

**TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PINETOWN DISTRICT, KWAZULU-
NATAL**

by

JABULILE PRINCESS HADEBE

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SUPERVISOR: DR N. NDOU

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DECLARATION

Name: Jabulile Princess Hadebe

Student number: 46233555

Degree: Master of Education (Inclusive Education)

Exact wording of the title of the dissertation as appearing on the electronic copy submitted for examination: **TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PINETOWN DISTRICT, KWAZULU-NATAL**

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- I would like to thank God, the Almighty, who gave me the strength to soldier on when it was seemingly impossible to continue. I believed and was anchored on the words, “I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13) when things got tough.
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ABBREVIATIONS

ELSEN	Education for learners with special educational needs
IEP	Individualised Education Plans
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
EFA	Education for All
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
NCES	National Centre for Education Statistic
PPN	Post Provisioning Norm
SAIRR	South African Institution of Race Relations
SGB	School Governing Body
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
DH	Departmental Heads
SEN	Special Educational Needs
EFA	Education For All
UNISA	University of South Africa
WHO	World Health Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SBST	School Support Based Team
SMT	School Management Team
IEP	Inclusive Education Policy

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a fundamental paradigm shift in primary education, striving to ensure that every child has equitable access to quality education regardless of their diverse abilities and needs. This study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. The study was conducted in four public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a case study design. Moreover, this study was guided by the lenses of Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. A purposeful sampling strategy was employed for this study to identify participants who were likely to be knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon under investigation. The data generation process was generated through semi-structured interviews and observations with principals, departmental heads (DH), and teachers. The study employed non-participant observation and document analysis to triangulate data for credibility and trustworthiness. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, and it followed a process that included data coding, theme identification, and interpretation of findings to analyse the data related to the implementation of inclusive education. The study findings revealed that all participants knew the importance of implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. It was evident that various factors, such as the availability of physical resources, human resources, financial resources, and the nature of the curriculum for Education for learners with special educational needs (ELSEN), impacted the implementation of inclusive education. The study also revealed the challenges that hamper implementation, such as insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms, inadequate time for teaching diverse learners, and inadequate parental involvement and support. It was recommended that for inclusive education to thrive, teachers must undergo training in educating learners with special educational needs (SEN). Schools should receive sufficient resources to address the diverse needs of all learners, and a flexible curriculum is crucial to providing every child with an opportunity to learn and benefit from education. Success in inclusive education also relies on active involvement from all stakeholders in educating learners with special needs.

KEY TERMS

Inclusive Education; Learners With Special Educational Needs; Curriculum; Learner Diversity; Individualised Education Plans; Diverse Needs

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) affects everybody concerned with education to some extent; it requires everyone's eye within the Department of Education (DoE). IEP promotes equal access to Education For All (EFA) learners, irrespective of differences; it ensures tailored support, celebrates diversity, and fosters an environment where every learner can thrive. Its goal is to create inclusive classrooms that accommodate varied needs and nurtures a sense of belonging for all. School principals must receive training to fully support the implementation of IEP at all levels (Geleta, 2019). There is a significant gap between the way IEP is implemented in primary schools and the role that inclusive education should play. Despite the enactment and domestication of international laws on inclusive education, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), (2019) states that there is still a significant gap between policy frameworks and inclusive strategies in order to effectively respond to learners' educational needs and minimise barriers to inclusive education implementation. According to Cheshire (2018), fees and other school levies are a major hurdle for students who live in poverty, which is experienced at disproportionately high rates by learners with learning challenges.

Attitudinal barriers and lack of inclusive practice and strategies are the most common issues affecting teachers' ability to teach inclusively (Sharma & Micheal, 2017). Inclusive education is defined by perceived competencies, genuine membership, full participation, social interactions, and a high standard of learning for all children in age-appropriate general education classes, with support given to learners and teachers to ensure success. The professional research literature has documented teachers' negative attitudes towards teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in primary schools (Ewing, Monsen & Kielblock, 2018). This study focuses on how these attitudes and negative outcomes persist in a local school setting and how these attitudes are associated with teacher education and experience. This study begins with the background of the research problem and the rationale for it. Addressing this problem, the accompanying questions are presented for this study's purpose, along with a literature review and the key concepts relevant to this study.

Several studies have consistently found positive academic achievement and social integration outcomes in inclusive education settings; learners with disabilities or diverse backgrounds benefit

from interacting with their peers without disabilities, leading to improved social skills, self-esteem, and acceptance (McManis, 2017). Additionally, inclusive education fosters higher levels of engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes for all learners (Haug, 2017). However, despite these positive findings, more research is needed to understand the specific factors contributing to improved academic achievement and social integration in implementing inclusive education. Further investigation is required to identify effective instructional strategies, support systems, and interventions that can be replicated across different educational contexts. Furthermore, studies could explore the long-term effects of inclusive education on students' academic progress and social development.

Teachers' attitudes and professional development are key factors in IEP implementation. Pit-ten Cate, Markova, Krischler and Krolak-Schwerdt (2018) highlight the significance of teacher attitudes and professional development in successfully implementing inclusive education. Saloviita (2020) added that positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion positively influence instructional practices, classroom management, and learner outcomes. Professional development programmes focusing on inclusive education have been found to enhance teacher knowledge, skills, and confidence in meeting the diverse needs of their learners (Erasmus, Kritzinger & Van der Linde, 2019). While research underscores the importance of teacher attitudes and professional development, there is a need for further exploration of effective strategies to promote positive attitudes towards inclusion and comprehensive professional development programmes.

The active participation of education stakeholders plays a vital role in IEP implementation. McLeskey (2017) states that collaboration among teachers, support staff, and families is vital in inclusive education. Kirk, Gallagher and Coleman (2022) indicated that effective collaboration and support systems positively influence student outcomes, inclusive practices, and overall school climate. Collaboration fosters a cohesive team approach, allowing for the coordination of instructional strategies, accommodations, and interventions to meet the diverse needs of students (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). The researcher felt the need to conduct this study to identify strategies to overcome barriers and challenges to collaboration, including time constraints, role ambiguity, and communication gaps, so that the researcher could explore the impact of collaboration on learners' academic achievement, social integration, and overall well-being. The

researcher examined teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools in this study. The study aimed to explore the strategies used to implement inclusive policy.

The context of this study was teachers' views on inclusive education implementation in public primary schools in the Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal. According to Cobley (2018), Florian et al., (2017) and UNESCO-IBE (2018), inclusive education is an educational model in which learners who experience barriers to learning are placed in primary school to study an age-appropriate curriculum with their non-disabled peers. Instead of receiving support services in an isolated setting away from non-disabled peers, inclusive education involves providing support services to elementary school students (Cobley, 2018). According to Lynch (2020), an elementary school is a place where learners are nurtured and educated equally by faculty and administration, but their families are also valued and encouraged to participate in their child's education, which creates a neighbourhood in which all learners are given the confidence to participate in the community.

Teachers must examine their instructional methods and ensure that a creative and inclusive environment is created. The central principle of inclusive education is that all students with disabilities should be included in primary school to the greatest extent possible. According to Nilholm (2021), there has been a lot of research on inclusive education since the Salamanca Declaration was published in 1994. However, a lack of progress requires critical consideration of the field without neglecting the progress. Miles and Signal (2015) argue that the implementation of the directive is not limited to South Africa and that other countries also have difficulty implementing it.

Before establishing a democratic government, measures were in place that contributed to marginalisation, which resulted in the deprivation of rights of many learners who experience barriers to learning, including elementary school students. According to the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), any educational policy must aim to protect the fundamental rights of all learners. Cultural beliefs about the significance of teaching learners who experience barriers to learning can affect parents' decisions to enroll them in education. Grace (2004) discovered that in diverse growing nations worldwide, learners who experience barriers to learning regularly no longer attend school because they cannot study or may be disruptive to other learners.

Inclusive education is a vital approach that aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. However, teachers face numerous challenges when implementing inclusive education policies. One of the significant hurdles faced by teachers in implementing inclusive education is the lack of necessary resources and support; this includes insufficient funding, limited access to assistive technology, and a lack of professional development opportunities, (Mason-Williams, Bettini, Peyton, Harvey, Rosenberg and Sindelar, 2020).

Another significant challenge teachers face is the lack of training and knowledge in implementing inclusive education practices. They may not be familiar with strategies for adapting curriculum, accommodating different learning styles, or supporting learners with disabilities, (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Attitudinal barriers among teachers can impede the successful implementation of inclusive education policies; these barriers may include biases, stereotypes, and misconceptions about students with disabilities or diverse backgrounds, (Saloviita, 2020).

Meeting the individualised needs of diverse learners within a mainstream classroom setting poses a significant challenge for teachers. Learners with different abilities, learning styles, and levels of support require personalised instruction. Inclusive education necessitates collaboration and engagement from parents and the wider community. However, these challenges may arise when parents are unfamiliar with inclusive education practices or have concerns about their child's placement in a mainstream classroom, (Paseka and Schwab, 2020) . Based on the challenges mentioned above, this study aimed to explore and better understand teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools through focus interviews. Furthermore, this study aimed to outline strategies to address these challenges effectively, empowering teachers to implement inclusive education practices successfully.

Research suggests that the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation depends on teachers' good attitudes toward inclusive education (Ewing, Monsen & Keilblock, 2018). Ross-Hill (2009) emphasised the importance of teachers' positive attitudes, claiming that inclusive education cannot be achieved unless the key stakeholders agree. Teachers often encounter difficulties in implementing IEP due to insufficient resources, inadequate support systems, and a lack of tailored teaching materials for diverse learning needs, including adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs, managing large classroom variances, and acquiring specialised training to support learners with disabilities or learning differences. Research in this

area was crucial as it can identify these specific gaps in resources, training, and support, offering evidence-based solutions to enhance teacher preparedness, develop targeted interventions, and create effective teaching strategies. Through this study, teachers can access updated methodologies, gain insights into best practices, and contribute to the evolution of inclusive education, thus fostering more supportive and equitable learning environments for all learners. Inclusive training and schooling are carried out by converting attitudes, behaviour, coaching methods, curricula, and the surroundings to fulfil the wants of all learners, (White Paper 6, 2001). Additionally, it recognises that gaining knowledge is broader than formal training and further occurs within the domestic community and formal and casual settings and structures.

1.1 THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The motivation for conducting this research was to explore teachers' perspectives on IEP implementation in primary schools. In the researcher's professional experience as a teacher, they have faced many challenges, including an overcrowded classroom. As a teacher, the researcher finds it difficult to manage the workload in a crowded classroom; this challenge has caused stress and frustration for the researcher and other teachers, creating a lack of interest in the teaching profession. It is difficult because of the classroom, the teacher's inability to assist weak learners, and an increased workload creating instructional challenges. Shah and Inamullah (2012) state that reducing class size allows for more effective teaching and learning. The greater the number, the more difficult it is for the teacher to know the specific circumstances of each learner.

The researcher has experienced the neglect of inclusive education; teachers have a negative attitude, claiming that learners with special educational needs (SEN) do not have the necessary skills in the classroom and must attend specific schools (Dash, 2018). Teachers are not prepared to teach learners with SEN because they believe it will result in poor academic performance for the other learners. The concerns raised by Engelbrecht and Green (2007), Singh (2010), and Skinner (2016) include teachers' difficulties coping with diverse learners in their classrooms. Another issue teachers face is an inflexible curriculum that does not allow for accommodation, modification, or personalisation, insufficient school resources and support, and insufficient specialised school support (DeBoe & Fiji, 2013).

When implementing inclusive education, the researcher has identified critical gaps that impede its successful implementation, such as negative attitudes and beliefs towards learners with disabilities or diverse learning needs hindering the acceptance and integration of inclusive practices. Furthermore, insufficient teacher training and professional development in inclusive strategies limit teachers' preparedness and confidence to cater to all learners effectively. There was also the allocation of resources, such as assistive technologies and support staff, which often falls short of what is needed to adequately support diverse learners, including a lack of meaningful collaboration between schools and parents of students with disabilities, leading to a disconnect in decision-making and support systems. Additionally, traditional assessment methods may not align with the varied learning styles of learners in inclusive settings, resulting in an inadequate representation of their abilities. Addressing these gaps requires a comprehensive approach involving policy changes, attitudinal shifts, improved resource allocation, and increased stakeholder collaboration to ensure an inclusive and equitable educational environment for all learners.

The study tackled the negative attitudes and beliefs and conducted workshops for teachers, parents, and learners to promote a positive and inclusive mindset. Moreover, it designed a comprehensive teacher training programme focused on inclusive strategies, providing ongoing professional development to enhance teachers' preparedness and confidence and overcome resource allocation challenges. Moreover, it assessed resource availability in inclusive classrooms and proposed targeted solutions for improved support. Additionally, the study explored alternative assessment methods that align with inclusive principles, incorporating formative assessments and project-based evaluations to better capture diverse learners' progress and achievements.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Due to inadequate teacher training and ongoing curriculum implementation, learners facing learning barriers are not effectively supported in typical classroom environments, making inclusive education challenging for those with SEN. In South African schools teachers have difficulties implementing inclusion, (Ladbrook, 2009). Due to inadequate teacher training and ongoing curriculum implementation, learners facing learning barriers are not effectively supported in typical classroom environments, making inclusive education challenging for those with SEN. These learners struggle to cope in a mixed-ability class. The other learners despise them and accuse them of demanding too much attention from the teacher. Teachers often face challenges in

identifying and effectively managing learners with diverse needs, making it difficult to strike a balance in their teaching methods that cater to the learning requirements of all learners.

The researcher translated the identified research problem into the following main and sub-research questions:

1.2.1 Main research question

What are the teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal?

1.2.2 Sub-research questions

- How do teachers in the Pinetown District implement inclusive education in public primary schools?
- What factors impact the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- Why do teachers perceive inclusive education implementation in the same or different ways?
- To what extent do teachers' perspectives affect the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- How can education stakeholders support teachers in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools?

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Aims

This research aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3.2 Objectives

The study's objectives are stated as follows:

- To explain how teachers implement inclusive education at public primary schools.

- To describe factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools.
- To explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools.
- To determine the extent to which teachers' perspectives influence inclusive education.
- To identify how education stakeholders support teachers in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to UNESCO (2017), inclusive education is a continual process of educational change with a specific set of equitable indicators. Inclusive education is a continuous process of educational reform that can be aided by a defined set of equity indicators, such as those provided by UNESCO (2017). The basis of this may be found in several worldwide policies and initiatives, the most important of which is the 1994 Salamanca Declaration, which signalled a major shift in educational policy towards a more inclusive education or EFA (Hollings, 2021). Despite decades having passed since this structural support was established, Al-Mahdy and Emam (2018) correctly point out that implementing and developing inclusive education remains one of the most challenging issues faced by educational systems worldwide.

South Africa has adopted an IEP to remove barriers to learning in the education system; however, Dalton, McKenzie and Kahode (2012) wrote that implementing inclusive education policies is hindered by a lack of skills and knowledge among teachers. In order to meet a wide range of training needs, the curriculum must be varied. Chataika, McKenzie, Swart and Cleophas (2012) agree that in designing an IEP to discuss exclusion, one of the challenges holding back progress is the lack of teaching skills to tailor the curriculum to students' needs.

1.4.1 Inclusive education in South Africa before 1994

Historically, the areas of education or specialised education and the provision of instructional support services have mirrored the overall inequalities of South African society with underprivileged students (most students receive inadequate or no provision).

The commitment to providing education for students with special needs was evident in white schools where it was first enacted, approved and funded, while the government was not committed to education for special needs of black disabled children, (Phasha, 2013). McKeever (2017) validates that the creation of separate schools for racially classified students was accompanied by unequal regulations, curricula, funding, and a compulsory level of education with much lower requirements. Khumalo and Hodgson further state that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) estimates that only 20% of learners who experienced barriers to learning accessed education during the apartheid era.

Furthermore, Gwala-Ogisi (2002), cited by Online MEd (2021), asserts that special schools followed two systems, thus implying further separation, namely special programmes and remedial education programmes. The model was predominantly medical, applying rigid categories that only allowed students with organic and medical disabilities to access grant programmes.

1.4.2 Inclusive education in South Africa after 1994

After 1994, inclusive education gained significant recognition and momentum worldwide; it has become a central focus in many educational systems, driven by the principles of equal access, social justice, and human rights (Engelbrecht, 2020). Saloviita (2018) states that many countries have enacted legislation and policies to support inclusive education; these frameworks emphasise the right to inclusive EFA learners, providing legal protection and guidance for implementing inclusive practices in schools. According to De Bruin (2019), inclusive education began recognising and addressing the diverse needs of learners beyond disabilities. It encompassed learners from various backgrounds, including low-income families, linguistic minorities, and cultural or ethnic communities, ensuring their access to quality education (Tomlinson, 2017).

Numerous education policies have been amended since the dawn of democracy. Capp (2017) points out that the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) gained prominence in

inclusive education after 1994. UDL focused on designing instructional materials, methods, and assessments that were flexible and accessible, addressing the diverse needs of all learners. By employing UDL principles, teachers aimed to remove barriers to learning and create inclusive learning environments that accommodated learners' varying strengths and challenges. Moraña (2017) argues that despite progress, challenges remain in implementing inclusive education, including adequate resource allocation, ensuring teacher preparedness, and addressing attitudinal barriers and systemic inequalities. In addition, Haug (2017) claims that in order to enhance inclusive education practices and foster inclusive societies, it is crucial to undertake ongoing advocacy, research, and collaboration as part of future endeavours.

1.4.3 Key features of inclusive education policy

Successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to learners' differences and diversity, which can include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional (McManis, 2020). According to UNESCO (2020), White Paper 6 is a national policy document introduced in 2001 to establish a system where learners with disabilities can learn alongside their peers with appropriate support. White Paper 6 was established to address the need for changes to be made to the provision of education and training so that it is responsive and sensitive to diverse needs.

Accepting unconditionally into regular classes and the life of the school and having strong leadership for inclusion from school principals and other administrators starts at the top; thus, learners with learning barriers strive to attend schools where leadership ensures they are valued and disability is viewed as a natural part of human diversity, which are all features of IEP (Clark, Dyson & Millward, 2018). The White Paper also looks at what all learners can do rather than what they can't—working with principals, teachers, parents, and others to discover the most effective ways to provide high-quality education in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, having professors who are knowledgeable about diverse teaching methods so that learners of all skills and talents may study together is important (Messiou, 2017).

1.4.4 Perspectives of teachers on inclusive education

Teachers are ultimately responsible for the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom. While inclusive education is widely recognised as a valuable approach, it is essential to understand the perspectives of teachers at the forefront of implementing this practice. According to Moening and Flynn (2017), teachers play a crucial role in successfully implementing inclusive education practices, though implementing inclusive education presents various challenges for teachers. Teachers encounter the need to cater to a wide range of learning abilities within a single classroom, requiring them to differentiate instruction effectively. Holmes (2018) indicates that teachers must find creative ways to address diverse learning needs while ensuring that all learners receive quality education. In addition, Vasbieva, Grudtsina, Masalimova and Yaraya (2018) believe that managing behaviour and maintaining an inclusive classroom environment can be demanding as teachers strive to foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect among learners.

The researcher has perceived that teachers encounter various challenges in implementing inclusive education; one major hurdle is the lack of resources and support. Teachers in public primary schools often struggle with limited access to specialised training, assistive technologies, and appropriate learning materials for learners with diverse needs, while there is a need for individualised attention and differentiated instruction that poses additional demands on teachers' time and energy. Buli-Holmberg et al., (2017) believe that balancing the diverse learning needs of a heterogeneous classroom can be overwhelming, requiring careful planning and organisation. Therefore, teachers face social and attitudinal barriers, such as resistance to change, misconceptions about inclusive education, and a lack of understanding from some parents or colleagues (Lynch, 2023).

Teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education shed light on its transformative potential and the challenges they face. Quispe, Alvarez, Chuquipa, Mora and Chiroque (2023) maintain that teachers recognise and celebrate every student's unique abilities and needs by embracing inclusive education. However, addressing the resource limitations, providing ongoing support, and overcoming attitudinal barriers are critical to effective implementation (Amor, Hagiwara, Thompson & Verdugo, 2019). Molbaek (2018) posits that investing in professional development, collaborative models of teaching, individualised support plans, and fostering a

positive classroom culture are key strategies to ensure the success of inclusive education. By valuing the experiences and insights of teachers, teachers can create inclusive learning environments that empower and nurture the potential of all learners.

1.4.5 The effects of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation

Teachers' perspectives and attitudes on implementing inclusive education differ. Some believe that inclusion should apply to all learners who experience barriers to learning and that all learners should be in the regular classroom all the time. Magomedova and Damadaeva (2015) and Movkebayeva, Oralkanova, Beisenova and Belenko (2016) agree that achievement in implementing inclusive schooling relies upon teachers' professional and mental readiness. According to these authors, professional readiness consists of statistics readiness, the ownership of pedagogic technology, the records of the fundamentals of technology and punitory pedagogy, the know-how of inexperienced persons' character personalities, and studying needs. It supports teachers' disposition to be flexible in the studying method, to own records of character traits of inexperienced persons, and to be organised for professional interplay studying, while the shape of the mental readiness consists of the emotional reputation of inexperienced persons with unique academic needs of their organic process (adoption – rejection); inclined to contain inexperienced persons with unique academic needs into room activities (inclusion – insulation); and pride with their personal coaching activities (Raykova, 2016).

1.4.6 Factors contributing to the effective implementation of inclusive education

Many issues affect the effective implementation of inclusive education in instructing unique schooling rookies. According to Flagler (2011), those elements vary from the mindset and ideals of the principal stakeholders, which include learners, teachers, parents, pedagogical strategies, and aids within the school room. However, amongst those elements, the important thing to achievement rests with instructors. Schuelka (2018) adds that successful implementation of inclusive education at the national level encompasses essential components, including activities at the school and classroom levels, such as conducting school assessments and creating inclusive plans, ensuring that all teachers, not just specialised ones, receive training and support in inclusive teaching practices, and aiding school leadership in realising an inclusive vision for their institutions. Additionally, at the national level, it necessitates the establishment of clear policies

that define and endorse inclusive education, establishing a reliable data collection and management system, providing curriculum flexibility, and coordinating with other societal elements that may be influenced by inclusive education.

1.4.7 The role of stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education

Educational stakeholders include administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, community members, school counsellors, and current city and state councillors, who are all involved in ensuring the success of the school and its pupils, (Saxena, 2014). Stakeholder participation is deemed critical to the school's performance and progress. According to Pelayo (2018), stakeholders play an essential role in school management since they are partners with school administrators in making the school suitable for teaching and learning.

Mashou (2016) states that the South African School Act of 1996 specifies the duties and functions of parents as one of the most significant stakeholders in their children's education through governing bodies. Not only should parents be active in education, but anybody interested in education should be involved. Pile and Gilchrist (2020) state that stakeholders (i.e., parents) are to create a positive home environment and provide support by being involved in school life.

The parent, within the family and home setting, plays a vital role in guiding learners' intellectual and moral growth, (Penuel, Barber & Clark, 2020). Schuelka (2018) claims that teachers are responsible for developing educational plans for students with special needs and assessing their individual needs and abilities. Carter and Abawi (2018) posit that religious leaders, parents, and teachers have a moral duty to impart values to their learners. School principals are tasked with implementing government policies and programmes that facilitate learning, enrolling learners, including those with special needs, fostering healthy peer relationships, organising school resources to support inclusive education, and providing administrative support for quality professional development. However, government bodies are responsible for establishing policy guidelines, monitoring schools, and allocating resources to enhance the quality of education for students facing educational barriers and typically developing students (Adams, Harris & Jones, 2018).

1.4.8 Challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education

Inclusion classrooms are a good concept, but they necessitate a great deal of training, tolerance, and consideration on the teacher's side. According to Ramos (2020), teachers face many challenges in a special needs classroom. Hardin and Hardin (2013) concur that including learners with different abilities can be challenging for teachers, such as accommodating the structural needs of diverse learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning. Hardin and Hardin (2013) agree that including learners with different abilities can be challenging for teachers, such as accommodating the structural needs of diverse learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning. Moreover, according to Mathew (2015), the entire purpose of inclusive education is undermined due to a lack of the right attitude and sensitivity on the part of teachers, a lack of parent support, high-class sizes, a lack of child-centred and relevant curriculum, and suitable teaching-learning material. Teachers' unfavourable views toward inclusive education are impediments to the implementation of inclusive education because inclusion places too many expectations on teachers, (Mokaleng and Mowes, 2020). A lack of support for teachers exacerbates negative views about inclusive education.

