore seen as a valuable aspect in the development of teachers' skills, knowledge and abilities to address barriers to learning effectively (Ngalim, 2019:44). Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018:3) agree with Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:10) that human resource allocation is still an ongoing challenge that hinders the successful implementation of inclusive education. However, the DBE lacks training and mentoring of these teachers.

Human resource development also indicates training teachers to develop knowledge and skills in order to provide the best support to learners with barriers to learning (Ngalim, 2019:44). However, Hargreaves *et al.* (2014:2), Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:2) as well as Zwane and Malale (2018:1) agree that teachers are of the opinion that they cannot provide sufficient support due to a lack of knowledge and insufficient support materials as they consider themselves as not

adequately trained with regard to barriers to learning in the classroom and how to address them.

2.5.3.3 Overcrowded classrooms

Special schools specifically cater for learners who need high levels of support (DBE, 2014) because of physical, sensory or mental barriers to learning. Therefore, the number of learners in special school classrooms are usually much lower than those in mainstream classrooms. However, the great demand for placement at special schools has led to increased enrolment and long waiting lists, at many special schools. resulting in extending classroom sizes. In addition, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:10) agree with Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.* (2016:10) that overcrowded classrooms have been one of the greatest challenges pertaining to implementing an inclusive atmosphere in classrooms. Zwane and Malale (2018:1) state that, due to large class sizes, the implementation of flexible curricula is unlikely to meet everybody's needs. Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:10) add that the learner-to-teacher ratio is too high. Thus, teachers are unable to provide sufficient support to learners who struggle to cope with mainstream curriculum requirements or to provide individual instruction when needed during the teaching and learning process.

2.5.3.4 Negative attitudes displayed by teachers

Teachers' attitudes can contribute towards increasing or decreasing student motivation, achievement, and well-being. Within special education, teachers are faced with many additional challenges, struggling to manage everyday classroom practices. Although EWP6 (DoE, 2001) argues that educators should have a positive attitude towards learning disabilities, Hargreaves *et al.* (2014:2) are of the opinion that teachers struggle with even minor daily activities due to insufficient support from their districts. They do not feel adequately and sufficiently trained for the severity of disabilities in their classrooms. This, in turn, may be as a result of unclear guidelines and strategies regarding what is expected of teachers during the implementation of EWP6 (DoE, 2001; Donohue & Bornman, 2014:3). According to Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:4), these struggles lead to negative attitudes among teachers, which affect teaching, discourage and limit academic performance, and impact learning outcomes.

It is evident that education transformation towards a more inclusive education system has been a challenge and a daily encounter for teachers (Molapo & Pillay, 2018:1; Walker & Musti-Rao, 2016:28).

2.6 OVERVIEW ON SPECIAL SCHOOL CURRICULA

Mathews (2018:4) defines a curriculum as “activities designed or encored within its organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils”. Furthermore, Ashdown *et al.* (2018:17) and Asiri (2019:8) are of the opinion that the core goal of a special education curriculum should be to support each individual to be as independent as possible and to be able to cope in everyday life. Miskovic and Svjetlana (2016:4) and Mittler *et al.* (2019:10) state that learners with disabilities should be placed in special schools, with appropriate curricula, that provide education to equip the learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to lead a normal, happy life in society.

In light of this, a special education curriculum can be generally defined as meeting individual needs through certain educational interventions and support given to learners who require additional assistance, enabling them to reach their “full potential” (Tiwari *et al.*, 2015:128).

2.6.1 International perspectives on curriculum offerings in special schools

Jacobs and Collair (2017:2) are of the opinion that special schools should accommodate learners with different disabilities, including mental and physical disabilities as well as neurodevelopmental conditions. Furthermore, special schools should have a curriculum that caters for the learners’ diverse needs. For example, for learners with neurological disabilities, such as autism, dyslexia, sensory disability, visual or hearing impairment and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, a differentiated and flexible approach to mainstream curriculum should rather be followed (Al Hazmi & Ahmed, 2018:68; Jacobs & Collair, 2017:2; Yuen *et al.*, 2019:48).

In the United States of America before the 1950s, most learners with disabilities were segregated from the education system, and it seems that race and disability played a significant role in the inequality of education (Waitoller & Lubienski, 2019:2). According to Slee (2018:17) there was support to only a small number of learners with special needs during this time (Kim *et al.*, 2019:800).

In 1997, IDEA (1997) was developed and emphasised that, regardless of disability, equal and quality education for disabled learners should be promoted (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016:120). IDEA (1997) inspired various countries to make the necessary policy changes to provide learners with barriers to learning an equal opportunity to mainstream, quality education (Miskovic & Svjetlana, 2016:4; Waddinton & Reed, 2017:140). Despite international legislation

striving towards the same goal, different perspectives have influenced the implementation of such policy changes. Countries all over the world categorise learners with regard to specific disabilities and then place these learners in specific schools or institutions that cater for their diverse needs (New & Kyuchukov, 2018:323).

According to Bajrami, (2017:136), in Europe, a more inclusive education system is enabled by the European Agency for Special Needs (2011). The European countries that are part of this Agency include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In addition, Leaton Gray *et al.*, (2018:84) state that depending on the severity of their disabilities, learners in these countries are placed in special schools and provided the opportunity to receive education with the mainstream curriculum, referred to as the Common Core Curriculum. However, each special school ensures that a variety of teaching methods and strategies are used to teach this mainstream curriculum to learners with disabilities. Classroom settings are prepared to implement an adapted curriculum by means of reducing the number of daily activities, adjusting the time allocation and providing efficient resources. Additionally, some special schools provide learners with disabilities an additional year to complete their school education (García-Carrión, Molina Roldán & Roca Campos, 2018:5).

In Australia, each state has its own curriculum for mainstream and special schools and each state's education policies differ. However, each school's individual learning plans are in line with the National Assessment Programme and mainstream curriculum (Australian Capital Territory Curriculum Framework, better known as the Australian Curriculum). Special schools cover the same content and skills as set out for ordinary schools (Moss *et al.*, 2019:24).

In the United States of America, learners who have been diagnosed with a barrier to learning are given the opportunity to receive general education and receive additional support and individual attention. They are placed in special schools and taught using the mainstream curriculum, namely the K-12 curriculum (Sharfstein & Morphew, 2020:133). The urgency and challenge of opening K-12 schools in the fall of 2020. Jama, 324(2), pp.133-134.). Specials schools follow the national curriculum with regard to content and skills, albeit adapted and adjusted to meet the needs of each individual (Bajrami, 2017:137).

Canada does not have a national curriculum that is followed by all schools. However, each province has its own curriculum as the provincial governments are responsible for the

development of each school's own curriculum. Mainstream and special schools have their own ministry-based common curriculum that provides learners with barriers the necessary support and guidance required to complete school (Kiru & Cooc, 2018:40).

In China, the national, basic mainstream curriculum is followed by all mainstream and special schools. The teaching methods and strategies are stipulated for teachers to ensure that all content and skills are taught in the same way to guarantee that learners with disabilities proceed to be well-adjusted citizens after school (Qi, 2016:3).

Both in Hungary and Zambia, there are different curricula for special and ordinary schools. Hungary's special schools are special vocational training schools, and Zambia's special education is called the Action for Disability and Development programme (Muzata, 2019:2; Vrășmaș, 2018:52; Yuen *et al.*, 2019:40).

Furthermore, the education systems of other countries, such as Finland and Malaysia, prescribe that special schools have access to the national, mainstream curriculum; however, it is taught in a more adaptive manner to meet the needs of learners with different disabilities (Nasir & Efendi, 2017:84; Vrășmaș, 2018:50).

2.6.2 National perspectives on curriculum offerings in special schools

The national initiative for the implementation of mainstream curricula in special schools was proposed by the DoE (DoE, 2005). About twenty years ago EWP6 (DoE, 2001) highlighted that the practice of curriculum implementation in special schools was "inappropriate" and posited that it failed to accommodate and address barriers to learning. EWP also stated then already that the main barrier to the successful implementation of a mainstream curriculum is the curriculum itself. In addition, EWP (DoE, 2001) also mentioned that the content, language of learning and teaching, teaching strategies, learner resources, teaching time allocation and assessment procedures are all factors hindering the successful implementation of mainstream curricula at special schools. However, as stated by Govender (2018: S2), this is still the case. The *Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres* (DoE, 2005a) state that challenges still occur within policy and curriculum implementation in South Africa.

In South Africa, special schools do not offer one curriculum, but different curricula depending on the learning barriers experienced by the learner. Within the special school sector, there are different streams, namely the Academic, Special and Vocational streams. Learners with

specific barriers to learning are admitted into these streams, depending on the severity of each learner's disability.

At the special school, where the current study was conducted, the Academic stream follows the CAPS (DBE, 2011a) curriculum as set out by the South African Department of Basic Education, which includes the Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3), Intermediate Phase (Grade 4 – 6,) and Senior Phase (Grade 7 – 9). In some LSEN schools where learners are placed in the academic stream, learners are individually assessed at the age of 13 years to see if they meet CAPS requirement to continue in the academic stream in the Further Education and Training [FET] Phase (Grade 10 – 12).If they do not, they are placed in the Special stream, in the Vocational Phase.

The Special stream at the research site of the current study, consists of two sub-streams: The Special Phase and the Vocational Phase. Learners with severe mental and physical barriers to learning can begin school in the Special Phase at the age of 6. These learners follow the Differentiated CAPS (DCAPS) from Grade R to Grade 5. They follow Grade R for three years, followed by Grade 1 to 4, spending two years in each grade, and then Grade 5 for another three years, after which, when they turn 18 years of age, they are ready to leave school. Learners with very Severe Intellectual Disabilities (SID) or learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities (PID) are placed in a class at the age of 6 and follow the curriculum for learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities, the draft learning programme for children with severe to profound intellectual disability (SPID Learning Programme), until they turn 18 years of age.

The Vocational Phase, or the Technical Phase in this school, follows the Vocational curriculum. In this specific school, this refers to the AET (old ABET- Adult Basic Education and Training) learning programme. Depending on the degree of each learner's disability and abilities, they follow a more skills-based approach to learning. This stream enables learners to work towards an NQF level 1 (National Qualification Framework), which is the equivalent of Grade 9 (DoE, 2016).

Buli-Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016:119) and Hornby (2015:242) state that education that caters for learners with special educational needs should be accommodated through curricula or programmes which require more specific instruction, and which are adaptable in order to meet mental and physical disabilities. It is Hornby's (2015:243) perspective that, for learners with disabilities to be resilient in their communities, education should incorporate academic, vocational and social skills. However, Govender (2018) states that, due to the constant curriculum changes, teachers feel inadequate and struggle to properly support and

assist learners with barriers who are taught with mainstream curricula because of a lack of resources and content knowledge. Govender (2018:S5) is also of the opinion that, even though the DoE promised to provide teachers with sufficient workshops to better support learning disabilities, they are not being given appropriate time to attend these workshops (Govender, 2018:S5).

Govender (2018:S4) highlights that, even though South Africa has put policies and programmes in place to promote effective curriculum implementation, it has been unsuccessful. Teachers are negative towards teaching learners with barriers to learning and feel that the implementation of mainstream curricula at special schools is ineffective due to them lacking the necessary knowledge and experience to effectively teach mainstream curricula to learners with disabilities.

Furthermore, Mathews (2018:4) adds that the curriculum content in special schools should develop all facets of the individual and therefore foster a sense of independence in order for learners to be productive citizens (Magnússon, 2019:667). In addition, Bell, Devecchi, McGuckin and Shevlin (2017:54) states that, if an education system manages to enable learners with barriers to learning to be part of a community, these learners are able to utilise the skills they were taught in school and become employed. However, due to the high standards and learning outcomes of mainstream curricula, learners with barriers to learning struggle to meet these outcomes, thus not adhering to the societal rules of playing a successful part in the community (Govender, 2018: S1).

To elaborate on this perspective, Kirby (2017:188) and Hlalele *et al.* (2020:144) state that differentiation is key in providing effective curriculum implementation. This includes creating assessments and different classroom activities, as well as utilising different resources and teaching techniques adapted in such a way that they meet the needs of the different learners in the classroom. These techniques can include oral instructions for learners with reading disabilities, frequent breaks from noise and classroom events, and concise and short activities with frequent checks on learners' progress and understanding. Hartmann and Weismer (2016:463) also mention that the use of different technological devices provides quality education in which all learners with barriers are able to participate. EWP6 (DoE, 2001) states that special schools will be given the correct resources and devices in order to promote "education for all" and to be able to successfully support and assist learners with barriers to learning. Examples of such devices can be computers for e-learning and web-based education where learning can be individualised and the learner can choose a convenient pace for learning, technological devises that assist with and simplify communication or assistive

technology for different physical abilities. However, Govender (2018: S1) mentions that resources have not been adequately allocated by the government.

Taylor (2017:55) suggests adapting the curriculum to such an extent that teachers are able to expose where each learner is struggling academically and how best to support the learner. Adapting the curriculum also aids teachers in inspiring and motivating learners to achieve academic outcomes (Taylor, 2017:56). However, Bruggink (2014:10) states that adapting and adjusting mainstream curricula on a daily basis for learners with disabilities has been challenging for all teachers, even those in special schools. Therefore, teachers struggle to teach mainstream curricula effectively in special school classrooms.

2.7 BENEFITS OF OFFERING MAINSTREAM CURRICULA AT SPECIAL SCHOOLS

As stated by Magnússon (2019:667), the main purpose of an excellent education system would be that all learners, including those with disabilities, become productive citizens who can cope in the community, with the skills needed to be resilient. According to Khoaeane and Naong (2015:289), an adaptable mainstream curriculum which consider special education needs, will better academic and social performance due to increased support and guidance. In corroboration, Buchner and Proyer (2020:89) are of the opinion that this strategy ensures that learners with disabilities are educated with the same educational opportunities as those in ordinary classes.

Furthermore, when teaching mainstream curricula at special schools, additional support is necessary to ensure that learners with barriers meet the learning outcomes of mainstream curricula. Luckily, Jigyel *et al.* (2020:2) state that special schools have additional resources, such as speech, occupational and physiotherapists who assist teachers and learners during the teaching and learning process. These authors also mentioned that differentiation in teaching methods and strategies, collaboration with specialists and individual learning plans are beneficial to special schools. Tiwari *et al.* (2015:128) agree that most special schools have the correct resources, trained educators, and speech, occupational or physiotherapy in order to provide the best opportunities and encourage full participation for learners in these schools to grow to their full academic potential. In light of this, Waddington and Reed (2017:139) state that, with individual support and attention, learners with barriers progress more in certain areas, such as academic and social skills, than learners attending ordinary schools.

Furthermore, Jigyel *et al.* (2020:7) and Gross (2017:108) state that a benefit to implementing a mainstream curriculum at special schools is that a special school environment promotes an

inclusive atmosphere and social interaction in classrooms. These authors are also of the opinion that learners in special schools develop social skills and grow to be independent adults after school.

It is evident that special schools add additional support that ordinary schools cannot provide. However, implementing a mainstream curriculum in special schools has its own set of challenges, as discussed next.

2.8 ONGOING CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO MAINSTREAM CURRICULUM OFFERINGS AT SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Special schools implementing mainstream curricula experience a unique set of challenges. Yuen *et al.* (2019:41) elaborate that the learning content, assessment standards, teaching and learning objectives and classroom activities of mainstream curricula are specifically planned for learners in ordinary schools. Nasir and Efendi (2017:84) state that some of the challenges being faced are insufficient funding, limited resources and resource allocation, uneducated teachers and ineffective curriculum application, all of which affect the successful implementation of mainstream curricula at special schools.

2.8.1 Challenges regarding the implementation of mainstream curricula in special schools internationally

IDEA (1997) proposed that policies and procedures be put in place to ensure quality education for all. IDEA (1997) defines the general education curriculum as “the same curriculum for nondisabled children” (Olson *et al.*, 2016:143). As stated by Cai *et al.* (2019:20), learners with barriers to learning should have the opportunity to receive quality education in line with a mainstream curriculum. McMurray and Thompson (2016:41) mention that internationally, schools have been implementing mainstream curricula at special schools. However, Walker and Musti-Rao (2016:28), as well as Molapo and Pillay (2018:1), contend that many countries worldwide experience challenges in the implementation of mainstream curricula at special schools as the “content, activities, standards and assessment objectives are designed for the ability level of mainstream students” (Yuen *et al.,* 2019:41). These authors elaborate that a mainstream curriculum has learning outcomes, activities and assessment requirements that do not meet the needs of learners with disabilities; therefore, these learners are not meeting the curriculum demands. Furthermore, it is mentioned that in the special and mainstream sectors where mainstream curricula are implemented, mainstream curricula fail to address individual needs (Yuen *et al.*, 2019:41).

According to McCoy *et al.* (2016:161), in Ireland, learners with disabilities have struggled to achieve the high academic standards, objectives and outcomes that are required in mainstream curricula. This has resulted in learners with disabilities having negative attitudes towards school, thus influencing their participation and achievement.

In addition, Nasir and Efendi (2017:84) state that implementing mainstream curricula in special schools has been challenging due to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding and limited resources (Nketsia, 2017:55). Köysüren and Deryakulu (2017:69) add that constant policy changes and curriculum reforms lead to frustrated teachers. Teachers feel that they are not adequately trained and do not have the resources to provide a differentiated approach to the mainstream curriculum to meet the needs of all learners with disabilities in their classrooms (Cavendish *et al.*, 20019:1; Maharajh *et al.*, 2016:372).

Magnússon (2019:667) states that education for learners with barriers to learning should be able to promote well-adjusted citizens and provide the skills necessary to meet the demands of adult life (Mathews, 2018:4). However, according to Ashdown *et al.* (2018:17), mainstream curricula have not been composed in such a way that they consider learners with different barriers to learning.

2.8.2 Challenges regarding the implementation of the mainstream curriculum in South African special schools

As previously mentioned, there are some special schools in South Africa that implement the mainstream curriculum, CAPS (DoE, 2011a), solely or as part of the curriculum offerings at those schools. However, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:6) are of the opinion that the implementation of the South African mainstream curriculum, CAPS (DoE, 2011a), in special schools is still challenging and problematic. Buka and Malepo (2016:38) agree with EWP6 (DoE, 2001:19) that challenges experienced by teachers often lead to insufficient and inadequate teaching. Policy changes; disadvantaged home circumstances, uninvolved parents and limited transport; insufficient resource allocation and inadequate support from schools, districts and government; and teachers' high administrative workload are only some of the challenges that affect the successful implementation of mainstream curricula.

2.8.2.1 Policy changes

Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.* (2015:3) state that constant policy changes have led to teachers feeling negative towards the implementation of mainstream curricula. Policies expect teachers

to be flexible with regard to the teaching process; however, the time allocations for mainstream curriculum objectives, activities and standards are inadequate and unrealistic. Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016:122) state that teachers in special schools always have to adapt and adjust mainstream curricula in order to accommodate all learning disabilities in their classrooms. Bruggink (2014:10) elaborates by stating that the traditional paradigm of adapting curricula for learners with disabilities has not been helpful to teachers supporting learners with barriers to learning. Therefore, it is clear that the mainstream curriculum does not cater for disabilities in classrooms and that this curriculum is difficult to adapt to meet the needs of all learners (Ntinda *et al.*, 2019:84). In addition, although EWP6 (DoE, 2001) supports appropriate policy adaptations to meet the needs of special school teachers and learners, in practice, Molapo and Pillay (2018:2) recognise that this is not what is being achieved in special school classrooms. Clearly, there is a gap between policy requirements and mainstream curriculum implementation in special school classrooms.

2.8.2.2 Disadvantaged home circumstances, uninvolved parents and limited transport

Aufseeser *et al.* (2018:245) state that other factors, such as parental negligence, poor household circumstances and lack of parental support, play a primary role in barriers to learning. Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al.* (2015:1) are of the opinion that challenges occur due to disadvantaged home circumstances, uninvolved parents and limited transport to and from school, all of which have a negative effect on productive teaching and learning at home and at school.

2.8.2.3 Insufficient resource allocation and inadequate support from schools, districts and the government

EWP6 (DoE, 2001) declared that part of the transformation process and upgrading of special schools will be to provide support through the provision of physical and material resources as well as training and development of staff. Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:9) however are of the opinion that insufficient resource allocation and inadequate support structures and systems for schools from the education districts and the government are still a cause for concern. Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:9) furthermore state that even in special schools, due to a "lack of research-based alternative methods and materials which are needed to teach and assess learners, barriers are created in the learning process". Bojuwoye *et al*. (2014:2) and Bruggink (2014:35) are of the opinion that the goals of a mainstream curriculum are of a high standard and that learners experiencing barriers to learning, even when placed in special schools, should have the required support in order to meet the standards suggested by mainstream curricula (Cai

et al., 2019:204). Support can generally include curriculum guidance, academic support through remedial classes, technical assistance in reading, writing and spelling, school psychological services, as well as a feeding scheme (Maciver *et al.*, 2018:1714). Authors such as Donohue and Bornman (2014:5) also state that additional support includes specialised equipment to support physical disabilities, additional worksheets and additional time allocation for the completion of tasks.

2.8.2.4 Teachers' high administrative workload and overcrowded classrooms

The SIAS policy (DBE, 2014) mentions that most teachers feel that they are not adequately trained and educated to give optimal support to learners with barriers to learning when implementing CAPS at schools (Buka & Malepo, 2016:38, Nel, Tlale *et al.*, 2016:11; Ntinda *et al.*, 2019:83). Furthermore, Petersen (2017:1,3) agrees with McKinney and Swartz (2016:311) that the high administrative workload of teachers, overcrowded classrooms which can lead to negligence, and inadequate staffing due to mismanagement also contribute to teachers in special schools feeling overwhelmed and overworked, which causes them to struggle to find time to educate themselves to productively teach curricula to learners with disabilities.

In conclusion, a positive school climate is directly linked to accommodating barriers to learning (Petersen, 2017:3). Mizunoya *et al.* (2016:8), however contend that the South African curriculum still lacks the focused adaptations necessary to meet the particular needs of disabled learners in special schools. Together with the various additional barriers and challenges faced by learners with disabilities and their ability to learn productively, this denies them the skills and knowledge that non-disabled learners have.

2.9 CONCLUSION

As seen from the literature discussed in Chapter 2, "schools have the responsibility to promote effective learning by creating a conductive and supportive learning environment within which learners feel appreciated, curriculum and teaching strategies complement learners' educational readiness and educators understand the uniqueness of every learner" (Bojuwoye *et al.*, 2014:1; Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel *et al*., 2015:2). In addition, as previously mentioned, Nel and Engelbrecht (2015:2) acknowledge the fact that it has been a challenge for South Africa to be truly inclusive during the implementation of inclusive practices in education.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion on the research methodology, including the research paradigm, role of the researcher, research approach, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research methodology is presented. The research paradigm, research approach, research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical aspects of the qualitative research are discussed. I chose to conduct the research due to the gap identified in academic studies and my experiences on encountering numerous challenges regarding the successful implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) when teaching Mathematics and Home Language at a Gauteng special school. Therefore, I realised the need for exploring Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of relevant teaching approaches for Mathematics and Home Language through the implementation of CAPS. If teachers' unique experiences in special schools are better understood, it may lead to an improvement in the implementation of CAPS in special schools' Foundation Phase classrooms. Hence, I explored the following research question: What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language via CAPS at a Gauteng special school?

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Qualitative research consists of interpretive and constructive practices. Through social interactions and interpretative understandings of people's experiences in their natural settings, their worldviews become clear and informative, sometimes transforming human practices (Howitt, 2016:10). As stated by Prasad (2017:6), a research paradigm can generally be defined as integrating a group of epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions or worldviews, underpinning how meaning is constructed when conducting research. Thus, this study was built around a specific paradigm, which was the lens through which the study was conducted. The chosen paradigm orientated me towards the research process. It provided a specific pathway for conducting research embedded in the worldview, while knowledge and truth were obtained through data collection and interpretation. Although there are several research paradigms, such as positivism, interpretivism and critical paradigms (Ryan, 2018:2), I found interpretivism best suited to my study, since it is a paradigm that investigates people's lived experiences occurring within a particular social context in their natural settings (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014:11). As stated by Thanh and Thanh (2015:24), the interpretivist paradigm perceives the world through others' observations and experiences.

Interpretivism assisted me to understand and interpret the phenomenon by means of individual participants' experiences (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:24).