Large classes, according to teachers, do not allow for inclusion. One of the challenges that teachers encounter is that some of the learners in inclusion classrooms have chronic diseases that can lead to death; dealing with this is a task that a teacher must adjust to. The lack of parental support is another concern; some parents are unconcerned about their children's well-being and fail to give appropriate care, (Paseka and Schwab, 2020). The role of the parent is to create a positive home environment and provide support by being involved in school life, (Pile and Gilchrist, 2020). Teachers have learners who experience barriers to learning, and because each learner is different, the teacher must adapt their lessons to suit each learner by delivering individualised education programmes.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is defined as the methods or strategies used to discover, select, process, and analyse information on a topic, (Potgieter, 2017). Research methodology covers the methodology, theoretical foundation, and description of the research procedures, (Pillay, 2019).

This section of the study explains the research paradigm, approach, style, data collection, population and sampling, and data analysis elaborated in Chapter 3.

1.5.1 Research approach

A qualitative approach was used in this study. The qualitative research approach is relevant as it relates to ‘what’ people think and ‘why’ they think this way (Thakur, 2020). It is also appropriate because the goal is to gain insight into and give voice to participants' experiences. The advantages of using a qualitative research approach include producing a thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, options, and experiences and interpreting the meaning of their actions (Rahman, 2016). Secondly, it explores the participants' inner experiences and how meanings are shaped within the culture (Leung, 2012). Bhandari (2020) agrees that qualitative research involves collecting and analysing data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. Bhandari further states that it can also be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas.

1.5.2 Research paradigm

The interpretive paradigm was used to frame this research. It is based on the concept that social reality is neither regular nor objective, but rather influenced by human experiences and social environment (ontology). It is thus best examined within a socio-historical context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its diverse participants (epistemology). A paradigm is a perceptual device and theoretical framework that a certain researcher uses to comprehend and examine reality, (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). There are several types of paradigms, including interpretivist, positivist, and critical theory, (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The interpretive paradigm was relevant to this research as it emphasised understanding and interpreting the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences. In studying complex phenomena, such as human behaviour or social interactions in education, the interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to delve into the diverse perspectives and contexts that shape these experiences. It provided a framework to explore the nuances of inclusive education, considering the varied viewpoints of teachers and stakeholders, thus offering a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in implementing inclusive policies and practices.

1.5.3 Research design

This study adopted a case study as a research style. A case study is defined as an in-depth observation of a particular subject, including a person, group, place, event, organisation, or phenomenon, (McCombes, 2019). The author further states that case studies entail the use of qualitative methods. According to Schoch (2020), a case study is appropriate for describing, comparing, evaluating, and appreciating exceptional aspects of a research problem. It is also suitable when the researcher wants concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject. Tarnowski (2015) believes that qualitative case studies about research can be a precious device for answering complex, actual-world questions. A case study research design was used to explore teachers' views on implementing inclusive education in predominant public schools. The researcher wished for a better recognition of how teachers implement inclusive education in essential public schools.

1.5.4 Instrumentation and data collection

The data collection instruments used were interviews, observations, and document analysis. The interview was arranged for teachers, principals, and HoDs. According to Kabir (2016), the idea of data collection is the system of accumulating and measuring statistics about variables of activity in a mounted and systematic way that allows you to reply to research questions, tests, discoveries, shape hypotheses, and evaluate results one of the essential tiers of the investigation.

1.5.4.1 Interviews

Interviews are an effective method for gathering qualitative data and are widely used for data collection because of their versatility. Structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews are the three forms of interviews used to acquire data in qualitative research (Bhasin, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. Bhasin opines that semi-structured interviews are hybrid structured and unstructured interviews. For example, the researcher prepared a list of questions to ask during the interview and asked follow-up questions to elicit more information or clarification from the respondents based on their responses.

1.5.4.2 Observation

Observation is a type of ethnographic data collection method where the researcher visits or participates in a location to better understand people, the environment, interactions, behaviour, or other phenomena within the space, (Newbold, 2018). Bertram and Christiansen (2020) agree that observation is when a researcher obtains first-hand data by going to the study site and observing what is happening there. Observation involves watching and recording people's behaviour on the research site using notes (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2018). The researcher took field notes on teachers, principals, and HoDs' conduct and classroom practices, interactions during working hours, and the school's atmosphere.

Observation is crucial for this study as it allows firsthand insight into how inclusive education policies are practised in natural classroom settings. It enables the researcher to capture nuanced interactions, instructional methods, and support mechanisms for diverse learners, providing rich qualitative data. Through observation, the researcher can understand the practical challenges and successes of implementing inclusive policies, offering valuable context to complement other research methods.

1.5.4.3 Document analysis

Document analysis involves examining various forms of documentation—such as written texts, transcripts, reports, or records to derive valuable insights and understanding. Frey (2018) agrees that document analysis is a type of qualitative research that uses a systematic approach to analyse document evidence and respond to specific research questions. It is frequently used to confirm conclusions obtained from data sources such as interviews, observations, and surveys.

Researchers analyse these documents to uncover underlying meanings, patterns, and contexts contributing to the research inquiry, (Morgan, 2022). This method allows for a deep exploration of historical, social, or organisational phenomena by scrutinising existing materials, (Cardno, 2018). Through careful examination and interpretation of documents, the researcher can unveil nuanced perspectives, identify recurring themes, and contextualise their findings within a broader framework. Education White Paper 6 (2001) document analysis in qualitative research provides a

rich source of information that supplements other data collection methods, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation.

1.5.4 Population and sampling

There is a close relationship between the population and the sample. According to Bhandari (2020), the population is the entire cluster from which you wish to draw conclusions, and the sample is the specific cluster from which you may collect knowledge. The sample size is usually smaller than the population size. He adds that in a study, the term "population" does not always mean "people." It can refer to a collection of components from whatever you're studying, such as things, events, organisations, nations, species, organisms, etc. The population for this study consisted of selected public primary school teachers, principals, and HoDs from the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal, who will represent the population so that the findings can be generalised to the population. The researcher contacted experienced teachers, principals, and HoDs who have been teaching for over five years and provided accurate answers to their questions. Participants included teachers, Principals, and HoDs who met the criteria and taught at selected schools in the Pinetown District.

Sampling is an essential component of study design. According to Flick (2014), this allows the researcher to select cases from a larger population that is too large to be fully investigated, allowing the researcher to generalise the final research findings to an entire population rather than individual study participants. In general, sampling is divided into two types: probability or random sampling and non-probability or non-random sampling.

Purposive sampling was used in this study since it allowed the researcher to select a small sample of teachers, principals, and HoDs who are likely to be informed about the subject. The participants chosen by the researcher provided relevant information about their experiences in implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. However, purposive sampling was a useful strategy for this study as six teachers, three principals, and three HoDs from three public primary schools in the Pinetown District were purposively selected as participants. As a result, the population comprised teachers, principals, and HoDs. They were chosen based on their knowledge and experience. Thus, four schools participated in this study, including four principals, four HoDs, and 12 teachers who participated in the focus group.

1.5.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analyses involve running to find styles and traits in datasets, while data interpretation involves explaining those styles and traits (Potgieter, 2017). Dalby (2021) states that data interpretation is important as it aids in purchasing beneficial facts from a pool of inappropriate ones while making knowledgeable decisions. It is ideal to be beneficial for researchers. Labied (2018) refers to data interpretation as implementing procedures through which records are reviewed to arrive at a knowledgeable conclusion. The act of making meaning of raw data is known as data analysis (Otukile-Mongwaketsi, 2011). During the interviews, the researcher took notes while the interviews were being recorded. Unless there was a need to rephrase the question for clarification, the interview questions were the same for all participants. The researcher ensured accuracy by reading the transcript and listening to the audiotapes several times in order to understand the participants' points of view.

Thematic data analysis was suitable for this study because it is a qualitative data analysis method sometimes applied to a group of documents, like tables and interview scores (Caulfield, 2019). The researcher closely examined the data to identify recurring themes, ideas, and patterns that emerged repeatedly. According to Smith (2020), thematic analysis is considered one of the foundational frameworks for analysing qualitative data, as it allows researchers to identify relevant trends and transform data into valuable information. The thematic analysis process typically involves familiarising with the data, identifying threads, creating themes, testing them against the data, and finally, naming the themes (Caulfield, 2019).

1.6 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Credibility and trustworthiness are critical factors in research studies as they establish the reliability and validity of the findings. To ensure the credibility of this study, the researcher employed robust methodologies, addressed potential biases, and enhanced transparency throughout the research process. Davis (2021) defines trustworthiness as the credibility of the researcher's findings, including all the researcher has done to design, conduct, and report the research in order to create trustworthy results. He continues, “in qualitative research, the purpose of trustworthiness is to support the notion that the findings are worth paying attention to.” The degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods employed to ensure the study’s

quality is referred to as the study's trustworthiness (Pilot & Beck, 2014). The researcher developed the guidelines and procedures required for a study to be considered worthy of the reader's consideration (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Fey (2018), there are four criteria in a qualitative study that confirm the reliability of a study, namely validity, applicability and reliability.

1.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

Before starting the research, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of South Africa (UNISA). The researcher discussed ethical issues over autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, informed consent, and confidentiality. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020), ethics deals with behaviour that's considered smart or unhealthy; they conjointly state that ethics is a crucial issue to be considered in research, particularly with research associated with humans and animals. Protecting people by applying appropriate ethical principles is essential to all research. The researcher also wrote a letter to the district manager and selected school principals to seek permission to conduct research. Permission was granted from the participants via written consent; information pertaining to the research was communicated to the participants before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were also addressed; no school or participants' names were used. Instead, the researcher used S1, S2, S3 and S4 for the schools to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the research sites. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

1.8 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are constraints to your study based on the research methodology and design, (Miles, 2017). Miles adds that limitations constraints cannot control the study and that limitations primarily deal with constraints to the research method. Miles and Scott (2017) define delimitations as primarily concerned with the scope of the study.

1.8.1 Limitations of the study

The limitations relate to the validity and reliability of the study (Discover PhDs, 2020). These characteristics of the research project or methodology are beyond the researcher's control but affect the research results. This small-scale study on a large subject was conducted in a single school district in KwaZulu-Natal; therefore, it may lack generalisable results. It can also be

difficult to schedule interview time with teachers, as they need to adjust to the interviews between teaching periods. To overcome limitations, the researcher built a solid connection with participants in order to overcome their attitudes. Being well-prepared at all times and having the necessary supporting documents and information on hand in case they request more information, such as necessary forms and abstracts. To overcome time and transportation constraints, the researcher chose locations that were not far from where the participants was located. The study used qualitative research that did not cover statistical data; as such, the study findings may not be as detailed and dependable as expected. The sample for the qualitative study is relatively small; thus, generality and transferability may not be possible.

1.8.2 Delimitation of the study

Generalisability is defined as characteristics guidelines that limit the scope and describe the scope of the study, such as sample size, geographic location or conditions in which the study is conducted, and population characteristics, (Theofandis, Dimitros, Funtuki and Antigoni, 2019). Miles and Scott (2017) agree that delimitation is constraints/boundaries imposed by investigators prior to the study in order to narrow the scope of the study. The current study was limited to four schools in the Pinetown District that are implementing inclusive education. The small number of schools chosen may have an impact on the generalisability of the study's findings. The scope of the research also negatively affected the dependability and transferability of the findings.

1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.9.1 Inclusive education

Inclusive education is defined as an approach to education in which students with different types of disabilities and learning needs learn with their non-disabled peers rather than in separate classes or schools, (Kirchner, 2015). Successful inclusive schooling is carried out frequently by accepting, comprehending, and getting to learner variations and diversity, which could encompass physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional variations (McManis, 2021). In this study, inclusive education refers to an educational approach that aims to provide equal opportunities and access to EFA learners, regardless of their individual differences, abilities, or disabilities. It promotes all learners' full participation, engagement, and learning within a diverse classroom environment.

Inclusive education emphasises removing barriers to learning and providing support and accommodations to ensure that all learners can actively participate in the educational process. It values diversity, promotes respect, and fosters an inclusive and supportive learning environment that meets the needs of every learner. Inclusive education goes beyond mere integration and strives for the holistic development of all students, promoting their academic, social, and emotional growth.

1.9.2 Inclusion

Inclusion facilitates learners learning from each other and ensures equal opportunities for special needs learners to participate in programmes. Inclusion allows learners with special needs or without a positive self-image, problem-solving skills, friendship skills, peer models, and respect for others. It affects all aspects of social life (Ballard, 2018). In this study, inclusion ensures that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, characteristics, or backgrounds, are fully and actively involved in all aspects of society. It entails creating environments that embrace diversity, promote equity, and value the contributions and perspectives of every person. Inclusion recognises and respects individuals' unique strengths, needs, and experiences, seeking to remove barriers and provide equal opportunities for participation, access, and success. It goes beyond mere tolerance or acceptance, aiming to create a sense of belonging, support, and empowerment for all individuals.

1.9.3 Curriculum

In this study, curriculum refers to the overall plan and set of learning experiences designed to guide and facilitate the educational development of students. It encompasses the content, goals, objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment methods used in an educational programme. The curriculum outlines what students are expected to learn, how it will be taught, and how their progress and achievement will be evaluated. UK Essays (2018) defines curriculum as more than a list of topics to be covered by an educational programme for which the most commonly accepted word is 'curriculum.' A curriculum is, first, a statement of principles on an educational subject and, second, an indication of how this policy will be implemented through a programme of action. Oh and Rozycki (2017) posit that the curriculum is not a textbook, materials, videos and worksheets to help students, but the knowledge and skills students should acquire in the school system. The

curriculum denotes a collection of lessons, assessments, and other academic content taught by the teacher in a school, programme, or class (McKenzie, 2021).

1.9.4 Perspective

The New South Wales Department of Education (2015) defines perspective as a lens through which we learn to perceive the world; it shapes what we see and how we perceive it. The lens can clarify, magnify, distort, or blur what we see. Different aspects of the text can be highlighted by changing the position of the lens. In this way, perspective provides a dynamic foundation for the composer-responder relationship. The Cambridge Dictionary defines perspective as "a particular way of looking at something or thinking about a situation or problem in a wise and rational way." In American English, perspective means "a special way of looking at things that depends on your own experience and personality." In this study, perspectives refer to teachers' viewpoints or ways they understand and interpret the implementation of inclusive education. They represent the unique lenses through which teachers perceive, analyse, and make sense of events, ideas, and experiences. Various factors influence perspectives, including personal beliefs, values, cultural backgrounds, knowledge, and life experiences.

1.9.5 Visual impairment

Visual impairment can range from low to limited vision, while others have no light perception and are considered completely blind. The causes can be neurological or genetic due to illness, injury, or infection, (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah, and Nyarko, 2018). Visually impaired learners have difficulty reading everything from gestures to pictures to text (Kuper, 2017). In this study, visual impairment refers to a condition in which a learner has difficulty seeing or cannot see. Various factors, including eye diseases, injuries, or congenital conditions, can cause it. Visual impairment is a broad term that encompasses a range of vision loss, from partial sight to total blindness. Learners with visual impairment may experience difficulties in various aspects of daily life, including reading, recognising faces, navigating their surroundings, or participating in certain activities.

1.9.6 Physically challenged learners

Concerning education, physically challenged learners may face unique challenges that require special attention and support (UNESCO, 2020). De Bézenac, Pajot and Gallinari (2019) state that it is crucial to create an inclusive and accessible learning environment to ensure that these learners have equal opportunities to participate and succeed in their education. In this study, a physically challenged learner refers to an individual who has a physical disability or impairment that affects their ability to perform certain tasks or activities. This can include conditions such as mobility impairments, limb differences, paralysis, or any other physical limitation that may impact a person's movements or physical functioning.

1.9.7 Barriers to learning

Barriers to learning refer to obstacles, challenges, or limitations that hinder or impede a person's ability to acquire knowledge, skills, or information effectively (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020). According to Lougheed, Hannigan, Las and McGrath (2018), these barriers can manifest in various forms, such as environmental factors, personal circumstances, cognitive or physical limitations, social or cultural issues, or educational structures that do not accommodate diverse learning needs. Barriers to learning can restrict access to education or hinder the learning process, making it more challenging for individuals to fully engage, understand, or participate in educational activities. Identifying and addressing these barriers is crucial to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all individuals.

1.9.8 Equality

Equality refers to the state or condition where individuals or groups are treated fairly and have the same rights, opportunities, and access to resources without discrimination or bias based on characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, or abilities (Gunn, 2018). According to Latta (2019), it's about ensuring everyone has equal opportunities to thrive, succeed, and contribute to society, irrespective of differences, and that systemic barriers that prevent equal access to resources or opportunities are dismantled. Equality promotes the idea that all individuals should be treated with fairness, have equal access to education, employment,

healthcare, and other essential services, and have their human rights respected regardless of their background or identity.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter comprises the introduction and context of the problem, formulation of the problem, objectives and logic of the study, research questions, target population, methodology, definition of the concepts, and research outline.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the relevant literature for the study and analyses the history of inclusive education globally and in South Africa, inclusive education and human rights in South Africa, teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, the influence of teachers' perspectives on the execution of inclusive education, challenges contributing towards the profitable implementation of inclusive education, the function of stakeholders in enforcing inclusive education, and challenges to teachers in implementing inclusive education.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter details the research methodology used in this study. It also explains the sampling method, data collection methods, data analysis, population and sampling, and ethical issues.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents, analyses, and discusses the findings. The researcher discussed their experience during data collection, interview findings, problems, and limitations the researcher experienced during the data collection stage.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the findings, presents specific recommendations based on the literature, and concludes the study.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This first chapter provided an overview and context of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation, South Africa's education history, and the role of stakeholders in inclusive education implementation. The chapter also set out the rationale for the study, difficulties in dealing with different students in their classes, and challenges teachers face in inclusive education implementation. The significance of the study, objectives, and critical questions guiding the research were also discussed. Chapter 2 focuses on the relevant literature sourced for this study as well as the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, the study was introduced, emphasising the examination of teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. The background and rationale of the study were discussed, and the research questions were covered in the introduction. This chapter commences with a discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning this study. This chapter ends with a discussion of scholars' conceptualisations of inclusive education. Key features of IEP, the effects of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation, the role of education stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education, the effects of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation, challenges and barriers to the implementation of inclusive education, and factors contributing to the effective implementation of inclusive education are also discussed.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Inclusive education in South Africa is guided by various theories and models that are relevant to our context (Schlüter, Baeza, Dressler, Frank, Groeneveld, Jager, Janssen, McAllister, Mülle & Schwarz, 2017). Theories give us ideas or a framework for understanding, interpreting, and explaining an experience (Newman & Newman, 2015). Models represent how something works in real life and are intended to guide our practice as educators. According to Vinz (2015), a theoretical framework is a key concept in research that offers relations between them, discusses relevant theories, and gives research direction, allowing it to convincingly interpret, explain and generalise from the findings. Eckel (2021) posits that a theoretical framework serves as an ultimate guide on existing theories that relate to, back up, or possibly refute a main idea. To understand aspects that influence the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological system theory and Vygotsky's (1896-1936) social constructivist theory framework were adopted. This section of the study discusses both theories and their relevance to the study.

2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner ecological system theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, also known as the bioecological model, is a theoretical framework developed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. This theory emphasises the importance of understanding the complex interactions between individuals and their environments in shaping human development. According to Mahlo (2013), there is a dialectical relationship between Bronfenbrenner and inclusive education. She further stated that it is a fact that Bronfenbrenner's theory qualifies to be used as a conceptual tool to understand issues around the policy of inclusive education. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory views child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate family and school settings to broad cultural values, laws, and customs (Evans, 2020). It also establishes how these factors are related to one another and how they cause complex development outcomes to one another. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory illustrates this interaction between individual levels.

The word ecology refers to studying the interconnection of all living things (Hedefalk, Almqvist & Östman, 2015). The ecological system theory shows how individuals and groups at different levels of society are linked and interact. It also describes the difference in the behaviour of the child in different environments and how the environment influences their development and grows the child into an adult (Hedefalk, Almqvist & Östman, 2015). When Bronfenbrenner developed a model of child development based on ecological system theory, he placed the child in the centre and identified five interconnected systems that shape the child's development. The conceptualisation of the ecology of human development provides a useful theoretical framework for conducting research on implementing inclusive education (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). He proposes that human development is influenced by factors operating at different system levels within a broad ecological structure; these different levels exert reciprocal influences on one another.

The ecology of inclusive education is a theoretical framework that builds on Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1976) and aims to address specific research needs in inclusive education, (Anderson and Boyle, 2014). Inclusive education is a social construct that relies on the relationship between people and societal systems to become constructed into what can be observed and called inclusive education or constructed environment or excluded from it. Bronfenbrenner's (1976)

ecological systems theory was built on two factors of learners' learning; the first one is relations between the learner and the environment, and the second one is relations between environments themselves (Anderson, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory offered a framework that significantly aligns with this study. This theory emphasises the influence of various environmental systems on an individual's development, ranging from the immediate microsystem (family, school, peers) to the larger macrosystem (societal values, cultural norms). In the context of inclusive education, this theory emphasises the importance of multiple interconnected systems influencing a student's learning environment. Implementing inclusive education requires considering the classroom dynamics and the broader social, cultural, and institutional structures impacting a student's educational experience. Bronfenbrenner's theory advocates for a holistic approach, highlighting the necessity of addressing various levels of influence to create an inclusive environment that supports the diverse needs of all learners within their unique ecological contexts.

2.2.1.1 Features of Bronfenbrenner ecological theory

Bronfenbrenner's theory defines five complex layers of environment, each influencing the child's development, namely microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

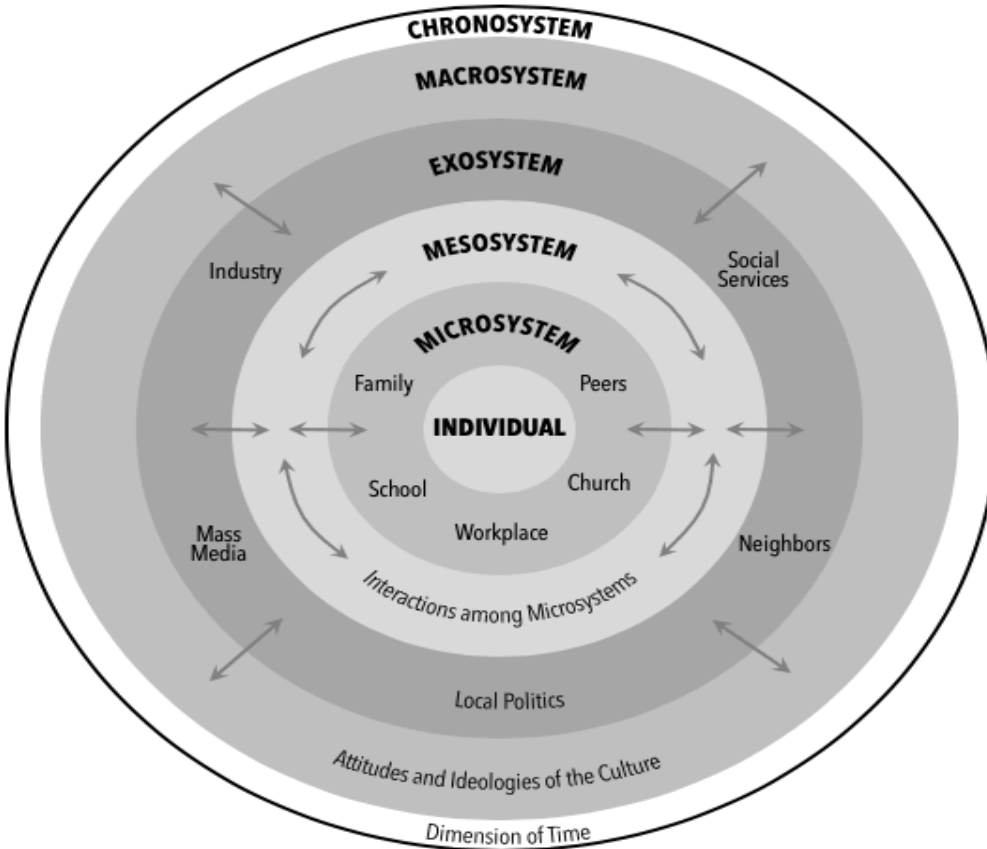


Figure 1: Illustration of the five ecological system theory, (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994)

i) Microsystem

A microsystem refers to a small, self-contained unit or system that operates within a larger system, (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The microsystem, which is the immediate environment in which an individual interacts regularly, plays a crucial role in implementing inclusive education. By focusing on the microsystem, inclusive education recognises that the immediate environment and relationships within a school significantly impact a learner's educational experience, (Anderson, Boyle, & Deppeler, 2014). Creating an inclusive microsystem involves collaboration among families, fostering positive teacher-learner and peer relationships, nurturing an inclusive school climate and culture, and implementing appropriate classroom practices and adaptations. These efforts create an environment where all learners can learn, participate, and thrive together, (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). The microsystem is the first stage of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, describing the individuals, groups, and institutions that directly influence a child's development (Nyawose, 2022). According to Evans (2020), the microsystems consist of

the things that have direct contact with the child in their immediate environment, such as parents, siblings, teachers, and peers at school. These interactions are crucial for the child's development; they foster and support the child's development. Drew (2022) states that the primary microsystem is the family, where the bond between children is social and biological. Parents build the foundations of a child's character; the school plays a significant role in shaping their social and emotional development.

In addition, it is not only the role of the school to provide a learner with skills to function in the world, but also to foster a child's moral, ethical, emotional, and social development (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters, 2015). Teachers and seniors in the school must act as role models. Due to their interactions with their peers, learners can understand the value of competition, cooperation, and coordination (Scott, 2015). The importance of a child's actions, reactions, and interactions with others in the microsystem is determined by the beliefs and practices of others; this clarifies the development of a child with special needs; therefore, in a well-functioning microsystem, a quality, friendly and diverse learning environment is provided for all (Nickels, McHugh & McHugh, 2016).

Furthermore, Hays, Otoole and Helpenny (2017) point out that school is one of the most important microsystems of one's life. The social, cognitive, and academic development of special education learners is influenced by the school environment, the learning process, and the relationships they form with their peers and teachers. The microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's theory refers to the immediate environment where an individual interacts directly. In the context of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation, the microsystem represents the classroom setting, including teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, and instructional practices. Teachers' perspectives are deeply rooted in this microsystem as they directly witness and influence the dynamics of inclusive classrooms. Their viewpoints are shaped by daily experiences, interactions, and challenges while accommodating diverse learning needs. Understanding teachers' perspectives within the microsystem is crucial as it provides insights into their roles, attitudes, instructional strategies, and the level of support required to effectively implement inclusive practices. The microsystem lens emphasises the significance of the immediate classroom environment in shaping teachers' perceptions and actions towards inclusive education.

ii) **Mesosystem**

The mesosystem, which refers to the connections and interactions between the different components of the microsystem, emphasises the importance of collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders involved in a learner's education, (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). It focuses on the importance of teamwork, communication, and coordination among teachers, support staff, support teams, and the broader community. Collaboration within the mesosystem ensures that learners with diverse abilities receive the necessary support and services to fully participate and succeed in inclusive educational environments. Schemm (2020) states that the mesosystem posits that children's development is influenced not just by their immediate familial environment, but also by their surroundings. According to Drew (2022), the mesosystem includes the parent-teacher, parent-church, and siblings-parent relationships. In other words, Bronfenbrenner believes a strongly interconnected community of people surrounding a child can help a child's holistic development.

The mesosystem is important in development because learners may experience similar, quite different, or contradictory socialisation experiences in different microsystem settings (Lisbdnet.com, 2021). In addition, Newman and Newman (2020) state that effective communication between home and school is crucial for any child's education, but creating a good partnership is essential where special needs are concerned. The working relationship between the two impacts a child's access to an appropriate education (Harding, Morris & Hughes, 2015); a family of a child with special needs at the primary level and the special education teacher are impacted by their ability to trust one another and establish effective communication and collaboration system (Beverage 2021).

The mesosystem in the context of this study involves the collaboration and interaction among various entities and systems supporting a learner's learning journey. Common elements within this mesosystem include coordinated efforts among teachers, principals, families, and community support services. This encompasses regular communication between teachers and parents to ensure alignment in strategies, sharing of resources, and monitoring of a learner's progress. Additionally, it involves partnerships between schools and external organisations or specialists providing additional support, such as counsellors, therapists, or inclusive education experts. The mesosystem in inclusive education thrives on interconnected relationships and collaborative efforts to create an environment where diverse learners can thrive holistically.

iii) Exosystem

The exosystem represents social systems and settings that indirectly impact an individual's development; it highlights the importance of external factors and influences on the inclusive education environment, (Navarro and Tudge, 2023). The exosystem reminds us that inclusive education implementation extends beyond the immediate school environment. It acknowledges the influence of external factors, policies, community resources, support organisations, and community attitudes on the success of inclusive education. By recognising and working within the exosystem, stakeholders involved in inclusive education can access additional resources, support, and collaborative opportunities that contribute to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment for all learners. According to Carnevale (2021), an exosystem consists of environmental elements that greatly affect the child's development; unlike home and school, the exosystem is made from external factors that the child is not directly involved with, such as their parent's workplace, extended family, neighbour, government, social systems, legal system, and the media. Unlike the microsystem, the institutions that make up the exosystem are not necessarily the ones with which the child has a close, personal, or intimate relationship (Drew, 2022). Changes within the exosystem may directly impact the child; for example, the parents' situation at their workplace, if the parent has a bad day at work, has a conflict at work, is promoted, or works overtime, or if the government cuts the funding of an important programme or raise taxes, all these events could negatively affect the child's development and cause conflict in the child's life. Tahin, Doelger and Hynes (2019) believe that since the exosystem consists of settings that involve the developing child as an active participant, the school as a service delivery agent is responsible for an inclusion programme providing an example of an exosystem setting.

The exosystem involves integrating external elements that indirectly impact a learner's educational experience, (Crawford, 2020). This encompasses advocating for inclusive policies at governmental levels, fostering community partnerships to create inclusive opportunities beyond school settings, ensuring equitable resource allocation to support diverse learners, providing ongoing professional development for educators within the larger system, and advocating for accessible infrastructure

in the community, (Eriksson, Ghazinour and Hammarström, 2018). By aligning inclusive education principles with the broader exosystem, there's a potential to create a more holistic and supportive environment that extends beyond the classroom, nurturing inclusivity across various societal domains.

iv) **Macrosystem**

This layer refers to the broader cultural, societal, and ideological values and norms. It highlights the broader context of inclusive education and influences the attitudes, beliefs, and policies that shape educational practices, (Shelton, 2018). It also emphasises the need for societal change, policy development, and cultural responsiveness to create an inclusive educational environment. The macrosystem provides a lens to examine and challenge societal attitudes and beliefs, align policies and funding mechanisms, and create inclusive practices that respect cultural diversity and uphold the rights of all individuals to inclusive education, (Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarström, 2018). According to Bronfenbrenner, the macrosystem in his ecological system theory is all the cultural and societal elements that can impact how a child is raised and developed (Jones, 2022). Drew (2022) states that examples of macrosystems include economic conditions, laws, taboos, customs, and cultural beliefs in the society in which the child lives.

As the macrosystem covers the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem since all settings at each level operate within a cultural context, many families and professionals now endorse the inclusion of children with special needs in a typical classroom or learning settings and for everyday community activities (Tahin, Doelger & Hynes, 2019). According to Tawanda and Pasha (2018), implementing inclusive education is a connectedness between learners, educators, and communities of learning, providing a positive environment that positively affects self-worth, self-belief, and achievement. After several years in which learners with SEN were marginalized, legislation and policies were established to abolish discrimination and redirect equality and equity (Pillay, 2019).

V) **Chronosystem**

Chronosystem refers to the changes and transitions that occur over time; it recognises that time and historical context impact educational practices and the experiences of individuals with diverse abilities, (Hayes, O'Toole and Halpenny, 2022). It also highlights the importance of staying informed, adapting to changing policies and practices, leveraging technological advancements,

promoting awareness and acceptance, and understanding the historical and cultural context, (Gal, 2017). Therefore, the chronosystem helps ensure that inclusive education practices are responsive to the evolving needs and circumstances of individuals with diverse abilities. According to Evans (2020), a chronosystem consists of all the environmental changes that occur over a lifetime, influencing development, major life transitions, and historical events. Hays, Otoole and Helpenny (2017) state that these transitions are from one classroom to another or from primary school to secondary school. Historically, the areas of education or specialised education and the provision of instructional support services have mirrored the overall inequalities of South African society with underprivileged students (most students receive inadequate or no provision). According to Pilay (2019), apartheid education produced a dual system of education that included a mainstream and special education component; these components were characterised by racial disparity, which resulted in large numbers of learners being excluded from mainstream education.

2.2.1.2 Advantages of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

Ecological system theory offers several advantages in implementing inclusive education, promoting a comprehensive and inclusive approach to educational practices. This theory emphasises the holistic understanding of learners within their ecological systems, considering the multiple levels of influence on their development, (Gal, 2017). Inclusive education implementation benefits from this holistic perspective by recognising that learners are shaped by their family, school, community, and broader societal contexts. It encourages a comprehensive understanding of learners' strengths, needs, and experiences, ensuring that interventions and supports are tailored to their unique circumstances, (Guy-Evans, 2020). According to Evans (2020), this theory offers a comprehensive and dynamic framework for understanding human development. She indicates that it provides valuable insights into the complexities of individuals' interactions with their environments, highlighting the importance of context, relationships, and the dynamic nature of development. Taylor (2016) agrees that this theory integrates multiple influences on child development and provides a holistic framework for understanding child development. He further states that there is an acknowledgement of the shared responsibilities that we all have regarding the development of children and the creation of support systems that nurture optimal development. Christesen (2016) points out that it has been proven beneficial in providing insight into all the factors that play a role in the growth and development of individuals. He claims that it is how all

factors are related to each other and impact the development cycle. Ecological systems theory can be used as a predictive tool and offers an alternative view of how humans interact with their environment. It is also a framework for understanding the organisation of living and non-living components in an ecosystem. This theory highlighted the significance of individual differences in each child during their development, which has played a key role in how people view and assist those children with SEN during learning. This theory also shows that sharing is caring and that everyone is unique (Christensen, 2016).

2.2.1.3 Limitations of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

Although this theory has provided valuable insights, it is crucial to recognise its limitations to gain a more nuanced understanding of human development and the factors that influence it, (Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarström, 2018). Although the theory provides a broad framework for understanding human development, it may lack specificity in explaining the specific mechanisms and processes underlying development, (Elliott & Davis, 2020). However, it does not give detailed explanations of how factors within each system interact or the specific causal relationships between systems and outcomes. According to Christensen (2016), focusing on the individual may prevent understanding group development. The main problem in implementing the model would most likely arise from failing to initiate the change at the very first level, the individual level, where the intervention deals with thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes (Rossman, O'Brien, Poisson & Tunkara, 2017).

2.2.1.4 Applicability of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

Different systems influence different learners with SEN in their environment, and therefore they must be understood within the context of their environment. Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological theory provides a comprehensive framework that considers all the systems in the developing learners' environment. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory helped the researcher to better understand how inclusive education can be implemented in public primary schools and how to address the special needs of learners by explaining interrelationships within the systems.

As discussed above, in a layer microsystem, families participate significantly in their children's education; however, some families are not involved, hindering inclusive education in public primary schools (DoE, 2015). Secondly, schools are also considered microsystems (Matteucci, 2016). They can be seen as the location for learners to gain knowledge of society, while teachers may be assisting them in acquiring different skills; this includes classroom environment, teaching methods and strategies, curriculum differentiation, teachers' perspectives, and challenges related to implementing inclusive education. Furthermore, teachers must understand learners' special needs in their classrooms. This will aid in determining the type of support the learner requires. Landsberg and Matthews (2016) state that differentiating the existing curriculum allows teachers to respond to the diverse needs of learners in a class by modifying the curriculum so that it can accommodate and benefit students of different abilities.

Mesosystems include the relationship between two or more settings where the learner is actively involved; in this study, the learner's home and school are referred to as mesosystems. At home, the learner interacts with their parents and siblings; at school, the learner interacts with a wide range of individuals and groups, such as classmates, teachers, school administration, and support staff. These interactions form a mesosystem.

The exosystem is an external factor in which the child is not directly involved, such as the parent's workplace, extended family, neighbour, government, education system, social system, legal system, and media (Carnevale, 2021). In this study, the context that does not directly involve the learner is the educational system, which includes teacher training and school administration. Educational systems encompass everything about the education of learners in public schools. Teachers must be trained to prepare them for inclusive education (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016). However, teachers cannot adequately support their learners in school without proper training. In addition, the school leadership must be involved in meeting the diverse needs of learners with special needs (Van Wyk & Marumoloa, 2017). School leadership must create programmes involving both teachers and parents, provide workshops to train teachers on implementing inclusive education in classrooms, monitor and evaluate inclusion, and provide the necessary resources to meet SEN.

Macrosystems are policies and legislation related to inclusive settings in this study. The basic human right of all people was legally entered into the Constitution of South Africa in 1996 (África,

2020). According to the constitution of South Africa, all people have equal rights, including the fundamental right to basic education, prohibiting unfair discrimination against anyone on one or more grounds. The constitution requires all learners to be given a fundamental right to basic education, addressing past imbalances by focusing on the key issues of access, redress, and equity (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016).

According to Smit, Preston and Hay (2020), the commitment of the South African government to address the diversity in the learner population and provide a continuum of support within a democratic South Africa has received a lot of attention. International guidelines such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the standard rules of the World Conference on Education all provide an overall framework for the policy document, which include:

The White Paper on Education and Training outlines the vision for an inclusive education system to address historical disparities and ensure equal access to quality EFA. The South African Act reinforces this commitment by enshrining the rights of individuals with disabilities and promoting their inclusion in educational settings. Additionally, the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy further emphasises the need for comprehensive strategies to support learners with disabilities. Establishing the National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services signifies the concerted effort to address diverse educational needs, providing guidance and support within the education system. White Paper 6 specifically focuses on building an inclusive education and training system, emphasising collaboration, resource allocation, and teacher training. Complementing these policies are the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools, offering a blueprint for creating supportive and accessible learning environments that cater to diverse learner needs and fostering inclusivity across South Africa's educational landscape.

In this study, chronosystems outline the history and trends of addressing barriers to learners in inclusive settings during the apartheid years (1948 – 1994). According to Geldenhuys and Wevers (2015), learners were not only educated separately according to race, but a separate special education system existed for learners with barriers to learning.

2.3 VYGOTSKY'S THEORY OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND LEARNING

According to Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and learning is a social activity and the foundation of human intellect in society or culture. The central concept of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social contact is essential for cognitive growth (McLeod, 2020). McLeod (2020) argues that Vygotsky's (1978) approach to child development is a form of social constructivism based on the idea that cognitive functions are the product of social interactions. Therefore, teachers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive education and its implementation by drawing on Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and learning. This theory helps teachers recognise the importance of social interactions, collaboration, scaffolding, differentiation, and cultural responsiveness in fostering inclusive learning environments. By incorporating Vygotsky's theory into their pedagogical practices, teachers can promote active learning, meaningful social interactions, and the development of higher-order thinking skills among students in inclusive classrooms.

2.3.1 Features of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and learning

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is based on the idea that learning is a social and interactive process that occurs through social interactions and collaboration, (Newman & Latifi, 2021). It asserts that learning is a social process in which the support of parents, caregivers, peers, and the wider society and culture plays a crucial role in developing higher psychological functions, (Clark, 2018). According to McLeod (2020), Vygotsky's sociocultural theory views human development as a socially mediated process in which children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society. Vygotsky's theory comprises concepts such as culture-specific tools, private speech, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

According to Vygotsky, everything is learned on two levels: via interaction with others and by integration into the individual's mental structure (UNESCO, 2016). The second feature of Vygotsky's theory is the notion that cognitive growth is restricted to a ZPD. This zone of inquiry is one in which the learner is cognitively equipped but requires assistance and social contact to adequately flourish (Sharkins et al., 2017). A teacher or more experienced peer can give learners scaffolding to help them grasp knowledge domains or develop complicated abilities (UNESCO,

2016). Vinney (2019) states that scaffolding refers to the assistance provided to a learner who is striving to learn something new from their ZPD; the teacher will provide extensive assistance. It might be a peer, a teacher, or even a parent performing the scaffolding (Main, 2019).

2.3.2 Advantages of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and learning

Vygotsky's theory provides a good platform for investigating how students learn before entering school and how this knowledge connects to concepts gained in school. This approach to educational theory and technological frameworks will allow teachers and learners to pursue goals compatible with the greatest customised learning possible (Everett, 2016). According to the Indeed Editorial Team (2022), it enables learners to take responsibility for their own learning and increases engagement, giving them a sense of independence. It also helps them develop problem-solving abilities that they may use in other aspects of their lives. Vygotsky theory also caters to different abilities; this theory encourages teachers to use a variety of tools to accommodate different learning styles; it also creates an inclusive and welcoming environment that allows them to work in teams to improve their knowledge; and, finally, it encourages independent learning, which can be useful when they enter a professional environment.

2.3.3 Limitations of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and learning

The first is tied to his untimely death, as many of his theories remained unfinished (Reed, 2021). Furthermore, the ZPD is ambiguous since it does not provide a clear image of a child's learning demands, current ability level, or motivating influences. It also does not describe the development process or how development occurred. The pioneering of aided learning is relevant for this study; it emphasises the value of having a more capable individual present throughout learning as a teaching and learning approach. Teachers who understand this theory may apply it in the classroom to better understand the requirements of learners with SEN and help them attain their full potential in the teaching and learning environment. Vygotsky's theory has many implications for teaching and learning techniques and strategies in classroom activities in an inclusive system, and this study shows the importance of including low-performing learners with more able learners so that low-performing learners can be better assisted in an encouraging environment.

2.4 SUMMARY OF BRONFENBRENNER AND VYGOTSKY'S THEORIES

In Bronfenbrenner's theory, humans encounter various environments throughout their lives, which may influence their behaviour (Aubrey & Riley, 2018). According to Vygotsky, parents, peers, caregivers, and even the culture at large are responsible for developing higher-order functions; higher-order functions refer to the learning process that occurs through interaction with people. There is an element of interaction in both theories; one's growth in both theories arises through contact with either one's parent, peers, or others around them, which may impact their moral, social, and cognitive development. There is an interaction with the environment in both ideas. Both philosophies emphasise the significance of relationships. Morrison (2018) agrees that both theories address how social interactions impact a child's learning and how culture affects development and that these theories have a chronological order that builds on each other. Both theorists are of Russian ancestry.

Both theories are relevant to this research because they provide insights into the factors that influence teachers' perspectives on implementing IEP. These theories recognise the impact of social and environmental contexts, collaborative efforts, cultural beliefs, and the role of social interactions and scaffolding in shaping teachers' attitudes and practices in inclusive classrooms. Understanding these theories can help inform the development of effective policies and support systems that promote the successful implementation of inclusive education.

2.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature on implementing inclusive education to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools in the Pinetown District, identify gaps, inconsistencies, or controversies in the existing literature, and highlight the need for further research (Milian, Spinola & de Carvalho, 2019). According to Thomas, Utley, Hong, Korkmaz and Nugent (2020), it helps researchers situate their own study within the broader academic context and understand the existing theories, concepts, methodologies, and findings in the field.

Liao, Deschamps, Loures and Ramos (2017) define literature as the body of scholarly or academic works published on a particular topic or subject area. Literature provides a foundation for understanding the existing knowledge, theories, and concepts related to a research topic. De

Beauvoir and Fleming (2020) state that researchers can identify the gaps, controversies, and unresolved questions in their field of study by reviewing the literature. In addition, this helps researchers situate their research within the broader academic conversation and build upon the existing body of knowledge.

According to Torraco (2016), a literature review in the study is a critical and comprehensive analysis of the existing body of literature on a specific topic or research question; it involves systematically reviewing, summarising, and synthesising the relevant published studies, scholarly articles, books, and other sources of information related to the research area (Paré, & Kitsiou, 2017).

Machi and McEvoy (2021) posit that there are several types of literature reviews in research studies, including narrative literature reviews that provide a comprehensive overview of existing literature; systematic literature reviews that follow a rigorous methodology to identify, select, and synthesise relevant studies; meta-analyses that statistically combine data from multiple studies; meta-syntheses that qualitatively synthesise findings from qualitative studies; scoping reviews that map the literature on a broad topic; integrative reviews that combine both quantitative and qualitative studies; and rapid reviews that offer a streamlined and time-efficient synthesis of evidence. Yung and Khoo-Lattimore (2019) indicate that each type of literature review serves different purposes and is chosen based on the research objectives, available literature, and desired level of depth and breadth in the review.

Templier and Paré (2015) state that a literature review is of paramount importance in research as it provides a solid foundation by offering a comprehensive understanding of existing knowledge, theories, and methodologies related to a topic. It enables a researcher to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and controversies in the literature, guiding the development of research questions and hypotheses. In addition, Stratton (2019) points out that by critically analysing and synthesising the literature, researchers can situate their own work within the broader academic context, enhance the credibility and validity of their findings, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their field. A well-conducted literature review ensures that research efforts are grounded, relevant, and built upon the existing body of knowledge, thus fostering innovation and generating meaningful insights (Stratton, 2019).

2.5.1 Inclusive education in South Africa before 1994

According to Engelbrecht (2020), before 1994, South Africa was deeply entrenched in a system of racial segregation known as apartheid. This system created stark divisions among different racial groups, including in the education sector. Walton (2018) suggests that inclusive education, which focuses on providing equal opportunities for all students regardless of their background or abilities, was virtually non-existent during this period. Instead, the apartheid government implemented a separate and unequal education system that reinforced racial hierarchies.

McKenzie (2021) points out that under apartheid, different racial groups were assigned different types of schools with varying levels of resources and quality of education. Engelbrecht and Savolainen (2018) are of the view that the majority of black learners attended poorly funded and overcrowded schools, where the curriculum was designed to perpetuate racial stereotypes and limit opportunities for advancement; in contrast, white learners had access to well-resourced schools with quality education and better facilities. McKeever (2017) indicates that this segregation in education perpetuated inequality and limited opportunities for marginalised communities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

It is evident that before 1994, inclusive education was severely lacking in South Africa due to the oppressive system of apartheid; the education system was deeply divided along racial lines, with marginalised communities receiving inferior education compared to their white counterparts (Adonis & Silinda, 2021). It was not until the end of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic South Africa that efforts were made to promote inclusive education and address the historical inequalities that had been perpetuated for decades (Mzangwa, 2019).

2.5.2 Inclusive education in South Africa after 1994

According to Walton (2018), after the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa embarked on a journey of transformation and sought to address the inequalities and injustices of the past; inclusive education became a significant priority in the country, aiming to ensure that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have access to quality education. Alden (2019) highlights that the Constitution of South Africa, adopted in 1996, includes provisions for the right to education and explicitly promotes inclusive education; it recognises the importance of providing equal

educational opportunities to all learners and emphasises the elimination of discrimination in education. In addition, this constitutional framework laid the foundation for developing and implementing inclusive education policies and practices in the country. Schoole and Pandor (2018) suggest that the DBE has been at the forefront of efforts to promote inclusive education. One of the key principles of inclusive education in South Africa is the move away from separate, specialised institutions for learners with disabilities. Zakaria (2017) elucidates that the focus shifted towards integrating these learners into mainstream schools, where they could receive appropriate support and access the same educational opportunities as their peers; this approach promotes diversity, social cohesion, and equal opportunities for all learners. Furthermore, the DBE emphasised the importance of teacher training and professional development in inclusive education (MacKenzie, 2021). Cooper (2019) states that teachers are provided with specialised training to enhance their capacity to teach diverse learners effectively; this includes training on inclusive teaching strategies, assessment accommodations, and adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

The study revealed that while progress has been made in implementing inclusive education in South Africa since 1994, challenges such as inadequate resources, limited infrastructure, and a shortage of specialised support personnel continue to pose obstacles to the full realisation of inclusive education (Walton, 2018). However, the commitment to inclusive education remains strong, and ongoing efforts are being made to address these challenges and ensure that every learner in South Africa can access quality education (Alden, 2019).