Furthermore, interpretivism was the most suitable paradigm as it permitted me to better understand the research question through sharing social educational beliefs and experiences with the participants in their natural setting (Ryan, 2018:50). Thanh and Thanh (2015:26) are of the opinion that, in order to better understand people's experiences and perceptions, data need to be gathered in relation to the phenomenon in the natural setting. Thanh and Thanh (2015:27) further elaborate that the interpretivist paradigm holds a variety of views of a particular reality. Thanh and Thanh (2015:27) also state that this paradigm promotes researcher's unprejudiced opinions, resulting in the researcher being unbiased regarding the participants' worldviews. As researcher, I understood from the literature that an interpretivist approach means that the researcher's understanding relies on the participants' responses regarding the phenomenon and that the researcher has to incorporate a variety of methods during data collection to ascertain how the participants approach their immediate reality. Thereafter, the researcher can make interpretations about the participants' experiences and opinions (Creswell & Poth, 2017:21).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Before embarking on the study, I had to consider the different research approaches, such as qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and action research (Jason & Glewick, 2016:2). After careful consideration of each, I found the qualitative research method to be best suited for this study. This was confirmed and strengthened through the different portrayals and definitions from the literature. Various scholars agree that qualitative research involves obtaining participants' views, experiences, thoughts and stances and the meaning attached thereto (Almalki, 2016:291; Cook & Cook, 2016:192; Creswell & Poth, 2017:4; Goertzen, 2017:12; Ngozwana, 2018:20). For example, Ngozwana (2018:20), states that qualitative research forms the basis of "shared social experiences". Cook and Cook (2016:192) define qualitative research as providing explanations of phenomena as experienced by individuals, while Creswell and Creswell (2017:4) concur with Goertzen (2017:12) that qualitative research enables the researcher to analyse social interactions by focusing on participants' experiences, feelings and thoughts about a specific phenomenon.

This study therefore considered a qualitative research approach to be the most appropriate approach in order to answer the research question. To further elaborate and motivate the

decision on why a qualitative approach fits the study, a description of qualitative research follows next.

3.3.1 Qualitative research

Percy *et al.* (2015:76) describe qualitative research as a study about people's lives, experiences, attitudes, opinions and beliefs within the world. Rahman (2017:103) interpreted qualitative research from many other authors as a link that puts together all aspects of participants' views and experiences of their social lives. O'Brien *et al.* (2014:1) elaborate on the definition by describing qualitative research as an approach where the social interactions and personal experiences surrounding a phenomenon in the natural setting should be described and interpreted to generate knowledge. Merriam and Grenier (2019:3) and Sutton and Austin (2015:226) agree that qualitative research grasps the perceptions of persons or groups in their own environment, as was the case in this study with the Foundation Phase teachers at a special school as research participants. These definitions of qualitative research also complement the chosen paradigm of this study, namely interpretivism, since interpretivism also investigates individuals' lived experiences within their immediate environment. This research approach and the interpretivist paradigm chosen for the current study thus allowed participants to share their beliefs, ideas and perceptions of what they had experienced with regard to the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in some Foundation Phase classes at the special school where they taught.

As confirmed by Queirós *et al.* (2017:370), an important feature of qualitative research is that data do not rely on numbers, but on the personal experiences of participants in their natural setting. Görgut and Tatkun (2018:318) further elaborate on qualitative research as a qualitative process that presents personal perceptions through data collected by means of interviews, observations and/or document analysis in the immediate setting. Similarly, Noble and Smith (2015:3) and Percy *et al.* (2015:76) contend that certain data collection methods, such as interviews, journals and written or visual materials, can be used to gather rich, descriptive data to form meaning of a specific phenomenon.

3.3.2 Advantages of qualitative research

An advantage of qualitative research, according to Rahman (2017:104) and Collins and Stockton (2018:6), is that the participants' opinions receive a detailed description and interpretation by the researcher, who makes these interpretations explicit, taking into account the context within the natural setting where the research has been conducted. In the study

under focus, the qualitative approach assisted me to determine and understand the participants' personal experiences and the meanings of the phenomenon under study by interacting directly with them in their natural setting and by paying attention to the social meaning and contextual detail (Mohajan, 2018:23). This occurred during this study, since I, as the researcher, tried to find an explanation within the experiences of and interactions with the Foundation Phase teachers teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school.

Another advantage stated by Mohajan (2018:24) is that, while investigating, explaining and interpreting participants' social contexts, new theories will be generated. Since this approach was "less structured" in the current study, it aided the Foundation Phase teachers to feel comfortable to give their honest opinions regarding their experiences on teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school, which added to the body of knowledge on this topic.

Collins and Stockton (2018:6) emphasise that a qualitative approach could assist the researcher to have a deeper understanding in answering the research question while collecting data. This served as an advantage since I acted as a "data collection instrument", personally collecting the data myself. Creswell (2017:9), Creswell and Poth (2017:5), Bakanay and Çakir (2016:161) and Van Manen (2015:9) elaborate on this advantage for the researcher. These authors are of the opinion that, by being personally invested and present in the natural setting, the researcher would understand the participants' reasoning better.

3.3.3 Disadvantages of qualitative research

One of the disadvantages of qualitative research, according to Rahman (2017:104), is that this research approach does not always disclose the full meaning of participants' subjective views and understandings, since the researcher focuses more on experiences and can be influenced by his or her personal opinions and perceptions. Walther, Sochacka, Benson, Bumbaco, Kellam, Pawley and Phillips (2017:17) further argues that qualitative research neglects the scientific aspect of investigation in research and therefore cannot validate findings due to the personal aspect of the data. I attempted to overcome this disadvantage by being fully aware of this limitation and consciously bracketing my preconceptions and preconceived ideas and theories (refer to section 3.9.3). Another perceived disadvantage of qualitative research is that, since it is not scientifically conclusive, findings are open to interpretation (Tuffour, 2017:53). However, in line with the study paradigm and research approach, this study did not subscribe to any notions of objective truths, especially when investigating human

phenomena. Therefore, in my view, this disadvantage did not apply to this study. Furthermore, since the sample size in qualitative research tends to be small, the findings cannot be generalised (Falk, 2019:1015). However, I agree with Mohajan (2018:24) that the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise findings, but to provide a rich, contextual account of the topic under focus in the unique social setting, as I attempted to do in this study.

Other disadvantages are that qualitative research has the potential of being time-consuming and that questions related to the research topic continually change and develop over the course of the study (Lune & Berg, 2016:79; Rahman, 2017:108). I mitigated these disadvantages by utilising an interview guide that validated the questions to be asked and ensured feasibility. The interview guide also aided me, in advance, to appropriately allocate the time necessary for the interviews and to make arrangements and adjustments where necessary.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a description of different components of investigation forming the foundation of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017:5). The design specifies the general approach adopted towards the research as well as the details of the methodology that fits the data collection and analysis process. It also indicates the relationship between data collection and analysis, and how the presentation and interpretation of the data is suitable to answer the research question(s) (Gee *et al.*, 2013:52). Phenomenology was used as the research design for this study.

3.4.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology as design of inquiry for this study assisted me to gain deeper insight into participants' views (Bakanay & Çakir, 2016:161; Creswell & Poth, 2017:5; Van Manen, 2015:9). Creswell (2017:15) elaborates that phenomenological research "identifies the essence of human experiences", whereas Goulding (2003:302) explains that the main purpose of phenomenology is to gain a deeper comprehension of individuals' direct experiences in their reality (Alase, 2017:10; Percy *et al.*, 2015:77). According to Charlick *et al.* (2016:206), phenomenology can be interpretive or descriptive in nature. For the purpose of this study, a descriptive and interpretive approach was utilised. Within this approach, I was concerned with finding meaning in the shared experiences of the participants. This approach aided me to gain a unique perspective into the participants' lives by listening to their expressions of feelings and views and interpreting them correctly.

Bakanay and Çakir (2016:162) state that a phenomenological approach is generally applied in education research within a specific school environment or classroom setup. Therefore, phenomenology, as the design of inquiry of this research, assisted me to gain insight into how the participants constructed meaning of their experiences in teaching Mathematics and Home Language at a specific special school. This may in turn lead to better classroom implementation of the curriculum and better teaching and learning practices (Percy *et al.*, 2015:77). Phenomenology further supports the qualitative approach and pragmatic view of interpretivism since, in the current study, lived experiences were being studied in a natural setting. A few advantages in the use of phenomenology are discussed next.

3.4.2 Advantages of phenomenology

According to Ejimabo (2015:306), a phenomenological design aims to answer the research question through seeking deeper meaning in participants' individual shared experiences and how they make sense of those experiences cognitively (Hopkins *et al.*, 2017:24). Phenomenology insists on describing the heart of individuals' "lived experience" (Englander, 2016:1). This design gives the researcher and the participants the opportunity to share ideas and feelings regarding the research question; therefore, the participants in the current study were able to contribute to the discussion about their experiences on the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a). As stated by Hopkins *et al.* (2017:22), a phenomenological design is an "inductive approach" where the researcher gathers meaning not only from the participants, but also from pre-existing knowledge and literature. To anticipate this advantage, an extended literature review was done.

According to the literature, phenomenology as a research design may also present with certain disadvantages, some of which are discussed next.

3.4.3 Disadvantages of phenomenology

As previously mentioned by Charlick *et al.* (2016:206), phenomenology has an interpretive and descriptive approach to research. However, a possible disadvantage of the interpretive approach is that researchers, who aim to gather meaning from participants' lived experiences, may not always distance themselves from their own reality and may struggle to distinguish between their own world and the interpretations of the participants (Charlick *et al.*, 2016:208; Larkin *et al.*, 2019:184). Yüksel and Yıldırım (2015:4) concur and state that, by following a phenomenological approach, the researcher has to describe and emphasise only the experiences of the participants and has to stay unprejudiced towards the phenomenon. To

mitigate this disadvantage, I ensured bracketing to prevent biases and predispositions. This ensured that my own views and ideas were identified and removed. My subjective experiences were put aside as I considered all comments from participants as accurately as possible while trying to be critically objective. This assisted me to see the data and findings in a new light with fresh eyes. Larkin *et al.* (2019:195) further state that knowledge exists within the interpretation of findings from data. I interpreted and described the findings through a constant reflexive process and kept a reflexive journal to assist me during this process.

Furthermore, Hopkins *et al.* (2017:24) are of the opinion that, although different methods might be an advantage to a phenomenological approach, this approach can also lead to a variety of misinterpreted views and re-reflections of participants' responses. However, my opinion is that phenomenology as method of inquiry offers a way of systematically studying and learning about the phenomenon. Participants' everyday being and experiences, views and reflections can contribute to unlocking important features surrounding the understanding and meaning of the phenomenon under study.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Before continuing to discuss the population and sampling, a broad description of the research setting is necessary.

3.5.1 Research setting

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018:10), the research setting can be described as the location where the collection of data takes place. In this case, the research was conducted at a special school in the Gauteng area, South Africa. The school comprises approximately 400 learners and 80 staff members. This school includes different streams, namely, the special, academic and vocational streams. Learners with specific barriers to learning are admitted directly to the school because of a diagnosis by professional practitioners or via referrals from the education department. The learners are referred by the district office of the education department or are evaluated externally by educational psychologists and then referred to a special school.

The academic stream follows the CAPS (DBE, 2012) curriculum as set out by the DBE. This stream includes the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. The Foundation Phase consists of Grade R to 3. Thereafter, learners are promoted or conditionally progressed to the Intermediate Phase, Grade 4 to 6, which also follows the CAPS curriculum.

Thereafter, they progress to the Senior Phase, Grade 7 to 9, which also follows the CAPS curriculum.

In the Intermediate Phase, learners are individually assessed at the age of 13 years to see if they are able to cope with the CAPS requirements. If so, they progress to the Senior Phase. If not, they are placed in the Vocational Phase.

The special stream consists of two sub-streams: the Special Phase and the Vocational Phase. Learners with severe mental and physical barriers to learning begin school in the Special Phase at the age of 6. These learners follow the Differentiated CAPS, Grade R to Grade 5. They follow Grade R for three years, followed by Grades 1 to 4, two years for each grade, and then Grade 5 for another three years, after which, when they turn 18 years old, they are ready to leave school. Learners with severe or profound intellectual disabilities are placed into a class at the age of 6 and follow the curriculum for learners with profound intellectual disabilities until they turn 18 years of age.

The Vocational Phase, or the Technical Phase, follows the Mild Intellectual Disability Curriculum or the Vocational Curriculum, depending on the degree of each learner's disability and abilities. These learners are the learners who did not cope in the academic stream and, after the age of 13 years, begin in this stream to follow a more skills-based approach to learning. This stream enables learners to work towards a National Qualification Framework level 1 qualification that is the equivalent of Grade 9 (DoE, 2016).

Only the Foundation Phase in the academic stream of the special school was the focus of this research.

3.5.2 Selection of participants: Population and sampling

A research population refers to all individuals of interest to the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017:119). Flick (2018:13) further affirms that a population is a specific group of people on whom the research study focuses. The population in this study thus consisted of all the Foundation Phase teachers teaching at one special school in Gauteng in the academic stream of the Foundation Phase. This target population comprised a group of individuals who met my criteria for sampling (Asiamah *et al.*, 2017:1611).

A sample denotes the fraction of participants chosen from the population to represent the population during the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2017:119). According to

Creswell (2014:160), a sample in research can be generally defined as a subset of a larger group of subjects that the researcher uses during the research study to answer the research question. Ngozwana (2018:21) further defines sampling as recognising the subjects to participate in the specific research at a specific point in time.

According to Creswell (2014:228), there are specific sampling approaches that need to be considered when collecting qualitative data. Through the sampling process, the researcher chooses the sample from the representative population to obtain information (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015:534). There are different sampling techniques for qualitative research, such as convenience, quota, purposive and snowball sampling (Etikan *et al.*, 2016:1; Etikan & Bala, 2017:215).

According to Etikan and Bala (2017:2), purposive sampling gathers data that contribute to a better apprehension or support of the theoretical framework. A researcher chooses this sampling technique to gather data related to a specific phenomenon and therefore chooses participants with specific attributes in accordance with the research question. Serra *et al.* (2018:59) are of the opinion that purposive sampling does not look to generalise findings, but to gather rich information and data to best inform the research question. In addition, Valerio *et al.* (2016:147) state that purposive sampling is based on available resources and in-depth research, and is utilised to "maintain rigor".

Purposive sampling was utilised to select the participants for this research. I used this method of sampling because each of the individual participants experienced a central phenomenon (being a Foundation Phase teacher at a special school teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS) and because I had a specific goal in mind related to the research question (Alvi, 2016:30; Creswell & Poth, 2017:76; Etikan *et al.*, 2016:1).

3.5.2.1 Advantages of purposive sampling

Purposive sampling has some advantages. According to Sharma (2017:751), purposive sampling is used to establish universal characteristics of a specific sample that can be generalised to a wider population (Pacho, 2015:47). Sharma (2017:751) also states that, since qualitative research has numerous phases, purposive sampling is useful as it provides various techniques to gather and analyse data. Purposive sampling leads to data saturation and, thereafter, findings that can be generalised (Sharma, 2017:751). Taking the above into account, I used this method of sampling participants in the current study since each of the participants experienced the central phenomenon under focus (Creswell & Poth, 2017:118;

Etikan *et al.*, 2016:2). Various methods of data collection were also utilised throughout the different phases of the research.

3.5.2.2 Disadvantages of purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is susceptible to researcher bias. A purposive sample is a preconceived idea that the researcher has that is based upon the researcher's understanding or feelings, which can cause the generalisation of the research findings to be ineffective. Thus, it becomes difficult to persuade the reader that the findings are applicable to a wider audience (Sharma, 2017:752). To mitigate this potential disadvantage in this study, data triangulation was done, which made it possible to provide the reader with adequate interpretations of the data about the shared experiences, feelings and thoughts of the participants (Smith, 2018:140).

Taking the other disadvantages of purposive sampling into account, as mentioned by authors in the literature, I had to ensure that, although the sample size was small, data were collected until saturation was achieved (Malterud *et al.*, 2016:1753). Furthermore, the participants and I had to be informed and prepared with regard to the fact that purposive sampling can be time-consuming as it focuses on all variables and aspects of participants' thoughts and feelings regarding the research question (Valerio *et al.*, 2016:149). As Etikan *et al.* (2016:2) state, participants involved must be willing to participate, which might become a disadvantage if potential participants are not willing to participate and a small sample size is all that is available. It is also of importance that participants are knowledgeable. I mitigated these disadvantages in the current study by information sessions and discussions, letters, informed consent letters and addresses to the participants before progressing to data collection. As stated by Etikan *et al.* (2016:2), if participants do not have enough insight into the phenomenon, findings might be inconclusive. Therefore, I purposefully chose Foundation Phase teachers at a special school who taught Mathematics and Home Language through CAPS (DBE, 2011a). In addition, Sharma (2017:751) further states that researchers are prone to "researcher bias" when using purposive sampling. This is based upon researchers selecting this type of sampling due to pre-existing ideas or judgements regarding the phenomenon. This was overcome in the current study through a research design with clear criteria and guidelines which were followed throughout the research and by applying the correct purposive sampling techniques.

3.5.3 Inclusion criteria for participant selection

Purposive sampling entails the identification of potential participants using certain inclusion criteria to ensure that the participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied. For

the purposes of this study, I had to establish these criteria prior to the selection process to identify potential participants. Potential participants had to fulfil all the following inclusion criteria:

- Foundation Phase teachers in the academic stream at the special school where the research was conducted.
- Teachers who taught Foundation Phase Mathematics and Home Language.
- Teachers who used CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in the teaching of Mathematics and Home Language.

3.5.4 Sample size

Moser and Korstjens (2018:9) state that a researcher can decide on a sample size to select a variety of participants from different backgrounds in order to gather rich data. These authors state that qualitative sample sizes are usually small and that the sample size will vary according to willingness to participate as the research continues. After taking all factors into account, the sample purposefully selected from this population consisted of six Foundation Phase teachers at a Gauteng special school, of whom five were Foundation Phase teachers and one was the HOD. I chose these six participants from the setting described in section 3.5.1 because they related to the research question, namely: *What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at a Gauteng special school?* This, in turn, provided an in-depth explanation and better the understanding to answer the research question at hand (Ngozwana, 2018:21; Palinkas *et al.*, 2015:534).

3.6 CONTEXT AND ROLE OF RESEARCHER

To be able to conduct the research effectively and continue with data collection, the context and role of the researcher have to be acknowledged, since different factors have a direct effect on the research process. In qualitative research, Creswell and Poth (2017:37) state that the researcher has to collect data in the "natural setting" where the participants are experiencing the phenomenon. Therefore, in the current study, the natural setting where the study was conducted was the special school where I worked as a Foundation Phase teacher. I was the primary source of data collection and analysis for the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews. I had to take into account that I had worked in close proximity with all participants for the past five years on a daily basis and experienced the same concerns as the participants.

The literature states that it is acceptable for the researcher to be the main source of data collection in qualitative research (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1411), as was the case during this study. This implies that data were collected by means of conducting the semi-structured individual telephonic individual interviews myself, and not via numerical or statistical instruments such as questionnaires, which would have made the research less involved on a personal level. As I played such a vital role in the collection of data, it was important to state any personal assumptions and prior experiences in order to conduct the study efficiently. Creswell and Poth (2017:3) state that the role of the researcher is not only to collect and analyse qualitative data, but also to read all the data. Therefore, when I took on the interpretive role to construct meaning during and after data collection, it was important to also listen and be sensitive to the participants' behaviours and questions while staying objective. In the light of this, Fusch and Ness (2015:1411) state that, to avoid potential bias, the researcher has to focus on representing the participants' insights and views, and not his or her own. These authors state that researchers should first admit that they have their own views and are personally invested in the research, which establishes potential bias from the researcher. Only after this can the researcher listen and interpret the participants' responses (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1411). It was therefore important for me as the researcher to be objective during these processes in terms of observation as well as the ideas and experience of the participants and myself. In order to be objective and avoid all bias, I bracketed myself outside the study (refer to section 3.9.3) and kept a reflexive journal. However, being so close to the participants also had advantages with regard to the clear interpretation of the findings. This included developing a deep connection with the participants and, as confirmed by Moser and Korstjens (2018:10), it assisted me in gaining easier access to data collection and understanding the process while studying the phenomenon. By applying these principles, the participants' views and reflections were appreciated and acknowledged, which contributed towards rich data and research findings.

Taking all factors into account, my role was to further ensure rigorous research through trustworthiness (refer to section 3.9). Therefore, data triangulation and member checking of the transcribed data by the participants were incorporated in the study (refer to section 3.9.1) The co-coder, who was my supervisor, aided with coding the data and verified the thematic analysis during the data analysis process.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Sutton and Austin (2015:227) generally define data collection as using various methods in order to record data throughout the research process. During this research, the five steps as proposed by Creswell (2014:227) were followed to gather data.

Firstly, participants who took part in the research were identified through a sampling strategy best suited to answer the research question (refer to section 3.5). Secondly, permission was obtained at the specific location where the research was conducted and from the participants (refer to Addenda 2, 3 and 4). It was important to decide on the type of information that would best answer the research question, as mentioned by Creswell (2014:227). Hence, after the literature study was done, I had to design instruments that would best collect and thereafter contribute to rigorous analysis and interpretation of the data gathered as the third step (refer to Addendum 6). Thereafter, the collection of the data was conducted in two phases while considering ethical issues regarding the research process. The data in this study were collected via phase 1, semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, and phase 2, a document analysis of relevant public and school documents. The phases and process of data collection are elaborated on next.

3.7.1 Phase 1: Semi-structured individual telephonic interviews

Initially, individual face-to-face interviews were going to be conducted with participants. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to reapply for and received ethical approval from my university to conduct telephonic interviews. Guest *et al.* (2017:693) state that semi-structured individual telephonic interviews are held to provide an opportunity for the participants to elaborate on their experiences of the research question and to share information that they may not have felt comfortable to share in the presence of their colleagues.

3.7.1.1 Description of semi-structured individual telephonic interviews

As stated by McIntosh and Morse (2015:1), semi-structured interviews are “non-standardised” interviews with open-ended questions that seek answers related to a central experience and not to test a specific hypothesis. In addition, Boote *et al.* (2017:2) state that conducting an interview “is a creative process in which the interactions and conversations of interviewer and respondent produce statements and formulations that draw upon the experience of both the researcher and participants”. Semi-structured interviews require a detailed interview guide or schedule where the researcher may probe for participants’ views to be able to answer the

research question. For the purpose of this research, semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were utilised for collecting qualitative data during the first phase of data collection.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the anticipated data collection method of face-face interviews could no longer take place. Therefore, the research method utilised to collect data was semi-structured individual telephonic interviews. I conducted personal semi-structured telephonic individual interviews with all five Foundation Phase teachers from the academic stream and the one HOD who was also a Foundation Phase teacher at the special school. I made an appointment with each individual and scheduled the telephonic individual interview for a suitable time.

Interviews are the most reliable and direct means of gaining facts from participants. In qualitative research, interviews are useful in establishing participants' experiences, interest, tasks and preferences surrounding a phenomenon (Maree, 2012:93). Interviews are the most reliable and direct means of gaining information from the participants.

According to Gill and Baillie (2018:4) in qualitative research, telephonic communication technology enables the researcher to conduct interviews at an appropriate time and accessible location for each participant. Since the participants are not face to face with the researcher conducting the interview, Chiu (2019:418) is of the opinion that the participants feel less anxious and are therefore not reluctant to give in-depth information about each question.

According to Wilson *et al.* (2016:1552), semi-structured individual telephonic interviews are qualitative methods of data collection and serve as a helpful tool for the researcher to understand and describe the differences among the participants' experiences, which may in turn lead to a better understanding of the research question (Ngozwana, 2018:23). According to Fusch and Ness (2015:1409), a personal interview is a method of data collection that involves a conversation between the researcher and the participant. In the current study, I asked the participants individually a series of semi-structured questions regarding their personal experiences of implementing CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in Foundation Phase Mathematics and English Home Language subjects.

I made an appointment with each of the participants individually and asked a series of questions until I felt satisfied with the information (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). These interviews took approximately one to two hours, depending on the responses I received to the questions asked.