2.5.3 Key features of Inclusive Education Policy

Inclusive education policies typically incorporate several key features aimed at creating equitable and accessible learning environments for all learners. Moriña (2019) states that inclusive education policies encompass several key features aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality EFA learners; these policies emphasise non-discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and eliminating biases based on factors such as gender, disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Haug (2017) indicates that they advocate for a learning environment that embraces diversity and fosters respect and inclusion. Additionally, inclusive education policies focus on accessibility by addressing physical, social, and academic barriers; this includes providing accessible infrastructure, resources, and support services to meet the diverse needs of learners (De Bruin,

2019). Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) posit that the curriculum is designed to accommodate different learning styles and abilities. Promoting inclusive teaching strategies and assessment practices, teachers receive specialised training and professional development to effectively support diverse learners, and collaboration among schools, parents, and stakeholders is encouraged to create a supportive and inclusive educational ecosystem.

The study revealed that teachers' understanding of IEP can vary depending on factors such as their training, experience, and exposure to inclusive practices. In many cases, teachers are aware of the key features of IEP, particularly if they have received professional development and training in this area (Samuels, 2018). However, it is important to note that the level of understanding and implementation may differ among individual teachers; teacher training programmes and professional development initiatives often aim to enhance teachers' understanding of IEP and equip them with the knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices in the classroom, these programmes cover topics such as inclusive teaching strategies, differentiation, assessment accommodations, and creating inclusive learning environments, (Nilsen, 2020). Through these initiatives, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the principles and key features of inclusive education and how they can be applied in their classrooms. It is evident that while efforts have been made to promote understanding and implementation of inclusive education policies among teachers, challenges can still arise; factors such as limited resources, time constraints, and large class sizes can impact teachers' ability to fully implement inclusive practices. Therefore, ongoing support, collaboration, and professional development opportunities can help address these challenges and enhance teachers' understanding and implementation of IEP (Armstrong, 2020).

2.5.4 Perspectives of teachers on inclusive education

The successful implementation of inclusive education relies heavily on the perspectives and experiences of teachers. Thompson, Verdugo, Burke and Aguayo (2019) opine that many teachers wholeheartedly embrace inclusive education and view it as a powerful means to promote diversity, acceptance, and equal opportunities. They understand that inclusive classrooms foster a sense of community, empathy, and respect among students. Molbaek (2018) agrees that these teachers are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment and are willing to adapt their teaching strategies to

meet the diverse needs of their students. They also recognise the potential of inclusive education to shape a more inclusive society by nurturing tolerance and understanding.

Haug (2017) argues that while teachers may support inclusive education, they often express concerns about the availability and allocation of resources, like inadequate funding, limited specialised support staff, or a lack of appropriate materials and technology can hinder their ability to effectively meet the needs of all students. There is a claim that teachers who raise resource concerns emphasise the need for additional funding and support to ensure the success of inclusive education initiatives; they argue that without sufficient resources, implementing inclusive practices becomes challenging and may lead to the exclusion of certain students, (Mngo & Mngo, 2018).

Furthermore, implementing inclusive education can be demanding for teachers in terms of time and workload, and they express concerns about the additional planning, preparation, and assessment required to meet the diverse needs of students with various abilities and learning styles (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). In addition, balancing these demands can be a significant challenge, and teachers may seek support in managing their workload effectively. Schools and educational institutions must provide adequate time and resources to ensure that teachers can meet the needs of all their students without compromising their well-being.

Teachers who advocate for inclusive education celebrate their learners' individual progress and achievements; they value the opportunity to witness the growth and development of learners with diverse backgrounds and abilities, (Zagona, Kurth and MacFarland, 2017). Sailor (2017) indicates that these teachers understand that inclusive practices foster a sense of belonging and self-esteem in their students; they believe in nurturing each learner's unique strengths and talents, enabling them to reach their full potential and become active contributors to society.

2.5.5 The effects of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation

Teachers' perspectives and attitudes on implementing inclusive education differ. Some believe that inclusion should apply to all learners who experience barriers to learning and that all learners should be in the regular classroom at all times. Magomedova and Damadaeva (2015) and Movkebayeva, Oralkanova, Beisenova and Belenko (2016) agree that achievement in

implementing inclusive schooling relies upon teachers' professional and mental readiness. According to these authors, professional readiness consists of statistics readiness, the ownership of pedagogic technology, the records of the fundamentals of technology and punitory pedagogy, the know-how of inexperienced persons' character personalities, and studying needs. It supports teachers' disposition to be flexible in the studying method, to own records of character traits of inexperienced persons, and to be organised for professional interplay studying, while the shape of the mental readiness consists of the emotional reputation of inexperienced persons with unique academic needs of their organic process (adoption – rejection); inclined to contain inexperienced persons with unique academic needs into room activities (inclusion – insulation); and pride with their personal coaching activities (Raykova, 2016).

According to Zakaria and Tahar (2017), overcoming negative perceptions and promoting a positive impact in implementing inclusive education in public primary schools is essential for creating a fair, equitable, and supportive learning environment. Through addressing biases, fostering awareness, and implementing supportive policies, teachers and stakeholders can work together to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. Ngulani (2020) added that by doing so, we can create a brighter, more inclusive future for our learners and communities.

2.5.6 Factors contributing to the effective implementation of inclusive education

Effective implementation of inclusive education hinges on several critical factors, (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). These include well-trained and supported teachers who can adapt their teaching to diverse learners, a flexible and inclusive curriculum, accessible physical environments, adequate support staff and resources, robust collaboration among teachers and specialists, active parental involvement, the cultivation of a positive school culture that values diversity, systematic assessment and monitoring of learner progress, supportive policies and legislation, community engagement, flexible scheduling, nurturing inclusive attitudes among both educators and students, and ongoing research and evaluation to inform and improve inclusive practices. Wray, Sharma and Subban (2022) add that these factors create an environment where all learners can thrive and access quality education regardless of their abilities and backgrounds.

According to Flagler (2011), those elements vary from the mindset and ideals of the principal stakeholders, which include learners, teachers, and parents, to pedagogical strategies and aid within the school room, but among those elements, the critical thing to achievement rests with instructors. Schuelka (2018) adds that successful implementation of inclusive education at the national level encompasses essential components, including activities at the school and classroom levels, such as conducting school assessments and creating inclusive plans, ensuring that all teachers, not just specialised ones, receive training and support in inclusive teaching practices, and aiding school leadership in realising an inclusive vision for their institutions. Additionally, at the national level, it necessitates the establishment of clear policies that define and endorse inclusive education, establishing a reliable data collection and management system, providing curriculum flexibility, and coordinating with other societal elements that may be influenced by inclusive education.

Sulasmı and Akrim (2019) state that the inquiry into the availability of human resources in public primary schools is essential because it directly impacts the quality of education. Human resources, encompassing teachers, support staff, specialists, and administrators, form the backbone of the educational system. Abrigo, Abushouk, Adebayo and Agarwal (2022) argue that their presence and competence determine the ability to provide personalised instruction, cater to the diverse needs of students, and effectively implement inclusive education practices. Assessing the adequacy of human resources helps researchers and policymakers identify potential resource gaps, advocate for equitable staffing, and work towards enhancing the overall educational experience and outcomes in public primary schools.

2.5.7 The role of education stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education

Educational stakeholders play a critical role in the successful implementation of inclusive education, (Saxena, 2014). These stakeholders include teachers, school principals, parents, students, support staff, and the broader community. Chris and Dew (2022) state that teachers are at the forefront of inclusive education; they are responsible for creating an inclusive classroom environment, adapting curriculum and instruction to meet diverse needs, and fostering a culture of acceptance and respect. Teachers play a crucial role in identifying learners who may benefit from additional support and collaborating with specialists to develop Individualized Education Plans

(IEPs). School principals provide leadership and support for inclusive education. They allocate resources, establish policies, and create a school culture that values diversity and inclusion. Principals ensure that teachers receive the necessary training and support and that the physical environment is accessible to all learners. According to Woo and Su (2019), parents are essential partners in inclusive education; they work closely with teachers and school staff to develop and monitor IEPs, provide insights into their child's unique needs, and advocate for their child's rights. Parental involvement fosters a strong home-school partnership that enhances a student's educational experience. Learners also play an active role in inclusive education. They learn to respect and appreciate diversity, advocate for their own needs, and collaborate with peers. Peer support and interaction are crucial for creating an inclusive classroom environment. Support staff, such as special education aides and counsellors, provide targeted assistance to students with diverse needs. They work in tandem with teachers to implement IEPs, offer specialised instruction, and provide emotional and behavioural support.

The community at large is a significant stakeholder. It contributes by promoting awareness, understanding, and acceptance of diversity. The community may offer resources, volunteer support, and advocacy efforts to ensure inclusive education extends beyond the classroom into society (Allen, 2017). Specialists, including speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists, provide expert guidance and services to students with specific needs. They collaborate with teachers to create tailored strategies for individual learners.

Governments and policymakers establish the legal framework and allocate funding to support inclusive education; they define policies that promote equitable access to EFA students, including those with disabilities. Teacher training institutions that train future teachers play a role by ensuring that pre-service teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement inclusive practices effectively.

The successful implementation of inclusive education relies on the collaboration and active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Each stakeholder has a unique role in creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment that allows every learner to reach their full potential. Stakeholder participation is deemed critical to the school's performance and progress. According to Pelayo (2018), stakeholders play an essential role in school management since they

partner with school principals in making the school suitable for teaching and learning. Mashou (2016) states that the South African School Act of 1996 specifies the duties and functions of parents as one of the most significant stakeholders in their children's education through governing bodies. Not only should parents be active in education, but anybody interested in education should be involved. Pile and Gilchrist (2020) state that stakeholders (i.e., parents) are to create a positive home environment and provide support by being involved in school life. The parent, within the context of the family and home, provides the guidance necessary for learners' proper intellectual and moral growth; teachers must prepare an educational plan for learners identified with special needs and identify each learner's needs and abilities; religious leaders, parents, and teachers have a moral obligation to instil values in their learners; the school administrators role is to implement government policies and programmes that facilitate learning, enrol learners (including learners with special needs), provide healthy peer relationships, organise school resources for operative execution of inclusive education and provide administrative support for quality professional development; government bodies play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of education for learners facing educational barriers and non-disabled learners. Their responsibilities include setting policy guidelines, monitoring schools, and allocating resources to ensure equitable opportunities for both groups.

According to Pillay, Duncan, and de Vries (2022), the government plays a pivotal role as a stakeholder in the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools. They further state that the government is responsible for formulating policies, allocating resources, and providing the legal framework necessary to ensure that inclusive education is not just an aspiration but a practical reality. Mestry and Du Plessis (2020) claim that government initiatives determine the level of financial support, training for educators, the development of accessible infrastructure, and the creation of a legal framework that protects the rights of students with diverse needs. As a stakeholder, the government's commitment to inclusive education was instrumental in shaping the educational landscape and ensuring equitable access to quality EFA learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.

Watts and Roundy (2022) state that educational institutions are pivotal stakeholders in implementing inclusive education. These institutions play a central role in creating inclusive

learning environments where all students have equitable access to quality education regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. Pelayo (2018) posits that educational institutions must develop policies and practices promoting diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities. This includes adapting curricula, providing necessary resources and support services, training teachers and staff in inclusive teaching methods, and fostering a culture of acceptance and respect. By embracing inclusive education principles, educational institutions contribute significantly to shaping a more inclusive and equitable society by preparing students to thrive in diverse settings.

2.5.8 Challenges and barriers to the implementation of inclusive education

Numerous challenges and barriers impede the implementation of inclusive education. These challenges and barriers include SEN as ‘barriers’ to inclusion, attitudinal barriers, schools as barriers, curriculum as a barrier, untrained teachers as a barrier, constraint of resources, and barriers associated with inclusion in education (Gulzar, 2021).

2.5.8.1 Special education as a “barrier” to inclusion

Labelling and special treatment are necessary to identify children with exceptional educational needs, which is in no way a valuable contribution to the goal of inclusive education. This prejudice goes against the entire principle of inclusion. According to the Reach Journal (2016), the balance between the positive and negative effects of labelling learners with SEN continues to be of concern, with some considering it to be a threat to the inclusion movement. Labelling may stereotype a learner and potentially limit one’s view of the labelled learner by focusing on the disorder (Klarke et al., 2018). Dalien (2017) is of the view that disability labelling refers to the unnecessary labelling of learners who have SEN. This labelling can significantly impact the self-esteem of learners who only require a little attention than other learners to learn certain concepts. She further states that terms like “lazy,” “unmotivated,” “having a behaviour problem,” and “slow,” all of which are frequently used to describe students with learning disabilities, are not only unfair but can also have negative consequences. Heather (2022) supports Dalien’s view, stating that labelling comes with reduced expectations, social stigma, self-fulfilling prophecy, and goals of what can be achieved in the classroom. Lower expectations may develop low self-esteem.

Alnawieser (2021) argues that labelling is a positive practice because it provides support for learners with disabilities and may open the door to a variety of opportunities and resources, such as individualised education programmes, in which the teacher can use the information to assist the learner by designing an individualised educational programme to meet their unique needs. Jones (2017) agrees that when a learner is labelled as having SEN, they receive additional assistance, learning support at their own speed, and regular repetition and instruction.

2.5.8.2 Attitudinal barriers

Implementing inclusive education requires a positive attitude toward inclusion and disability among teachers, parents, peers, principals, and policymakers, (Yash, Singh and Agarwal, 2015). Negative and non-cooperating attitudes of stakeholders like members of society, peers, and teachers that hinder inclusion are social exclusion and discrimination, peer pressure, attitudes of regular teachers, schools as barriers, and curriculum as a barrier.

According to Cachero (2015), one of the most significant barriers related to inclusion in education is a negative attitude; many people are not prepared to interact with disabled people. Therefore, attitudinal barriers can impact the rest of learners' lives (Kovac, 2021). However, schools do not intentionally build attitude barriers; instead, barriers arise due to teachers' and learners' lack of information about engaging with learners with disabilities.

Social exclusion and discrimination may be defined and perceived differently. The Department for International Development (2016) defines social exclusion as a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against based on their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. According to Roy (2020), social exclusion and discrimination have been two major issues that have made it challenging for the marginalised and oppressed section of society to avail themselves of the rights they are entitled to fully. Roy (2020) further states that discrimination is where people face avoidance, rejection and exclusion, which are all manifestations of discrimination. Ladd (2016) states that peer relationships are essential to a learner's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Social exclusion and discrimination is the state in which certain groups are denied the same access to education as the rest of society; social exclusion can happen in many ways and on different levels.

Disabled learners are socially isolated by non-disabled people, particularly in less developed civilizations, because it is widely held that teaching disabled people is fruitless. The researcher believes that all learners have the right to receive all the required support services to empower them with skills that will lead them to a better life.

Peer pressure is the influence a social group exerts on an individual to conform to their attitudes, behaviours, or actions to fit in or be accepted within that group. It often involves feeling compelled to adopt certain behaviours or beliefs due to the social norms and expectations of one's peers. According to Freud (2018), most young people struggle to cope with varying forms and degrees of peer pressure, where learners often look to their peers for guidance, reassurance, and a sense of belonging. She further states that peer pressure is a powerful force that can adversely affect a learner's well-being. Smith (2020) states that learners with special needs are like any other learners; they also want friends, respect, and inclusion. These learners benefit from each other; it increases appreciation and acceptance of individual differences and builds meaningful relationships (Wilkinson & Penney , 2020).

The researcher believes this may happen through buddy systems; pairing special and non-special learners in one classroom can be effective as it helps them learn and build better self-esteem. Thus, learners can believe in each other's abilities.

2.5.8.2 School as a barrier

The school is another factor that is a barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. Hoque (2020) believes schools are unwilling to cater to learners with special needs. Gulzar (2021) states that although learners with special needs have secured admission to an inclusive school, they still face challenges because these schools prefer learners with moderate challenges because they expect parents to assist their children. Furthermore, according to Zemba (2021), the other issue is parents not being able to pay higher fees in private schools, making it a barrier to admission for their children.

Kreisa (2021) adds that another challenge is that schools for learners with SEN are too scarce for them to get inclusive education, resulting in difficulties in attending school. The lack of proper transportation also hampers their access to education with dignity and equality. Furthermore, inaccessible school buildings are another barrier to implementing inclusive education. The

buildings do not accommodate learners with special needs; these learners cannot access playgrounds, washrooms, stairs, and steep ramps (Mahanta, 2019).

In addition, Gulzar (2021) points out that overcrowded classrooms are also a challenge when implementing inclusive education as it becomes difficult for the educator to adjust, leaving the learner with special needs unattended and not treated fairly since these learners require individual attention. Moreover, Panda (2016) agrees that learners with special needs require a learning environment in which they can learn by participating in a small group.

2.5.8.3 Curriculum as a barrier

In our education system, curriculum is one of the chief impediments to inclusive education development (Kreisa, 2021). The assumption is that it happens because it does not meet the needs of the comprehensive range of diverse learners. Villegas (2015) states that there is a lack of a learner-centred and relevant curriculum; it does not provide options for learners with special needs. It is evident that teachers have used various methods to support learners with special (Sunbare, 2022).

2.5.8.4 Lack of trained teachers and their attitude as a barrier

Teacher training and attitude can be major limitations for inclusive education; a critical element of inclusive education involves ensuring that all teachers are trained and well-prepared to teach all learners, (Dua, 2017). Teachers' lack of capability and determination to adapt methodology as per the needs of learners with special needs is a major limitation for implementing inclusive education; therefore, teachers play a significant role in making inclusion happen successfully in any country. However, teachers have shown that they need intensive training regarding inclusive education in order to support learners with special needs in their classrooms (Zwane & Matome, 2018). In addition, Sign (2019) claims that teacher training is disjointed and poor; it is happening in a segregated manner, one for special learners and another for capable learners, making teachers have poor skills and positive attitudes towards learners with special needs. Stafford (2017) states that training teachers as regular teachers does not equip them for working in a diverse classroom, nor does it provide them with knowledge, skills, and confidence to support learners with SEN.

Research has shown that training teachers in the field of inclusive education is associated with a more positive attitude towards inclusive education because it increases understanding, and teachers can educate in a style that meets the needs of learners and will teach at a pace that accommodates all learners (Hisar & Haryana, 2017). Attitude is fundamental to the practice of inclusive education.

2.5.9 Challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education

Inclusion classrooms are a good concept, but they necessitate a great deal of training, tolerance, and consideration on the teacher's side, (Haug, 2017). According to Ramos (2020), teachers face several challenges in a special needs classroom. Hardin and Hardin (2013) agree that including learners with different abilities can be challenging for teachers, such as accommodating the structural needs of diverse learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning. Moreover, according to Mathew (2015), the entire purpose of inclusive education is undermined due to a lack of the right attitude and sensitivity on the part of teachers, a lack of parent support, high-class sizes, a lack of child-centred and relevant curriculum, and suitable teaching-learning material. According to Mokaleng and Mowes (2020), teachers' unfavourable views toward inclusive education are impediments to the implementation of inclusive education because inclusion places too many expectations on teachers.

A lack of support for teachers exacerbates negative views about inclusive education. Large classes, according to teachers, do not allow for inclusion. One of the challenges that teachers encounter is that some of the learners in inclusion classrooms have chronic diseases that can lead to death; dealing with this is a task that a teacher must adjust to. Paseka and Schwab(2020) stated that lack of parental support is another concern; some parents are unconcerned about their children's well-being and fail to give appropriate care. Pile and Gilchrist (2020) stated that the role of the parent is to create a positive home environment and provide support by being involved in school life. Teachers have learners who experience barriers to learning, and because each learner is different, the teacher must adapt their lessons to suit each learner by delivering individualised education programmes.

According to Bonner, Warren and Jiang (2018), inadequate time for teaching diverse learners is a pressing concern in education. It encompasses the challenge of providing sufficient instructional

time to meet the varying needs of learners, including those with disabilities, English language learners, and those requiring additional support. Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) stated that this issue has significant implications, as it can hinder learners' access to tailored and equitable educational experiences, perpetuating educational disparities. Moreover, it places additional stress on teachers who must balance the demands of a crowded curriculum with the need for differentiated instruction, potentially compromising the quality of teaching and the overall learning environment (Kebbi, 2018). Addressing this challenge requires a concerted effort, including flexible curriculum planning, professional development for teachers, adequate resources, and technology integration to provide supplementary support, ultimately working toward a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape (Bryant & Smith, 2019).

2.5.10 History of implementation of inclusive education in global settings

The history of inclusive education in global settings is a long and evolving one, driven by changing societal attitudes, legal developments, and a growing understanding of the benefits of providing education to all learners, regardless of their abilities or differences (Andrews, Walton & Osman, 2021). According to Haug (2017), in ancient civilizations, education was often limited to a select group of individuals, such as the elite or privileged classes, and people with disabilities or special needs were frequently excluded from formal education. Artiles, Harris-Murri and Rostenberg (2021) point out that as industrialisation progressed, there were limited efforts to educate children with disabilities or differences. Special schools and institutions were established but often focused on segregating these learners from mainstream society (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020).

In addition, Lautenbach and Heyder (2019) claim that as industrialisation progressed, there were limited efforts to provide education for children with disabilities or differences; special schools and institutions were established, but their focus was often on segregating these learners from mainstream society. Bryant, Bryant and Smith (2019) argue that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, affirmed the right to EFA without discrimination, setting the stage for more inclusive practices; therefore, the 1970s and 1980s marked a turning point in the global implementation of inclusive education. International organisations, such as UNESCO, began promoting the idea of inclusive schools and emphasising the rights of children with disabilities to access education (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2019). This era also

saw the rise of the parent advocacy movement, demanding equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities.

Furthermore, The Education for All (EFA) conference in Jomtien, Thailand, emphasised the importance of inclusive education in achieving global education goals (Madani, 2019). The Jomtien Declaration promoted equal access to quality EFA, including those with disabilities. According to Mégret (2017), the Salamanca Statement, a milestone in the history of inclusive education, was adopted during the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain. The statement called for the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools and advocated for inclusive education as a fundamental human right. Inclusive education continued to gain momentum in the early 2000s, with many countries adopting laws and policies to support its implementation. Mégret (2017) argues that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), adopted in 2006, further reinforced the rights of people with disabilities, including their right to education on an equal basis with others.

Kauffman and Hallahan (2018) point out that various international initiatives, such as the EFA campaign and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have emphasised the importance of inclusive education in achieving universal education and promoting equality and social inclusion.

The study revealed that despite significant progress, many challenges remain in implementing inclusive education worldwide; these challenges include the need for adequate resources, teacher training, infrastructure, and the creation of supportive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all learners. It is clear that overall, the history of inclusive education reflects a shift towards recognising and valuing the diversity of learners and working towards creating educational systems that are accessible, inclusive, and beneficial for all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, the journey towards fully inclusive education is ongoing. It requires ongoing efforts and collaborations at local, national, and global levels.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature covered a comprehensive examination of inclusive education, encompassing its historical development, present status, and the various factors influencing its implementation, teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, and the effects of teachers'

perspectives on inclusive education implementation. Additionally, it delved into the challenges educators face when adopting inclusive education practices and discussed the crucial involvement of stakeholders in implementing inclusive education. Chapter 3 is devoted to the methodology followed in the study, including the research paradigm, research approach, research design, and data collection tools used. The sample size and procedures were also discussed. Lastly, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study were presented.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the literature review on the key features of IEP, perspectives of teachers on inclusive education, the effects of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation, factors contributing to the effective implementation of inclusive education, and the role of education stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education. The previous chapter also discussed the two theories that underpinned this study. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used to generate data that will respond to the following research questions presented in Chapter 1:

- What are the teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal?
- How do teachers in public primary schools in the Pinetown District implement inclusive education?
- What factors impact the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- Why do teachers perceive inclusive education implementation in the same or different ways?
- To what extent do teachers' perspectives affect the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- How can education stakeholders support teachers in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools?

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology, encompassing the research approach, paradigm, and design. It also includes an extensive discussion of the data collection methods, sampling techniques, and subsequent data analysis. Moreover, ethical considerations pertinent to the study are thoroughly explained. Additionally, the chapter outlines the limitations encountered during the research.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology is when the researcher explains how they intend to conduct the study. Potgieter (2017) states that the research question will always control the methodology. Research methodology must always answer how data will be collected and how the data will be analysed. When collecting and analysing data, there are three research methodology approaches, namely, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Moffitt & Budert-Waltz, 2021).