Since interviews are the most reliable and direct means of gaining facts from participants, I applied probing as a technique when I found that a participant's responses were not fully comprehended. According to Guest *et al.* (2017:693), probing in qualitative research is a method used by the researcher to encourage a more in-depth explanation to gather relevant information regarding the research topic. As stated by Webb (2015:3), a good qualitative researcher poses probing questions during interviews, listens to responses, thinks and reflects on the responses, then further probes to gather in-depth information regarding the phenomenon. Follow-up questions were utilised for clarification (Phillips, 2017:4). I prompted the participants by asking questions when their answers were vague and ambiguous. This resulted in rich and descriptive data. Furthermore, I used two digital voice recorders to ensure that all participants' comments were recorded. Using the recorders also safeguarded the accuracy of the transcription of the data to be made afterwards (Blaxter *et al.*, 2010:196).

3.7.1.2 Advantages of semi-structured individual telephonic interviews

Semi-structured individual telephonic interviews have several advantages, such as giving the researcher the opportunity to be flexible during the conversations (Kallio *et al.*, 2016:2956). They also enable the researcher to clarify certain responses and gain information regarding the research question (Webb, 2015:3). Webb (2015:3) states that, through probing, the researcher is able to gain a deeper understanding into the thoughts and experiences of the participants. I applied these techniques during the interviews with the individual participants. By being flexible and being able to probe during the interviews, more information was gathered, which assisted to clarify comments from the participants. These techniques also further contributed towards elaboration of the topic under discussion, which expanded the data.

3.7.1.3 Disadvantages of semi-structured individual telephonic interviews

Notwithstanding that the participants in the current study were able to answer the questions in their own words, semi-structured individual telephonic interviews do have potential disadvantages. Petrescu *et al.* (2017:192) are of the opinion that, since semi-structured individual telephonic interviews are unpremeditated and unrehearsed, participants may not fully understand the questions and therefore struggle to answer, which may lead to difficulties in data analysis. The flexibility of individual interviews and the aspect of being able to probe when asking questions, as discussed in section 3.7.2.2, mitigated this disadvantage. To mitigate this disadvantage, I utilised an interview guide. Another disadvantage is that interviews have the possibility of bias, as different interviewers may understand and transcribe interviews in different ways (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:7). Therefore, I conducted the interviews

myself. Recording the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, using member checking and the supervisor's contribution as co-coder also limited this disadvantage. Another disadvantage mentioned in the literature is the time-consuming process of conducting individual interviews, especially when the researcher has to set up all interviews to be conducted, and thereafter transcribe each interview, analyse feedback and report on the findings. I do thus agree that personal interviews are a costly data collection tool, as stated by Newcomer and Kathryn (2015:498), because the researcher requires recording devices to conduct the interviews. However, since semi-structured individual telephonic interviews are planned upfront during a time that suits both interviewer and participant, the preparations that were made accommodated this disadvantage accordingly.

3.7.2 Phase 2: Analysis of relevant documents as data collection source

While the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were the primary source of data collection, document analysis was the secondary source of data collection (Van den Berg & Stuwig, 2017:112). Document analysis, as defined by Linton, Coast, Williams, Copping and Owen-Smith (2019:3), is the structured process of analysing and interpreting applicable materials, applicable and relevant public and school documents in this case. Gasva and Mukomana (2020:43) state that document analysis can be generated through utilising government and school policies, school-based improvement plans, as well as lesson plans and learners' workbooks. For the sake of this research, I analysed the following documents:

- EWP6 (DoE, 2001);
- Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: special schools as resource centres (DoE, 2005a) ;
- CAPS (DBE, 2012);
- Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through curriculum and assessment policy statements: Grade R-12 (DBE, 2011b);
- Guidelines to strengthen CAPS implementation (DBE, 2017);
- SIAS policy (DBE, 2014)
- Lesson planning weekly schedules

These documents not only gave me an additional objective perspective into the phenomenon, but contributed to triangulation of data. This created the opportunity for me to elaborate on aspects of the phenomenon and increase the amount of research data collected. As stated by Ngulube (2015:135;136) and Viswambharan and Priya (2015:13), the triangulation of data increased trustworthiness, validity and reliability, which ensured a rigorous research process.

As previously mentioned, document analysis was done in order to ensure that I gained insight into the phenomenon under study. Before the analysis could take place, I compiled a "common assessment criteria" guide. The guide assisted me to focus and ensured that unrelated content did not form part of the document analysis (Duruk *et al.*, 2017:128) (refer to Addendum 6). As further stated by Duruk *et al.* (2017:128), through singling out codes from the data, categories were developed from the content. The summarised categories emphasised valuable information that was utilised in triangulation of the research findings (Claydon *et al.*, 2018:4). This process was similar to the analysis of the interview data, which is further elaborated on in section 3.8.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis provides the researcher with a method to analyse similarities and differences within the data while making meaningful connections (Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2017:362). During this study, the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were analysed by means of thematic data analysis. "Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data" (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019:843; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3352). This allowed me as the researcher to look at data from different angles to identify key aspects that might help to understand and interpret the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017:153) by means of identifying categories and themes, which further allowed the presentation of rich descriptive explanations from the data (Hancock *et al.*, 2016:2125).

The data analysis process that was applied to interpret the data took place according to the six steps of thematic analysis as described by Creswell (2014:261) and Braun *et al.,* (2019:843).

3.8.1 Step 1: Become familiar with the data

I began by familiarising myself with the data and preparing the data for analysis. The data obtained from the digital recordings of the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and field notes were first transcribed. Thereafter, as described by Javadi and Zarea (2016:36), I read through the data numerous times and wrote memos and notes to enhance a deeper understanding of the data and the participants.

3.8.2 Step 2: Generate initial codes

The next step was to generate initial codes by investigating the data through an open coding process. According to Braun *et al.* (2019:2130), a code is the label for a piece of data that is relevant to the research question. Walliman (2017:102) further elaborates by stating that coding is a method used to give meaning to data. This method aided me to organise and conceptualise the presented data. As stated by Stuckey (2014:7), the coding process starts with previous codes from multiple sources, such as a coding dictionary and key concepts in theory. By applying the process of open coding, data were broken down into parts, and categories were established from the codes identified. Thereafter, themes were to be developed from the identified categories that developed from the codes.

3.8.3 Step 3: Search for themes

Themes are the "overall concepts of underlying meanings" (Bengtsson, 2016:12). Through utilising an inductive coding process, I initially developed codes by directly examining the data as described by Braun *et al.,* (2019:844). Similar codes and ideas were grouped together as categories. The represented categories were then grouped together as themes that described key messages formed from the data, thus making it possible to systematically order the data and conclude findings through making sense of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017:5). Silverman (2016:85) states that this analysis is appropriate as it gives the researcher the opportunity to simply inspect the data for "recurrent instances".

3.8.4 Step 4: Review themes

According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017:3354) and Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:101), one can distinguish between two levels of themes, namely the semantic level and the latent level. These authors define the semantic level as developing themes by looking at the "surface meaning" of what the participants said in order to better understand their experiences. The latent level, however, takes the deeper understanding of what was said and experienced by the participants and identifies ideas, characteristics and assumptions based on and informing the themes developed at the semantic level. This process was incorporated during the selection and identification of the themes to ensure rich data and recognise relationships between data. The field notes and verbatim transcripts were integrated during data analysis for a more inclusive transcription and to complement the data analysis process. After this process, the themes were reviewed. After the initial themes that were generated in step 3, I returned to the raw data to establish a pattern. This enabled me to decide whether a theme

was a primary theme or just a code, since themes need to be in correlation with the data. Otherwise, the researcher has to rearrange the theme to fit into another theme or discard it as a code as proposed by Javadi and Zarea (2016:37) and Nowell *et al.* (2017:9).

3.8.5 Step 5: Define themes

During this step, I was able to view the data as a story. Next, the themes had to be clearly defined and be specific. It was evident that the themes captured the essence of interests of the data, as described by Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:105). A few sentences from categories were added to define each theme. However, thematic analysis should be done in such a manner that the theme does not have to be explained. Each theme should have a "clear focus" and address the research question directly (Braun *et al.*, 2019:846). These authors concur with Nowell *et al.* (2017:10) and Javadi and Zarea (2016:37), who state that it is evident that each theme builds on a previous theme and therefore the researcher can calculate whether a theme needs to fit into the overall story related to the research question.

3.8.6 Step 6: Writing-up the findings

Lastly, I wrote a dissertation as an outcome for the study under focus. During this step, I interpreted the results by explaining the findings as well as presenting literature to inform the accuracy of the findings. As mentioned by Nowell *et al.* (2017:11), through the thematic analysis process, the researcher strives to provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the data within and across themes. During the report stage of the current study, direct quotes and original phrases were given from the data (refer to Chapter 4). The purpose was to provide a story about the data that was based on my analysis and findings.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Connelly (2016:1) and Draeger *et al.* (2015:219), rigorous research is research that shows trustworthiness towards methods utilised to ensure the quality of the study and through demonstrating the degree of confidence in the data and the interpretation thereof. Trustworthy methodology demonstrates that the research was systematic, detailed, and truthful. Rigour of the research was ensured by collecting data through different phases using multiple methods, namely, semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, field notes, analysis of relevant documents and consensus discussions on data. Minimising researcher bias enhanced rigour through triangulation across data sources, researcher bracketing and

reflexivity and member checking through providing feedback about findings to participants for their review and reflection. Connelly (2016:1), McIntosh and Morse (2015:17) and Elo *et al.* (2014:2) are of the opinion that attending to the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, authenticity and transferability develops trustworthiness and demonstrates the qualitative rigour of a study.

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019:31), there are different strategies for ensuring trustworthiness. Triangulation of different data, member checking, peer review, the researcher's position during the research, sufficient engagement during data collection, maximum variation, an audit trail and rich description are the various ways in which rigour can be accomplished (Hays *et al.*, 2016:173). Therefore, I further elaborate upon trustworthiness next through a discussion on the strategies incorporated to enhance the credibility, dependability, confirmability, authenticity and transferability of the research process.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to research findings that are believable and truthful (Creswell, 2014:286; Twining *et al.*, 2017:9). Credibility strategies establish the truthfulness of the research findings (Creswell, 2014:286; Maree, 2012:133). According to Anney (2014:276), a qualitative researcher establishes rigour by adopting different credibility strategies, such as doing an extensive literature review, researcher reflexivity, member checking and triangulation of data. During this study, multiple methodological and data collection methods were focused on to ensure a rigorous and credible qualitative approach. An extensive literature review was also done on the research topic in this study. As stated by Munafò *et al.* (2017:4), an extensive literature review enables credibility though various research resources, providing documentation and proof towards the research topic at hand. It is the role of the researcher to provide all detailed descriptions, transparencies and affirmations that may support or contradict the research question. This is supported by Aguinis *et al.* (2018:88), who mention that the researcher should have in-depth knowledge of different literature sources in order to conduct a rich and productive study.

Since the research was done in the participants' natural setting, researcher reflexivity during data collection was applied through journal-keeping, which further ensured credibility. Furthermore, with regard to the current study, the data were also verified, compared and corroborated through member checking. Member checking is generally defined as checking the researcher's interpretations of the data from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews (Simpson & Quigley, 2016:378). Simpson and Quigley (2016:378) are of the opinion

that it is a vital part of credibility that the researcher honours participants' personal insights and work and offers them the opportunity to comment on the findings. Through this process, in the current study, I shared "analytical thoughts" with participants, which also ensured that misinterpretations were recognised by participants and corrected after the transcribing of interview recordings (Varpio *et al.*, 2017:49). Since the research was done in a special school with teachers from the Foundation Phase, they helped to bring out ideas and opinions of their experiences, cross-check the data, add points and compare their own knowledge and insights with my knowledge. The comparison and discussion of data generated additional theoretical ideas. Member checking was thus part of ensuring trustworthiness.

Triangulation of data through a range of data collection techniques and the use of multiple methods and perspectives further enhanced credibility (Stewart *et al.*, 2017:9; Johnson *et al.*, 2017:6). During data review, triangulation of the transcribed data (verbatim transcripts of semi-structured individual telephonic interviews), field notes, reflexive journal and findings from the document analysis was applied while the supervisor as co-coder confirmed and validated the coding during the data analysis.

3.9.2 Dependability

Dependability concurs with credibility and refers to the stability and quality of the data (Connelly, 2016:435). Strategies to establish dependability in this study included the dense description of the research methodology by thoroughly describing the three phases of data collection and the various steps of data analysis. Anney (2014:278) is of the opinion that dependability includes asking the selected participants to assess the findings, interpretations and recommendations of the research to ensure that the data are supported as received from the participants. Chowdhury (2015:154) states that dependability can be guaranteed through an audit trail, comprehensive field notes, utilising a co-coder, triangulation, peer examination or comparisons and rich description of the data.

During this research, the supervisor was the co-coder, assisted by a data analysis expert. Co-coding occurred after I had completed initial coding and after the participants had examined the data in order to ensure the correctness of transcriptions and interpretations. Conducting each interview the same way and utilising an interview guide increased the reliability of these methods (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:3).

3.9.3 Confirmability

During this study, confirmability of the research process was ensured through minimising researcher bias, contextualising my pre-existing experiences through researcher bracketing and researcher reflexivity.

As the researcher in the study under focus, I was also a Foundation Phase teacher at the special school where the study was conducted, and therefore had to first bracket my own views and perspectives. This is confirmed by Sohn *et al.* (2017:130) and Creswell (2017:15), who are of the opinion that ensuring trustworthiness through bracketing requires that researchers make a conscious effort to distance their own knowledge, values, preconceived ideas and experience to remain impartial in the description of the phenomenon. Furthermore, Yüksel and Yıldırım (2015:4) agree that researchers have to bracket their own beliefs and experiences by being unbiased in order to fully comprehend the participants' views. It was thus important that I refrained from preconceived beliefs and only focused on the participants' experiences. This in turn assisted me to reduce predetermined assumptions and experiences which would have affected the research process. In this study, bracketing was reached through being objective, not criticising the participants during the interviews and staying open to the interpretations and opinions of each participant. In addition, also contributing towards bracketing, I had opportunities to reflect in conversations with my study supervisor, who was not part of the interview process. Reflection made me aware of any pre-existing thoughts and feelings that might have affected bracketing (Hadi & Closs, 2016:642). Confirmability was thus ensured through my own reflexivity, by staying aware of my own perceptions and teaching background, as well as by applying ethical guidelines throughout the research process. Confirmability was further evident by practising reflexivity through journal-keeping and recording my own reflections.

Confirmability further refers to the neutrality and objectivity of the data verified by others (Anney, 2014:279; Connelly, 2016:435). As stated by Ergene and Delice (2016:2), confirmability refers to the techniques utilised to confirm the research findings, such as member checking, where transcriptions of the interviews were presented to the participants in this study for their review and to reflect on the data and confirm the research findings. Confirmability was further ensured through the triangulation of data (semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, field notes and document analysis) when the process of coding and re-coding of data was done. Through constant communication between myself, the participants and co-coder (supervisor) on data coding and interpretation, the neutrality and objectivity of findings were ensured and results were verified.

3.9.4 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to not making judgements during the enquiry. This was ensured by following ethical approaches throughout the research process (Connelly, 2016:436). As stated by Ram *et al.* (2016:111), authenticity can be generally defined as being "reliable, real and true". Therefore, as researcher, I had to take the data given and not focus on perceived ideas, thus being objective during the research process (Wald & Harland, 2017:2). I also stayed attentive to the data and was reasonable by not making judgements during the inquiry (Stewart *et al.*, 2017:9). Applying ethical principles such as following an ethical approach throughout the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews also ensured authenticity. Furthermore, measures were taken to safeguard the data by taking extensive field notes and using two digital recorders during the interviews. These were stored and kept safe in a secure place to ensure effective and efficient use at the end of the research. Voice recordings were also saved on my own computer as a backup system to safeguard the data. The computer was protected by a personal password. This added to authenticity by ensuring that the data were reliable and truthful.

3.9.5 Transferability

Transferability is linked with a detailed description of the context to make judgements of the fittingness of the research with other contexts possible (Noble & Smith, 2015:2). Following rigorous methodology and ethical principles during the research enhanced transferability. Transferability during this research was further ensured through a detailed description of the content and data to make it possible to judge the connectedness and appropriateness of the research to other contexts. This was ensured through the transcription of interview recordings and an in-depth dense description of the research methodology, setting, data collection techniques and data obtained. The correct choice of sampling also contributed towards transferability as well as sufficient information to judge the applicability of the findings to other special schools.

3.10 ETHICAL CONCIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations refer to a set of principles which embodies or exemplifies what is good or right or allows us to identify what is bad or wrong (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:1). In order to ensure minimal risk towards participants, ethical issues were considered which confirmed that the research abided by certain principles. Creswell and Poth (2017:44) state that whoever is

involved during the research must be informed of all general agreements of what is proper and improper in research.

Ethical principles guide the whole research process, from the planning of the research, throughout implementation of the process and evaluation of the data and outcomes (McKenna & Gray, 2018:147). The Nuremberg Code (Moreno *et al.*, 2017:795) provides a set of research criteria aimed at protecting the rights of human participants. Ethics thus provides rules and guidelines for the researcher on behavioural expectations and expected conduct towards the participants, co-researchers, research assistants, fieldworkers, institutions and sponsors attached to a study (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:1). It mandates all researchers using human subjects to obtain voluntary consent, to provide justification for the purpose of the research for the good of society, to ensure adequate protection from harm of participants, and to acknowledge their right to withdraw from the research of their own will (Surmiak, 2018:19). To ensure that the research adhered to all ethical considerations, the ethical principles discussed next were applied and upheld by the researcher throughout the study.

3.10.1 Permission

In order to conduct this research, permission was required from institutions and organisations (Creswell, 2014:165). To ensure that ethical considerations were maintained, the research proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of UNISA. A certificate of approval and registration number were issued before the research commenced. Further permission had to be obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education in order to conduct this research at a specific special school. The school where the research was conducted also had to provide consent to take part in this research study. Therefore, permission was granted by the principal of the school and the SMT through written consent for the research study to take place.

Lastly, permission had to be obtained from the group of participants through informed consent, as discussed next.

3.10.2 Informed consent

According to Creswell and Poth (2017:123), all participants must be informed about the nature of the research in which they are involved and have to agree to participate voluntarily. They should be informed on all aspects of the research, namely, the purpose, duration and any risks involved.

In trying to obtain informed consent from the Foundation Phase teachers taking part in this research, a meeting took place to inform them verbally of what this research involved and what their participation included. They were also informed about how and why they had been selected to participate. All aspects of what was to occur and what might occur were disclosed to the participants so that they could comprehend the information and make a rational and mature judgement, since participants are autonomous agents and should have the right to choose whether or not to be part of a research. Therefore, each Foundation Phase teacher and the one HOD from the academic stream received an information letter to take home in order to consider participating in this research.

Thereafter, the participants were presented with an informed consent document. This document again explained what the research entailed and what exactly was required of them. The contact details of the researcher were available on this document in case of any uncertainties or queries. Participants gave written consent for the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and for the recording of these interviews. The verbal and written briefing of the participants included important details, such as:

- the purpose of the research;
- the researcher's own details;
- the reason for selecting the setting and participants;
- the possible, anticipated and potential benefits and/or harms;
- information on the extent of privacy and confidentiality;
- the right to participate or withdraw; and
- the future use of the information.

Further permission was obtained from the participants to use the data for academic research purposes, and the participants were assured that they would be acknowledged in the research for their contributions and participation. They were also informed before signing consent that they would not be recognised or traceable through the intended research outputs, namely, the dissertation and potential publication of academic journal articles.

3.10.3 Privacy and confidentiality

Since privacy and confidentiality are inherent rights of all participants, all information and records provided by participants or obtained from them directly or indirectly are confidential (Nayak *et al.*, 2016:294.). The ethical principle of confidentiality exists to safeguard

participants from the harm that can befall them if they are intentionally or inadvertently associated with any data that are collected (Chowdhury, 2015:152; Petrova *et al.*, 2016:4).

To adhere to this ethical principle, I had verbal discussions with the participants about the issues of privacy and confidentiality and gave them the assurance that they would be protected. Before revealing or sharing any information that could identify participants, the permission of the participants was obtained verbally and in writing (Tracy, 2019:81).

The right to privacy refers specifically to the extent and general circumstances under which personal information is shared with or withheld from others. Therefore, participants were made aware that the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews were to be recorded on a digital voice recorder. They were also assured that, although information provided would be accessible to the researcher and supervisors and would be published, the exclusion of names and identifiable data would be ensured. The right to privacy was furthermore maintained as the collected data were kept strictly confidential on a computer with a password needed to access.

Additionally, no identification by name was disclosed (Wolf *et al.*, 2015:597). Although the names of the participants were used during the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews to facilitate communication, their names were not recorded during the transcription of the data. Pseudonyms for participants were used. They were referred to as ‘Respondent 1’, ‘Respondent 2’, and so on. This minimised the prospect of the research having any adverse effect on the participants (Petrova *et al.*, 2016:2). The research data were also coded in such a manner that they could not be associated with or linked to either the participants or the school where the study was conducted. No personal information was used in the research report and article to be published, and readers will therefore be unable to identify or trace the research participants.

I, as data collector of the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, as well as the co-coder (supervisor) involved in this research, had ownership of the raw data, including those which identified the participants. Along with this right, we were made fully aware of and responsible for ensuring that, when the raw data was shared, all necessary measures were taken and followed to maintain confidentiality.

3.10.4 Confidentiality of data

The right to confidentiality refers to the researcher's responsibility to protect all data collected within the scope of the research from being made available to any other persons. Participants were assured that the data would not be disclosed to anyone other than myself and the co-coder, who was the study leader as well, and that information would not be traced back to the individual (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015:1122). Appropriate anonymity and confidentiality of information was maintained during the creation, storage, access, transfer and disposal of records.

At the beginning of the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, the participants were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded. The agreement was that the voice recordings would be stored electronically in a password-protected file on my personal computer. Any data in hardcopy, such as transcribed copies of the interviews, would be stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed after five years by being shredded. Thereafter, electronic data will be permanently erased from the computer. Participants were reassured that all data collected would be treated as confidential and that secure data storage would be guaranteed. To abide by this principle, I kept all received data in a safe place to which only I had access. The security of computerised data was confirmed by means of a personal password; therefore, the data were protected from unauthorised access, and information was used only for the purposes for which it was collected. The information obtained through the transcripts of the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews was read by me, the supervisor as co-coder and the interview attendees only. Confidentiality was pledged to the participants that no information would be shared with anyone who was not involved in the research without the explicit permission of the participants concerned.

3.10.5 The right to self-determination and autonomy

The right to self-determination is based on the ethical principle of respect for and protection of participants during research (Agawa & Takeuchi, 2016:9; Jang *et al.*, 2016:27). Autonomy refers to research that respects and protects participants' rights and dignity (Creswell, 2014:37; Kanadli, 2017:1849). To respect the rights and dignity of the participants involved at the research setting, I informed them that the raw data from the interviews would not be shared with the SMT or the principal. Furthermore, the invitation of the participants to the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews was done by means of informative letters that explained the research and its purpose. Violation of the participants' right to self-determination was avoided as no coercion, covert data collection or deception was practised. Coercion

involves explicit excessive rewards for agreeing to participate (Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015:2). In the information letters, it was clearly stated that there was no monetary or other reward for participation.

3.10.6 Justice

The principle of justice deals with participants' right to be treated fairly and justly in all circumstances relating to the research (Johnson & Parry, 2015:17). It also refers to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary withdrawal of participants involved in the research. Justice in particular, however, refers to the fair recruitment and selection of participants based on scientific reasoning and the purpose of the research question (Colquitt *et al.*, 2015:258). The recruitment and selection of participants for this research was based on participants related to the research question (Robinson *et al.*, 2016:3). No person was unfairly excluded from the research, as this could exclude them from the social understanding of the situation. All Foundation Phase teachers at the special school currently teaching CAPS were invited to participate in the research.