This study employed a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative design enabled the researcher to gain insights into participants' perspectives, motivations, and decision-making processes, (Busetto and Gumbinger, 2020). By using methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, the researcher gathered rich and detailed data that captured the context and meanings attributed to actions. This chapter provides a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the research approach, paradigm, and design. The data collection methods employed, sampling techniques, and data analysis procedures are thoroughly elaborated upon. Ethical considerations pertaining to the study are also presented, along with a discussion of the study's limitations.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The interpretive paradigm was used to frame this research. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), a paradigm is a perceptual device and theoretical framework that a certain researcher uses to comprehend and examine reality. Nikerson (2021) states that the nature of the topic to be researched, the adequate methods of study, and the reasons why data should be analysed and interpreted are all defined by interpretative paradigms. The interpretative paradigm addresses the understanding and solution of problems. The interpretative paradigm is appropriate for this study because it stresses people's connections with events in their daily lives and proposes a qualitative approach to social research. At school, there are obstacles to learning. Teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools and teachers' opinions of teaching learners who encounter these obstacles are of particular interest to the researcher.

The notion that social reality is neither regular nor objective, but rather influenced by human experiences and social environment (ontology) and is thus best examined within a socio-historical context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its diverse participants (epistemology), (Gephart, Cassell and Cunliffe, 2018). According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), a paradigm is a

perceptual device and theoretical framework that a certain researcher uses to comprehend and examine reality.

Interpretive paradigms are based on people's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). This paradigm was suitable for this study because the researcher wanted to understand, explain, and describe the experience of teachers in implementing inclusive education in primary schools. This paradigm allowed participants to express their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about how they feel about implementing inclusive education. This research is based solely on the teacher's experience. Willis (2018) mentions that researchers' interpretations focus on people's subjective experience of the outside world. Allowing teachers to voice their experiences allowed the researcher to gain insights into how they felt about the implementation of inclusive education and why they had these experiences that they did. Lincoln (2020) argues that interpretive theories attempt to answer questions of how and why.

The interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation; thus, observation is the generation of information about facts, while interpretation is understanding information by drawing inferences, (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm is also relevant for this study because the researcher can collect information from teachers about their experiences in teaching learners with learning barriers in the classroom, as well as observe them in the classroom and interpret and understand the data generated by answering research questions like How do teachers implement inclusive education in public primary schools in the Pinetown District? What factors impact the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools? Why do teachers perceive inclusive education implementation in the same or different ways? How can education stakeholders support teachers in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools? Additionally, it is important to understand to what extent teachers' perspectives affect the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools.

This paradigm aimed to understand and interpret teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools, how IEP is implemented by teachers, and to what extent teachers' perspectives affect the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools. This paradigm is preferred because it allows the researcher to elicit the participants' subjective experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and views. Therefore, teachers' experiences in engaging diverse

learner populations, their beliefs in creating equitable learning environments, their attitudes towards embracing inclusivity as an educational ethos, and their views on the implementation of inclusive education were discussed.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach is the strategy used by the researcher when gathering and analysing data in research and is dependent on research and quantitative inquiry (Tobi, 2016). Chetty (2020) believes that the research approach is a strategy and process that progresses from general hypotheses to specific techniques for gathering, analysing, and interpreting data. Therefore, it is determined by the type of research topic being addressed. The two main aspects of the research strategy are the approach to data collecting and the approach to data analysis or reasoning.

A qualitative approach was used in this study. This approach is relevant as it relates to 'what' people think and 'why' they think that way (Thakur, 2020). It is also appropriate because the goal is to gain insight into and give a voice to participants' experiences. The advantages of using a qualitative research approach include producing a thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, options, and experiences and interpreting the meaning of their actions (Rahman, 2016). Secondly, it explores the participants' inner experiences and how meanings are shaped within the culture (Leung, 2012). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2015), qualitative research is a comprehensive research technique that takes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the issue at hand. Using qualitative research enabled better understanding and improved collaboration among the researcher and participants since the study is conducted in a natural setting, which means the researcher studied things as they were and did not manipulate the environment.

Tuffour (2017) posits qualitative research employs inductive reasoning, where themes and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed from pre-existing theories. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, through constant comparison and analysis, the researcher was able to refine existing theoretical frameworks to explain and interpret human behaviour and social phenomena (Alase, 2017). The qualitative approach offers a powerful lens through which to comprehend human behaviour and social interactions. By embracing subjectivity, contextual understanding, and researcher reflexivity, qualitative research uncovers the intricate layers of meaning that shape participants' actions and

experiences (Frew, Weston & Reynolds, 2018). Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings and De Eyto (2018) indicate that using diverse data collection methods and inductive reasoning contributes to developing deeper and more nuanced insights into the complexities of human behaviours.

The researcher actively engaged in reflexivity, acknowledging biases, assumptions, and preconceptions, and understanding that the perspectives can influence the research process and strive for transparency. Moreover, the researcher recognised the positionality concerning the study's subjects, encompassing cultural backgrounds and upbringing, influencing their grasp of inclusion and equity. Social identities, spanning race, gender, and socio-economic status, shape their perceptions and interactions within diverse educational settings. Additionally, their professional backgrounds and expertise in special education or mainstream pedagogy inform the approaches and strategies for cultivating inclusive learning environments.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research takes the form of a single case study. A single case study aims to provide deep insights, context-specific knowledge, and a holistic understanding of the subject under investigation. When applied judiciously to appropriate research questions, case studies can make significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge in various fields (Thomas, 2021). This research selected a case study to understand teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. Bhasin (2019) defines research design as a step-by-step procedure followed by a researcher to carry out scientific research; it involves many strategies and procedures for conducting research in order to efficiently manage a research topic. According to McCombes (2021), a research design is a strategy for answering your research question using empirical data. By conducting research, the researcher has a sequence of enquiries they need to find answers for; the research method gives a logical process for carrying out experiments so that all questions may be answered in the correct order (Bhasin, 2019).

There are four key characteristics of research design, namely neutrality, reliability, validity, and generalisation (Bhat, 2023).

3.5.1 Neutrality

When organising a study, the researcher may need to create expectations about the data to be collected, and the study's findings should be devoid of prejudice and unbiased. The researcher should discuss and get conclusions assessed by numerous knowledgeable experts, considering those who agree with the investigation's findings (Chang, 2021).

3.5.2 Reliability

Researchers always want the same results each time they perform an experiment; thus, the design of the study should be able to ensure standard results by specifying how research questions can be formulated (Meeker, Escobar & Pascual, 2022).

3.5.3 Validity

The validity of a study design is used to compute predicted findings and judge the honesty of the results. When defining what is legitimate, most scholars choose their own definition. As a result, the questionnaire created from the study design is regarded as legitimate (Bonazza, Smuin, Onks, Silvis & Dhawan, 2017).

3.5.4 Generalisation

Generalisation is one of the most crucial aspects of research design; the findings from the study should apply to the entire population, not just a small sample. A generalised method suggests that a survey can be carried out on any segment of the population with the same level of precision (Morcos, Barrett & Rabinowitz, 2018).

Since the factors mentioned above influence respondents' responses to the research questions, the design should strike a balance between them all.

3.6 TYPES OF RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Kowalczyk (2021), the researcher should understand different types of research design in order to help choose the right technique for their project, which includes descriptive, exploratory, experimental, observational, and diagnostic.

3.6.1. Descriptive

A descriptive research method accurately displays participants; it is all about unfolding participants participating in the study. The descriptive method allows for examining phenomena such as social, demographic, or environmental issues, and it refers to the process of carefully describing the features of a certain population or phenomenon. It can also be used to investigate personal experiences or sentiments, with the purpose of providing information about the kind and severity of the problem (Vijayamohan, 2022). Three methods can be used in descriptive research, namely a survey, which is defined as a short conversation with a person about a particular subject; an observation, which is defined as a way to observe and record the participants; and a case study, which is defined as an in-depth investigation of a single person or group of people (Jones, 2022).

3.6.2. Exploratory

Exploratory research is a methodology approach that examines research questions that have not previously been studied in depth. Exploratory research is often qualitative and primary in nature (George, 2023).

3.6.3. Experimental

An experimental research design is a framework of protocol and procedures developed to help researchers conduct experimental research using two sets of variables and a scientific approach. It aids in collecting data that is required for better research decisions and establishing the study's facts (Sirisilla, 2023).

3.6.4 Observational

When conducting an observational study, researchers examine the results of a particular intervention, risk, diagnostic procedure, or treatment without attempting to control who is or is not exposed (Ciesielska & Jemielniak, 2018). The primary data on participants is gathered through observational research by viewing them in their natural environment. There are different types of observational research design: naturalistic observation, participant observation, and structured observation.

3.6.5. Diagnostic

A diagnostic research design is a sort of research design that attempts to uncover the underlying cause of a certain illness or phenomenon. It can help you understand more about the factors contributing to the issues or obstacles the customers may face (McCombes, 2023).

The multiple case study was employed as a research design to explore the teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. A multiple case study is a qualitative research approach investigating a phenomenon over numerous cases. This study is frequently employed to understand a complex issue or explore a phenomenon in depth (Cash, 2022). According to the Universal class (2023), multiple case study analysis allows researchers to gather a general opinion on a specific issue by analysing different cases on the same research. The multiple case study enabled the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. This case study was conducted to explore teachers' views on implementing inclusive education in predominantly public schools. The researcher wished for better recognition of how teachers implement inclusive education in essential public schools.

According to Fouché and Schurink (2016), qualitative researchers are primarily interested in the meaning participants give to their life experiences by using some form of case study to immerse themselves in the activities of a single person or small group of people in order to obtain an understanding of their social world. The researcher looks for patterns in the research participant's words and actions in the context of the case as a whole. A multiple case study design was appropriate in the current study, as the researcher wanted to obtain an understanding of the teachers' perspectives when implementing inclusive education and identify pertinent themes based on the teachers' responses in the selected school (Fouché & Schurink, 2016).

3.7 INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION

Data refers to the information or facts collected, observed, or measured to answer specific research questions or test hypotheses. It is the raw material from which researchers derive insights, draw conclusions, and make informed decisions, and it can take various forms, depending on the research design and methods used (Mwita, 2022). For this study, the researcher chose qualitative data, which consists of non-numeric information and is usually gathered through open-ended methods like interviews, focus groups, observations, or content analysis and includes narratives,

descriptions, quotes, and textual responses (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey & Lawless, 2019). The data collection instruments used in this study were interviews and observations. The interview was arranged for teachers, principals, and HoDs. According to Kabir (2016), the idea of data collection is the system of accumulating and measuring statistics about variables of activity in a mounted and systematic way that allows you to reply to research questions, tests, discoveries, shape hypotheses, and evaluate results – one of the essential tiers of the investigation.

Three data collection instruments, namely interviews, observation and document analysis, were used. The reason for using these three instruments was essential for the study; it provided a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to data collection and analysis (Flick, 2017). Interviews allow in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and motivations, providing valuable qualitative insights, (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). Observation enabled the researcher to observe and understand behaviour directly in its natural context, offering a more objective view of actions and interactions, (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan, 2017). Additionally, document analysis allows for the examination of written records, such as historical documents and organisational reports, which can provide valuable context and corroborate findings from other sources, (Morgan, 2022). By employing these diverse methods, the study aimed to triangulate data, enhance data validity, and gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.7.1 Interviews

Interviews are an effective method for gathering qualitative data and are widely used for data collection because of their versatility. Structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews are the three forms used to acquire data in qualitative research (Bhasin, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. Bhasin adds that semi-structured interviews are a hybrid of structured and unstructured interviews. For example, the researcher prepared a list of questions to ask during the interview and asked follow-up questions to elicit more information or clarification from the respondents based on their responses.

According to Magaldi and Berler (2020), semi-structured interviews are a type of qualitative research method that lies between structured and unstructured interviews. Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021) state that in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses a predetermined set of open-ended questions as a framework but allows flexibility to explore relevant topics and follow-

up on participants' responses. This approach allowed the researcher a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and emotions. Semi-structured interviews offered several advantages in this research; they allowed the researcher to explore the topic in-depth while also having the freedom to ask follow-up questions based on the participant's responses; this flexibility enabled the researcher to dig deeper into relevant areas and gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter to provide opportunities for triangulation, where data from multiple sources are combined to enhance the study's validity and trustworthiness. The semi-structured interviews for this study included questions that allowed the researcher to elicit and refine answers. In addition, the interview process allowed the interviewer and the participants more flexibility and allowed the interviewer to follow interesting information obtained in the process. The main method of data collection in this study was an interview. The researcher gathered information about the participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Thus, the interview allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education and reducing barriers to learners' learning in the Pinetown District.

The interview for each participant lasted approximately 20 minutes, was recorded with a voice recorder, and was transcribed verbatim. The scheduled interview contained many questions that would allow the researchers to gain insight into the phenomenon of their research. The researcher established relationships with participants before inviting them to formal interviews. In this study, the researcher initiated a relationship with the participants when she visited their school while the researcher was still presenting the research to them. Through these visits, the researcher was able to observe the culture of the schools. Ethical issues were discussed with the participants prior to the start of the interview. The date, time, and location of the previous interview were negotiated with the interviewee.

The interview schedules were used to ask participants questions that required them to express their opinions in their own words. During the interview schedules, participants were asked about various topics related to a teacher's bio, including personal information, the classroom environment, supportive structures for teachers, challenges in addressing learning barriers, strategies for supporting students with learning barriers, readily available documents guiding learning support,

and accessible resources for students facing learning barriers. Additionally, field notes were taken while observing each participant in the classroom.

3.7.2 Observation

Observation is a data collection method where researchers gather information by directly observing and recording behaviours, events, or phenomena without intervening in the natural setting. It provides valuable, first-hand insights and data that can be used to study and analyse various aspects of a research topic, (Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland, 2022). According to Newbold (2018), observation in qualitative research involves systematically and often in-depth watching and recording of behaviours, interactions, and phenomena within their natural context. Bertram and Christiansen (2020) opine that it enables a researcher to gain a profound understanding of human experiences, social dynamics, and cultural practices. This method is often used in ethnographic studies, case studies, and other forms of qualitative inquiry where context and meaning are central. The researcher could employ participant observation, actively engaging with the subjects, or non-participant observation, maintaining a more detached perspective, using techniques such as field notes, audio or video recordings, and reflective journals to document what was observed (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2018). Data were then analysed through coding and thematic analysis to identify patterns, insights, and themes, contributing to the broader understanding of the researched phenomenon.

Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) mention that observation in qualitative research offers the advantage of capturing behaviours and interactions in their natural setting, providing context and depth that other methods might have lacked. It helped the researcher uncover the tacit and unspoken aspects of a phenomenon and led to the discovery of unexpected insights. However, it was essential to consider the potential for observer bias, maintain ethical standards, and combine observation with other data collection methods for a comprehensive understanding. Cohen (2016) further asserts that reflexivity, or the researcher's awareness of their own influence on the observations, was critical in maintaining rigour and validity in the qualitative research process.

The researcher was a non-participant observer, meaning she did not interact or participate in the classroom and strived to remain as inconspicuous as possible, as teachers were teaching in their classrooms, which are their natural settings. Observations were used to corroborate the data

collected and to determine the reliability between the interviews and the deeds (Ngulani, 2020). Therefore, to compare notes, a colleague assisted with recording the observation. This allowed the researcher to collect valuable data by documenting what happened in the natural situation. The researcher used an observation sheet and a notebook to take notes during the observation.

Some classroom aspects that were observed and mechanisms provided by schools were included in the observation template, as highlighted below:

Content (i.e., what is taught and differentiation to cater for all the learners); the language of instruction; how the classroom is organised and managed; general school environment accessibility; the methods and processes used in teaching; the pace of teaching; the time available to complete the curriculum, the learning materials and equipment that are used, how learning is assessed; support from other learners, for example, pushing of wheelchairs, writing of notes, etc.; mechanisms provided by the school such as feeding scheme, extra lessons, support classes, support of teachers internally by experts through workshops and class visits, social worker/psychologist/counsellor/ therapist, etc., technology and software, interactive boards, school transport, lighting, stationery, ramps or lifts, security and safety; the general infrastructure of the school; types of buildings (conduciveness in the South African weather conditions); accessibility; and accommodative design.

3.7.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is a systematic method for analysing printed and electronic documents, (Bowen, 2017). Frey (2018) agrees that document analysis is a type of qualitative research that uses a systematic approach to analyse document evidence and respond to specific research questions. It is frequently used to confirm conclusions obtained from data sources such as interviews, observations, and surveys. Documents can be valuable sources of information about the site or participants in qualitative research (Pillay, 2019). In this study, document analysis aims at understanding the implementation of inclusive education by using interviews and observation to predict outcomes. Documents used for this study were completed Support Needs Assessment, (SNA) and Individual Learning Plan, (ILP) forms; these documents may have indicated the level of learning support the teacher and the school provide to the learners who need additional support. Other documents used in the study include the DoEs document entitled Educational White Paper

6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001) and Draft Guidelines for implementing Inclusive Education (2002). These documents served as evidence of indication and support for learners, and, in the analysis of these documents, they offered information and a better understanding of specific events. Furthermore, the documents from the DoE provided in-depth information on how teachers should respond to the diverse needs in inclusive settings.

After obtaining the documents, the researchers conducted a comprehensive review and analysis, focusing on inclusive education practices, policies, learner support services, and other pertinent data. Systematically extracting the relevant information ensured the accuracy and reliability of the collected data. Through rigorous analysis, meaningful insights, and patterns, trends were identified, leading to the interpretation of the findings. The researchers first developed a checklist containing criteria related to research objectives, such as inclusive education policies and learner support services. After relevant documents were identified, the researcher systematically applied the checklist to analyse each document, recording findings and extracting pertinent data. By synthesising the data based on checklist categories, the researcher could identify patterns and draw meaningful insights that address the main and sub-research questions. Supporting conclusions with evidence from the analysed documents, the researcher presented well-structured findings in the research report, acknowledging any limitations of the document analysis method.

3.8 POPULATION

Population refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or elements that the researcher aims to investigate and draw conclusions about; it is the larger group from which a sample is drawn to conduct research and make inferences about the whole group, (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). According to Bhandari (2020), the population is the entire cluster from which you wish to draw conclusions, and the sample is the specific cluster from which you may collect knowledge. The sample size is usually smaller than the population size. He adds that in a study, the term "population" does not always mean "people." It can refer to a collection of components from whatever you're studying, such as things, events, organisations, nations, species, organisms, etc. This study focused on a diverse population within educational settings, encompassing teachers, HoDs, principals, and stakeholders involved in creating and fostering inclusive environments.

3.8.1 Sampling

Sampling is an essential component of study design, (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). According to Flick (2014), this allows the researcher to select cases from a larger population that is too large to be fully investigated, allowing the researcher to generalise the final research findings to an entire population rather than individual study participants. In general, sampling is divided into two types: probability or random sampling and non-probability or non-random sampling.

Probability sampling involves selecting a sample from a population based on known probabilities, ensuring each member has a chance of being chosen, (Mishra and Alok, 2022). Random sampling involves selecting a sample from a population where every member has an equal chance of being chosen, without regard to probabilities, (Bhardwaj, 2019). Non-probability sampling involves selecting a sample from a population without ensuring every member has an equal chance of being chosen, often relying on convenience or judgmental criteria, (Buelens, Burger and Brakel, 2018). Non-random sampling methods may introduce bias and limit generalizability to the broader population, (Pace, 2021). Taherdoost (2016) asserts that before choosing a specific type of sampling technique, it is necessary to decide on a broad sampling technique, as shown in the figure below:

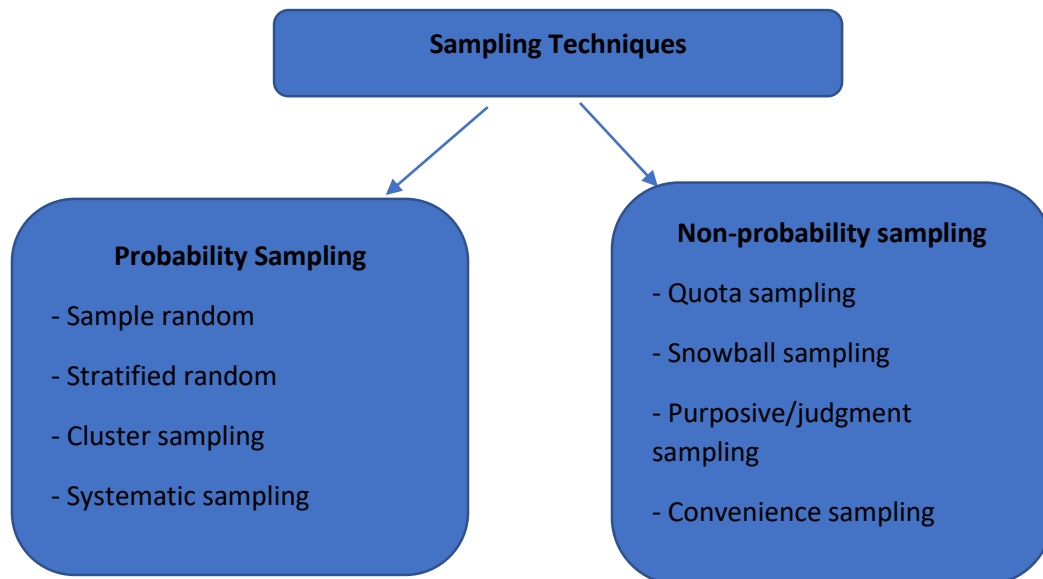


Figure 2: Sampling techniques, (Noor, Tajik, and Golzar, 2022)

Purposive sampling was used in this study since it allowed the researcher to select a small sample of teachers, principals, and HoDs who are likely to be informed about the subject. The participants chosen by the researcher provided relevant information about their experiences in implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. However, purposive sampling was a useful strategy for this study. Six teachers, three principals, and three HoDs from three public primary schools in the Pinetown District were purposively selected as participants. As a result, the population comprised teachers, principals, and HoDs. They were chosen based on their knowledge and experience. Thus, four schools participated in this study, including four principals, four HoDs, and 12 teachers who participated in the focus group.

Table 1: Coding of participants in the sample

Codes	Explanation	Number
SCH	School	A, B, C, D
P	Principal	1, 2, 3, 4
HoD	Head of Department	1, 2, 3, 4
T	Teacher	1, 2, 3, 4

3.9 RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted in four primary schools in the informal settlements of the Pinetown District of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The target population of the research investigation consisted of principals, HoDs, and teachers working in public primary schools. To maintain the anonymity of the research, participant codes were allocated to the transcribed responses (P=Participant 1-20).

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to Potgieter (2017), data analyses involve running to find styles and traits in datasets, while data interpretation involves explaining those styles and traits. Dalby (2021) states that data interpretation is important as it aids in purchasing beneficial facts from a pool of inappropriate ones while making knowledgeable decisions. It is ideal to be beneficial for researchers. Labied (2018) refers to data interpretation as implementing procedures for reviewing records to arrive at a knowledgeable conclusion.

Making meaning of raw data is known as data analysis (Otukile-Mongwaketsi, 2011). During the interviews, the researcher took notes while the interviews were being recorded. Unless there was a need to rephrase the question for clarification, the interview questions were the same for all participants. The researcher ensured accuracy by reading the transcript and listening to the audiotapes several times in order to understand the participants' points of view.

Thematic data analysis was suitable for this study because it is a qualitative data analysis method sometimes applied to a group of documents, like tables and interview scores (Caulfield, 2019). The researcher closely examined the data to identify recurring themes, ideas, and patterns that emerged repeatedly. Smith (2020) argues that thematic analysis is one of the foremost basic analytical frameworks for qualitative knowledge; as a result, qualitative knowledge is the variety of knowledge collected directly from the first supply through interviews, surveys, and focus teams. This knowledge is analysed to spot relevant trends and switch data into valuable information. Caulfield (2022) is of the view that thematic analysis is a helpful way to study when you are seeking to learn anything about people's perspectives, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from a group of qualitative data such as interviews, transcripts, social media, profile, or survey answers. Topic analysis was done in several ways; however, the most common ways are familiarisation, threading, topic creation, topic testing, identification, and naming (Caulfield, 2019). The researcher used thematic analysis to translate observations and gain insight into the data. The researcher was guided by the research questions in performing the analysis. Each question has its own main thread category.

According to Caulfield (2019), in thematic analysis, there are two different approaches, namely inductive and deductive. The inductive approach starts with observations, and theories are

proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of observation (Thomas, 2016). According to Streefkerk (2019), it is when there is little to no existing literature on a topic. Deductive analysis often means applying predetermined codes to the data. According to Miles et al. (2020), deductive analysis can help sort data into organisational categories, such as data type, participants, or time period. To do this, the researcher can develop attribute codes to organise data.