3.10.7 Beneficence and non-maleficence

According to the principle of non-maleficence, research must not cause harm to the participants or to any person in general. The principle of beneficence includes that the research should make a positive contribution towards people's welfare (Darnell *et al.*, 2016:438; Nebeker *et al.*, 2016:579). As the researcher, I was therefore responsible for minimising harm and maximising the benefits of participation. In this research, no known harm or risk was anticipated for participants. The only potential risk to participants might have been self-disclosure through participation. I further explained to the participants that there would be no direct benefit of the research study to them, but that information gathered and the outcome of the research study might contribute towards the successful implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in special schools.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The research methodology as discussed in this chapter included discussions on the research paradigm, research approach and design, the population, sampling and recruitment strategies, as well as data collection and analysis strategies. Ensuring trustworthiness during the research process was explained. Finally, the ethical considerations applied in this

research study were described. The next chapter deals with the data analysis, findings and discussion of the results.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter elaborated on the research methodology. This chapter contemplates the data generation and findings obtained from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and document analysis.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Taking into consideration the implementation of CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at special schools, the research was guided by the following main research question: What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at one Gauteng special school? The data derived from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and document analysis are presented in this chapter by discussing the findings through the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis.

4.2.1 Themes and sub-themes emerging from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews

The following seven (7) themes and eighteen (18) sub-themes emerged from the interview data:

- Profile of participants
- Teacher attitudes towards CAPS
- Inappropriateness of CAPS for the academic stream in a special school
    - High language standards
    - Learners' home language versus language of teaching and learning
    - High mathematical standards
    - CAPS is not appropriately adapted for learners with disabilities
    - Pace of learning and teaching
    - Learners progressed, not promoted
- Teacher training
- Support given to LSEN teachers

- School-based support
- DBE-based support

- Participants' views about DBE and school policies
- Provision of resources
  - Teaching and learning resources and materials
  - Inadequate funding
- Teaching strategies and approaches
- Ways to enhance support for special school teachers

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Profile of participants

Six Foundation Phase teachers were interviewed, one of which is also the head of department of the Foundation Phase. Table 4.1 illustrates the biographical profiles of the participants.

Table 4.1: BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Specialisations/ Extra qualifications	Years of teaching experience
A	36	F	Foundation Phase B.Ed. Degree	Honours degree in Psychology and Learner Support – Remedial Teaching	12
B	38	F	Foundation Phase B.Ed. Degree	Honours degree in Special Needs Education and Learner Support	14
C	45	F	Psychology Degree	Certificate in Foundation Phase Education; Clay Therapy and Clay Track Therapy certificate	10
D	33	F	Foundation Phase B.Ed. Degree		8
E	32	F	Foundation Phase B.Ed. Degree	Certificate in Special Education for mildly to moderately intellectually disabled learners	8
F	50	F	Higher Education Diploma	2-year Diploma in Remedial Teaching	27

The six participants who were interviewed are all female and their ages range from 32 to 50 years old. All six participants stated that they had experience with teaching in a mainstream environment. However, it was mentioned by all of the participants that they had preferred and enjoyed teaching in a special school environment and thus had a good understanding regarding teaching Home Language and Mathematics. Narratives supporting the findings were:

Participant A: I've always had a passion for special needs children.

Participant E: One of my passions was to teach special ed kids.

At the time of the interviews, all the participants were teaching in the Foundation Phase, in the academic stream in a special school, and presented different qualifications: One participant has a three-year Psychology Degree, with an additional certificate in Clay Therapy and Clay Track Therapy; another participant has a four-year Higher Education Diploma as well as a Foundation Phase Education certificate for Grade R to 3, with an additional Certificate in Special Education for mildly to moderately intellectually disabled learners; a third participant has a two-year Diploma in Remedial Education; while three participants have a four-year Bachelors of Education degree, specialising in the Foundation Phase – one has an Honours Degree in Learner Support and another has an Honours Degree in Psychology.

All participants are passionate about their work and exercised preference with regard to the Foundation Phase. Their teaching experience ranged from 8 up to 27 years. It was also noted by two participants that they exercised preference with regard to teaching learners with special education needs. Narratives portraying their views were:

Participant A: I just have a love for younger kids and I feel like I get along with them better than I do with uhm the older kids.

Participant B: I started off teaching in a remedial school and I really enjoyed it. Well, I like working with little ones… I feel that's where the biggest difference is made.

Participant C: I love working with children with special needs, because actually, you can change a life.

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Teacher attitudes towards the CAPS

Responses derived from the interviews portrayed attitudes of participants teaching in the special school environment using the CAPS (DBE, 2011a).

All, except participant B (who indicated a neutral stance), portrayed negativity towards teaching the CAPS (DBE, 2011a) in their specific LSEN environment. The reasons provided by participants for their negative attitudes towards the CAPS were mostly due to inflexibility of the curriculum, the standards set by the CAPS was too high, and the time set out for activities for LSEN learners was too little and therefore LSEN learners were not able to meet the learning outcomes as stated in the CAPS (DBE, 2011a). Participants stated that the curriculum did not take into consideration the extra activities during teaching and learning due to challenges and barriers to learning present in LSEN schools. These sentiments will be expounded in some of the themes that follow.

Participants' attitudes towards CAPS are illustrated in the following quotations:

> *Participant C: If we talk about CAPS beneficial towards special needs, then my answer is no. CAPS focus on mainstream children that can actually work on their own and actually have the capacity to learn more and take in more information than a child with special needs, CAPS is absolutely not the right 'treatment' for children with special needs.*
>
> *Participant B: I have a negative outlook towards the CAPS. I just really feel that it's not suited to our kids' needs, it's not adapted to our kids' needs. It almost feels like they just expect our kids to do everything a mainstream child can do and they're just not wired that way.*
>
> *Participant A: I think in a perfect world the CAPS will be excellent to teach our kids. But, with our specific learners and the situations that we have in class and the types of learners we have in class; you can't meet all the needs that the CAPS require you to.*

4.2.1.3 Theme 3: Inappropriateness of CAPS for the academic stream in a special school

The participants' views portrayed that the CAPS provides guidelines for mainstream schools, but that it was too rigid in terms of the scheduled delivery of the curriculum and did not take into account that teachers needed to slow down the pace for learners, where necessary, in a

special school. One participant suggested a total review of the CAPS and to rather rewrite the curriculum considering and accommodating learners with special needs. They concurred that the CAPS is developed for mainstream schools and, in its current form, inappropriate to apply in the academic stream in a special school. One participant stated that trying to apply the CAPS in a special school is not quality teaching, since one has to rush through the content. Another participant said that within mainstream, a teacher can give instructions and the learner will be able to follow the instruction. With LSEN schools, teachers need to repeat instructions and to be more hands-on with the learners. Examples of narratives that corroborate participants responses were:

> *Participant F: CAPS is absolutely for the public schools, they don't take LSEN schools into consideration at all like I say, they say, but we do, must do, we cannot just make up our own. They want us to rush through it and it's a big difference between a child in a mainstream school. The CAPS is too high and it's mainly aimed for mainstream schools.*

> *Participant C: You cannot complete a CAPS curriculum at a special needs school with the disabilities you have to face every day. CAPS is not for special schools.*

From the theme, *"the CAPS is inappropriate for the academic stream in a special school",* sub-themes emerged and will now be presented with some of the transcripts from the participants to substantiate the participants' responses.

a) Theme 3: Sub-theme 1 – High language standards

Responses derived from the interviews portrayed attitudes and personal experiences of participants teaching Home Language using the CAPS (DBE, 2011a). Participants mentioned that their learners struggled to meet the outcomes of Home Language due to the intrinsic or extrinsic barriers to learning faced by their learners.

Furthermore, the participants were all in agreement that learners struggled with basic language skills and LSEN learners had numerous challenges to take into account. Examples of learners' challenges in learning Home Language were sentence construction, comprehension of basic instructions, comprehension of basic vocabulary, and problem-solving within a language context with the use of higher-order skills. In essence, participants were of the view that the high language standards of CAPS were inappropriate for the LSEN

school context (even though the CAPS curriculum was only used in the academic stream). These sentiments are reflected in the following excerpt:

> *Participant D: What the Department expects the learners to do is very difficult for their level of academics and for their level of learning and reading because you can't read something and not comprehend what you read so if it's too difficult to read or understand, the child will never be able to do the work properly. The standard should not be the same, and the content should be made easier, so that the learners will also be able to do the work.*

b) Theme 3: Sub-theme 2 – Learners' home language versus language of learning and teaching

Participants indicated that learners' home language (mother tongue) was not always the same as the home language (also the language of teaching and learning) taught at school. Also, there were instances when teachers could not communicate with learners in the learners' home languages. Therefore, the participants found it challenging to teach via the specific language of learning and teaching. Furthermore, learners experienced barriers to learning, which made it more difficult since they do not easily grasp the content. These sentiments are reflected in the following excerpt:

> Participant C: *The children come from home, talking two, three different languages. The home language* [language of teaching and learning] *is not their first language, so already there is a barrier to learning, it is their second or third language. Obviously, I cannot speak Zulu or Xhosa, I do have an assistant, so when I say one word, she would say one in her language and they would listen to her and they will repeat after me. Home languages is most of the time first vocabulary you have to teach them. "It is quite difficult to teach them in home language, because they are so young and because of their special needs. It takes them much longer to grasp the home language you're trying to teach them… They do not always understand what you are expecting from them, sometimes you have to repeat yourself several times.*

c) Theme 3: Sub-theme 3 – High mathematics standards

The participants voiced their stand towards the high standard set by CAPS (DBE, 2011a) for teaching Mathematics to Foundation Phase learners at a special school. Their opinions portrayed that barriers to learning affected leaners' ability to conceptualise the learning content,

especially during the teaching of Mathematics. As previously mentioned in the findings about teaching Home Language, the participants indicated that LSEN learners required additional support during the teaching of mathematics. One of the difficulties mentioned by the participants is that the learners struggled to read word problems, or the questions asked in Mathematics tasks. Another challenge was that learners battled to comprehend vertical and horizontal addition. The following narratives support the viewpoints:

> Participant B: *The basics of mathematics for our little ones is already a very high standard that's expected of them and they do not reach them at all… Certain learning outcomes, like division, like times, our kids are still struggling to do basic plus and minus signs where they already bring in long division in CAPS.*

> Participant A: *With word problems most of our kids struggle to read and the ones that are good with maths struggle with reading and the ones that are good with the languages, struggle with maths. Word problems are reading within maths so they struggle with the reading part, they don't understand it, like comprehension I told you about, so they can't take out the concepts and the numbers they need to use.*

> Participant D: *They can't read the questions, they can't do the sum, they get confused between things like the long, the vertical addition and the horizontal addition are very confusing, they don't know which one to use. These children really struggle with the maths, because it is just too difficult. Their math age is much lower than what they are in that grade.*

Two participants also mentioned that dyslexia as a barrier to learning makes it even more difficult to grasp the general concepts of mathematics and understanding the processing of the numbers and sums. Learners with dyslexia struggled to understand what they needed to do, as previously mentioned, since the answering of the questions were in words, the learners did not understand, since they found the reading part difficult. It was mentioned by one participant that LSEN learners struggled with specific mathematical concepts such as number recognition, operation and relations, time and division. Another participant noticed measurement, doubling and halving to be a real challenge.

> Participant B: *It is something that they need to experience. For example, if you're dealing with weight and mass, they need to be able to experience heavy and light for themselves. Not being able to recognise a number, number concepts… I struggle big time with number concepts.*

Furthermore, the participants concurred that for learners to grasp certain mathematical concepts, they actually needed to physically move, play, develop visual perceptions and be able to make a star jump, which was not possible for learners with physical disabilities. Participants expressed different opinions as follows:

> Participant C: *As I say, CAPS maths is mean! They want the kids to write number 1 to 20 in like the second term and like I said there's no way. I struggle now to get them to count 1 to 5 and then they will do a 1, one day in this book. If you're going to work according to the CAPS book and then like the next time of the day after we have number 2. We did number 1 for a week, and I need a week or two weeks for number 1.*

d) Theme 3 – Sub-theme 4: CAPS is not appropriately adapted for learners with disabilities experiencing barriers to learning

Participants' responses indicated that CAPS (DBE, 2011a) was not appropriately adapted for learners with disabilities and therefore is an inappropriate curriculum to apply in a special school environment. All of the participants stated that LSEN learners needed extra support due to disabilities and barriers to learning, which the CAPS (DBE, 2011a) do not make provision for. The participants encountered the need to accommodate different barriers to learning in their classes each day. One participant mentioned that she had 50 learners in her class, with different learning barriers that she had to accommodate on a daily basis. Examples of barriers to learning the participants encountered were loss of hearing, loss of eyesight, cerebral palsy, dyslexia, physical disabilities, learners who were quadriplegic, poor socio-economic circumstances and learners with traumatic brain injury. Three participants emphasised language as a barrier to learning as well as hearing and eyesight impairment, two participants referred to physical disabilities and quadriplegia that they needed to accommodate, and two participants specifically indicated phonics as a barrier to learning. One participant mentioned that she sought support from the District-based Support Team to accommodate the barriers to learning in her class but indicated that they too were not knowledgeable enough to make suggestions. Although the CAPS curriculum was not appropriately adapted for the LSEN context in a formal sense, participants reported that they did adapt the curriculum to facilitate learning. The participants agreed that barriers to learning were not accommodated by the CAPS as indicated through the following narratives:

> *Participant F: There are so many different disabilities and levels in a class. I actually went, and I did my counting on how they count every kind of disability in your class, and I came to 50. It's like I actually have 50 kids in my class. I've got a quadriplegic in*

my class he cannot sit right on his own he can take a crayon in his hand, but he grabs it physically, he just scrolls over the whole paper and you have to force his hand to get his hand open again to take out that crayon because his hands go into spasms. There's no control over his body and hands.

Participant D: They expect a special needs school to do the same as what normal children do, and we cannot compare the two…

Participant C: We have to adapt, the CAPS, since it is a big difference. You can't use all the work just as it is. And even with adaptations it's still too much to teach them. It definitely has to be cut down. You trim it.

Participant A: You can't use all the work just as it is in the CAPS. You definitely have to adapt, and even with adaptations it's still too much to teach them. You cut it down and there goes a lot of extra support in. You need to be more concrete and abstract, so obviously laying the concrete foundation more heavily before moving onto the abstract since the number concepts is a bit…off can you say off.

Participant C: I find it difficult to teach a certain child with a certain disability, or to get a concept over to the child, or I don't know how to actually get this child to grasp it…You can teach them now and an hour or two later they actually forgot what you've taught them, and then you have to re-teach and it really takes so much time to just grasp one main idea in home language before they actually would remember that work. I worked on a theme every week or two weeks.

Participant D: You can try and explain something in a different way for the learner to understand and you can try using visual aids to help learners understand the question or to be able to answer the question so that's the extra help.

e) Theme 3 – Sub-theme 5: Pace of learning and teaching

Participants stated that they needed to make constant adaptations to the curriculum to make sure that the learners grasped the basics. This made it difficult, since CAPS expected a teacher to cover a large amount of content to reach the learning outcomes, resulting in CAPS been delivered at a fast pace. However, a fast-paced delivery of the curriculum content was

not possible in a special school environment. One participant stated that since learners struggled even with the basic skills, they needed extra time and support, which the CAPS does not accommodate. Another participant mentioned that further challenges were: the need by learners for individual support and overcrowded classrooms due to the number of learners, their specific needs and assistive devices. The participants mentioned that they needed to apply different teaching strategies for different learners due to the slower pace of learning. One participant mentioned that in the mainstream sector a teacher would be able to teach a concept within one week, but within the special school sector, that same concept will take three weeks to even a whole term to teach.

Participants expressed opinions as follows:

> *Participant B: The work schedule does not cater for LSEN kids. They move very quickly from one topic to another in the CAPS curriculum. An LSEN child needs a lot of repetition… they need a lot of time to consolidate concepts, unfortunately CAPS just doesn't give that, it doesn't allow us that time.*
>
> *Participant D: It is not possible, there isn't a way that I can keep to the time allocation, especially in our school or in my class. Some learners work very slow, they need lots of attention and one on one help. Some of the children cannot write so we have to write for them and with the CAPS they also expect the learners to know what to do already, when the basis hasn't been taught, or they don't understand the basics and then we are passing our work frame because it takes two or three days, instead of just one day to do something.*
>
> *Participant C: I think it is for me CAPS it's too complicated for the children, special needs children and too much work If you wanted to teach CAPS at a special needs school your, your expectations must be much lower.*
>
> *Participant E: All the CAPS guidelines are there for mainstream schools, but in special education schools, again the time difference and the speed that these learners take the time to grasp a concept is just not sufficient, you rush through a big amount of work which should actually be done over two years in a special education school, so the time allocations in the CAPS to certain concepts, are just too short. It would be nice if we can actually take the CAPS curriculum and just rewrite it for kids with special needs.*

f) Theme 3 – Sub-theme 6: Learners progressed not promoted

Participants were of opinion that since the CAPS did not cater for learning disabilities, learners with disabilities were mostly progressed, not promoted. This meant that learners had not really passed the grade but were promoted to the next grade because of the DBE policy pertaining to promotions and progressions (DoE, 2012) where learners were only allowed to repeat once in a phase. According to participants, this policy-informed practice was detrimental to learners because they were not given a chance to catch up with work, so they fell behind, year after year. It was described as follows:

> Participant A: If they are conditionally progressed, they do not reach those outcomes.

4.2.1.4 Theme 4: Teacher training and development

Data indicated that the participants had adequate formal qualifications. These were degrees in teaching and psychology, honours degrees in remedial and special education, as well as applicable certificates. However, participants indicated the need for specialised teacher training that addresses all barriers to learning. One participant stated that knowledgeable teachers would be able to utilise different teaching strategies to accommodate disabilities and barriers to learning. Although one participant stated that teachers do attend in-service training through workshops on mathematics, all participants agreed that they experienced insufficient teacher training from the DBE on how to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and how to adapt the CAPS in the special school environment. Furthermore, participants indicated that it was expected of teachers to be knowledgeable about barriers to learning, especially foundation phase teachers, because it is primarily in the Foundation Phase where learners' disabilities ought to be identified for timeous intervention.

> *Participant A: You mostly feel that the Department does not support you enough and does not provide necessary guidelines. They probably could elaborate more on certain of the concepts they want us to teach, although it's very well outlined in the CAPS (DBE, 2011a).*

> *Participant B: They actually do, not quite often. They've got math workshops that they run on a Saturday usually, they also train heads of Departments on curriculum, but like I say it's specific.*

Participant A: Training specifically towards learning difficulties, and to handle our special needs learners because we are a physical LSEN school where we have a lot of physical disabilities, so we are trained as to how to help learners with reading, learning difficulties, but not necessarily physical disabilities.

4.2.1.5 Theme 5: Support given to LSEN teachers

This theme centred on the views expressed by the participants about their specific expectations regarding support. Participants revealed through sub-themes that they expected sufficient internal and external support but did not receive support from most parents or the DBE and expressed their concerns over these inadequacies. These sub-themes will now be elaborated on:

a) Theme 5 – Sub-theme 1: School-based support

Participants elaborated on the importance of additional internal support. Internal support systems implied class assistants, parental support, therapists, educational psychologists, medical specialists and the school management team (SMT). Participants were of the opinion that they were supported, although it was indicated that the support was inadequate and unreliable. Although assistants were available, they only assisted in large classes, since there were not enough assistants appointed to be an effective support system to all Foundation Phase LSEN teachers. Opinions about the parents were that sometimes they did not understand the assignments or homework of the learners and also needed support to be able to support their children. Furthermore, one participant indicated that some parents just did not care about their children. Therapists were available at the school and are part of the SBST team at the school. One participant stated that the therapists provided extra therapy to the learners, depending on the need for either speech therapy, physiotherapy, or occupational therapy. Therapists also assisted the teachers with suggestions on how to assist the learners in class. One participant also mentioned that she expected more support from the school SMT. She was of the opinion that they ought to visit the classes more often to identify the support needs of teachers. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the participants were of the opinion that the DBE did not provide the necessary support and there was no differentiation between mainstream and special education, especially with regards to the CAPS.

These were the participants' comments regarding internal support:

- ***Assistants to assist in classes***

  Participant C: *We do have assistants, but we do not have enough…. so our facilitators go to the classes where there are many children. Some teachers don't get facilitators and they still need facilitators, so we don't get support as staff to help or to do anything with the kids, we have to do everything by ourselves. Sometimes therapists would actually sit next to a child and be with the child in that session and it also helps the therapist to exactly see what the child is struggling with so that she can focus on the problem and help him or her to actually grasp the concept.*

- ***Parental support***

  Participant A: Because there was no support for parents and I think that if some of the parents would phone me and said I don't understand what the kids must do and it's really something that's not difficult to understand what to do. So I also think some of them don't have the intelligence to help these kids and some of them really… to say it straightforward, they don't care, it is just an effort, it's easier to say go and sit in front of the TV and watch TV.

- ***Therapists***

  Participant B: Well support means good support from the different types of therapists.

  Participant C: There is a therapist that comes into your session when you teach home language, and if you cannot get to the child, the therapist would actually sit next to a child and be with the child in that session and it also helps therapist to exactly see what the child is struggling with that she can focus on the problem, but there is also limited therapists to help.

- ***Management (SMT):***

  Participant B: I definitely expect top management to support me, which a lot of the time they do but it could be more. I just expect top management to be sort of more hands on. I feel like they are forever in their offices and they're not actually coming to have a look and seeing that we're okay in class and seeing if there is something that they can do to sort of almost feel like they are there to put out fires.

b) Theme 5 – Sub-theme 2: DBE-based support

The participants revealed a need for the DBE to be more supportive towards teachers at special schools. They identified the need for workshops, meetings and training. Participant A mentioned that during cluster meetings or workshops they indicated that they needed more training and support on special education, but feedback from the DBE was that they needed to make their own adaptions of the CAPS to accommodate barriers to learning. Participant A referred to special needs schools as “dumping centres”. One participant indicated that the teacher unions were more supportive but visits from DBE to their classes mostly resulted in head counts of learners in class, implying that there was no real support given by the DBE. She proposed more conferences and webinars for teachers at special schools on how to adapt the CAPS to accommodate disabilities and learners experiencing barriers to learning. One participant proposed more classroom observations by education district officials were required to get a better idea of the needs at special schools and how to provide appropriate support to these schools. It was mentioned that DBE officials have to get to know the real world of special schools before writing curricula and policies.

Illustrative quotes on these findings are:

> Participant A: *I think the Department can give us more support when we go to cluster meetings or any subject meetings or workshops. We tell them we are from a special school and we need help, then the answers that we get is adapt yourself, change it yourself and just do as much as you can. This is not really what we need… we need a curriculum for special schools to include them into the education as well... Some days I do feel supported, but most of the days I feel like as a special education teacher I have to go out and carve my own path since they don’t really look at special education schools as schools, and more look at it like dumping centres. I really wish that I could make up a curriculum for our Foundation Phase.*
>
> *Participant F: Support, well we’re doing a lot of webinars, but it was one of the unions that gave support to us right presenting us as LSEN. It was a special school conference. I don’t see the educational department doing it. Support for me starts with the curriculum and to actually come and see what is going on in our classes. We rarely get visits from the Department. They come, they do a head count, and they go, but they never really actually see the kids and how we work with the kids. I think they are in a place where they don’t actually know what’s going on in real life they sit and they write the curriculum and they know the theory, but they don’t know how to practically do it*

themselves, they have never been teachers, so they don't know actually in a classroom to do this to come and see.

Participant D: Yes, I think there should be people that work at the district that only work with special schools that only specialise in special schools so that they do know what's going on and that they can help with the curriculum and write a curriculum specialised with subjects that will help the special schools.

4.2.1.6 Theme 6: Participants views about DBE and school policies

The majority of participants explained in the interviews that although participants acknowledged policies and guidelines related to CAPS, they did not incorporate these guidelines as such. One participant was of the opinion that the education policies were not applicable and did not give sufficient guidance for the inclusive environment. Another participant chose to only focus on the school policy and mentioned that the policies related to CAPS are mostly applicable to mainstream schools. Still another participant actually admitted that she did not read the policies and just accepted that as the CAPS, policies are not applicable to the special school environment. One participant also stated that she had some knowledge of policies, however, when probed, she struggled to mention policies and actually did not know where to find the available policies. Another participant voiced that she incorporated educational policies with regard to certain curriculum issues such as the incorporation of religion education into the curriculum.

They voiced their views as follows:

Participant E: In a way we incorporate policies, but also in a way not, it is for mainstream schools.

Participant D: I know the names of the policies, but I haven't read them. I know about the PAM so we just follow what the school's policy says and the school's policy is according to what the Department's policy is and well I hope it is in accordance. We probably do incorporate some of the policy but there will be some of the policies that we do leave out if it is not compatible with our school or compliant with our schools or if it doesn't work with the type of children in our school.

Participant A: I've just said that the policies are a little bit all over the place.