There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis, but the most common form follows a six-step process: familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. This process can also help the researcher avoid confirmation bias when formulating an analysis. The first step in the thematic analysis process is important for the researcher to become familiar with the entire data set, which involves repeated and active reading through the data. This might include interviews, recorded observations, field notes or other media such as photographs or videos (Nowell et al., 2017). At this stage, the researcher took notes and recorded initial impressions of the extract. The second step is coding. Elliott, (2018), state that coding aids in organising data at a detailed, precise level. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), it is the first analytical phase in the process. They state that when the researcher starts to code, they start to make notes on queries, linkages between data items, and possible data items of interest. The third phase is creating themes, which entails reviewing the codes and extracting data to identify prospective themes that may have wider implications (Braun & Clark, 2016). Varpio et al., (2017) claim that themes are not just drawn from the data; rather, they are created by the researcher by analysing, combining, contrasting, and even mapping the relationships between the codes. The fourth step is reviewing themes. Nowell et al., (2017) describe this step as a two-level analytical process. At this point, data extracts are re-sorted, and themes are modified to better reflect and capture coded data. Themes are added, combined, divided, or even discarded. The fifth step was defining and naming themes, which entails the researcher developing a definition and narrative description of each theme and why it is essential to the larger research question. The theme titles included in the final report were checked to verify that they were concise and appropriately stated. The sixth step was writing up the final analysis and description of the findings. King (2018) describes the last stage of presentations as a continuation of previous analysis and interpretation rather than a new stage. The scholar explains that the report should make up a narrative that gives a clear, succinct, and logical description of how a researcher interprets the data and why their choice of theme and interpretation of data is essential and correct.

After gathering relevant school data, the researcher transcribed and organised it for analysis. She then familiarised herself with the content, themes, and patterns by carefully reading the data multiple times. Creating initial codes representing different concepts, she coded relevant sections accordingly. The researcher then condensed the data by categorising similar codes into broader themes, simplifying the analysis, identifying and refining central themes aligned with the research objectives, and ensuring coherence and relevance based on observed patterns. Exploring relationships between themes and sub-themes, she sought connections and deeper insights, interpreting the themes in the context of the research objectives and drawing conclusions from the patterns and insights unveiled by the thematic content analysis.

3.11 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Credibility and trustworthiness are two essential qualities in research that indicate the reliability and validity of the study's findings; these qualities are crucial for ensuring that the research results are accurate, dependable, and can be used with confidence, (Stahl and King, 2020). Davis (2021) defines trustworthiness as the credibility of the researcher's findings, which includes all the researcher has done to design, conduct, and report the research to create trustworthy results. He continues, "In qualitative research, the purpose of trustworthiness is to support the notion that the findings are worth paying attention to." The degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods employed to ensure the study's quality is referred to as the study's trustworthiness (Stahl & King, 2020). The researcher developed the guidelines and procedures required for a study to be considered worthy of the reader's consideration. According to Rheinhardt, Kreiner, Gioia and Corley (2018), credibility is the truth in the researchers' conclusions. Credibility refers to the veracity of the data or the participants' perspectives and their interpretation by the researcher (Adler, 2022). The researcher's credibility is determined by the researcher's confidence in the study's results. To ensure the credibility of this research, the researcher used triangulation, extensive engagement with participants, and a review of data by participants. To ensure credibility, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with experienced teachers, which allowed the researcher to gather information.

3.11.1 Dependability

Hanson, Ju and Tong (2019) outline dependability in qualitative studies as a balance of facts through the years and over conditions. In addition, a country's dependability may be compared to reliability in quantitative studies. In other words, dependability may be compared to the exceptionality of an incorporated system of fact collection, analysis, and idea generation. Cypress (2017) agrees that dependability confers with the entire concept of reliability in quantitative studies; the researcher ought to be capable of repairing themselves in converting the context of studies. As stated by Cypress (2017), dependable research must be accurate and consistent. Two ways to assess the reliability of data include incremental replication and inquiry audit. Interviews and non-participant observation were used in this study to ensure dependability.

3.11.2 Conformability

Conformability refers to the degree to which the findings, interpretations, and conclusions of a study are shaped by the perspectives and biases of the researcher rather than being solely grounded in the data collected from participants or the research context, (Singh, Benmamoun, Meyr and Arikan, 2021). According to Devis (2021), conformability is the stage at which other researchers can confirm the results of a study. Devis also states that the data and the interpretation of the results do not arise from the researcher's imagination but are derived from the data. Lichtman (2014) argues that conformability in qualitative studies is the researcher's diploma of objectivity, mainly while amassing and studying facts, which ensures that the effects continue to be neutral and proven and collaborated through the means of the researcher. Furthermore, conformability refers to the researcher's potential to illustrate the facts as it should represent the participants' responses instead of the researcher's biases or views (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

The researcher can reveal confirmability by explaining how the conclusions and hypotheses were drawn and demonstrating that the results are drawn directly from the data, (Stahl and King, 2020). Davis (2021). This can be demonstrated in qualitative research reports by including rich citations from participants describing each emerging topic, (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). The aim is to address bias issues and for results based solely on participant feedback. To ensure the validity of the results of this study, the adherence check was performed by asking participants to read comments on the accuracy of the text quotes to determine if they agreed with the interviewers,

using their direct quotes or not in the research report, participants' emotions, attitudes, body language and feelings.

3.11.3 Transferability

Transferability is a concept in qualitative research that relates to the extent to which the findings and conclusions of a study can be applied or generalised to other settings, populations, or contexts beyond the specific research participants and context, (Carminati, 2018). Stahl and King (2020) state that transferability addresses the question of whether the findings of a qualitative study have relevance and applicability beyond the immediate study sample. In addition, Nassaji (2020) indicates that qualitative research seeks to achieve transferability by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and the research process. This allows readers to assess the similarities and differences between the study context and other contexts in which they might want to apply the findings. Therefore, it is important to note that transferability in qualitative research does not seek universal generalisations but aims to provide insights and understanding that can be transferable to similar contexts (Smith, 2018). The researcher was explicit about the limitations and contextual boundaries of the study to allow readers to make informed judgments about the applicability of the findings in other situations.

3.12 RESEARCH ETHICS

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from UNISA. The researchers applied for ethical clearance before starting data collection involving human subjects. The researcher discussed ethical issues over autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, informed consent, and confidentiality. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020), ethics deals with behaviour that's considered smart or unhealthy; they conjointly state that ethics is a crucial issue to be considered in research, particularly with research associated with humans and animals. Protecting people by applying appropriate ethical principles is essential to all research. The researcher also wrote a letter to the district manager and selected school principals to seek permission to conduct research. Permission was granted from the participants via written consent; information pertaining to the research was communicated to the participants before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were also addressed; no school or participants' names were used. Instead, the researcher

used S1, S2, S3 and S4 for the schools to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the research sites. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Research ethics are of paramount importance to both the researcher and the participants involved in the study; the researcher adhered to ethical principles to ensure the credibility and validity of their findings, fostering trust among the scientific community and the public (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo, 2017). In addition, ethical conduct safeguards the well-being and rights of participants, preventing any potential harm, exploitation, or deception. It also promotes transparency in data collection, analysis, and reporting, thereby upholding the integrity of the research process. On the other hand, research ethics safeguard the participants' dignity, privacy, and safety while ensuring informed consent and voluntary participation (Barrow, Brannan & Khandhar, 2017). It is evident that ethical research protects individuals from potential harm and contributes to advancing knowledge and improving society at large.

Failure to adhere to research ethics can have severe negative consequences across multiple dimensions, harming or exploiting the research participants, violating their rights and undermining their trust in the scientific community (Kara, 2018). Unethical research practices can also compromise the validity and reliability of the study's results, rendering them unusable or misleading; this, in turn, wastes valuable time, resources, and effort (Bracken-Roche, Bell, Macdonald & Racine, 2017). Moreover, unethical conduct can damage the researcher's and the institution's reputation, leading to credibility loss. In some cases, it may even result in legal repercussions and sanctions. Ultimately, the failure to uphold research ethics erodes the foundation of responsible and unbiased inquiry, threatening the progress of science and impeding the pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of society, (Bos, 2020).

In line with UNISA's Research Ethics Policy (2016), guidelines for research involving human participants are:

3.12.1 Autonomy

Research must respect the autonomy, rights, and dignity of research participants. Participants were treated as autonomous. In this study, participants were respected for making their own informed

decisions about participating. Participants received full information about the research and could decide for themselves whether or not to participate (Clinfield, 2019).

3.12.2 Beneficence

Research should contribute positively to people's well-being. Beneficence has two components: utility beneficence and positive beneficence. Positive entails doing something beneficial because the researcher has some scientific, practical, or educational value, i.e., an important question was addressed. The requirement for the researcher was to "balance the advantages and disadvantages" to obtain the best overall results, called usability. In other words, a decision was made for the study's benefits to outweigh the effort, resources, costs, or risk of causing harm to study participants and the community (Needham & Keli Mu, 2016).

3.12.3 Non-maleficence

The research must not harm the participants in the research or the general public. The non-maleficence principle states that research should not cause harm. The study's goal was never to harm anyone, gather information at the expense of others, or maximise participants' benefits while minimising their risks. The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence are inextricably linked. Non-maleficence entails avoiding the infliction of harm. Non-maleficence implies that the harm must not be disproportionate to the study (Hepler & Staller, 2022).

3.12.4 Justice

The benefits and risks of research must be fairly shared between people. This principle is related to the idea of justice, (McCombs, 2022). The researcher designed a study that considered fairness in terms of recruitment and location of the study. Participants in this study decline but they were chosen because they were readily available or possibly vulnerable and less prone to population decline (McCombs, 2022).

3.12.5 Permission

For this study, the researcher sought permission from the Ethics Committee of the university under whose auspices the research was conducted, which was granted. The DBE in the Pinetown District

also granted the researcher permission to proceed with the study (see Appendix B). The researcher visited the school's principal to inform the principals and participants about the nature of the study in the selected primary schools within the district. Documents like the Educational White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001) and the Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (2002) were used.

3.12.6 Informed consent

According to Kowalczyk (2012), informed consent provides participants with complete information about the research to make informed, voluntary and rational decisions about participation. Norman (2021) also states that the important aspects of informed consent include an ethical obligation to promote autonomy, provide information, and avoid unethical forms of bias. Before participating in the study, the participants signed a consent form drawn by the researcher. Participants were given written consent beforehand to be aware of the nature of the research. The researcher informed the participants that they could withdraw at any time during the process without incurring any penalties and that their information would be kept confidential.

3.12.7 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is ethics that protects the privacy of human subjects during data collection, analysis, and communication, (Allen, 2017). He further adds that confidentiality involves separating or modifying any personal or identifying information provided by the participants from the data. Participants in this study were assured of their confidentiality. The researcher ensured that only the researcher had access to the data, that the names of the participants were not used, and that the information collected remained confidential.

For the purpose of this study:

Ethical clearance was obtained from UNISA (Appendix A). Consent was requested from the DBE in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, informing them of the intention to use specific public primary schools in this research (Appendix B). A request letter was written to the school's principal requesting and informing him about the purpose of the study and advising him of the intention to use teachers in this research and observing teachers teaching in the classroom (Appendix C). The researcher ensured that the principal signed a consent form to grant permission to use teachers

from the school (Appendix D). The HoDs that participated in the study were also informed about the study's purpose, what was expected of them, the study's duration, and their involvement. All HoDs participating in the research also signed a consent form (Appendix E and I). The teachers who participated in the study were also informed about its purpose, what was expected of them, its duration, and their involvement. All teachers participating in the research also signed a consent form (Appendix F and I).

All participants and schools were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. No one's identity was exposed. The true name of the school was likewise not mentioned. To represent the subjects, the researcher also utilised pseudonyms; participants were given alternative names (aliases). Participants were also advised that they might opt out of the research at any moment. Participants were promised that they could review the transcripts once the data had been transcribed to confirm that no information had been distorted. Participants were also informed that the research would be useful by contributing to advances that would improve the teaching experience.

3.13 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's limitations include potential constraints in generalising findings due to the specific context or sample size, restricting the extrapolation of results to broader educational settings. According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), limitations might arise from the chosen methodology, such as the reliance on self-reported data or the inability to control all variables. Ross and Zaidi (2019) state that delimitations involve setting boundaries, which could involve focusing solely on certain demographics or geographic regions, potentially overlooking nuances present in other populations or settings. Moreover, time constraints or resource limitations might restrict the depth or breadth of the study, impacting the comprehensiveness of the findings and recommendations for implementing inclusive education more broadly.

3.13.1 Limitations of the study

According to Miles (2017), limitations are constraints to your study based on the research methodology and design. Miles adds that limitations constraints cannot control the study and that limitations primarily deal with constraints to the research method. Miles and Scott (2017) define delimitations as primarily concerned with the scope of the study.

The limitations relate to the validity and reliability of the study (Discover PhDs, 2020). These characteristics of the research project or methodology are beyond the researcher's control but affect the research results. This small-scale study on a large subject was conducted in four schools district in KwaZulu-Natal; therefore, it may lack generalisable results. It can also be difficult to schedule interview time with teachers, as they need to adjust to the interviews between teaching periods. To overcome limitations, the researcher built a solid connection with participants in order to overcome their attitudes. Being well-prepared at all times and having the necessary supporting documents and information on hand in case they request more information, such as necessary forms and abstracts. To overcome time and transportation constraints, the researcher chose locations that were not far from where the researcher was located.

3.13.2 Delimitation of the study

Theofandis, Dimitros, Funtuki and Antigoni (2019) define delimitation as characteristic guidelines that limit the scope and describe the scope of the study, such as sample size, geographic location or conditions in which the study is conducted and population characteristics. According to Naar (2021), the study's delimitation clearly defines the boundaries of the research problem that the researcher is studying. Miles and Scott (2017) agree that delimitation is constraints/boundaries imposed by investigators prior to the study in order to narrow the scope of the study. The current study was limited to four schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Province within the Pinetown District. The small number of schools chosen may impact the generalisability of the study's findings by focusing on the sample size or population demographics, which may prevent certain outcomes (Naar, 2021). Laying out a delimitation assisted with emphasising research. Delimitations were created to form a sort of guide that researchers use to focus on key aspects of their research (Writer, 2020). Likewise, delimitations in this study serve as a guide to position readers about the type of research they are reading.

3.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher discussed and described the research methodology, including the research paradigm, research approach, research design, and data collection tools used in the study. Lastly, sample size and procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and

limitations were presented. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings that emerged from the data generated through interviews, observation, and document analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the methodology adopted in this study. The research was conducted using a qualitative design, employing a multiple case study approach. Firsthand data were gathered through interviews and observations. This interpretive qualitative case study was conducted in the Pinetown District to explore teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools, drawing different perspectives from four public primary school teachers from different schools. The research was framed within the interpretive paradigm and drew its theoretical underpinnings from Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory.

The researcher analysed and interpreted the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. This data was rich in detail and aimed to capture the subjective experiences and perceptions of teachers implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. The thematic data analysis process involved systematically examining and interpreting this rich, textual and audio data to identify themes, patterns, and meanings, utilising thematic analysis methods.

The study aimed to find unfiltered thoughts and opinions of teachers, DHs, and principals on teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. Pseudonyms SCH A, SCH B, SCH C and SCH D were used for the schools to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the research sites. This research used both observation and interviews. The data is therefore presented based on these two methods. As indicated in Chapter 3, data generation was analysed following the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Kiger and Varpio (2020). These phases include familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing up.

The data were analysed based on the main and the sub-research questions, namely “What are the teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal?” sub-research questions were as follows:

- How do teachers in the Pinetown District implement inclusive education in public primary schools?
 - What factors impact the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
 - Why do teachers perceive inclusive education implementation in the same or different ways?
 - To what extent do teachers' perspectives affect the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- How can education stakeholders support teachers in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools?

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The researcher used a thematic content analysis strategy. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach commonly used for examining textual materials, such as interview transcripts, where the researcher meticulously examines the content to uncover recurring themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of significance (Caulfield, 2019). The researcher chose this method to analyse the data and thus followed a six-step process. It commenced with familiarisation, encompassing tasks such as transcribing audio, thoroughly reviewing the text, and making preliminary notes, followed

by creating initial codes for marking pertinent segments. These codes were then structured into prospective themes, which were refined through an iterative process of reviewing, defining, and naming the themes. The final set of themes represented key patterns or meanings within the data and was used to answer research questions. The analysis opens with the codes used to represent participants' demographic information. Thereafter, the thematic analysis of the interview responses and the observation followed. Principals who were accessible and available to participate voluntarily in the study were selected.

4.2.1 Participants' demographic information

Convenient purposive sampling was used to select experienced principals, departmental heads (DH) and teachers from four public primary schools. Convenience purposive sampling entails the selection of participants who are accessible and can set time aside for interviews or focus group discussions. The collection of demographic information was done carefully, with participants' informed consent and in accordance with ethical guidelines. The researcher was mindful of the potential for bias and handled demographic data in a way that protected participants' privacy and confidentiality. The following table represents the coding of participants.

Table 2: Coding of participants in the sample

Codes	Explanation	Number
SCH	School	A, B, C, D
DH	Departmental Heads	1, 2, 3, 4
Teacher	Teacher	1, 2, 3, 4

Coding is the systematic process of categorising and labelling data to identify patterns, themes, and insights within the textual or visual information collected during the research study (Adu, 2019). Coding was crucial in this study process, enabling the researcher to transition efficiently

from raw data to valuable findings. This procedure organised the data and ensured that the posed questions aligned with the ones addressed. Its significance lies in enabling effective progression through the research journey by facilitating profound, all-encompassing insights. Coding rendered data more accessible, aiding in sorting, structuring, and retrieval. Additionally, it upheld data transparency and reliability, playing a central role in maintaining research integrity.

Table 3: Participants’ demographic information

Location	School	Codes	Qualification	Gender	Experience
Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal	A	P1	Honours degree	Male	12 years
		DH1	BEd	F	11 years
		Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4	BEd	M	
				M	8 years
	F				
	B	P2	Honours degree	M	13 years
		DH2	Honours degree	M	10 years
		Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4	BEd	F	12 years
				F	7 years
				F	9 years
		C	P3	Master’s degree	F
	DH3		Honours degree	Female	9 years
	Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4		BEd	M	8 years
				F	6 years
				F	8 years
	D	P4	Honours degree	F	15 years
		DH4	BEd	M	12 years
		Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4	BEd	M	8 years
				F	10 years
				M	7 years

The gender, age, and experiences of research participants were essential variables because they impact the validity and applicability of study findings. Principals were selected based on their schools' performance, while DHs were chosen based on their tenure as heads in the current school or previous educational institutions. This approach was adopted to enhance the study's effectiveness, as DHs play a crucial role in overseeing teacher-learner relationships and offering valuable advice and support. In the case of teachers, their selection was determined by their years of service and experience, ensuring that their responses to the study's questions would be rich and insightful. Gender equality was also a factor considered during the selection process.

As indicated above, four schools (A, B, C and D) participated in this study, four principals (P1, P2, P3 and P4), four departmental heads (DH1, DH2, DH3 and DH4), and 12 teachers (Teacher1, Teacher2, Teacher3 and Teacher4) participated in semi-structured interviews.

4.2.3 Research themes

Data were analysed thematically using the research questions discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.8). The use of thematic analyses resulted in the emergence of themes and sub-themes relevant to the study. Themes were derived from research questions and responses from the participants to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. Table 4.3 below summarises the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the current study.

Table 4: Summary of themes and sub-themes

Theme 1: Teachers perspectives in the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools
Sub-themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' understanding of inclusive education • Teachers' attitude towards implementing inclusive education
Theme 2: Challenges faced by teachers implementing inclusive education in public primary schools
Sub-themes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms • Inadequate time for teaching diverse learners • Inadequate parental involvement and support
Theme 3: Factors impacting the implementation of inclusive education
Sub-theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of physical resources • Availability of human resources • Availability of financial resources • The nature of the curriculum for ELSEN learners
Theme 4: The impact of teachers' perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education
Sub-theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact of teachers' perceptions • Negative impact of teachers perceptions • Overcoming negative perceptions and promoting positive impacts
Theme 5: The role of education stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education
Sub-theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government as a stakeholders • Educational institution as a stakeholders • Teacher as a stakeholders • Parents as stakeholders • Community as a stakeholders

Interviews were held in staffrooms and the DHs' and principals' offices, which was convenient and conducive to participants. Five main themes and 17 sub-themes were identified. In the following section, themes were discussed: teachers perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education, challenges faced by teachers implementing inclusive education in public primary schools, factors impacting the implementation of inclusive education, the impact of teachers' perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education, and the role of education stakeholders

in the implementation of inclusive education. Evidence from the data was provided to support themes and sub-themes that arose from empirical data and were connected to earlier findings.

A systematic process of transforming raw qualitative data into meaningful themes was involved in this study. The researcher began with data familiarisation, followed by initial coding, where short phrases or keywords were assigned to data segments. These initial codes were then grouped into preliminary categories, and through an iterative process of review and refinement, overarching themes emerged that captured key patterns within the data. Themes were clearly defined, and the entire dataset was systematically coded under themes. The data displayed was used to visualise patterns and explore relationships between themes. The analysis was then presented, supported by evidence from the data, and a peer review was conducted to ensure the validity, credibility and trustworthiness of the data generated.

4.2.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers perspectives of implementation of inclusive education in primary schools

Teachers' perspectives towards implementing inclusive education are crucial in fostering a truly inclusive and equitable learning environment. Lynch's (2023) views align with those of Thompson, Verdugo, Burke and Aguayo (2019), that when teachers embrace the principles of inclusive education, they recognise and value the diverse needs and abilities of all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or learning styles, by adopting a positive and supportive attitude. Teachers can create an inclusive classroom that celebrates differences and promotes a sense of belonging for every learner. Inclusive education is of paramount importance as it not only ensures equal access to quality EFA learners but also fosters empathy, compassion, and mutual respect among students, preparing them to become responsible and compassionate citizens in a diverse and interconnected world, (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). This study's framework structure was comprised of principals, DHs, and teachers from primary schools. Therefore, teachers' understanding of the importance of inclusive education cannot be overstated enough, which influences their readiness and attitude towards implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. This theme is discussed below with the emerged sub-theme: Teachers' understanding of inclusive education and teachers' attitude towards implementing inclusive education in public primary schools.

Teachers' understanding of inclusive education is of paramount importance in public primary schools because it promotes equal opportunities, fosters a positive learning environment, enhances teacher-learner relationships, encourages collaboration, and builds an inclusive society. Inclusive education benefits learners, the school community, and society at large. The researcher posed the study's opening question in relation to teachers' knowledge of inclusive education. This question was posed at the start to build a link between what the participants already understood and what the researcher intended to ask later, *“What are your perceptions about inclusive education?”* This question was intended to gauge an individual's knowledge, awareness, and comprehension of the principles, concepts, and practices associated with inclusive education. This question was posed because teachers are on the front lines of education, responsible for delivering teaching and supporting learners. Understanding the principles and practices of inclusive education is crucial for teachers to effectively implement inclusive strategies in their classrooms. This question was asked to determine whether the teachers understand the fundamental principles of inclusive education, such as equal access, diversity, and the importance of creating a supportive learning environment for all learners. This question helps evaluate if the individual is familiar with best practices in inclusive education, including differentiated instruction, accommodations, and support services for learners with diverse needs. It allows for assessing whether the individual is aware of legal requirements and ethical considerations related to inclusive education, such as anti-discrimination laws and the rights of students with disabilities.

Through their responses, participants seemed to understand what inclusive education entails. They contributed actively by explaining their understanding and support for implementing inclusive education. The majority of the responses from SCH A, SCH B, SCH C and SCH D indicated that they had a good idea of what inclusive education entails. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“According to my understanding, inclusive education includes learners with challenges. With my little knowledge, we should acknowledge learners with different diseases; for example, learners with epilepsy, asthma, and physical challenges; we have to treat them in the same manner in class.”*

Teacher 2: *“My understanding of inclusive education is where learners are receiving the same treatment in the classroom irrespective of their sicknesses, physical challenges and mind levels.”*

Teacher 3: *“Inclusive education recognises that every learner is unique and may require individualised support; this may include specialised teaching, assistive technology, or additional support from teachers and specialists.”*

Teacher 4: *“Inclusive education includes early intervention and support as key components; identifying and addressing learning difficulties or disabilities as early as possible can help learners progress and achieve their full potential.”*

During the interview session, the participating school DHs also had a similar opinion about their understanding of inclusive education. The DHs responded in a similar way:

DH1 and DH3: *“Inclusive education is considered beneficial not only for learners with disabilities but also for typically developing learners; it fosters a sense of diversity, tolerance, and empathy, preparing learners for the diverse world they will encounter in adulthood. It also promotes a more equitable society where all individuals have the opportunity to participate fully in education and society.”*

The majority of participants understood inclusive education as an educational system that accommodates all learners to feel welcomed in a supportive educational environment in their own communities, including those who need extra support because of their learning or physical disability, social disadvantage, cultural difference or other barriers to learning.