4.2.1.7 Theme 7: Provision of resources

Participants elaborated on the importance of adequate resources to be able to support the learners, but they indicated the resources were mostly insufficient. Sub-themes that emerged were the provision of teaching and learning materials as resources and inadequate funding.

a) Theme 7 – Sub-theme 1: Teaching and learning resources and materials

One participant indicated that the resources at the school were outdated. Others mentioned the books they received from the DBE were the only resources received from the Department. They were of the opinion that although the level of competency in the books was too high to be useful for LSEN, they still made use of the books. Some of the participants opted to make use of ideas from the internet.

Their responses were as follows:

> *Participant F: We get a book from the Department of Education, every term a new book. I use it but I used certain pages over certain things. It's got nice stickers in it, all kids love stickers, and it's good for their fine motor control to take off the stickers and stick it on the right spot. I'll use those things but some of the other things are for me too formal. Yeah, the kid is not supposed to do so much formal work; they are supposed to more be able to play and enjoy and learn through play. There's no formal book for each child in my class. I find other resources in other books not so difficult because some of the things in the DBE books are too difficult for these children. The kids don't have the ability to hold the scissors so I cannot let them do the cutting work.*

> *Participant E: I'll use Sparkle Box, Kids' Zone and E-classroom on the Internet, GPLMS which I like, which if you go to the government's website the DBE-based books. I use a lot of Oxford readers and Pinterest worksheets... The DBE, I think they could actually give us a little bit more stuff freely instead of us having to go onto the website and having to search for them to download it so maybe they could make things more freely available.*

> *Participant C: For example, puzzles that been made 30 years ago and it's not enough pieces, it's not really incorporated in such a way to make it more efficient for the child with regards to colour and shape, some of these puzzles can be quite difficult to build.*

b) Theme 7 – Sub-theme 2: Inadequate funding

Findings revealed that adequate funding is a problem and if participants needed funds for professional development, they needed to pay for it themselves.

One participant voiced her stand with regard to funds:

> *Participant A: The training and the cost around that is too much for an educator to sustain and if you're not in a private school, who has the funds, you struggle to go. So, if you're going to your own training in your own time, and your own money, you're not going to get the training.*

4.2.1.8 Theme 8: Teaching strategies and approaches

In considering the barriers to learning and extra support learners in special schools need, the participants indicated that they had to be innovative in their teaching approaches and incorporated different teaching strategies and approaches.

Findings form the interviews portrayed examples on how the participants constantly needed to adapt the CAPS through applying different teaching approaches and strategies to accommodate the barriers to learning and diverse disabilities in their classrooms. From what was reported, sign language, music and songs, as well as appropriate concrete resources were used. The concrete resources were adapted when necessary, such as using large print. One participant verbalised that she incorporated sign language, another participant incorporated music and songs, and physical resources such as blocks, beads and other concrete resources were mentioned by two participants. One participant mentioned that she utilised bigger counters and peg boards as well as spring-loaded scissors for those learners with challenges in gross motor skills. One participant elaborated by stating that she made use of big alphabet letters on the wall to point to or cooldrink bottle tops and counting cards. Participants further mentioned that they needed to plan the seating of learners with hearing and vision impairments in class to ensure that they could effectively follow the lessons in class. One participant indicated that her classroom was small, and she was not able to accommodate all of those learners in the front of her class. Another verbalised that during re-teaching of the content, she needed to incorporate a different strategy and sometimes during teaching of home language, she made use of a bingo board and spinning wheel, where the learners had to identify the correct word. The examples mentioned by one participant were an indication of appropriately adapting the LTSM, taking into account the learning barriers such as memory

problems. She also adapted downwards when teaching number concepts by scaffolding learning through doing lesser work than what would be done with children not experiencing barriers to learning. Furthermore, she determined a baseline for scaffolding to take place in learning with the performance of the 'weakest' child used as a baseline of competence for the rest of the class.

Participants verbalised their initiatives and innovativeness as follows:

> *Participant C: I have incorporated sign language with my home language to show them the action as well as showing the shape of my mouth.*

> *Participant A: We will do timetables, so I'll use the blocks or I'll use beads, or I'll use pencils like concrete things, groups of two so 2 times 4 or put the four groups of two down for them so they can visually see it as well as seeing it abstractly with a number, combine the two strategies, like to draw the pictures and put down the block so they can see the whole thing and how they relate to each other.*

> *Participant F: Songs work well, since there is a lot of repetition in songs and it is fun for the learners, especially for those that are able to do the movements together with the songs.*

> *Participant B: OK it's the gross motor that I need to support them in. I've got some children that I need bigger equipment for because their hand function isn't great. I've got two of them that need bigger uhm counters, peg boards, all that kind of stuff. We also use adaptable equipment in my class, instead of normal scissors we use a spring-loaded scissors so instead of having to use two or three fingers the child uses their whole hand.*

> *Participant C: In special education you have to adapt everything within the normal curriculum for the child and there goes a lot of extra support in. You need to be more concrete and abstract, so obviously laying the concrete foundation more heavily before moving onto the abstract since the number concepts is a bit… off. I look at the curriculum and I will take the main ideas out of the curriculum and then I would, if it's a story for example that is more than three minutes long, I would find a story with that theme that is less than two minutes long. If there's a number concept from one to ten, I would actually half it from one to five. If it is sight words, they will only start with 5 to 10 sight words and then I would actually take my weakest child and if my weakest child*

can grasp three sight words, I will keep at three sight words for that day and only on the third or fourth day I would actually extend those sight words and sometimes, it will pass over to the next week as well. If my weakest child in the class understood, then I am satisfied that the rest of the class will be fine during assessments.

Participant A: You have to make sure that they are seated in such a way that they, where they can actually hear you and listen nicely. Then along with that you need to implement the learners with eyesight, that has difficulty seeing, and they also have to be close to you. So, you can't have all of them in front because the classes aren't big enough.

Participant C: Okay, when you reteach some of the content for me, I don't always teach the same way I've taught it in the class previously or in the morning or however, I would actually find another way to get the concept over with this more in a fun way I'll try and put it in a game we are playing and, uhm, I'll teach them like that. For example, if I am teaching Home Language, I'll make a Bingo sheet with words and they have to go find the word when I call out the word, they have to go find the word and colour the block.

Furthermore, participants applied multimodal and multisensory approaches to accommodate learners with special needs towards developing learners holistically. Participants verbalised that they applied different modes of activity, employed sensory activities such as visual, kinaesthetic, auditory and tactile techniques and integrated diverse learning styles to ensure that the learners experienced learning in a variety of ways.

Examples of multimodal strategies were having learners knock on their tables or doors in tens or hundreds to explain mathematical concepts on the door while counting the numbers out loud, using concrete blocks of numbers, while drawing the pictures of the numbers and adding the number itself, using a game board "Smack the Maggie", where the learners need to spin the board, see where it lands, call out the number and count the steps. Furthermore, participants utilised visual aids during assessments together with the question they needed to read to assist the learner to understand the question in different ways. They also incorporated physical activities during assessments where they put the learners in a circle on the carpet and let them throw the bean bag with the number requested testing number recognition. The participants also claimed that they showed initiative by designing their lessons in such a way that different techniques were applied to ensure all learners had a fair chance at learning successfully. This implied different impactful activities that targeted the learning strengths of most learners at one time, focusing on all senses.

The following narratives portrayed the different initiatives incorporated by the participants:

Participant A: I just perform in my class, I literally knock on the board, and they need to knock on their tables, to get them interactive actively involved in the lesson and they are used to the fact that if I need to borrow, they need to knock-knock on the next-door neighbours, the tens or the hundreds, to actually borrow. Yeah, that's a simple example.

Participant B: Put down the objects for them so they can visually see it as well as seeing it abstractly with a number, combine the two strategies of only making, uhm, putting down the numbers. We put down numbers, will draw the pictures and put down the block so they can see the whole thing and how they relate to each other.

Participant C: Game board like Smack the Maggie and every time when they roll, they have to count out how many steps they have to take and when the counter is on the dot and then they have to recount again on the… on the board to see where they land, and they have to call out the number.

Participant D: I try using visual aids to help learners understand the question or to be able to answer the question so that's the extra help supplied to our learners.

Participant F: At the moment, because we're doing assessments, they must know number recognition one to five, so on my carpet with chalk I will draw five circles and I will in each circle write the number and then the child must stand at a point and he's got a bean bag and now I tell the child throw the bean bag by the number four, and then he must take the bean bag and throw it in.

4.2.1.9 Theme 9: Ways to enhance support for special school teachers

Insufficient and inadequate internal and external support for teachers revealed through the findings were discussed in theme 5. However, the participants further suggested ways to improve support. One participant verbalised that support could be enhanced through research to be done by the DBE with regard to the development of a whole new special support system, including a new curriculum and revised books. She also mentioned support towards training teachers in using equipment that disabled learners are utilising, e.g., eye gaze computer programmes. It was mentioned by one participant that the SMT can also ensure additional support for teachers teaching learners with disabilities. Two participants mentioned that more support for parents was needed with regard to understanding the specific disability of the child

and how to support the child taking into account the barriers to learning. Another participant verbalised that more assistants in classes would enhance support, not only for the teacher, but for the learners as well. She mentioned that she currently had to do everything herself. One participant also stated that the high learner-teacher class ratio made it difficult to optimally address all the learning barriers experienced by learners. In order to optimise support for learners experiencing barriers to learning, the number of learners in a class should be reduced, taking into account the degree of disability. It was also mentioned by this participant that the DBE could take teacher's perspectives and experience in special education into consideration in order to enhance support for teachers.

> *Participant E: Like I said, revised books would be nice in a revised curriculum, but to get that we're going to have to do a lot of research and a whole new system of books needs to be written so they're gonna have to develop a whole new support system, since the support system is only for mainstream kids. Also, maybe the kids who needs to work on a computer or key that needs to work with an eye gaze, send people to train the teachers or say like pay 50% of the equipment.*
>
> *Participant A: Well, support means good support from the different types of therapists, also, uhm, support from parent. Because without the proper support that the parents give, you can't come to help the child.*
>
> *Participant D: We don't get support as staff to help or to do anything with the kids we have to do everything by ourselves, including cutting out worksheets and things like that.*
>
> *Participant C: Support could be enhanced. I just think there are too many children in a classroom and not enough teachers and assistants and therapists to help… if the school government and the Department actually take our teachers in consideration and learn from us and see we do need more help and support from not only the school, but from the Department, it would actually be beneficial to the child, parents and teachers.*

4.2.2 Document analysis

Relevant documents to be analysed were the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) (2001), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2011a), Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (2014), Conceptual and Operational

Guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: Special Schools as Resource Centres (2005a), Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom Grade R-12 (DBE, 2011b), Guidelines to Strengthen CAPS implementation (2017), research site (school) lesson plans and research site (school) Foundation Phase Policy. The documents were systematically analysed by using a document analysis guide. The purpose of the document analysis guide was to provide supplementary research data. The findings are indicated in the tables below.

Table 4.2: EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6 (EWP6) (DoE, 2001)

Document Analysis Guide	
1. Document being analysed, Date and Author	**EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6 – Special Needs Education Building an inclusive education and training system; 2001; Department of Education**
2. Why and for whom was the document written	The purpose of this paper was to set out guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa's Basic Education. This paper highlights the importance of active participation of all learners within the education system and suggests that education should transform and develop into an integrated education system where 'special needs and support services' are infused. This paper also suggests that flexible teaching should be encouraged within classrooms and that efficient guidance should be provided to teachers, parents and schools to enhance optimal support. Lastly, this paper states that barriers to learning arise from several factors such as curriculum content, medium of instruction, pace of teaching, insufficient time allocations and learning resources, inadequate legislation, uninvolved parents, inappropriate communication, and inadequate assessment strategies.
3. The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	This paper clearly outlines the framework for establishing an inclusive education and training system and emphasises that special schools should be strengthened and accommodate all learners with severe disabilities. It also states that curricula instruction should be flexible to ensure that all learners have an equal access to education and to accommodate individual learning disabilities. *This paper addresses the following key strategies:*

	Improvement of special schools, conversion to resource centres, identifying, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools, acknowledges the different role-players, adapting curricula content and assessment, establishing DBSTs to provide support services to special schools and specialised settings.
4. List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	It does not specifically address in detail the curriculum delivery at special schools, such as type of curriculum, how to adapt curriculum, how to provide a flexible learning environment, how to maximise participation, how and whom specifically will be providing curriculum support and development, or how teachers should provide curriculum and assessment support in special schools.

Table 4.3: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT (CAPS) (DBE, 2011a)

Document Analysis Guide	
1. Document being analysed, Date and Author	**CAPS; 2011a; Department of Basic Education**
2. Why and for whom was the document written	The CAPS document states in detail the curriculum to be taught in South African schools. Regarding this study, CAPS include the curriculum for Home Language and Mathematics to be taught in Foundation Phase classrooms. This document emphasises that holistic development and inclusivity of all learners are at the essence of this curriculum. The CAPS clearly outline all areas within the foundation phase subjects and what specific skills and knowledge are to be obtained in each term.
3. The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	This document outlines the knowledge and skills required for Foundation Phase learners. It outlines the importance of inclusive practices in all classrooms and promotes education for all irrespective of background or disability. This document also mentions amendments and time allocations for Foundation Phase learners for all subjects. It is also stated that an integrated approach to teaching and learning should be taken when implementing the CAPS and that assessment, baseline, formative and summative, for

	all subjects should be implemented throughout the school year. In this document, it is mentioned that the teaching and learning pace should be adjusted to provide all learners, regardless of disability, the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes. It also stipulates suggestions for formal and informal assessment for each subject, each term.
4. List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	This document does not provide guidelines on how exactly to address barriers to learning within classroom contexts and also does not provide measures on how to adapt prescribed learning content for special schools for learners with specific barriers to learning. It also does not provide ways in which assessment can be adjusted for learners with specific barriers to learning and does not give suggestions on how to adapt time allocations for each subject to meet the needs of all individuals.

Table 4.4 POLICY ON SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT (SIAS) (DBE, 2014)

Document Analysis Guide	
1. Document being analysed, Date and Author	**POLICY ON SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT; 2014; Department of Basic Education**
2. Why and for whom was the document written	This policy is aimed at giving more clarity about the implementation of EWP6, which should be read in conjunction with this policy. It also identifies the roles and responsibilities of teachers, managers, district-based support teams and parents/caregivers, and stipulates different support systems (internal and external) in order to provide optimal, individual support within classrooms.
3. The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	This content in this policy relates to all schools, that is mainstream and special schools. It outlines the process of identifying individual learner needs in relation to the home and school context, to establish the level and extent of additional support that is needed. It highlights the importance of teachers' role in an inclusive education classroom setting and states that different barriers to learning can arise by means of poor socio-economic circumstances, health issues, negative attitudes, inflexible curriculum and assessment, inappropriate

	language of learning and teaching, inadequate infrastructure and uninvolved parents, disability, and insufficient resources and assistive devices. It is stated that curricula should be implemented in a differentiated manner and assessment should be constantly adjusted to accommodate the diverse learning needs in classrooms. This policy states that learners with barriers require low, moderate and high levels of support, however it is not clearly specified how to identify the level of support required by a learner. The SIAS document recommends the support needed from schools, teachers and parents to optimally address individual barriers in classrooms. It also mentions that learning and teaching support materials and resources are necessary for optimal support, that additional time should be allocated for curriculum and assessment implementation and that additional support can take place by means of concessions during assessments to ensure that all learners, regardless of disability, have an equal opportunity to meet learning outcomes. Support via DBST requires districts to ensure that inclusive practices are implemented and that learners are correctly placed within the educational settings catering for their individual needs. Support via the DBST and the SBST requires specialists, such as educational psychologists and therapists, to ensure that learners are appropriately assessed and supported. In this policy, a set of forms are allocated that outlines the protocol to be followed in identifying and addressing barriers to learning that affect each individual. These forms state the procedures towards providing supportive measures taken by the school and parents to address individual disabilities and aids in the placement of learners with more severe barriers to learning in special schools.
4. List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	This policy does not provide specific guidelines as to how learning programmes and materials as well as assessment procedures should be made accessible and adapted to accommodate the diversity of learning needs. It also does not include how to effect differentiation of curriculum content and assessment, adjustment of classroom methodologies, and classroom environment.

Table 4.5 CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AS RESOURCE CENTRES (DoE, 2005a)

Document Analysis Guide	
Document being analysed, Date and Author	**CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AS RESOURCE CENTRES; 2005a; Department of Education**
Why and for whom was the document written	This document focuses on special schools as resource centres (SSRC) and provides a conceptual framework for SSRCs to move from the medical model to the inclusive education model. This policy also emphasises the role of special schools in that they should provide high-intensity support, holistic curriculum implementation, development of learning support materials, adaptative assessment and how to indicate the level of individual support needed.
The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	This document discusses the roles of special schools that function as resource centres. This document lists the variety of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning such as poor health and socio-economic circumstances, inappropriate language of learning and teaching, negative attitudes, inflexible curriculum and assessment, inadequate school infrastructure, uninvolved parents, disability and insufficient resources and insufficient assistive devices. However, this policy also emphasises that a flexible curriculum and assessment practices should be at the heart of an inclusive education system and that assessment should be in line with national curriculum requirements. *This policy promotes:* Making existing special schools part of an integrated education system; encouraging schools to operate within a disability rights framework; the development of special schools as resources centres; upgrading physical facilities in schools to provide quality services to learners with high intensity needs; and training all teachers for an inclusive education approach to teaching.
List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	This document does not provide specific guidelines as to how to move from the medical model to an inclusive education model. It does not provide specific guidelines on how to support learners with barriers to learning within an inclusive classroom. It also does not provide specific details as to how teachers are to implement and adapt flexible curriculum and assessments strategies within special education classrooms or how to utilise resources to optimally support all learners with barriers to learning within a classroom environment.

Table 4.6: GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO LEARNER DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGH CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENTS: GRADE R-12 (DBE, 2011b)

Document Analysis Guide	
1. Document being analysed, Date and Author	**GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO LEARNER DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGH CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENTS; (DBE, 2011b).**
2. Why and for whom was the document written	The purpose of this document is to provide all education staff (teachers, principals, subject advisors, administrators, school governors and other personnel) with teaching approaches to accommodate and support learner diversity within classrooms where the CAPS is implemented.
3. The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	These guidelines were developed to implement curriculum differentiation in classrooms and to support and encourage all teachers, including those in LSEN schools, to find efficient strategies to support all learners. The document states examples of diverse learning needs of learners and how to respond to diversity through the curriculum. This document states that adaptations should be seen as the normal routine of the learners. Furthermore, this document motivates teachers to better understand diversity in classrooms, respond effectively to diversity, implement curriculum differentiation as a key strategy through modifying curriculum content, teaching approaches, assessment and the learning environment according to the needs of learners with diverse individual needs. This document stipulates that it is the responsibility of the teachers to adapt curriculum content accordingly. It also specifies a range of technological resources for differentiated learning. Teaching approaches and strategies are mentioned to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs. It encourages teachers to analyse and record assessments efficiently and find innovative ways to assess learners for optimal support. The document informs teachers on sample questions from Bloom's taxonomy as well as potential activities in completing assessments. Alternative methods of assessments to be utilised with learners according to their specific learning barriers and disabilities are explained by means of examples. Learners with an intellectual

	disability can be assessed on the basic content, but at a reduced depth, breadth, and complexity. Another example mentioned is learners with a moderate intellectual disability or hearing impairment that require more time to master the content will be assessed on a reduced load of content. Lastly, learners who are blind, have communication difficulties, physical disabilities, learners who are dyslexic or with hearing loss and who need additional time, alternate formats, readers, amanuensis or electronic equipment, can be assessed through special procedures or technology to give them the same opportunity as learners in mainstream schools. This document also includes four appendixes to aid teachers during the differentiation process. Appendix 1: Sample lesson plans for Grade 3s regarding different subjects. Appendix 2: This appendix discusses the grouping of learners regarding whole class and small group instruction, paired groups, interest groups, co-operative expert groups and cluster groups. This appendix also discusses possible challenges that can possibly occur during group-guided activities, as well as points to take into consideration during activities. Appendix 3: This appendix discusses practical activities to assess learners with the multiple intelligences in learners' cognitive abilities with regards to logical/mathematics, special, interpersonal, bodily/kinaesthetic, verbal/linguistic, and interpersonal/emotional intelligences. It also discusses how these multiple intelligences can be recognised and what the learning style entails. Appendix 4: This appendix discusses how to assess diverse attainments in all learners within the classroom setting. This appendix directs the assessment content by indicting current knowledge or skills being assessed and differential attainment levels for tasks. This ensures that every learner has access to the standard of assessment that is suited for their specific needs and that assessment tasks take different disabilities into consideration.
4. List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	Although this document provides sufficient examples of how curriculum content can be differentiated within the different Foundation Phase subjects, it only has sample lesson plans for Grade 3 and not of other grades within the Foundation Phase. This

	document considers different intelligences and disabilities within a LSEN classroom; however, it does not give clear ideas regarding summative assessment tasks for the Foundation Phase and to what extent differentiation can specifically be addressed. In this document it states that that teachers need "training on the various curriculum differentiation methodologies so as to be able to apply the various adaptive and supportive assessment measures in school-based as well as formal assessment". It however also states that teachers are responsible for adaptations of content and utilisations of different teaching methods. Lastly, although this document acknowledges the time constraints for learners in LSEN classrooms and the challenges associated with this, it does not provide specific information on how teachers are to adjust time allocations to teach the full, yet differentiated, curriculum content.

Table 4.7: GUIDELINES TO STRENGTHEN CAPS IMPLEMENTATION (DBE: 2017)

Document Analysis Guide	
1. Document being analysed, Date and Author	**GUIDELINES TO STRENGTHEN CAPS IMPLEMENTATION; 2017; Department of Basic Education**
2. Why and for whom was the document written	This policy is specifically for the General Education and Training (GET) Band Grades R – 9; This document provides a Programme of Assessment for amendments for learning outcomes for subjects: Home Language, Mathematics, Life Skills and First Additional Language, Natural Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Physical Sciences and Creative Arts.
3. The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	This document stipulates formal assessment scales for mainstream schools, however there is no specific reference to special schools. These scales are used for summative assessment for specific subjects – Home Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics and Life Skills – in the Foundation Phase. The assessment scale for each subject varies from level 1 to 7, 1 being not achieved and 7 being outstanding achievement. According to

	this document, the promotion and progression criteria for Grade R-9 is stipulated.
4. List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	Within the Foundation Phase, this policy does not mention how curriculum and assessment is to be specifically implemented for learners with barriers to learning and whether formal assessment scales are to be adjusted for Foundation Phase learners within special schools. This document also does not specify teaching pedagogies to encourage optimal support of all learners.

Table 4.8: RESEARCH SITE (SCHOOL) FOUNDATION PHASE POLICY

Document Analysis Guide	
Document being analysed, Date and Author	**Foundation Phase School Policy; 2016**
Why and for whom was the document written	This policy was formulated for the Foundation Phase teachers, Grade R-3, at the specific special school.
The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	This policy includes the Foundation Phase timetables for each teacher, related to specific grades, to follow daily. It also includes the Foundation Phase Code of Conduct for the parents pertaining to what is expected of parents with regards to support. This policy also includes the School Term Planner.
List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	This document has not been updated since 2016. It also does not include any specific information related to the implementation of the curriculum and within the Foundation Phase or how to adapt learning content to meet the diverse barriers to learning within each class in this special school. This document does not stipulate any information in relation to inclusive education within the special school classroom environment and how different disabilities are to be identified and addressed, does not specify teaching and learning strategies for classrooms, does not outline the roles of different role-players associated with optimal support, assessment implementation and adaptations, and also does not provide reference to any DBE policies or legislation.

Table 4.9: RESEARCH SITE WEEKLY SCHEDULES

Document Analysis Guide	
1. Document being analysed, Date and Author	**Foundation Phase Lesson Plans; 2020**
2. Why and for whom was the document written	The schedules are included for each teacher in the Foundation Phase, Grade R-3.
3. The applicability towards Special Schools and this study	Within each teacher's weekly schedules, information regarding daily teaching content is stipulated. Time allocation for each subject's content and therapy for individual learners or group therapy are noted.
4. List the aspects NOT addressed in the document	The weekly schedules do not provide information about how teachers adapt and adjust curriculum content within the classroom. They also do not mention what resources are utilised to teach content stipulated in the weekly schedules or how the curriculum is to be differentiated to accommodate diversity among learners and to address the different barriers to learning within the class. These documents also do not stipulate any specific teaching strategies or interventions used to promote inclusive education practices within the special school classroom. Lastly, it does not provide information regarding how teachers ought to adjust time allocations to teach the curriculum content, indicate any formative or summative assessment strategies or how differentiated assessment should be done.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the results obtained through the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and document analysis at the data collection stage of the study. The profiles of the participants were summarised. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the transcribed

data were presented. Findings from the document analysis were elaborated on. The next chapter will discuss and synthesise the findings.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter contemplated the data generation and findings obtained from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and document analysis. This chapter is structured by discussing the findings by answering the study's main research question: *What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of Mathematics and Home Language through the implementation of CAPS at a selected Gauteng special school?*

The main research question will be indirectly answered by answering each of the study's research sub-questions through synthesis of findings from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, document analysis and reference to relevant literature.

5.2 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION 1

What are Foundation Phase special school teachers' views about the teaching of Home Language and Mathematics using CAPS (DBE, 2011a) at a special school?

During the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, it became clear that the participants shared general views about the *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) that applied across the curriculum, which were not only restricted to the two subjects under review. They also made comments specific to the teaching of home language as well as mathematics. I am first going to present participants' general views about the use of *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) in the academic Foundation Phase stream at the special school.

5.2.1 General views about the use of CAPS in the Foundation Phase academic stream of a special school

Before discussing participants' views about *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a), it was considered important to gauge their views about teaching at a special school since such attitudes could influence how they experienced the implementation of the *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) curriculum at the special school. The study showed that all participants reported that teaching at a special school was what they enjoyed and preferred. They indicated that they felt passionate about teaching at a special school and working with disabled learners experiencing barriers to learning. These findings are in line with Langher, Caputo and Ricci (2017:124), who report that teachers at a

special school or in a special classroom environment, tend to be more positive towards their work environment. Similarly, Barley and Southcott (2019:2620) assert that teachers teaching in a special school often feel passionate about their work since they feel that they can make a positive difference in education. Pit-ten Cate, Markova, Krischler and Krolak-Schwerdt (2018:50) are of the opinion that although the inclusive education environment expects teachers to be skilled and knowledgeable, their values and positive attitudes contribute towards efficiency and being effective in the teaching and learning environment.

Although all participants in the current study agreed that they felt passionate about teaching at a special school, most participants, except for one who had a neutral stance, were not in favour of implementing *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) in the academic stream of the special school. They all found it difficult to teach a mainstream curriculum in their specific classrooms due to the inflexibility of *CAPS*, which implicated that they constantly needed to adapt the curriculum in their environment. Almost all the participants reported that they perceived *CAPS* as fast paced, with learning outcomes as being of a high standard and therefore inappropriate for application in the academic stream in this special school, which accommodates learning disabilities. Furthermore, the large amount of *CAPS* content to be covered resulted in insufficient time allocations to meet the learning outcomes and was therefore not conducive to learners with barriers to learning. These general views reported by the participants will now be further elaborated on with relation to findings from the document analysis, supported by literature.

Findings from the current study indicated that all the participants were aware of the difference between mainstream and special education due to them having taught in both mainstream and special schools. The majority of the participants, in light of their previous experience, were of the opinion that *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) specifically did not provide clear guidelines in the use of mainstream curricula at a special school. Data from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews revealed constant adaptations of *CAPS* by the participants due to the nature of inflexibility of this curriculum. One participant stated that although she adapted the curriculum to fit the needs of the LSEN learners, she still needed to cut down on the large amount of content as prescribed by *CAPS*. Findings further showed that using an inflexible mainstream curriculum in an inclusive class was a challenge for the participants, since they needed to accommodate diverse needs in their classrooms. The documents analysed during this study indicated the importance of a flexible curriculum and flexible teaching methods in addressing all needs within an inclusive environment, and that an inflexible curriculum and assessment policies are considered a barrier to learning towards inclusive practices (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2005a; DBE, 2011b; DBE, 2014). Document analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) further

revealed that a differentiated curriculum is key to promoting an inclusive education system, whilst addressing barriers to learning and promoting diversity in classrooms. Similar to the findings in this study, South African studies report that teachers often experience negative attitudes towards the *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) due to an inflexible curriculum and inappropriate time allocations for learner activities (Engelbrecht *et al.,* 2015:3, Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016:122). Furthermore, international studies such as Al Hazmi and Ahmed (2018:68) state that although teachers are expected to have a flexible approach to teaching, they usually struggle to implement the curriculum in a flexible manner.

Another reason proposed by most of the participants of the current study for not supporting *CAPS* implementation in the academic stream of the special school was the high standards set by *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a). Some of the participants stated that the implications of high standards led to insufficient time allocation for learner activities, therefore learners were not able to reach outcomes as expected from the *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a). Participants stated that due to disabilities, learners needed more time to meet the outcomes than what the *CAPS* suggested. The capabilities of learners that experienced barriers to learning implicate that both the teacher and learner needed to put in more effort and therefore, more time was required to reach the high standards set out by *CAPS*. The findings further revealed that teachers struggled to achieve these high standards set by *CAPS* because of the additional activities that they needed to implement for learners to grasp the learning content. Document analysis of the *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) also highlighted the high standards that are to be achieved in all grades. Analysis of the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) and the *Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in Classrooms through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) indicated that these two documents concur on the necessity and prioritisation of curriculum adjustments in an inclusive education environment. International research agrees that the time allocated for learning content seems to be a barrier to learning in classrooms, especially in special schools where teachers must constantly adapt and adjust content to meet the diverse learning needs in their classrooms (Ssentanda, Southwood & Huddlestone, 2019:141). Furthermore García-Carrión et al. (2018:5) state that the time for learners to complete activities and meet learning outcomes is too little, therefore not addressing barriers to learning within the classroom.

Although *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) expects a teacher to cover a large amount of content to reach the learning outcomes, some participants in the current study reported on how the amount of learning content constantly required adjustment. One participant was of opinion that the content of the *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) should be reviewed to be applicable in a special school environment with learners experiencing barriers to learning. It was noted by a few participants that they had to focus on repetitive instructions during learning activities as well as allowing

and accommodating the learners to learn at their own pace. They indicated that accommodating learners to take time and giving their best would not compromise the quality of teaching and would influence the learners' achievement in a positive manner. It was further indicated that in addressing barriers to learning, it made pedagogical sense for the teacher to allow more time and apply a hands-on approach during teaching and learning activities, which in the end allowed learners to engage in those activities at their own pace and therefore promoted learning positively. During the document analysis, it was revealed that inclusive practices should be supported in all classrooms, but that there is a great impact on special school classrooms due to the education system's inability to accommodate, support and improve the situation of learners experiencing barriers to learning (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2014). During document analysis, policy further stipulated that curriculum adaptations should be in line with national policy guidelines and that support will provided to educators during the adaptation process (DoE, 2005a; DBE, 2011b). The *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) document provides guidelines as to how to address learner diversity through the curriculum. Even these guidelines speak about the crucial aspects such as pace of learning, time allocation and language of learning and teaching. These guidelines further assist the teacher to understand diversity in the classroom and how to respond to diversity through the curriculum and during assessment by means of examples. Although the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) promotes curriculum differentiation, it is stated that teachers are responsible for making curriculum adaptations themselves and that curriculum adaptations should form part of learners' classroom routine on a daily basis (DBE, 2011b). In support, Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016:122) are of the opinion that teachers in special schools must constantly adapt the curriculum to accommodate all learning disabilities in their classrooms. In further support of this study's findings, Burnett (2020:4) is of opinion that *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a), and the implementation thereof, should be reviewed to consider teacher experiences and inclusive practices of LSEN learners. Furthermore, according to Ngcezulla (2018:45), adaptations in accommodating LSEN learners in classrooms include repeating and clarifying instructions throughout the learning process to enable full participation and understanding. In addition, *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) states, and is supported by Ngcezulla (2018:81) and Burnett (2020:4), that accommodations for inclusive education would include additional time allocations for the completion of learning activities. However, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:4) state that curriculum guidelines for the successful implementation and accommodations are still unclear, therefore hindering the successful implementation of an adapted curriculum.

This study's findings also indicated that some of the participants acknowledged educational policies, documents and guidelines but did not incorporate these policies, documents and

guidelines in their classrooms, while other participants stated that they only applied school policy. A few participants opined that this inadequate attention to policy is due to educational policies' content that are irrelevant to their specific classroom settings and do not aid in implementing inclusive classrooms practices. Another participant was of the opinion that the standards set in the policies were focused on mainstream schools and therefore were not applicable to their LSEN classroom settings. However, even though participants were aware of some of the policies, it was clear that they did not engage efficiently in policy content to improve curriculum implementation. For example, an analysis of the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) indicated that this document elaborates on key principles of diversity and curriculum differentiation and stipulates assessment procedures that teachers can apply during differentiated assessment. However, it appeared as if the participants were not aware of this particular curriculum document, possibly because they were not formally (or informally) introduced to this document for guidance. Furthermore, *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) states that it provides teachers with guidelines on how to use the *CAPS* in the classroom, but findings from this study have indicated that the teachers in this special school struggled to implement these policies and documents due to the lack of LSEN relevance. National studies such as Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016:122) state that teachers in special schools find that policy does not provide clear guidelines for the implementation of mainstream curricula at special schools. Furthermore, Molapo and Pillay (2018:2) contend that due to multiple policy and curriculum revisions, a gap is recognised between policy and what is being implemented in classrooms; as was seemingly the case in the current study.

In the current study, an analysis of the *Foundation Phase Policy* of the school where the research was conducted, indicated the importance of learner-teacher ratio, and it implicates time allocation for content distribution and homework. Weekly lesson schedules were also expected from each teacher, which outlined the daily delivery of the *CAPS* content. However, findings from the weekly schedules' document analysis highlighted that these lesson plans only stated *CAPS* content and did not indicate curriculum differentiation, different resources utilised, different teaching strategies used, assessment procedures or adaptations made to content or adjustments of time during classes. It seemed as if the participants just plotted the *CAPS* content onto their lesson plans in order to be administratively compliant and accountable to education management. It seemed as if they did not focus on the pedagogical reasons for planning lessons, as is expected of teachers who are professionals. In addition, analysis of the school's *Foundation Phase Policy* claims that the school should create an inclusive, supportive and stimulating environment for the learner. However, when one considers the analysis of the *Foundation Phase Policy*, there is no explicit mention of

accommodation of diversity and the school policy principles are not reflected in the weekly schedules, which operationalise teaching and learning. According to Shalem, Steinberg, Koornhof, and De Clercq (2017:18) lesson plans are specifically designed to implement the curriculum. It is mentioned that lesson plans can also encourage teachers to deepen their understanding of curriculum content to ensure that all aspects of these subjects are thoroughly taught. In addition, this provides teachers with the opportunity to plan for differentiation within the classroom for all learners. However, it is also stated that lesson plans are compiled in order for the DBE to be able to regulate if educational standards are upheld (Shalem *et al.,* 2017:19). The latter reason may explain the manner in which the weekly lesson schedules were devised by teachers in the current study, to be compliant as 'evidence' of maintaining 'educational standards' and accountability to the employer. Green and Moodley (2017:200) refer to such practice in learner support as the business model of accountability, characterised by a paper trail of compliance, rather than a genuine attempt at promoting inclusivity.

Findings from the current study also indicated an inadequate number of assistive devices for disabled learners at this specific school. It was also further mentioned by one participant that the classrooms were too small and congested to accommodate the number of learners with assistive devices. These circumstances hindered quality teaching and learning. Participants reported that the disabilities that needed to be accommodated daily were hearing and eyesight impairment, physical disabilities and quadriplegia, cerebral palsy, dyslexia, and traumatic brain injuries. *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) states that barriers to learning can be caused by multiple contributing factors, for example intrinsic, social, school- or curriculum-based factors. Barriers to learning are categorised as genetic, teratogenic, medical, developmental, ecological factors, socio-economic factors, systematic factors, and pedagogical factors, which directly influence language, reading or speech impairments. Other factors include any impairments or disability that children develop in areas such as visual and auditory perception, visual and auditory discrimination, visual and auditory memory linked to sounds, and visual and auditory sequential memory of sequencing stimuli (Nel & Grosser, 2016:81). This study's findings reported many of the barriers to learning mentioned in the literature that the study's participants were expected to accommodate during their delivery of the *CAPS* curriculum. The provision of appropriate and adequate resources such as assistive devices is also highlighted in national IE policy documents. For example, analysis of *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) and *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) stipulate that assistive devices are identified as a need and will be distributed and provided to schools in need. The *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom* (DBE, 2011b) stipulates the diverse learning needs of learners and gives examples of barriers to learning, of which assistive devices was mentioned specifically. The *Conceptual and operational*

guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres is in support of *EWP6* and addresses the importance of assistive devices in teaching and learning and the distribution thereof to special schools (DoE, 2005a; DoE, 2001b). In addition, *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) relates to the acknowledgement of identifying and supporting barriers to learning by providing assistive devices to give learners access to learning. Literature agrees with the finding of the current study that the research setting (special school) had inadequate assistive devices. For example, Mizunoya *et al.* (2016:8) and Govender and Hugo (2018:24) state that the education system lacks the focused human and physical adaptations necessary to meet the particular needs of disabled learners, thus denying these learners the opportunities that non-disabled learners have.

5.2.2 Views about the implementation of CAPS in the subject Home Language

In the current study, participants' general views and experiences of implementing *CAPS* in the Foundation Phase academic stream at a special school also applied to the teaching of home language. In addition, they made specific comments about the teaching of home language using *CAPS*. The study found that participants reported that learners in their classes were not able to meet the home language learning outcomes of *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a), due to these intrinsic or extrinsic barriers to learning. Examples that were mentioned by the participants hindering successful language implementation were sentence construction, comprehension of basic instructions, problem-solving within a language context with the use of higher-order skills and comprehension of basic vocabulary. It was also mentioned that the learners in their classrooms even struggled with the basics of language.

During document analysis, it was revealed that the use of inappropriate language, together with additional barriers to learning, formed a great part of language barriers (DoE, 2001b; DoE, 2005a). *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) furthermore mentions that barriers to learning arise from inappropriate language or the medium of instruction. However, analysing the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) indicated that this document does provide example lesson plans for Grade 3 that illustrate how lessons can be designed to promote curriculum differentiation in meeting the needs of all learners. According to Bojuwoye *et al.* (2014:1), learner barriers are often characterised by difficulty to learn home language due to mental disorders and physical disabilities. Furthermore, any impairments or disability that children develop in areas such as visual and auditory perception, visual and auditory discrimination, visual and auditory memory linked to sounds, and visual and auditory sequential memory of sequencing stimuli, contribute towards such learners not meeting the learning outcomes (Kumpulainen *et al.,* 2015:2; Nel & Grosser, 2016:81). Similarly,

Aufseeser *et al.* (2018:245) claim that the absence of basic language skills implies that learners with barriers struggle with the comprehension of simple language content. Recommendations on how to deal with language barriers has been stated by Sadegni and Izadpanah (2018:299) as adding additional remedial classes that do not form part of school time. This ensures that repetition is reinforced. These authors have also mentioned that smaller classes and adjusting reading and learning content to meet learners' cognitive levels, enhance learner performance. Positive feedback and motivation to learners who struggle with language ensure that learners feel positive and strive towards meeting learning outcomes. In addition, Korytina (2021:6) is of the opinion that several visual and tactile resources, and assistive devices where needed, should be incorporated during the teaching and learning of language. This author furthermore states that learners should be actively involved throughout the learning process to ensure that learners are active agents in their own learning.

During this study it was highlighted that except for the barriers to learning experienced by learners, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) differed from the home language of some learners. The majority of participants stated that the language barriers made it difficult to communicate and that this obstacle contributed towards learners not meeting the learning outcomes. They were also of opinion that due to the language barriers, learners struggled to comprehend language content. Bojuwoye *et al.* (2014:1) concur that parents often enrol their children at an English-speaking school, but that their home language is an African language. Bojuwoye *et al.* (2014:1) continue that 65% of South African schools in rural areas are mainly English-speaking schools, thus forcing learners to be educated in English, which is not their home language, thus contributing towards the language barrier experienced in classrooms.

The added barrier of LoLT being different to the learners' mother tongue was also identified as a matter of concern in the document analysis in the current study. The analyses identified that inappropriate language of learning and teaching can contribute to barriers to learning (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2005a; DBE, 2011a; DBE, 2014). However, the issue of LoLT versus mother tongue is not limited to learners, it also applies to some teachers. Therefore, Nel, Mohangi, Krog and Stephens (2016:48) caution that teachers may hinder the successful implementation of the language curriculum, since they too are often faced with the challenge that they must teach in a language they are not as familiar with.

5.2.3 Views about the implementation of CAPS in the subject Mathematics

Participants' general views and experiences of implementing *CAPS* in the Foundation Phase academic stream at a special school also applied to the teaching of mathematics. In addition,

they made specific comments about the teaching of mathematics using *CAPS*. The study found that most of the participants did not always stick to or implement the daily mathematical teaching content and learning activities as required by *CAPS*, since learners struggled to comprehend even the basic mathematical concepts. This study identified number comprehension, number operations, time and measurement as concepts that LSEN learners struggled to comprehend. During the document analysis, *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) stated that curriculum content and assessment are to be adapted. Policies and government documents provide some details regarding the implementation of adapted, flexible curriculum content for learners with learning disabilities. These policies also provide guidelines regarding supporting learners with disabilities by means of assistive devices and resources (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2014). Analysing the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) indicated that this document does provide examples of mathematics lesson plans for Grade 3 that shows how lessons can be altered to promote differentiations whilst meeting the needs of all learners. Furthermore, similar to the research site's home language weekly lesson schedules, document analysis of participants' weekly mathematics lesson schedules did not indicate what specific teaching methodologies were utilised to implement the curriculum in a flexible manner. It also did not state how the participants applied differentiation to improve the teaching and learning of mathematical concepts. Relatedly, Al Hazmi and Ahmed (2018:68) are of the opinion that mainstream curricula should be implemented in a flexible manner. Literature and document analysis emphasise the importance of flexible curriculum implementation, however, findings from the interviews have indicated that teachers struggle to implement *CAPS*.

Some participants in the current study stated that learners struggled to understand what they needed to do because the instructions were in words which they found difficult to read. It was mentioned that dyslexia contributed towards certain learners experiencing barriers in the learning of mathematics because struggling with reading and writing affected their ability to comprehend word problems. Document analysis revealed that although most IE policy documents have guidelines to address barriers to learning, these guidelines were not detailed enough to support specific barriers to learning in classrooms or how content is to be adapted and should be taught in special school classrooms (DBE, 2011a; *SIAS*, 2014). Even the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) document is limited on detail in supporting learners with specific barriers to learning.

Literature agrees that learners with dyslexia find reading and comprehension exceedingly difficult and that dyslexia makes it even more difficult to grasp the general concept of mathematics, the understanding and the processing of the numbers and sums (Awada &

Plana, 2018:464; Leseyane, Mandende, Makgato & Cekiso, 2018:1). In response to learning barriers such as dyslexia, Ferreira (2018:14) recommends interventions to address barriers to learning for language and mathematics, such as concessions, scribing, or the use of a laptop with spell-check for learners struggling with language content application. This author is of the opinion that learners with certain barriers, such as dyslexia, need remedial accommodations by trained teachers to give them a fair chance at success. It is mentioned that concessions, readers or scribes enhance among learners with disabilities, the opportunity to meet the learning outcomes through not being discriminated against because of their disability (Ferreira, 2018:14).

One of the participants in the current study, was of the opinion that LSEN learners struggled to grasp some mathematical concepts due to limited physical movement. The participant indicated that disabilities causing restrictions of physical movement retarded normal play activities, which, in turn, retarded the development of certain sensory skills necessary for effective learning, such as visual perception. Consequently, this retardation of certain skills had a negative impact on the learning of mathematical skills. With sufficient physical stimulation activities, children develop the visual perception skills necessary for reading, writing and doing mathematics. The lack thereof hinders the development of mathematical skills. Furthermore, it was mentioned by some of the participants that factors such as weak visual perception and the inability to understand simple operations such as addition hinders the successful teaching and learning of mathematical concepts. With regard to physical movement as discussed from the interview findings, Riley, Lubans, Holmes, Hansen, Gore and Morgan (2017:1656) are of the opinion that mathematical concepts, such as multiplication, measurement and estimation, are better developed through physical movement such as skipping and jumping.

In the current study, the analysis of the content of the school's *Foundation Phase Policy* included weekly timetables indicating daily subjects that are to be presented. Also included was a template for weekly schedules where teachers had to plan lessons. Although a template is available in the policy for weekly schedules, it does not guide teachers in the completion of weekly schedules, especially with regard to differentiation of curriculum implementation. In addition, the weekly mathematics lesson schedules did not indicate the resources utilised during the presentation of mathematics lessons and did not indicate what interventions took place to promote inclusive practices within LSEN classrooms. It was only found during document analysis that the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) did provide procedures on how to apply differentiation during presentation of mathematical curriculum content. As mentioned earlier, this may point to the

participants' ignorance about the policies and specifically, the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) document, on how to provide a differentiated plan and present differentiated lessons to make them more inclusive.

5.3 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION 2

What teaching approaches do Foundation Phase special school teachers employ in the teaching of Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS (DBE, 2011a)?

In this study, the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews highlighted that all teachers in the academic stream of this special school implemented the mainstream curricula daily, albeit in an adaptive manner, since they deemed it inappropriate for LSEN learners in a formal classroom setting. Due to the variety of barriers to learning in the classroom, participants attempted to adapt the curricula by implementing different teaching and learning strategies in Home Language and Mathematics in an attempt at addressing all learning needs and to accommodate diversity among learners.

Reports from the individual interviews indicated that all participants agreed that they constantly used their own initiative to incorporate different teaching and learning approaches to accommodate learners' special needs and the diversity of barriers to learning in classrooms. During document analysis, it was indicated that differentiation in using several teaching strategies during curriculum implementation should be flexible and accommodating towards all learners, specifically focusing on addressing diverse learning needs (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2005a; DBE, 2011a; DBE, 2011b). Analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) and the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) revealed that the development of good teaching strategies are beneficial to all learners, whilst overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs. Furthermore, the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) states that teachers are responsible for adapting the curriculum to such an extent that learners with barriers are accommodated and supported, as was reported by participants in the current study. In line with the interview findings and document analysis, Louws *et al.* (2017:489) state that teachers must implement different teaching strategies and approaches on a daily basis to enable the effective teaching and learning of LSEN learners. However, Mulaudzi and Dube (2016:18) mention that although teachers should be able to teach learners with and without barriers to learning in any classroom setting, teachers' planning and adaptations towards the learning programmes as well as the use of different teaching approaches are inadequate and are therefore hindering the successful

implementation of mainstream curricula at special schools. Nevertheless, the participants in this study reported attempts to support learners with barriers to learning through incorporating a variety of teaching approaches and strategies contributing and enhancing a more inclusive teaching and learning environment (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020:10; Wahl, 2017:6).

Examples revealed through findings from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, in the current study, indicated that participants applied multimodal and multisensory teaching and learning approaches towards developing learners holistically. According to Cruz, Parisi, Twiefel and Wermter (2016:260), multimodal teaching approaches refer to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic strategies to learning that enhance learners' perception of curriculum content, whereas multisensory teaching approaches motivate teachers to adapt activities to use all senses, referring to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic senses, to promote effective learning (Cruz *et al.,* 2016:260).

5.3.1 Teaching approaches utilised in Home Language

An analysis of the weekly lesson schedules in the current study, indicated the language skills a learner needs to develop in each lesson. Those skills included mastering of listening and speaking, reading and phonics, writing and handwriting skills. The skills indicated on the weekly schedules were scheduled by the participants according to the *CAPS* requirements and not as would have been expected for a special school environment. Although not indicated in the weekly schedules, participants claimed during the interviews that they designed their lessons in such a way that different teaching strategies and approaches were applied to ensure all learners had a fair chance at learning successfully. Participants reported on the implementation of different impactful activities, focusing on all senses in the teaching of home language. These activities accommodated the learning strengths of learners in class, implicating an inclusive approach to teaching and learning (Cruz *et al.,* 2016:260). Other examples of learning activities were reported in the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews in trying to facilitate language learning, such as using appropriate resources (e.g. larger printed words, music and songs, bigger alphabet letters on the walls, and spring-loaded scissors for those learners with challenges in gross motor skills). Furthermore, a few participants mentioned in the interviews that they considered the physical environment of the classroom to maximise the potential for learning among learners with barriers to learning (e.g. visual and hearing impairments).