Teachers' attitudes towards implementing inclusive education can vary significantly, influenced by a multitude of factors such as their training, prior experiences, and personal beliefs. The responses from participating teachers that their attitudes towards inclusive education profoundly impact the learning experiences and outcomes of diverse learners. Teachers' attitudes towards implementing inclusive education can vary significantly based on their experiences, training, and beliefs. During the interviews, the principals, DHs, and teachers revealed their views on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. The teachers responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is influenced by the availability of resources and support because inclusive classrooms often require additional materials, specialised equipment, and support staff to effectively cater to diverse learners; therefore, when teachers perceive a lack of resources, they may feel frustrated and hindered in their efforts to*

implement inclusive practices fully, for teachers to have the resources they require to develop inclusive learning environments, adequate financing and resource allocation are crucial.”

Teacher 2: *“A common factor that influences teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education is the availability of relevant and continuous professional development. Teachers who have access to training on differentiating instruction, creating individualised learning plans, using assistive technologies, and managing diverse classrooms are more likely to have positive attitudes towards inclusive practices. I believe that professional development empowers teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to meet the diverse needs of their learners effectively.”*

Teacher 3: *“I hold a strong belief in the potential of all my learners, and more likely approach inclusive education with a positive attitude. I also view each learner as an individual with unique strengths and challenges rather than focusing solely on their disabilities or learning difficulties. This makes it easy for me to create a nurturing and supportive environment where all learners can thrive. My belief in my learner potential drives me to adapt my teaching methods, provide appropriate accommodations, and ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed.”*

Teacher 4: *“Some of us teachers embrace the idea of inclusive education wholeheartedly, while others might struggle with feelings of frustration, exhaustion, and burnout due to the increased demands of catering to diverse needs. Emotional resilience is crucial for us teachers to maintain a positive attitude and support their students effectively.”*

DH1: *“Being a teacher it not easy at times; it is overwhelming. Sometimes, it's easy to let challenges impact your attitude in the classroom, but maintaining a positive attitude, on the other hand, boosts your ability to assist learners and grasp new material.”*

Participants' views aligned with Dua (2017), who mentioned that teacher training and attitude can be significant limitations for inclusive education. Additionally, these findings are consistent with Hisar and Haryana (2017), who argue that training teachers in inclusive education is associated with a more positive attitude towards inclusive education because it increases understanding, and teachers are able to educate in a style that meets the needs of learners. It became apparent that teachers' attitudes play a critical role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Although challenges exist, the benefits of fostering an inclusive learning environment are immense, creating a positive impact on learners, teachers, and the wider community. Educational

institutions can empower teachers to embrace inclusive practices and promote a more equitable and compassionate society by providing adequate training, support, and resources. Embracing inclusive education is a responsibility and an opportunity to shape a more inclusive and accepting world for future generations.

4.2.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges faced by teachers implementing inclusive education in public primary schools

This theme details how teachers experience challenges implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. During the interview, the researcher requested participants to share their difficulties while implementing inclusive education. The intention was to bring attention to the complexities and difficulties associated with inclusive education. This awareness is crucial for both teachers and policymakers as they work together to improve inclusive practices. Identifying these challenges can highlight areas where teachers may need additional training or support; it can lead to opportunities for professional development to equip teachers with the necessary skills to address these challenges effectively.

As presented by Hardin and Hardin (2013), that including learners with different abilities can be challenging for teachers, such as accommodating the structural needs of diverse learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning. Conversely, Paseka and Schwab (2020) stated that lack of parental support is another concern; some parents are unconcerned about their children's well-being and fail to give appropriate care. Implementing inclusive education in public primary schools is a complex process that requires significant effort and dedication from teachers. However, this endeavour is not without its challenges. This theme discusses teachers' various obstacles when implementing inclusive education and highlights the importance of overcoming these challenges to create an inclusive learning environment.

Participants shared their feelings, views, and opinions regarding the challenges they faced as they negatively impacted the effective implementation of inclusive education. Interview responses indicated that challenges still exist and won't be resolved overnight. The literature revealed that challenges teachers face include insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms, inadequate time for teaching diverse learners, and inadequate parental involvement and support. The following

sub-themes were identified from the interviews and revealed different challenges teachers face when implementing inclusive education.

Insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms in public primary schools hinder effective teaching and learning. These issues often lead to reduced learner engagement and compromised educational quality. Addressing these challenges is essential to provide equitable access to quality EFA learners.

The researcher asked the teachers, *“How do you deal with insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms?”* This question was intended to understand the multifaceted impact of these conditions on education. These inquiries assessed how overcrowding hinders learner learning, affects teacher effectiveness, and impacts overall well-being. Additionally, such questions helped identify resource allocation challenges, inform policy and planning decisions, and promote equitable access to quality education. By addressing these questions, the researcher aimed to improve educational environments and enhance educational outcomes for learners, making it a vital area of study in education and policy development. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Government and educational authorities must invest in building new schools and expanding existing ones to accommodate the growing learner population; modern infrastructure can create a positive learning environment and facilitate effective teaching practices.”*

Teacher 2: *“Managing an overcrowded classroom becomes an arduous task for us teachers. The noise level and distractions make it challenging to maintain discipline and create a conducive learning environment; this results in a suboptimal learning experience for both high-achieving and struggling learners.”*

Teacher 3: *“Teachers need professional development and training to manage overcrowded classrooms effectively; strategies for differentiated instruction, classroom management, and student engagement should be emphasised.”*

Teacher 4: *“Where possible, efforts should be made to reduce class sizes. Smaller classes allow teachers to provide more personalised attention, fostering stronger teacher-learner relationships and improving learning outcomes.”*

The teachers hold similar perspectives in line with the findings presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.8.3). Gulzar (2021) highlights that overcrowded classrooms are also a challenge when implementing inclusive education as it becomes difficult for the educator to adjust, leaving the learners with special needs unattended and not treated fairly since they require individual attention. Furthermore, as Panda (2016) pointed out, learners with special needs require a learning environment in which they can learn by participating in a small group.

It was clear from participants' responses that insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms have become significant challenges in education. Limited physical space and large learner populations have a profound impact on the learning environment, teacher-learner interactions, and overall educational outcomes. In overcrowded classrooms, teachers struggle to provide individual attention to each learner. This leads to reduced opportunities for personalised instruction, feedback, and support. Learners may feel neglected or lost amidst the crowd, hindering their ability to grasp complex concepts effectively.

Through participant interviews, it became clear that overcrowded classrooms were the main obstacle to implementing inclusive education. It was also revealed that offering each learner the individualised attention they require takes time. Participating teachers revealed that discipline in an overcrowded classroom is a major challenge because learners are noisy, affecting teaching and learning time.

Through the findings, teachers believed that although principals and some DHs did not teach, they were also included in the teachers-to-learner ratio calculation; they should consider information such as how many teachers they have before allocating learners rather than enrolling an excessive number of learners. It became apparent that insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms pose significant challenges in the education system; they hinder the learning experience, exacerbate achievement gaps, and impact teacher effectiveness. Addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts from governments, educational institutions, and communities. Investing in infrastructure, reducing class sizes, leveraging technology, and providing teacher support can create more conducive learning environments that nurture learners' potential and foster academic success (Meier & West, 2020). It was clear that a commitment to improving classroom conditions will benefit learners today and contribute to building a more prosperous and equitable future.

As teachers shared their views on challenges they faced implementing inclusive education, the following sub-themes emerged: inadequate time for teaching diverse learners. The researcher asked the teachers, *“How do teachers deal with inadequate time for teaching diverse learners?”* This question was intended to gain insights into the impact of time constraints on the quality of education provided to diverse learners. This question addressed concerns about allocating time for individualised teaching and support, which is essential for accommodating diverse learning needs. The researcher seeks to understand how inadequate time may affect the effectiveness of teaching strategies, hinder teachers' ability to cater to the specific requirements of diverse learners, and potentially contribute to educational inequalities. By investigating this issue, the researchers aimed to inform educational policies and practices that optimise teaching time and ensure equitable learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of their diverse learning needs. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“It’s difficult for me because inclusive classrooms consist of learners with a wide range of abilities, learning styles, and needs. Addressing the individual requirements of each learner can be time-consuming as teachers must design and implement personalised strategies for various learners.”*

Teacher 2: *“Creating differentiated lesson plans and materials to accommodate the varying levels of understanding and skill sets of learners can be time-intensive.”*

Teacher 3: *“Some learners may exhibit behavioural challenges that require the teacher's attention and intervention; diverting focus from other learners can be time-intensive.”*

Teacher 4: *“Teachers are often burdened with administrative tasks, including paperwork, meetings, and assessments, leaving them with less time for actual teaching.”*

Participants’ responses align with Bonner, Warren and Jiang’s (2018) perspectives, affirming that inadequate time to teach diverse learners is a pressing concern in education. It encompasses the challenge of providing sufficient instructional time to meet the varying needs of learners, as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.9). Additionally, as articulated by Kebbi (2018), it places additional stress on teachers who must balance the demands of a crowded curriculum with the need for differentiated instruction, potentially compromising the quality of teaching and the overall learning environment.

The interviews portrayed that teaching in an inclusive classroom presents a unique set of challenges and time constraints stand out as significant hurdles. Teachers are expected to balance their learners' diverse needs and priorities while ensuring no child is left behind. Teachers navigate the time constraints more effectively by adopting collaborative approaches, prioritising learning goals, differentiating instruction, and seeking support from assistants. Acknowledging the importance of personalised attention and support for every learner is crucial to creating an inclusive learning environment where all learners can thrive. Participants mentioned that by diligently working together and prioritising efficient instructional time, inclusive classrooms can transform into supportive environments that embrace diversity and foster academic achievements for every learner.

From the above, it is evident that teaching in an inclusive classroom, where learners with diverse learning needs are brought together, is a noble and rewarding endeavour; however, teachers often face the challenge of not having adequate time to adequately address the individual requirements of each learner. As presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.9), inclusive classrooms comprise learners with a wide range of learning abilities, including those with disabilities, special needs, and different learning styles (Palesa & Schwab, 2020). This diversity demands a more tailored approach to teaching and learning. Learners in an inclusive classroom require individualised attention, differentiated teaching, and specialised interventions to reach their full potential. Accommodations and modifications are necessary to ensure equal access to the curriculum.

During the interviews, most participants raised concerns about time being challenging when teaching in an inclusive classroom. They mention that there is inadequate time to monitor activities and complete tasks, as well as to give learners individual attention and to mark every learner's books due to the high numbers in their classrooms. Teachers believe that the allocated time for each period does not provide enough time to expand the curricula or prepare and teach additional activities for learners who need additional help. As presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.9), some participants felt it would be better if the curriculum were developed considering learners with learning difficulties, creating and setting up time to give learners attention according to their individual needs (Ramos, 2020). For inclusive education to be implemented successfully, it is important to create more time for teachers and learners.

Parent involvement and support in their children's education is a crucial factor that significantly impacts a child's academic success, personal development, and overall well-being. The researcher asked the teachers, *“Is there any support you get from parents?”* This question is pivotal in influencing a child's educational journey. This inquiry seeks to uncover how parental engagement, or the lack thereof, impacts a child's academic success and overall development. Inadequate parental involvement can hinder a child's motivation, attendance, and performance in school. By understanding the dynamics of parental involvement and its consequences, the researcher aimed to shed light on ways to enhance the home-school partnership, improve educational outcomes, and advocate for policies that strengthen the role of parents in their children's education. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“One of the most significant consequences of parental disengagement is academic underachievement because when parents fail to show interest in their children’s education, learners lack motivation and a sense of accountability for their learning. Without parental support and guidance, learners struggle with their studies which leads to lower grades and diminished educational outcomes; lastly, a lack of monitoring and encouragement can lead to incomplete homework, missed assignments, and poor attendance, further contributing to academic decline.”*

Teacher 2: *“I have seen that when a parent is not involved in the learner’s education, it causes adverse effects on a learner's emotional and behavioural well-being. A learner may feel neglected and unimportant, resulting in a sense of isolation and insecurity; this emotional distress can manifest in behavioural issues such as rebelliousness, aggression, or withdrawal from social interactions, and the learner ends up seeking attention and validation from negative peer groups, increasing the risk of engaging in risky behaviours or developing destructive habits. From the parent side, not all of them give us support.”*

Teacher 3: *“Parental involvement plays a significant role in nurturing a learner’s self-esteem and confidence because when parents are disengaged, learners may lack the validation and encouragement needed to develop a healthy self-image. As a result, they doubt their abilities and feel incapable of handling challenges, both in and outside of school, and this low self-esteem hinders their willingness to participate in classroom activities and reduces their aspirations for future success.”*

Teacher 3: *“I have noticed that learners with supportive and involved parents tend to have an advantage over their peers who lack the same level of support; this disparity leads to a widening achievement gap between learners, perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage.”*

Teacher 4: *“Some parents do not fully understand the importance of their involvement and support in their child's education. They are not aware of the positive impact their support can have on academic outcomes.”*

Lev Vygotsky's theory was also relevant concerning the parents' involvement and support to successfully implement inclusive education (Chapter 2, section 2.2.1.1). Parents build the foundations of a child's character. Vygotsky emphasised the significant role of social interactions and the cultural context in shaping a child's cognitive development. In inclusive education, parental involvement is a crucial social interaction that can significantly influence a child's learning experience. When parents actively engage in their child's education, they become a valuable resource for scaffolding their child's learning, providing emotional support, and fostering a positive educational environment.

This could also be viewed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.1). This theory emphasises the interconnectedness of various systems that influence an individual's development, with the microsystem, which includes the family and immediate environment, playing a central role. In inclusive education, parents form a critical component of the microsystem, directly impacting a child's educational experiences. Parent's involvement and support create a supportive and nurturing environment that complements the school's efforts. As parents interact with their child's school, they engage with the microsystem and mesosystem, bridging the gap between home and school.

This section of the study examined the importance of parental involvement in supporting learners with SEN, explored its benefits, and discussed strategies for fostering effective collaboration between parents and educational institutions. As presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.4), Pile and Gilchrist (2020) state that the role of the parent is to create a positive home environment and provide support by being involved in school life. The teachers who were interviewed mentioned that when parents take an active interest in their children's education, it creates a positive and supportive learning environment that can lead to several benefits.

Based on participant comments, parental involvement and support play a pivotal role in learners' education and overall development, particularly those with SEN. It allows for a better understanding of a learner's academic strengths and weaknesses, enabling parents to provide assistance and resources to address areas of difficulty. Teachers indicated that when parents actively participate in their child's education, it can have a profound impact on their academic progress, social integration, and emotional well-being (Woo & Su, 2019).

All participating teachers mentioned that when teachers and parents work together to support the learners with special needs, the learners do better in school not only academically but also help the learners develop positive relationships with other learners. However, some participants raised concerns about instances where parents are not actively engaged in their children's education, resulting in potential negative consequences.

4.2.3.3 Theme 3: Factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education

The successful implementation of inclusive education is influenced by many factors that interact with and shape the outcomes of this educational approach. One critical factor is the availability of adequate resources and support services. Schools must have the necessary funding, trained staff, and specialised materials to accommodate learners with diverse needs. Additionally, community and parental support play a pivotal role in the success of inclusive education. When parents and local communities embrace and advocate for inclusive practices, it fosters a more inclusive environment and can lead to better outcomes for all learners.

During the interview, participants were asked if there were factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education. These factors were posed as questions to teachers because they are the primary agents responsible for translating inclusive education principles into practice within the classroom. Teachers' experiences, insights, and challenges in dealing with these factors provide valuable feedback for improving the effectiveness and equity of inclusive education programmes and policies. The intention of asking teachers about these factors was to gain practical insights and firsthand experiences regarding the challenges, successes, and strategies related to inclusive education in real-world classroom settings. This feedback helped inform policy decisions, improve teacher training, and refine inclusive education practices, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students.

This section explores the key factors that impact the implementation of inclusive education, such as the availability of physical resources, human resources, financial resources, and the nature of the curriculum for ELSEN learners.

The researcher asked the teachers, “*What are your views on the availability of physical resources in your school?*” This question is critical for influencing the quality of education and the overall learning experience of learners. The accessibility and adequacy of resources, such as classrooms, textbooks, technology, and recreational facilities, significantly affect the educational outcomes and well-being of both learners and teachers. A scarcity of physical resources can hinder effective teaching and learning, potentially exacerbating educational disparities. By investigating this question, the researcher aimed to identify areas where resource allocation and infrastructure improvement are required, helping policymakers and educators create a more conducive and equitable learning environment for all learners in public primary schools. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: “*We still need to have facilities that are physically accessible to all learners, including those with mobility impairments. This includes ramps, elevators, wheelchair-accessible restrooms, and wider doorways to accommodate mobility aids.*”

Teacher 2: “*You know some learners require adaptive equipment like specialised desks and chairs, communication devices, or hearing aids. These resources should be readily available and maintained to ensure they function properly.*”

Teacher 3: “*Things like ergonomic and flexible furniture can accommodate learners with physical disabilities and create a more comfortable learning environment for all, and adjustable desks and chairs, for example, can be configured to meet individual learner needs.*”

Teacher 4: “*Learning materials such as pencils, paper, art materials, and manipulatives should be accessible to all learners. It's important to consider the needs of learners with disabilities when selecting these materials, ensuring they are adaptable or available in alternative formats.*”

Participants' responses align with Mitchell and Sutherland, (2020), as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.6), that effective implementation of inclusive education hinges on several critical factors, including accessible physical environments. As teachers expressed their perspectives regarding the availability of physical resources in public primary schools, it became evident that

this factor plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing an equitable education for learners with diverse needs. Access to these resources ensures that learners with disabilities or unique learning requirements can fully participate in the educational process, promoting their academic and social development. Results from the interviews indicated that ensuring the availability and maintenance of these physical resources is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment where all learners have an equal opportunity to thrive academically and socially. It is important for schools to regularly assess their resource needs and allocate resources effectively to meet the diverse needs of their learner population. Collaboration with local agencies, support organisations, and parents can help schools secure the resources needed to support inclusive education.

The researcher asked the teachers, *“What are your views on the availability of human resources in your school?”* This question was intended to inquire about the availability of human resources in public primary schools because it's a fundamental factor that profoundly influences the quality of education. Human resources encompass teachers, teaching assistants, counsellors, specialists, and support staff who play pivotal roles in shaping students' learning experiences. The adequacy and competence of these human resources significantly impact the provision of individualised support, differentiated teaching, and inclusive practices for learners with diverse needs. Understanding the availability of human resources was crucial for assessing educational disparities, identifying areas for improvement, and advocating for policies that ensure a sufficient and qualified workforce, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of public primary schools. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Without an adequate number of special education teachers, paraeducators, and specialists, it becomes challenging to provide individualised support and accommodations to learners with disabilities or special needs, potentially impeding their academic progress.”*

Teacher 2: *“We teachers become overwhelmed by larger class sizes and a higher number of learners with diverse needs, leading to burnout and reduced instructional quality. Existing staff face increased workloads and stress, leading to reduced job satisfaction and retention issues.”*

Teacher 3: *“The challenge is learners have limited access to essential services like speech therapy, occupational therapy, or counselling, affecting their development and well-being, and also insufficient behavioural support specialists can result in challenges in managing learners with behavioural issues, potentially disrupting the learning environment for all learners.”*

Teacher 4: *“I have observed that due to the unavailability of essential human resources, inclusion becomes more of an aspiration than a reality, as it requires a dedicated team of professionals to adapt curriculum, provide accommodations, and ensure a supportive environment for all learners and also without adequate resources for training and professional development, teachers may struggle to stay current with best practices in inclusive education, limiting their ability to meet learners' evolving needs.”*

As Sulasmi and Akrim (2019) mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.6), the inquiry into the availability of human resources in public primary schools is essential because it directly impacts the quality of education and aligns with the sentiments shared by participants. Their emotions, perspectives, and viewpoints shed light on their challenges due to the insufficiency of essential human resources in public primary schools. They underscored that this shortage significantly hampers the schools' ability to effectively support learners with diverse needs, posing a substantial barrier to the successful execution of inclusive education practices.

During the interviews, it became apparent that addressing the unavailability of human resources in public primary schools requires a commitment from educational authorities to allocate sufficient funding, recruit and retain qualified professionals, and ensure ongoing support and professional development for staff because the goal is to create an inclusive educational environment where all learners have the opportunity to thrive academically and socially, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

The teachers who were interviewed mentioned that the availability of human resources in an inclusive classroom is crucial for creating an environment that supports the diverse needs of all learners because inclusive education aims to provide equitable opportunities for learners with disabilities, special needs, or different abilities to learn alongside their typically developing peers. This includes a team of general education teachers, special education teachers, paraeducators, and specialists in various fields to provide differentiated teaching and support. School psychologists, therapists, and social workers play pivotal roles in addressing learners' emotional and social needs, while principals implement inclusive policies and allocate resources accordingly. Collaboration with parents, families, and the community is encouraged, and professional development is ongoing to keep teachers informed about the latest inclusive practices. Support staff, behavioural support specialists, peer support programmes, and resource rooms further contribute to fostering

inclusivity. Ultimately, the availability and effective coordination of these human resources are fundamental to promoting the success and well-being of all students in an inclusive school setting.

The researcher requested the participants to *“Please share your views on the availability of financial resources in your school.”* The researcher posed the question about the availability of financial resources because it is a fundamental factor that profoundly influences the quality and accessibility of education. Financial resources encompass funding for infrastructure, teaching materials, technology, teacher salaries, and various support services. The sufficiency and equitable distribution of financial resources can significantly impact the provision of quality education and the implementation of inclusive practices, especially for students with diverse needs. Understanding the availability of financial resources is essential for assessing disparities, identifying areas for improvement, and advocating for policies that ensure adequate funding and equitable resource allocation, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness and equity of educational systems. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“One of the primary challenges I’ve noticed is the scarcity of specialised support personnel, such as special education teachers, counsellors, and therapists; these professionals play a pivotal role in tailoring education to meet the unique needs of learners with disabilities, without them, learners do not receive the individualised attention and support they require, hindering their academic and personal development.”*

Teacher 2: *“We all know that implementing inclusive education often demands specialised learning materials, assistive technologies, and accessible facilities. The absence of financial resources has resulted in inadequate or outdated resources, limiting learners' access to a curriculum that suits their learning styles and needs. This can also hinder learners' ability to participate fully in classroom activities.”*

Teacher 3: *“Limited funding has led to larger class sizes, making it challenging for us teachers to provide personalised teaching and support to every learner. In such conditions, teachers struggle to address the diverse learning requirements of learners, thereby compromising the quality of education.”*

Teacher 4: *“The lack of funds hinders necessary renovations and adaptations, limiting the school's ability to accommodate learners with physical disabilities because the implementation of inclusive*

education also involves making physical adjustments to school facilities to ensure accessibility for learners with mobility impairments.”

The responses indicated that the unavailability of financial resources in public primary schools poses significant challenges that impact the quality of education and the well-being of learners. These findings are consistent with the study of Haug (2017), as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.4), who argued that while teachers may support inclusive education, they often express concerns about the availability and allocation of resources, like inadequate funding. To ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education, educational institutions, governments, and communities must prioritise funding and resource allocation. Investing in inclusive education can create a more equitable and inclusive society where all learners can thrive academically and socially, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. The availability of financial resources in implementing inclusive education is paramount to its success. Adequate funding ensures schools can invest in necessary infrastructure, specialised instructional materials, assistive technologies, and a diverse range of personnel, including special education teachers, support staff, and specialists. It also allows for professional development opportunities for educators to stay updated with inclusive teaching practices and promotes research and innovation in inclusive education.