The current study's findings further revealed that more opportunities for learning were provided through re-teaching of content whilst incorporating different teaching strategies. Document

analysis indicated that teachers need to plan lessons in such a way that they accommodate and support all learners (DoE, 2005a; DBE, 2011a; DBE, 2014). Participants' interview reports in this study seemed to be in line with the expectations of the *SIAS* policy (DBE, 2014) regarding efficient support of learners in classrooms. Further analysis of the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) stipulated that the specific needs of each learner must be accommodated to ensure quality teaching, learning and assessment, since quality education and support is every child's right (DoE, 2005a; DBE, 2014). Analysis of the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) identified that the said document has examples of language lessons that promote differentiation in teaching and assessment of language. Other examples of inclusionary practices reported by participants was the use of concessions during assessment, such as scribing, where the teacher wrote the answers to assessment tasks that were given orally by the learner. Another example of concessions was the teachers reading the assessment tasks to learners who had severe learning barriers with reading. Ellis, Bianchi, Griskevicius and Frankenhuis (2017:562) mention that lessons and assessments should be planned in such a way that it motivates and challenges learning by engaging learners' experiencing barriers to learning. The inclusive pedagogical approach applied by the participants in this study attempted to acknowledge the variety of barriers to learning during teaching and assessment of learners (Florian & Beaton, 2018:870). By providing adequate differentiation, learners can reach their full potential (Taylor, 2017:55). As concluded by Nel, Mohandi *et al.* (2016:53), different teaching approaches and strategies are needed to provide adequate differentiation, the key towards optimal support to learners experiencing barriers to learning.

5.3.2 Teaching approaches utilised in Mathematics

During the interviews in the current study, examples of different teaching strategies in Mathematics included incorporating appropriate concrete physical resources such as blocks, beads, bigger counters and peg boards to support teaching and learning activities in class. Multimodal strategies mentioned by a few participants during the interviews included practical learning strategies to explain mathematical perceptions to the learners. For example, using both auditory (knocking) and verbal (saying out loud) modalities in advancing knowledge of number comprehension. Another example mentioned was the use of three-dimensional teaching aids (blocks) in conjunction with two-dimensional problem-solving strategies (picture drawing) in teaching number comprehension and addition operation. "Smack the Maggie" is a game used by one of the participants, where the learners spin the board and wherever it stops, the learner must call the number out loud and count the steps to get to that specific number. This was an example of teaching number sense.

Different teaching and learning styles, such as kinaesthetic and auditory skills, were implemented during these mathematics class activities. Furthermore, all participants indicated that they utilised visual and verbal aids during assessments, together with the assessment questions, although most of the time the teacher also needed to read the questions to the learner to assist the learner to understand what was asked in different ways. This indicated application of a multi-level teaching and learning approach. During the document analysis, the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) illustrated strategies to address and support learners experiencing barriers to learning in classrooms. This document also mentioned multilevel teaching and strategies for curriculum and assessment differentiation. Furthermore, several policies and documents agree that diverse teaching strategies and approaches are key to promoting a fully inclusive and supportive education system (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2005a, DBE, 2011a, DBE, 2011b; DBE, 2014). In support of the interview findings and document analysis, Sarudin, Hashim and Yunus, (2019:3187) state that the use of multimodal and multisensory teaching and learning approaches enable support for learners experiencing barriers to learning in classrooms. Suryaratri *et al.* (2019:101) elaborate that multimodal approaches utilise several teaching modes, such as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic means of teaching. Asari (2017:185) agrees that the use of different modes of learning contributes towards optimally addressing and supporting learners with barriers to learning in LSEN classrooms, supporting the findings from the interviews and document analysis in the current study.

Lastly, general findings during the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews mentioned that teachers attempted to teach concepts by firstly establishing the levels of knowledge and skills of the weakest learners in the class, then scaffolded learning to enhance the skill and knowledge levels. This is good practice according to Jee and Anggoro, (2019:18). However, there was no differentiation it seems, to accommodate learners at different levels of knowledge and skill at the same point in time, so curriculum differentiation was lacking, as identified in the analysis of the lesson plans. Relatedly, document analysis of the document *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) revealed that scaffolding allows for learners with barriers to learners to be guided, assisted, and supported by the teacher during the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the same document (DBE, 2011b) cautions that learners with barriers struggle to cope with a large amount of content at once and scaffolding allows teachers to break down each task into smaller tasks or use group work to master certain concepts and skills. However, in the current study, analysis of the weekly schedules showed that participants did not indicate scaffolding strategies during the teaching and learning process. Through scaffolding and differentiation, learners experiencing barriers to learning develop a positive attitude towards learning since it promotes

self-discipline and inspires independence (Anggadewi, 2017: 214). By providing adequate differentiation, learners can reach their full potential (Taylor, 2017:55).

5.4 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION 3

In what ways are Foundation Phase teachers supported in teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at a special school?

Within a special school, learners are dependent on support from their teachers; in turn, teachers need to be supported in various ways to be able to address the needs of learners. Although the participants in the current study (as indicated in chapter 4), were experienced and professionally qualified teachers, the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews indicated that the participants were of the opinion that they had expectations with regard to sufficient internal and external support. Support can be defined as all activities that increase the capacity of a school in responding to diversity, which includes organisational, classroom and educator support (Nkambule, 2018:2). Research findings related to the provision of internal support to teachers will first be discussed in the paragraph that follows. Thereafter the focus will be on the provision of external support.

The semi-structured individual telephonic interview findings revealed views on class assistants, therapists, educational psychologists, and medical specialists as internal support systems, although these systems were seen by the participants as insufficient and inadequate. It was also noted by a few participants that class assistants, appointed to assist in classes, were a valuable internal support system. However, since these assistants needed to rotate between classes, they did not provide adequate support. Furthermore, the value of professional therapists as a support mechanism was discussed. According to the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews, specialist support provided by the different types of therapists (educational psychologists, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy) was invaluable but inadequate in supporting learners with barriers due to the demand for such services by the number of learners requiring such specialist support. The therapists also provided assistance and guidance to the teachers on how to best support learners with learning and other disabilities within the classroom setting. Overall, it became clear from participants' responses that the support they received from internal role-players, was inadequate due to the great need amongst learners for assistance, thus limiting assistance to teachers in class.

Document analysis of the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) highlights the importance of support systems that need to focus broadly on the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, teacher and school needs. Although it was not stated in the interviews, the *Guidelines for responding to diversity in classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) indicated that teachers can provide peer support and learn from one another when working collaboratively on different tasks. At school level, it is the responsibility of the SMT to provide support to teachers to implement curriculum differentiation (DBE, 2011b). Analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) and the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) as inclusive education policies indicates that specialist support, such as therapists and educational psychologists, will be available and will provide individual support to learners and teachers at LSEN schools. Jigyel *et al.* (2020:2) and Tiwari *et al.* (2015:128) are of the opinion that at some LSEN schools, speech, occupational and physiotherapists are available to assist teachers and provide opportunity for full participation by learners to reach their full academic potential. Jigyel *et al.* (2020:2) furthermore state that collaboration with these specialised support staff is beneficial to special schools. In addition, Waddington and Reed (2017:139) state that the benefit of support is that learners in LSEN schools progress more in all aspects than learners attending ordinary schools, because of the individual support and attention. Furthermore, according to Nel, Mohandi *et al.* (2016:57) and Ngalim (2019:44), effective support is enabled through the use of human resources. Human resources implicate skilled and specialised staff, such as psychologists, therapists and social workers, to support teachers and learners during teaching and learning. These authors agree that this is vital towards developing skills, knowledge and abilities of teachers to effectively address barriers to learning. However, Nel, Mohandi *et al.* (2016:57) agree with Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018:3) that human resources are limited (e.g. well-trained teachers), which hinders the successful implementation of inclusive education. Similarly, a study was conducted by Zagona, Kurth and MacFarland, (2017:174) on “Teachers’ Views of Their Preparation for Inclusive Education and Collaboration”. The aim of the study was to understand experiences and preparation to demonstrate skills associated with inclusive education, collaboration and identifying factors contributing to their preparation. The sample consisted of 33 mainstream and 10 special school educators. Two of the participants interviewed had their master’s degrees in special education for learners with significant disabilities. Of importance was that they were also qualified in coursework in inclusive education. Both these participants indicated that the coursework qualification assisted them in their lesson preparations. The benefits of these extra qualifications implied more “hands-on” learning and “practical preparation” towards planning of lessons to accommodate diverse learning needs. The examples given included evaluation of a learner’s performance in different settings, which then informed the adaptations to be made towards teaching and learning to accommodate the learners’ special needs. A more

“hands-on approach” enhances differentiation in planning and teaching to meet the diverse learning needs of each learner (Brennan, King & Travers, 2019:10).

The participants in the current study, further reported through the semi-structured telephonic interviews on different external support systems. These were parental support, adequate resources, funding, proper infrastructure, and support from the DBE, specifically providing the necessary resources as well as specialised training for teachers. Even though some participants felt that they did receive some external support, for example books from the DBE, they indicated that the support was inadequate and unreliable. Most participants stated that they were not adequately supported. Since these support mechanisms identified by the participants were expressed as needs which, if available, enhance teaching and learning, it will be discussed and elaborated on in research sub-question 4.

Document analysis of EWP6 (DoE,2001) emphasised the importance of coordinated support of the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs, thereby enabling an inclusive education system. Further analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001), *SIAS* (DBE, 2014), *Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres* (DoE, 2005a), the *Guidelines for responding to diversity in classroom through CAPS* (DBE, 2011b) and the school’s *Foundation Phase Policy*, all highlight the importance and establishment of the provision of support mechanisms such as adequate resources, improved school infrastructure, available specialist support staff, the identification, utilisation and provision of teaching and learning resources, and ongoing training and staff development for the successful implementation of curriculum. The *Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres* (DoE, 2005a) elaborates on high-intensity support mechanisms for the learners, moving towards a non-disablist practice, and the *SIAS* policy (DBE, 2014) further promotes school- and district-based support teams to mentor, guide and address barriers to learning. In this study, participants indicated that they expected holistic support systems, providing not only the human and physical resources as support mechanisms, but specialised training regarding learning barriers. It is therefore evident that all role-players in the special school context should be aware of teachers’ expectations regarding sufficient support (Govender, 2018: S1; Magardie, 2018:18).

It became clear through findings from the interviews that district officials also did not provide sufficient advice and knowledge on how to address barriers to learning in classrooms and how to make specific accommodations to address individual needs when teachers from LSEN schools do attend training sessions. To elaborate, interviews revealed that teachers in special

schools were not being sufficiently trained by the DBST and that in-service training had not been efficient and productive in addressing and supporting barriers to learning for learners with disabilities. This finding is concerning since *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) elaborates that teachers would be trained by the DBST to meet the needs of all learners experiencing barriers to learning. In agreement, analysis of *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) suggests that the SBST and DBST should provide teachers in special schools with the appropriate, differentiated curriculum, planning, assessments and resources to effectively teach learners with disabilities. Furthermore, *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) states that workshops, differentiating curriculum, adjusted classroom methodologies, and assessment accommodations will be addressed to ensure that teachers feel adequately equipped to teach efficiently. Therefore, although the participants reported on the different teaching approaches initiated by them to accommodate barriers to learning in their classes in research sub-question two (2), they might not have reported on or included diversity in terms of delivering a differentiated curriculum due to a lack of knowledge and specialised training. Magardie (2018:18) reports that teachers often feel they do not necessarily have the knowledge and skills required to successfully implement the curricula. Literature agrees that teachers in special education classroom settings often feel they do not effectively teach due to them not having enough knowledge, skills or supportive materials or resources (Hargreaves *et al.,* 2014:2; Nel, Mohandi *et al.,* 2016:48; Zwane and Malale, 2018:1).

It was further noted during the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews that participants utilised appropriate concrete resources to provide support to learners with barriers to learning. However, this study found that teachers received very little teaching materials and resources and that they had to utilise their own resources during teaching and learning. Document analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) reports that the DBST should provide the appropriate support materials and equipment to special school educators to teach effectively. Furthermore, analysis of the *Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres* (DoE, 2005a) indicates that there is a need for resource development in all classrooms, however this study found that resource development has minimally been realised in classrooms. Literature concurs that a lack of resources in all schools still pose a challenge and that this aids in unsuccessful support strategies (Hoadley 2015:733; Makhalemele & Nel, 2015:2; Molapo & Pillay, 2018:1). Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:2) agree that teachers are anxious regarding curriculum implementation due to a lack of adequate support.

5.5 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION 4

How can the support of Foundation Phase special school teachers be enhanced in the teaching of CAPS-based Mathematics and Home Language?

In the current study, participants reported a number of support mechanisms that, according to their knowledge and experience, would enhance teaching and learning in an inclusive education environment. Those mentioned were support from the DBE, DBST, SBST and SMT, teacher training on barriers to learning, resources, funding, infrastructure and parental support. The participants shared their views on the lack of the abovementioned and made suggestions towards enhancement. These are discussed in relation to findings from the document analysis and related literature. Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:4) state that teachers feel that insufficient support, such as insufficient teacher training, the unavailability or inadequate provision of resources, inadequate funding, insufficient assistive and technological devices, inefficient infrastructure as well as insufficient parental involvement and support hinder the provision of sufficient support to learners with barriers, therefore affecting the successful implementation of the curriculum.

It was highlighted during the semi-structured telephonic interviews by a few participants that teachers in special schools needed workshops, meetings and training with regard to effectively addressing and supporting specific barriers to learning in classrooms. One participant voiced another concern regarding the high cost of training provided by private providers, which the participants needed to pay for themselves, as well as covering the travelling costs when attending training in other cities. They indicated the school was not able to finance them to attend training, therefore hindering teachers attending valuable training sessions. Furthermore, it came to light in the interviews that it was insufficient support from the DBE and DBST that was a concern. One participant in the current study suggested that the DBE should conduct research at special schools and invite teachers to share their experiences, and also observe daily activities at the special schools, before developing a new curriculum for the academic stream in special schools.

Participants were further of the opinion that they also saw the benefit of additional support from the SMT. They suggested classroom observations by SMT members to identify the needs of teachers and to address these needs accordingly. Enhancing support to teachers would thus include competency and involvement from members of the DBST, SBST and SMT that could support teachers through being more perceptive towards the barriers to learning that teachers in the academic stream in special schools, experience in classrooms. Participants

expected the DBST, SBST and SMT to be more observant with regard to the specific needs of an inclusive education environment.

In support of the provision of adequate training and support for teachers in an inclusive education context, document analysis revealed that the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) formulated an action plan for the DBST to determine the level of support needed by individual learners and schools. It was noted by several other policies and documents that an inclusive education system will function effectively if teachers are adequately trained and that teachers will be trained to effectively adapt curricula to meet the needs of all learners in LSEN classrooms (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2011b). Furthermore, analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) indicates that training would include supporting learners and teachers to ensure that all barriers are addressed and that teachers will be trained to ensure effective teaching and learning. In addition, documents elaborate that training of staff is of utmost importance to ensure that learner and teacher needs are being met and that in-service training will be encouraged and conducted by district officials as well as SBST members (DoE, 2005; DoE, 2011b). *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) furthermore states that support programmes will be provided to all teachers with specific relation to ongoing training and guidance for teachers to address barriers to learning. In addition, the analysis of *Guidelines for responding to diversity through CAPS* (DoE, 2011b) suggested that training is imperative and will be given to all teachers and support staff on how to respond to diversity within classrooms and address and support barriers to learning accordingly. In support, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:1) affirms that even though teachers aim to adequately adapt and adjust the curriculum to address all needs in their classroom, challenges such as inadequate training, the heavy workload and insufficient support and resources lead to the hindering of the implementation of effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, as was found in the current study, literature concurs that teachers are not adequately trained and do not have the resources to provide a differentiated approach to the mainstream curriculum to meet the needs of all learners with disabilities in their classrooms (Cavendish *et al.*, 20019:1; Köysüren & Deryakulu, 2017:69; Maharajh *et al.*, 2016:372). Furthermore, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:1) state that teachers feel that they are not knowledgeable, or do not have the skills necessary due to inadequate training, to optimally support learners with barriers to learning in their classrooms. Therefore, improving skills and knowledge of LSEN teachers will not only enhance support by equipping and empowering them, but will also benefit the learners experiencing barriers to learning and assist in developing these learners holistically and comprehensively.

To further elaborate on enhancement of training as mentioned in this study's findings, one participant shared that LSEN teachers should be coached to be skilled in utilising assistive and technological devices available for learners with learning and other disabilities. An

example of this was the use of an eye gaze computer programme that enables all learners to fully participate within an LSEN classroom. Another participant stated that teachers in special schools utilise assistive and technological devices in their classrooms daily to support learners with barriers to learning. However, a few participants noted that inadequate resources (assistive and technological devices) hindered the successful implementation of mainstream curricula and participation of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Participants further suggested adapted versions of books from the DBST would assist teaching and learning.

The document analysis of the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) states that support through the allocation of textbooks (DBE, 2014) will be provided to schools, but does not mention the provision of adapted textbooks. With regard to assistive devices, document analysis revealed that the South African education system promotes and encourages full participation for all learners, including learners with various disabilities, by recommending the availability of assistive devices (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2011b). *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) states that special schools will receive all the necessary assistive and technological devices to support learners with disabilities during teaching and learning. Furthermore, analysis of the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity through CAPS* (DoE, 2011b) reveals that learners with disabilities are often in need of assistive devices to optimally participate. This document states that disabled learners should have the opportunity to engage in all lessons by means of adaptations such as assistive devices (DoE, 2011b). In support, Ngcezulla (2018:15) as well as Visser, Nel and De Klerk *et al.* (2020:12), opine that assistive devices enable learners with barriers to learning to engage in all activities because it promotes knowledge and skills associated with curriculum content. Assistive and technological devices are used by learners with severe barriers to learning to have effective learning through physical, verbal or written alternatives (Ngcezulla, 2018:6). Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:7) agree with Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.* (2016:12) that assistive and technological devices such as computers, manual and electrical wheelchairs or hearing aids promote effective implementation of curricula for learners with severe learning disabilities. However, due to the lack of supportive devices and inadequately allocated resources, an additional barrier to learning is created that could have been avoided (Govender, 2018: S1). Assistive devices and assistive technology are seen by literature as tools to enhance support and aid teachers to provide a flexible and differentiated learning environment (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.,* 2016:12; Nel, Tlale *et al.*, 2016:4; DoE, 2011b). Furthermore, Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:12) and Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.* (2016:6) are of the opinion that adequate funding contributes towards providing assistive and technological devices required for adequate support and implementation of inclusive practises. Enhancing support towards an inclusive teaching and learning environment thus includes adequate supply for technological and assistive devices for learners experiencing barriers to learning. The finding of inadequate

resources such as assistive devices in the current study again points to the schism between inclusive education policy and practice. In assessing the effectiveness of an IE system, one needs to be continually reminded that IE is not experienced in its policy but in its praxis.

Findings from the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews indicated that all participants experienced funding as a barrier to learning in the special school. It was mentioned that part of the lack of provision of teaching and learning resources and devices was inadequate funding. It was noted that resources are not freely available in the school and that this creates a stressful environment to teach in. Participants agreed that the circumstances of unavailable resources and limited funding creates a barrier-filled environment for teachers trying to teach efficiently. Analysis of *EWP6* (DoE, 2001), revealed that part of a fully inclusive education system would include funding strategies to ensure optimal support to all schools. This policy elaborates that sufficient funding would create a "barrier-free environment" to teachers and learners experiencing several barriers to learning. Analysis of other policies and documents furthermore indicate that the amount of funding would be determined by the level of support necessary for learners in special schools (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2014). In addition, *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) mentions that funding was to be made available, specifically for schools in need of physical resources for adapted learning materials, and for upgrading infrastructure and equipment to provide the necessary support to learners with barriers to learning.

It was also mentioned that funding was to be allocated for classroom assistants, supportive personnel, or for devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and medication. In support, literature concurs that learning and teaching materials should be provided through adequate funding to promote sufficient support by schools and teachers (Nel, Tlale *et al.*, 2016:12; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et a*l., 2016:6). However, these authors are of the opinion that in instances where funding is adequate, it is not properly utilised and therefore hinders the successful support of barriers to learning. In addition, Nasir and Efendi (2017:84) agree with Nketsia (2017:55) that challenges, such as insufficient funding and inadequate resource allocation, is faced within the school system, hindering the successful implementation of mainstream curriculum. It is thus clear that funding is imperative. Furthermore, Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.* (2016:522) concur that challenges, such as insufficient support, are causing a barrier to the successful implementation of educational policies in classrooms, thus hindering the successful teaching and learning of mainstream curricula in special schools. Adequate funding could enhance the teaching and learning environment, making it a positive experience not only for teachers, but also for learners. It therefore seems as if participants in the current study were ignorant of policy content, therefore they were unaware of the emphasis that IE policy

documents placed on the provision of funding, which is important to successfully promote inclusive education. Alternatively, or in addition, it may be that there is a gap between policy and practice with regard to actual funding being made available by the DBE for adequate support and promotion of IE contexts.

In this study, a few participants indicated that classroom infrastructure also hindered successful teaching in terms of the physical size of the classroom in relation to learner numbers. Another participant was of the opinion that they experienced the high learner-teacher ratio as very challenging because they struggled to fully support the different disabilities in their classrooms. One participant stated that the degree of disability needs to be considered when allocating the number of learners in each classroom. Participants in this study mentioned that the provision of more classroom assistants would aid both teachers and learners, including learners with severe physical disabilities.

Document analysis stated that the proposed number for teacher-learner ratio is 1:10 in LSEN classrooms (DBE, 2014). However, findings in this study indicated that some of the classrooms had more than the prescribed number of learners in class; despite *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) stating that the infrastructure of schools was to be upgraded to accommodate and support learners with severe barriers to learning (DoE, 2001). In addition, analysis of the *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity through CAPS* (DoE, 2011*b*) suggests that to optimally address and support learners with barriers to learning the physical environment, such as the appropriate infrastructure, need to be taken into consideration. However, according to Nasir and Efendi (2017:84) and Nketsia (2017:55), implementing mainstream curricula in special schools has been challenging due to adequate infrastructure being a limited resource. McKinney and Swartz (2016:311) add that South African schools implementing mainstream curricula mostly struggle to cater for learners with physical disabilities due to the inefficient infrastructure of schools. Similarly, Zwane and Malale (2018:10) contend that most schools do not have a disability-friendly infrastructure, therefore hindering the successful implementation of inclusive practices and flexible curricula. Research further indicates that the lack of upgraded infrastructure has been a challenge (Nel, Tlale *et al.*, 2016:3; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2016:6). Nel, Tlale *et al.* (2016:11) elaborates that a fully inclusive South African education system should transform to a point where upgraded infrastructure, appropriate resources and adequate support is provided. To enhance support, it is necessary to review and re-assess the infrastructure and learner-teacher ratios in special schools and attend to the needs. The findings of the current study with regard to infrastructure provision, once more suggests the gap between policy and practice in the South African schooling system.

During this study, a few participants were of the opinion that parental support is vital and much needed towards enhancing support in LSEN schools. A few participants stated that parents or caregivers need to be fully aware and grasp the degree of their child's disability. Participants believed parents need to understand how to not only apply individual support at home, but to also understand that teachers try their best to support and address learners' individual needs. Parental involvement as an important factor in the education of leaners is also highlighted in policy.

During document analysis, *CAPS* (DBE, 2011*a*) identified support structures such as the community, parents or caregivers amongst other sources of support. Documents analysed revealed that parental involvement and support is vital to a fully inclusive education system (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2011b). In addition, the *SIAS* (DBE, 2014) document promotes and elaborates on parental roles, rights and responsibilities. According to *EWP6* (DoE, 2001) the model of inclusion stipulates the importance of parents and caregivers as they aid schools and teachers to optimally support learners with barriers to learning. *CAPS* (DBE, 2011a) agrees with *SIAS* (DBE, 2014), stipulating that an intervention strategy and parental support is key to the early identification of barriers to learning. Furthermore, the *Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive education: special schools as resource centres* (DoE, 2005a) agrees with *EWP6* (DoE, 2001), which aims to provide, inter alia, outreach programmes for parental guidance, training, counselling and mentoring for early intervention and to promote that parents collaborate with teachers and schools. Literature agrees that parental involvement as a means of support is pivotal to the identification and support of learners with barriers to learning (Asari, 2017:185; Ngcezulla, 2018:43). According to Aufseeser *et al.* (2018:245), as well as Buka and Malepo (2016:38), parental negligence, poor household circumstances and lack of parental support are challenges that are being faced by not only special schools, but by schools in general. Engelbrecht, Nle, Nel *et al.* (2015:1) state that disadvantaged home circumstances and limited transport to and from school, negatively affect the successful identification and support of barriers to learning. Furthermore, Ngcezulla (2018:43) and Buka and Malepo (2016:38) agree that parents should be made aware, take responsibility, be involved, and assist in the education programme to identify, address and support learners with barriers to learning. To conclude, Asari (2017:185) agrees with policy that collaboration between the different support structures is important in embracing an inclusive education system, implement curriculum differentiation and to optimally support learners with barriers to learning.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the results of the study by referring to relevant literature in an attempt at answering the study's main question by answering the research sub-questions. The findings suggest that participants were passionate about teaching at a special school but experienced many challenges with the general implementation of *CAPS* in the Foundation Phase academic stream classes at a special school. The findings suggest that teachers were trying to deliver the curriculum within an inclusive education approach through teaching strategies that were reportedly used. However, limited teacher knowledge about barriers to learning and curriculum differentiation, an inappropriate curriculum, unrealistic expectations, insufficient support from different role-players and inadequate resources had a negative impact on how effective they were in teaching inclusively. The study also highlighted the gap between policy and practice and voiced the manner in which support could be enhanced to improve teaching the mainstream curriculum. It became clear that special schools implementing mainstream curricula experience a unique set of challenges. Policies and procedures, adequate resources and support mechanisms should be put into place to ensure quality inclusive education for all.

Chapter 6 discusses conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the study, as well as possible future research and benefits emanating from the study.

CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the interpretation and discussion of data obtained through the semi-structured individual telephonic interviews and document analysis. In this chapter, a summary of the study's findings and benefits are presented. Recommendations are conferred with regard to Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at one Gauteng special school. A discussion on the limitations of the study and further research suggestions follows thereafter.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The aim of the research was to investigate Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at one Gauteng special school. In order to achieve the aim, specific objectives were met, and the study's main research question was answered by answering the research sub-questions. The findings of the study are summarised as follows:

- Participants were professionally qualified and indicated that although they had experience teaching in a mainstream environment, they preferred and felt passionate about teaching in a special school.

- Most participants were not in favour of CAPS implementation in the academic stream of the special school for various reasons such as: inflexible curriculum, too much content, expectations of CAPS are too high for LSEN learners, the pace of the curriculum is too fast for LSEN learners, CAPS does not take into account the many barriers to learning experienced by LSEN learners, insufficient teacher knowledge of how to address the different barriers to learning, and the home language of some of the LSEN learners was not the same as the LoLT. Participants therefore advocated for a revised curriculum that was appropriate for LSEN leaners following an academic curriculum.

- Despite the many challenges experienced in the implementation of CAPS, participants still reportedly tried to implement the curriculum in an inclusive manner by trying to adapt the

curriculum content and the pace of the curriculum to be more appropriate for the LSEN learners.

- There was a lack of planning for curriculum differentiation as gleaned from the analysis of lesson plans.

- Participants did not seem to have deep insight into IE polices and other official documents to inform their teaching within an IE approach and also how these policies could be consulted to advance IE.

- Although the participants relied on support systems, the internal (e.g. SMT) and external (e.g. DBST) support mechanisms were limited, thus hindering the implementation of inclusive practices in classrooms. Participants mentioned that support could be enhanced by them receiving appropriate in-service training on addressing the various barriers to learning, since they work in a special school environment. They also advocated for more resources and funding to enhance teaching and learning.

- Providing support and assistance is seen as a priority by the government policies and guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education. District support teams, as proposed by the supporting documents, were appointed to assist and implement systems, and promises were made towards improved school infrastructure, available specialist support staff and ongoing training and staff development as resources, but according to the participants, this has not materialised. Therefore, a significant finding of the study was the apparent gap between IE policy and practice.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DELIVERY IN THE ACADEMIC STREAMS OF LSEN SCHOOLS

All learners have the right to be educated in an environment that promotes social, cultural and physical activities to develop the learner holistically.

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- A flexible curriculum should be developed. If teachers are expected to apply principles of full participation, embrace diversity, and promote social justice and equality in accordance with the CAPS requirements, it is anticipated that adequate support will be provided by means of a flexible curriculum comprising clear guidelines and strategies.

- Curriculum planning should embrace barriers to learning. The specific, individual requirements and needs of all learners should be at the centre of curriculum planning and delivery. This implies that the learners will have an opportunity to develop their potential in an environment that fosters a sense of well-being.

- Curriculum development should consider the necessary curriculum adaptations and time allocation when teaching LSEN learners. Teachers should have the opportunity to create a stimulating atmosphere where learners can explore and develop their individuality and personal strengths, promoted through experiential learning, encouragement, support and learner engagement.

- The curriculum should embrace diversity and disability. Teachers, schools and other role-players should be given the opportunity and guidance to acknowledge, accommodate and support individual abilities through developing educational opportunities by including the use of different teaching strategies and styles, creating a productive teaching and learning environment, enhancing the constructive and functional use of a variety of resources, as well as promoting interaction and collaboration with other teachers.

- A supportive educational platform for teachers should be made available. For teachers to be able to accommodate the diverse barriers to learning and provide extra support to learners, they need the necessary skills and specialised knowledge. Teachers also need physical and social resources, assistive devices and specialised equipment and a supportive infrastructure to be able to function optimally in the inclusive educational environment. Adequate funding should be available to train teachers and to provide the necessary resources to implement inclusive practices and to ensure optimal, successful teaching and learning for learners with barriers to learning.

- For the DBST, SBST and SMT to support teachers in the challenges they encounter in the inclusive education environment, they should engage and become more involved in daily class activities, introduce teachers to policies and guidelines, assist teachers on how to provide differentiated lesson plans and present differentiated lessons to make them more inclusive, and rather follow a bottom-up approach, including teachers in decision-making processes.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study were limited to one special school where CAPS is implemented. Covid-19 regulations influenced the initial planning of the research, and in the end, the semi-structured interviews had to be done telephonically during a time that suited the participants, which was usually in the evening. Lockdown restrictions also had an enormous impact on the participants' workload in already overcrowded classrooms where they had to incorporate an inflexible curriculum. Furthermore, it was a challenge to persuade the Foundation Phase teachers to avail their weekly schedules, which were not true versions of what happened in the classes. Although the weekly schedules were based on CAPS, it was not possible for participants to indicate and include all adaptations and daily changes made to the work schedule, due to the challenges of diverse learner barriers and disabilities in one class.

This is a qualitative study, with a small sample of participants, focusing on Foundation Phase teacher experiences with regards to CAPS implementation at one special school. The results of this study can therefore not be generalised to similar teaching contexts in South Africa. However, it is never the intention of a qualitative study to generalise findings, but rather to describe the experiences of participants about a study focused on a specific context.

6.5 BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Findings from the study could contribute towards the development of a flexible curriculum which accommodates diversity and barriers to learning. The study further revealed the experiences of the teachers using CAPS, indicating that they shared the same experiences. Sharing of experiences could serve as a support system where teachers can share ideas and communicate and demonstrate their own initiatives of the creative teaching and learning strategies they applied. The researcher hopes this study will contribute to a body of knowledge where further research and findings will lead to the development of best practices that will inform a curriculum representative of inclusive education practices in a special school environment.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research on a larger scale should include other special schools where CAPS is implemented in the academic stream of these special schools. Teachers' experiences of teaching CAPS at special schools should be further explored to gain a more comprehensive view of teachers' experiences in this regard. The findings of similar large-scale studies could

assist the DBE to effectively re-curriculate according to the gaps identified, to accommodate the diversity of learners and to adapt the curriculum to support learners in the academic streams of special schools.

6.7 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the original contribution of the research was to investigate Foundation Phase special school teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using CAPS at one Gauteng special school. The objectives that this study set out to accomplish have been achieved, and the research question has been answered. I am of the opinion that the findings of the study can contribute towards removing the gap between curriculum delivery and IE policies and anticipate meaningful curricula that assist teachers to support learners in developing their full potential, despite barriers to learning.

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ADDENDUM 1: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2020/06/23

Ref: **2019/11/13/64007642/40/AM**
Name: Ms J Theron
Student No.: 64007642

Dear Ms J Theron

Decision: Approved

Researcher(s): Name: Ms J Theron
[redacted]

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr. T Moodley
[redacted]

Title of research:

FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

Qualification: MEd Inclusive Education

Research Ethics Committee Recommendations:

The request to amend the ethics application previously approved on the 13th November 2019 is approved.

Yours sincerely,
Name of the Chair: Prof AT Motlhabane
E-mail: motlhat@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-2840

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

ADDENDUM 2: DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**01 July 2020**
Validity of Research Approval:	**04 February 2020 – 30 September 2020** **2019/509**
Name of Researcher:	**Theron J**
Address of Researcher:	**Kiewiet Street 26**
	Falconridge
	Vereeniging
Telephone Number:	**0649075440**
Email address:	**64007642@mylife.co.za**
Research Topic:	**FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL.**
Type of qualification	**Master's in Education**
Number and type of schools:	**1 LSEN School**
District/s/HO	**Johannesburg South**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

15/07/2020

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. *Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. ***Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.***
4. ***The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.***
5. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
6. *A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
7. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
8. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
9. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
10. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
11. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
12. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
13. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
14. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
15. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
16. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 15/07/2020

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ADDENDUM 3: SCHOOL APPROVAL LETTER

[redacted]

FR NO 011016920008

[redacted]

[redacted]

24.10.2017

To whom it may concern,

Re: [redacted]

This serves as confirmation that [redacted]
School and will continue studying for her Master's Degree.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Principal

[redacted]

ADDENDUM 4: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY APPROVAL LETTER

Dear Teacher

I am currently busy with a research towards my Masters' Degree in Inclusive Education at UNISA, and I need your assistance to complete the research. This letter provides information regarding the research and what your involvement will entail.

My research is entitled "FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL". The research links well with the present teaching and learning situation in South Africa where it is expected of teachers to implement the CAPS with inclusive practices in a classroom situation. You will be requested to take part in a personal interview that will not take longer than 2 hours using telephonic communication. The interview will not interfere with your academic teaching time. Please note that a voice recorder will be used to record the interview and ensure the truthfulness of the data collected. Furthermore, the interview will be anonymous and you nor your school will be identified throughout the entire research. The purpose of this interview is to get clarity regarding the research question, and your personal experience regarding implementation of the CAPS in your class. This will aid the researcher to better the understanding into the investigation of Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) at one Gauteng Special school.
All information collected with the interview will be handled confidentially and results will be reported in an anonymous way for research and publication purposes only. There are no risks or direct benefits for taking part in this research. However, the findings could be utilized to make recommendations regarding the implementation of the CAPS at other special schools. Participation will be voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation, I will appreciate it if you could sign the section to follow indicating your consent that you are willing to take part in the study. If you have any questions regarding the research you can contact Jeantelle Theron at 064 907 5440.

for taking part in this research. However, the findings could be utilized to make recommendations regarding the implementation of the CAPS at other Special schools. Participation will be voluntary and they may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation, I will appreciate it if you could sign the section to follow indicating your consent.

If you have any questions regarding the research you can contact Jeantelle Theron at 064 907 5440.

Signature: Teacher

2020-07-17

Date

Signature: Principal

22/7/2020

Date

Signatures: SMT members:

Date

ADDENDUM 5: PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS

UNISA college of education

Dear Teacher

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If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation, I will appreciate it if you could sign the section to follow indicating your consent that you are willing to take part in the study. If you have any questions regarding the research you can contact [redacted]

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

Name of researcher: [redacted]

If you agree to the following, kindly tick:	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the above-mentioned research.	✓	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it and have had them answered satisfactory.	✓	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.	✓	
I understand that the data gathered from this research will be accessible to other professionals at UNISA and that the results will be published.	✓	
I agree to take part in this research	✓	

Signature Participant [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

Participants name: [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

Signature Researcher [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

UNISA college of education

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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

Name of researcher: [redacted]

If you agree to the following, kindly tick:	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the above-mentioned research.	✓	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it and have had them answered satisfactory.	✓	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.	✓	
I understand that the data gathered from this research will be accessible to other professionals at UNISA and that the results will be published.	✓	
I agree to take part in this research	✓	

Signature Participant: [redacted] Date: 20·07·2020

Participants name: [redacted] Date: 20·07·2020

Signature Researcher: [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

UNISA college of education

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Name of researcher: [redacted]

If you agree to the following, kindly tick:	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the above-mentioned research.	✓	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it and have had them answered satisfactory.	✓	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.	✓	
I understand that the data gathered from this research will be accessible to other professionals at UNISA and that the results will be published.	✓	
I agree to take part in this research	✓	

Signature Participant: [redacted] Date: 2020-07-20

Participants name: [redacted] Date: 2020-07-20

Signature Researcher: [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

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Name of researcher: [redacted]

If you agree to the following, kindly tick:	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the above-mentioned research.	✓	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it and have had them answered satisfactory.	✓	
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I understand that the data gathered from this research will be accessible to other professionals at UNISA and that the results will be published.	✓	
I agree to take part in this research	✓	

Signature Participant: [redacted] Date: [redacted]

Participants name: [redacted] Date: [redacted]

Signature Researcher: [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

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I am currently busy with a research towards my Masters' Degree in Inclusive Education at UNISA, and I need your assistance to complete the research. This letter provides information regarding the research and what your involvement will entail.

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All information collected with the interview will be handled confidentially and results will be reported in an anonymous way for research and publication purposes only. There are no risks or direct benefits for taking part in this research. However, the findings could be utilized to make recommendations regarding the implementation of the CAPS at other special schools. Participation will be voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation, I will appreciate it if you could sign the section to follow indicating your consent that you are willing to take part in the study. If you have any questions regarding the research you can contact [redacted].

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

Name of researcher: [redacted]

If you agree to the following, kindly tick:	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the above-mentioned research.	✓	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it and have had them answered satisfactory.	✓	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.	✓	
I understand that the data gathered from this research will be accessible to other professionals at UNISA and that the results will be published.	✓	
I agree to take part in this research	✓	

Signature Participant: [redacted] Date: [redacted]

Participants name: [redacted] Date: 23/07/2020

Signature Researcher: [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

UNISA college of education

Dear Teacher

I am currently busy with a research towards my Masters' Degree in Inclusive Education at UNISA, and I need your assistance to complete the research. This letter provides information regarding the research and what your involvement will entail.

My research is entitled "FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL". The research links well with the present teaching and learning situation in South Africa where it is expected of teachers to implement the CAPS with inclusive practices in a classroom situation. You will be requested to take part in a personal interview that will not take longer than 2 hours using telephonic communication. The interview will not interfere with your academic teaching time. Please note that a voice recorder will be used to record the interview and ensure the truthfulness of the data collected. Furthermore, the interview will be anonymous and you nor your school will be identified throughout the entire research. The purpose of this interview is to get clarity regarding the research question, and your personal experience regarding implementation of the CAPS in your class. This will aid the researcher to better the understanding into the investigation of Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) at one Gauteng Special school.
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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS AND HOME LANGUAGE USING THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT AT ONE GAUTENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

Name of researcher: [redacted]

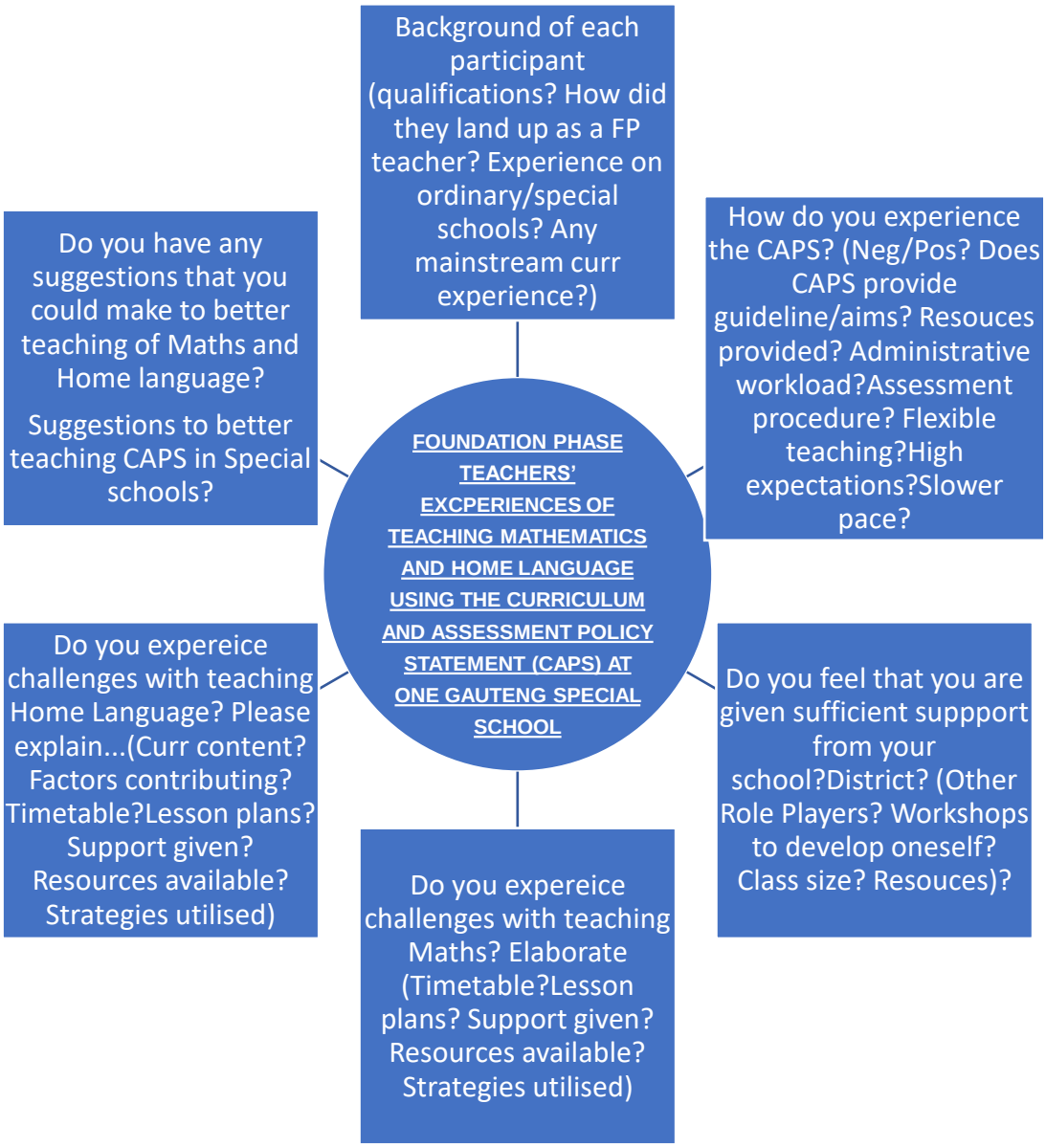
If you agree to the following, kindly tick:	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understand the information given in the informed consent for the above-mentioned research.	✓	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about it and have had them answered satisfactory.	✓	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.	✓	
I understand that the data gathered from this research will be accessible to other professionals at UNISA and that the results will be published.	✓	
I agree to take part in this research	✓	

Signature Participant: [redacted] Date: 2020.07.20

Participants name: [redacted] Date: 2020.07.20

Signature Researcher: [redacted] Date: 2020/07/20

ADDENDUM 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE



ADDENDUM 7: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

Document Analysis Guide	
Type of document being analysed	
The applicability towards special schools and this study	
The Date and Author of this document	
Why and for whom was the document written	
List all applicable and important aspects in the document	
List the aspects not addressed in the document	
Discuss and compare aspects (data) revealed from semi-structured individual interview	

ADDENDUM 8: EXAMPLE OF ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

R: OK so do you have any experiences with any experience with mainstream education?

Do have mainstream education

P3: Yes ,I do um I've taught in uh mainstream grade 1 as well two and three but not grade R in mainstream.

Cat 3: Differentiate between Mainstream and Special education

R: Do you find it different than uhm, the special education?

Mainstream education differs from special education w.r.t support

P3: Oh yes, I do, definitely. Uhm with mainstream, you can actually teach the children and they will grasp the concept quite faster and quite uhm... and they will have higher marks as well and you can actually push the curriculum to um getting to do more than an is expected with, with a special needs school you cannot do that.

Learners in special schools takes longer to grasp certain content

Cat 10: Learning disabilities effect conceptualisation of learning content

Considers curriculum content as of a high standard

R: OK so, so if you say that you um, that with the special education …can you elaborate on that that you…Do I understand it correctly that you find it more difficult to teach in special education?

Cat 18: High Language standards

Has to adapt the amount of curriculum content taught

P3: Ah, no, I don't find it difficult to teach in special education. I find it challenging in the in the a sense that if you're used to the to the mainstream and what the children are able to do in in comparison with special needs then um, then you'll find you have to adapt towards uhm the children's abilities and that makes it sometimes difficult because you expect more from the child sometimes and then you have to go down to their level, and remember that they cannot actually do what you are expecting from them and the curriculum expect from…them to do.

Cat 7: High Mathematical standards

Considers the curriculum standards as too high to accomplish

R: OK so if you talk about um, uhm the curriculum expectations, do you have specific expectations of the curriculum?

ADDENDUM 9: EXAMPLE OF DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 2

RATIONALE OF THE POLICY ON SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT (SIAS)

1. DETERMINING THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS

CAT 4: IDENTIFY DEGREE OF SUPPORT NEEDED

(1) The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy framework is structured in such a way that it ensures that teachers and schools understand the support needs of all learners to enhance the delivery of the National Curriculum Statement.

To identify and assess the level of support for learner participation of schools and classrooms

(2) The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) process outlined in this policy is intended to assess the level and extent of support required in schools and in classrooms to maximise learners' participation in the learning process.

To identify individual external learner needs

(3) Firstly, it outlines a process of identifying individual learner needs in relation to the home and school context, to establish the level and extent of additional support that is needed.

To identify level of support needed of schools

ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

(1) Secondly, it outlines a process to enable access to and provide such support at different levels.

CAT 1: IDENTIFY LEARNER BARRIERS TO LEARNING

(2) Through a set of forms, this policy outlines the protocol that has to be followed in identifying and addressing barriers to learning that affect individual learners throughout their school career.

To identify different role of multiple role players

(3) It further identifies the roles and responsibilities of teachers, managers, district-based support teams and parents/caregivers.

To identify level of learner support after screening

(4) It also guides how further support and interventions must be provided to learners who have been identified through the screening processes conducted through the Integrated School Health programme.

CAT 5: IDENTIFY ROLE OF DIFFERENT ROLE-PLAYERS

(5) Often learners are faced with challenges in the learning process which are a result of a broad range of experiences in the classroom, at school, at home, in the community, and/or as a result of health conditions or disability. These challenges are referred to as 'barriers to learning and development'.

(6) Barriers to learning and development may include:

a) Socio-economic aspects (such as a lack of access to basic services, poverty and under-development);

ADDENDUM 10: TURNITIN REPORT

64007642 J.THERON FINAL THESIS

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10%	10%	3%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	2%
2	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	repository.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	1%
4	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	1%
5	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	1%
6	moam.info Internet Source	<1%
7	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	<1%
8	www.education.gov.za Internet Source	<1%
9	scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source	<1%

ADDENDUM 11: LANGUAGE EDITING DECLARATION

danielle barfoot
Professional writer, blogger, copywriter and translator

EDITING DECLARATION

Danielle Barfoot
danielle.barfoot@gmail.com
076 668 6317
SATI membership number: 1000503

30 March 2021

I, D Barfoot, hereby declare that I have done language editing for the dissertation titled *Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Mathematics and Home Language using the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement at one Gauteng special school* by J Theron, with the exception of images and verbatim quotes and without seeing the final version. Do not hesitate to contact me if further information is required.

Danielle Barfoot
Danielle Barfoot