Furthermore, financial resources can be allocated to create accessible learning environments and provide individualised support, ultimately fostering an inclusive educational ecosystem where all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have equitable access to quality education and the opportunity to thrive academically and socially. These findings were supported by Mngo and Mngo (2018), that there's a contention among teachers who voice resource-related concerns, emphasising the requirement for increased funding and support to ensure the effectiveness of inclusive education efforts. They assert that without adequate resources, implementing inclusive practices becomes arduous and could result in the exclusion of specific learners.

All participants raised concerns that the absence of adequate financial resources in an inclusive education school can present numerous challenges. They mentioned that the effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the availability of financial resources to support its implementation. The unavailability of adequate financial resources in an inclusive education school can have far-reaching implications for both learners and teachers.

The researcher requested participants to “*Share your insight on the nature of the curriculum for ELSEN learners.*” The researcher posed the question about the nature of the curriculum for ELSEN learners because it was a crucial inquiry to understand how educational systems cater to the unique needs of this learner population. The curriculum's design and content profoundly influence the quality of education and the extent to which it is inclusive and effective. Investigating the curriculum's nature allowed the researcher to assess whether it aligns with the diverse learning requirements of ELSEN learners and whether it supports the development of essential skills, independence, and social inclusion. This understanding is essential for evaluating the success of inclusive education initiatives, identifying areas for improvement, and advocating for curriculum adaptations that better serve the educational needs of ELSEN learners. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: “*ELSEN curriculum involves adapted or modified content that aligns with ELSEN learners' abilities. This includes simplified or alternative materials and instructional approaches to suit their needs; that's my understanding.*”

Teacher 2: “*ELSEN curricula should typically supported by a multidisciplinary team, including special education teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and behavioural specialists; these professionals collaborate to provide comprehensive support.*”

Teacher 3: “*According to my understanding, regular assessment and evaluation are crucial to monitor progress and adjust the curriculum as needed for ELSEN. This data-driven approach ensures that the curriculum remains effective in addressing learners' evolving needs.*”

Teacher 4: “*The primary goal of an ELSEN curriculum is to support the holistic development of learners. This includes cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, with a focus on enhancing their overall quality of life. Another critical goal is skill progression. ELSEN curricula are designed to help learners progress from their current abilities to higher levels of skill acquisition, ensuring that they make continuous strides in their educational journey.*”

Participants' responses seemed to align with the views shared by Villegas (2015), as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.8.4), which stated that there is a lack of a learner-centred and relevant curriculum, and it does not provide choice for learners with special needs. The interviewed teachers mentioned that ELSEN education is a fundamental aspect of inclusive education. ELSEN

learners encompass a diverse group with various disabilities, including intellectual, physical, sensory, and emotional impairments. Designing an appropriate curriculum for these learners is crucial to ensure they receive a tailored education that meets their unique needs.

The responses from participants indicated that curriculum design plays a pivotal role. It must be designed to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners by providing a flexible framework that embraces varied learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds and integrates differentiated instruction, personalised learning pathways, and a range of instructional materials to ensure that each learner can access and engage with the content in meaningful ways. Based on participants' responses, it was clear that the nature of the curriculum for ELSSEN learners is rooted in the principles of individualisation, inclusivity, and a focus on functional skills. These findings were consistent with the study of Sunbare (2022), as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.8.4), indicating that teachers have used differentiation methods to assist those learners with special needs to learn and be successful in the classroom. The goals revolve around holistic development and skill progression to enhance learners' quality of life. Key components include adapted content, assistive technologies, multidisciplinary support, IEPs, and continuous assessment. An effective ELSSEN curriculum is a testament to the commitment of inclusive education to cater to the diverse needs of all learners, ensuring that they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and participate meaningfully in society.

4.2.3.4 Theme 4: The impact of teachers' perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education

Teachers' perceptions play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Their attitudes and beliefs shape the classroom environment, determining whether it becomes an inclusive, supportive space or one marked by exclusion and inequality. Positive perceptions of inclusion encourage teachers to employ strategies like differentiated instruction and peer support, benefiting all learners. Conversely, negative perceptions may lead to resistance to adapting teaching methods, potentially limiting access to learning for learners with disabilities. Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in policy development, and their perceptions can either promote inclusive education or inadvertently hinder it by advocating for policies that do not prioritise inclusion or provide adequate resources. Therefore, addressing and reshaping teachers' perceptions through professional development and awareness programmes is paramount to

fostering an educational system that embraces diversity and ensures equitable opportunities for all learners.

The question regarding the impact of teachers in implementing inclusive education served several important intentions. It seeks to acknowledge and highlight teachers' central role in shaping the success of inclusive education initiatives. Teachers are responsible for imparting knowledge and creating inclusive and supportive classroom environments where students of all abilities and backgrounds can thrive. By understanding the specific impacts they can have, teachers are better equipped to take ownership of the inclusive education process and contribute to its effectiveness.

This part of this study explored the key factors that impact the implementation of inclusive education, such as the positive impact of teachers' perceptions, the negative impact of teachers' perceptions, overcoming negative perceptions, and promoting positive impacts.

The researcher asked the teachers, "What are the benefits of the positive impact of teachers' perceptions?" This question was intended to gather data because it is pivotal in understanding how teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives influence various aspects of education. Exploring this question allowed the researcher to uncover the potential benefits of teachers' positive perceptions, which can include improved student motivation, enhanced classroom engagement, more effective teaching strategies, and, ultimately, better educational outcomes. This inquiry sheds light on the intricate relationship between teachers' perceptions and learner success, helping teachers, principals, and policymakers harness the power of positive teacher attitudes to create a more conducive and productive learning environment. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *"One of the most significant positive impacts for me is creating an inclusive and accepting classroom environment and genuinely embracing the principles of inclusive education by fostering a culture where my learners of all abilities and backgrounds feel valued, respected, and included."*

Teacher 2: *"I view all learners as equal contributors to the classroom community to help cultivate a sense of belonging among my learners because when learners with disabilities or diverse learning needs feel accepted, they are more likely to engage actively in their education."*

Teacher 3: *"Positive perceptions, in my view, promote social cohesion by encouraging peer interaction and reducing instances of bullying or isolation; for example, in my classroom, I teach*

my learners the importance of empathy, understanding, and cooperation, preparing them for a more inclusive society.”

Teacher 4: *“For me, I use personalised teaching, allowing my learners to progress at their own pace and in their preferred learning style; this approach maximises learner engagement and comprehension.”*

Positive perceptions of teachers regarding implementing inclusive education in public primary schools can have a profound and multifaceted impact. Teachers who embrace the principles of inclusive education create an inclusive and accepting classroom environment where learners with diverse learning needs feel valued and respected. This promotes a sense of belonging among all learners, fostering social cohesion and reducing bullying or isolation. Teachers with positive perceptions are more likely to adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate different learning styles and abilities, providing individualised support and tailored instruction. Teachers with positive perceptions often engage in continuous professional development, which improves their skills and sets an example for their colleagues, contributing to a more inclusive school culture overall.

The views expressed in the discussions emphasised that teachers' perceptions in public primary schools have a profound and positive impact on the successful implementation of inclusive education. It was clear that teachers' positive perceptions of implementing inclusive education have a transformative impact on the educational landscape. Such attitudes foster an inclusive classroom culture where diverse learners, including those with disabilities or special needs, thrive academically and socially. This fosters improved learning outcomes for all, reduces stigmatisation and discrimination, boosts learners' self-esteem, and encourages teacher collaboration.

The researcher asked the teachers, *“What are your views on the negative impact of teachers' perceptions?”* This question was intended to inquire about the negative impact of teachers' perceptions because it is crucial to comprehend how teachers' attitudes, biases, or misconceptions can have a detrimental effect on the educational experiences of students. Investigating this question helps identify potential challenges stemming from negative teacher perceptions, including disparities in student treatment, reduced engagement, and hindered academic progress. Recognising the adverse consequences of such perceptions is essential for developing strategies to

mitigate their impact, promoting fair and equitable education, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“I believe when a teacher holds negative perceptions about the capabilities of learners with disabilities or special needs, they have lower expectations for those learners, inadvertently limiting their potential and opportunities for growth.”*

Teacher 2: *“Teachers with negative perceptions are less inclined to use inclusive teaching strategies and accommodations, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to address the diverse learning needs of learners, both with and without disabilities.”*

Teacher 3: *“A negative attitude towards inclusive education discourages a teacher from seeking professional development in this area, impeding their ability to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively support all learners.”*

Teacher 4: *“The impact of negative attitudes can lead to stigmatisation and marginalisation of learners with disabilities, as they may feel isolated or unwelcome in the classroom, which can negatively affect their self-esteem and mental well-being.”*

The literature from the study revealed that implementing inclusive education requires a positive attitude toward inclusion and disability among teachers (Yash, Singh & Agarwal, 2015), as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.8.2). The participants’ views are aligned with Dua (2017), as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.8.2), who believes teachers’ negative attitudes can be a major limitation for inclusive education. Moreover, the researcher discovered that participants’ responses indicated that negative perceptions of teachers implementing inclusive education could harm learners, limit their academic and social opportunities, perpetuate discrimination, and hinder the overall success of inclusive education initiatives.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.9), the purpose of inclusive education is undermined due to teachers' lack of positive attitude and sensitivity (Mathew, 2015). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to address and overcome these negative perceptions to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all learners. According to the findings, negative perceptions of teachers implementing inclusive education can lead to detrimental consequences; these attitudes may result in reduced expectations for learners with disabilities, fostering a culture of stigmatisation and exclusion, ineffective teaching strategies, and reluctance to collaborate with special education

professionals. The absence of necessary accommodations can further marginalise learners with diverse needs, leading to missed opportunities for growth, hindered social development, and legal compliance concerns. Ultimately, it was clear that negative teacher perceptions undermine the principles of inclusivity, impair the quality of EFA students, and perpetuate societal biases against those with disabilities or unique needs.

The researcher asked the teachers, *“As a teacher, how do you overcome negative perceptions and promote positive impact?”* This question was intended to address the critical aspect of improving education. This question seeks to understand how to combat biases, misconceptions, or adverse beliefs held by teachers and, conversely, how to cultivate a more positive and equitable learning environment. By examining strategies to overcome negative perceptions and enhance positive impacts, the researcher aimed to identify effective interventions, teacher training programmes, and policy changes that can foster a more inclusive and supportive educational experience. Finally, this question served as a catalyst for positive transformation in education, aiming to ensure that all learners receive fair treatment, access quality education, and reach their full potential. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“My opinion is promoting collaboration between general and special education teachers is essential; joint planning, co-teaching, and sharing of best practices enable teachers to learn from each other and develop a deeper understanding of how to meet the needs of all learners. Collaboration breaks down barriers and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the success of every learner.”*

Teacher 2: *“Schools must cultivate an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and emphasises acceptance; this culture should extend beyond the classroom to all aspects of school life, including extracurricular activities, events, and policies. When inclusivity becomes a core value of the school, it sends a powerful message to both teachers and learners.”*

Teacher 3: *“To address negative perceptions associated with schools, it is crucial to allocate resources towards specialised training, materials, and personnel. This investment will ensure that each learner receives tailored support to enhance their chances of success. Inclusive education relies on the provision of sufficient resources and support services for learners with disabilities, making it a fundamental requirement.”*

Teacher 4: *“Open and consistent communication with parents and the community is vital. Involving parents in decision-making processes and providing them with resources and support fosters trust and engagement. When parents are active partners in their child's education, it strengthens the support network around the learner.”*

Zakaria and Tahar's (2017) study discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.4) is relevant in overcoming negative perceptions and promoting positive impacts in implementing inclusive education within public primary schools. The authors emphasised the importance of establishing a fair, equitable, and supportive learning environment. They argued that addressing biases, raising awareness, and implementing supportive policies are essential to achieving this goal. These findings align with the views shared by participants, who emphasised that teachers must prioritise their professional development to overcome negative perceptions and cultivate positive impacts during the implementation of inclusive education. This development should aim to enhance their knowledge and understanding of diverse learning needs, emphasise empathy, and challenge biases, thus creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Participants' responses are closely aligned with the perspective put forth by Ngulani (2020), as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 5.2.5). Ngulani emphasises that overcoming negative perceptions and effectively addressing the implementation challenges are essential steps toward realising the positive impacts of inclusive education. This attempt requires collective commitment from teachers, policymakers, communities, and families to ensure every learner can flourish in an inclusive educational setting. The participants' views clearly highlight that implementing inclusive education carries immense potential to bring about transformative changes in our society by dismantling barriers, fostering mutual understanding, and advancing equal opportunities. Ultimately, the successful implementation of inclusive education promises to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all. Encouraging collaborative efforts between general and special education teachers to share best practices and resources, along with school leadership fostering a supportive environment that champions inclusivity, can enable all learners to excel academically and socially, thus paving the way for a future characterised by greater inclusivity and equity.

Participants' responses seemed to align with the view of Ngulani (2020), as highlighted in Chapter 2 (section 5.2.5), that overcoming negative perceptions and addressing implementation challenges

is crucial to fully realise the positive impacts of inclusive education. It is a collective effort involving teachers, policymakers, communities, and families to ensure that every learner has the opportunity to thrive in an inclusive educational environment.

4.2.3.5 Theme 5: The role of educational stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education

Educational stakeholders, including teachers, parents, school principals, policymakers, and the wider community, play essential roles in the successful implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools. Teachers are responsible for adapting the curriculum, creating inclusive classroom environments, and continuous professional development; parents advocate for their children, provide support at home, and engage with the community; school principals translate policies into practice, ensure resource allocation, and monitor progress; policymakers craft inclusive education policies, allocate resources, and advocate for inclusion; while the broader community promotes acceptance, offers support, and raises awareness. Collaboration among these stakeholders is crucial in fostering equitable, diverse, and inclusive learning environments that benefit all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Participants were asked if they received any support from educational stakeholders. The aim was to assess the effectiveness of the educational system in facilitating the success of teachers and, by extension, the quality of education. This question underlines the importance of collaboration and partnership within the educational ecosystem. Education is a collective endeavour, and when all stakeholders are actively engaged in supporting teachers, it fosters a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders are essential to align policies, resources, and strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners and promote inclusive education. This theme is discussed below with emerging sub-themes: government as a stakeholder, educational institution as a stakeholder, teacher as a stakeholder, parent as a stakeholder and community as a stakeholder.

The researcher asked the teachers, *“Do you receive any support from the government as a stakeholder?”* This question was intended to understand the extent to which governmental policies, funding, and resources are allocated to support teachers in their efforts to provide quality, inclusive education. The findings shed light on the effectiveness of government initiatives, the

gaps in support, and areas for improvement, ultimately contributing to more informed policymaking and ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources and support to create inclusive and equitable learning environments for all learners in public primary schools. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Governments are at the forefront of developing policies and regulations that shape the educational setting; they have a significant responsibility to formulate inclusive education policies that define the principles, goals, and strategies for accommodating diverse learning needs within public primary schools and these policies should emphasise the importance of inclusive education and establish legal frameworks to protect the rights of learners with disabilities, ensuring they receive the support and accommodations they require.”*

Teacher 2: *“I think a crucial aspect of government involvement in inclusive education is the allocation of resources. Adequate funding is essential to implement inclusive practices effectively. The government must allocate financial resources to provide necessary infrastructure, materials, assistive technologies, and specialised staff, such as special education teachers and therapists, to support learners with diverse needs, and resources should be allocated for continuous teacher training and professional development in inclusive teaching strategies.”*

Teacher 3: *“In my opinion, one of the critical components of inclusive education is equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach a diverse range of learners; governments should invest in comprehensive teacher training programmes that address inclusive teaching practices. This includes training on differentiated instruction, creating inclusive classroom environments, and developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for learners with disabilities. Ongoing professional development opportunities should be made available to ensure we as teachers stay updated with evolving best practices in inclusive education.”*

Teacher 4: *“Actually, the government need to play a significant role in advocating for the importance of inclusive education within society; through public awareness campaigns and educational programmes, they can promote understanding and acceptance of diversity, which is foundational to inclusive education. Advocacy efforts should extend beyond the education sector to involve various stakeholders, including parents, communities, and civil society organisations.”*

Pillay, Duncan and de Vries' (2022) insights discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7) highlighted the role of the government as a crucial stakeholder. Their research indicated that the government is responsible for crafting policies, allocating resources, and establishing the legal framework to transform inclusive education from an abstract aspiration into a practical and attainable reality. These findings resonate with the perspectives expressed by participating teachers, further emphasising the government's pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education. The findings in this study align with the research conducted by Mestry and Du Plessis (2020), as detailed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.7). Their study emphasises that government initiatives are instrumental in shaping the level of financial support, provision of teacher training, development of accessible infrastructure, and establishment of a legal framework safeguarding the rights of learners with diverse needs. During interviews with teachers, it became evident that these teachers stressed the need for governments to prioritise comprehensive teacher training and ongoing professional development. This focus on skill development is essential for empowering teachers with the necessary competencies to effectively implement inclusive teaching practices. It was clear from participating teachers that the government plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the progress of inclusive education initiatives and advocating for public awareness and acceptance of diversity, thereby shaping an inclusive

The researcher requested the teachers to “Share your views about educational institutions as a stakeholder.” This question was intended to delve into how educational institutions, as stakeholders, adopt policies, practices, and resources to accommodate the diverse needs of learners, including those with disabilities and varying learning styles and explore how these institutions foster a culture of inclusion, collaborate with teachers, support staff, and parents, and facilitate the successful implementation of inclusive education practices, by examining their contributions. The researcher’s aim was to provide insights into the challenges, best practices, and strategies employed by educational institutions to ensure equitable access and quality EFA learners. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“According to my understanding, educational institutions are responsible for creating inclusive classroom environments where all learners feel welcome, valued, and supported; this involves not only physical accessibility but also fostering a culture of acceptance and respect. I*

believe that we teachers and school staff play a pivotal role in ensuring that classrooms are inclusive spaces where learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities can thrive.”

Teacher 2: *“In my view, one of the hallmark features of inclusive education is the provision of individualised support. Educational institutions must work closely with learners, parents, and special education professionals to develop and implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for learners with SEN; these plans are tailored to each learner's unique needs, ensuring that appropriate accommodations, modifications, and support services are provided to facilitate.”*

Teacher 3: *“Effective inclusive education requires teachers and staff to have the knowledge and skills necessary to support learners with diverse needs. Educational institutions are responsible for providing ongoing teacher training and professional development opportunities; these programmes empower teachers to implement inclusive teaching practices effectively, including differentiated teaching, classroom management strategies, and the use of assistive technologies.”*

Teacher 4: *“I think adequate allocation of resources is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Educational institutions must ensure that they have the necessary resources, including specialised staff, assistive technologies, adapted materials, and support services, to meet the diverse needs of their students. Resource allocation should be based on a thorough assessment of the specific requirements of each student and the overall school community.”*

Considering the feedback from participating teachers regarding educational institutions as key stakeholders, it becomes evident that public primary schools are pivotal in effectively implementing inclusive education. These schools are at the forefront, where the practical application of inclusive education principles takes place, and their decisions and policies wield direct influence over the educational journeys of all learners, with a particular focus on those with disabilities. These observations closely mirror the perspectives Watts and Roundy (2022) advanced, as outlined in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7) within the framework of this study.

The views expressed by participating teachers were in line with Pelayo (2018), as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7), stating that educational institutions, particularly educational institutions, are primary stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education; they bear the critical responsibility of shaping the educational experiences of all learners. Therefore, they must create

inclusive classroom environments that foster acceptance and respect, develop individualised support plans like the Individualized Education Program (IEP), provide ongoing teacher training to equip teachers with the necessary skills, allocate resources for diverse needs, actively engage parents and communities, establish monitoring mechanisms, and advocate for inclusivity. By fulfilling these roles, educational institutions create equitable and diverse learning environments that empower all learners to reach their full potential, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

The researcher asked the teachers to “Please share your views on what you understand about the teacher as a stakeholder.” This question was intended to gain insights into how teachers perceive and engage with inclusive practices; the challenges they encounter; the strategies they employ to meet the diverse needs of their learners; the extent to which teachers receive training and support; their attitudes and beliefs regarding inclusion; and their collaborative efforts with other stakeholders; including support staff, parents, and students. By examining teachers as key stakeholders, the researcher aimed to uncover the factors that influence the effective implementation of inclusive education and inform strategies to enhance teacher preparedness and engagement in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Inclusive education requires us to adapt and modify the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of our learners; this entails differentiated teaching, using various teaching strategies, and providing additional support as necessary. We have to be flexible and creative in our approach, tailoring our lessons to accommodate a wide range of abilities and learning styles.”*

Teacher 2: *“In my opinion, we teachers are responsible for creating classroom environments where diversity is not only recognised but celebrated; beyond physical accessibility, we must foster a culture of acceptance and respect among our learners. As inclusive teachers, we must work tirelessly to ensure that every learner feels welcome, valued, and supported, creating a conducive atmosphere for learning and growth.”*

Teacher 3: *“I believe inclusive education is an evolving field, and teachers must stay current with the latest inclusive teaching practices and strategies. Educational institutions and policymakers should provide opportunities for ongoing professional development, enabling teachers to enhance their skills in addressing the diverse needs of their learners. In doing so, teachers can continually refine their ability to provide inclusive and quality education.”*

Teacher 4: *“Teachers are not just educators but also advocates for their learners; they play a crucial role in advocating for the inclusion of learners with SEN within the school community by demonstrating the benefits of inclusive education and championing the rights of all learners, we contribute to a broader societal understanding and acceptance of diversity.”*

One would also consider Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development, which aligns with the critical role of teachers. As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.1), Vygotsky's theory emphasises the idea of the ZPD, which represents the space between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. In this context, teachers are instrumental. Leveraging their expertise, they assist learners in bridging this gap by offering appropriate support, presenting challenging tasks, and facilitating meaningful interactions. This theory underlines how teachers are essential for nurturing learning, fostering intellectual growth, and advancing cognitive development by establishing a nurturing and supportive social and educational environment for learners. This concept aligns seamlessly with the views expressed by participants, emphasising the indispensable role of teachers as key stakeholders in the successful implementation of inclusive education, particularly in creating inclusive classroom environments.

It became evident through the perspectives of participating teachers that the success of inclusive education relies heavily on the unwavering commitment and dedication of the educators. These teachers tirelessly work to establish inclusive classroom environments, tailor curriculum and teaching methods to accommodate diverse learners, develop and put into action IEPs, engage in continuous professional development, and passionately advocate for the fundamental principles of inclusion. This conclusion aligns with the research conducted by Chris and Dew (2022), as detailed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7), wherein they highlighted that teachers play a pivotal role in inclusive education. Their responsibilities encompass creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere, adapting teaching approaches to suit diverse needs, and nurturing a culture characterised by acceptance and respect.

Through participant interviews, it became clear that in the realm of inclusive education, teachers hold a central and transformative role as stakeholders; they are the heart and soul of the educational process, shaping the experiences of learners within diverse classrooms. Teachers embody the ethos of inclusive education, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive within the educational system. Their role as stakeholders

is central to the creation of equitable and diverse learning environments that prepare learners for a more inclusive and accepting society.

The researcher asked the teachers, “What do you understand about the parent as a stakeholder?” This question was intended to explore the views, involvement, and support of parents in the education of their children, particularly those with diverse needs, and to investigate how parents perceive the inclusive education model, their experiences in collaborating with educators and school administrators, and the challenges and successes they encounter. Examining parents as key stakeholders aimed to uncover the factors influencing parental engagement and its impact on learners' academic progress and well-being. This information informs strategies to enhance parental involvement in fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for all learners in public primary schools. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“According to my understanding, parents serve as tireless advocates for their children, particularly those with disabilities. Within the inclusive education framework, they work in close collaboration with teachers, school principals, and support professionals to ensure that their child's unique needs and learning style are considered. This advocacy often takes the form of participating in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, where parents provide valuable insights and goals that shape their child's educational path. This collaborative approach ensures that the education provided is tailored to each student's specific requirements.”*

Teacher 2: *“In my understanding, parents are not only advocates but also key providers of support outside the classroom; they reinforce what their children are learning at school by engaging in educational activities at home. This includes assisting with homework, reading with their children, and encouraging a positive attitude toward learning. For learners with SEN, this support can be particularly crucial in bridging the gap between school and home learning environments.”*

Teacher 3: *“Parents play a critical role in promoting a culture of acceptance and understanding of diversity within their families and communities; they model and reinforce attitudes of empathy, respect, and inclusion at home, which then extend to the wider society. By nurturing acceptance and celebrating differences, parents contribute to the broader societal acceptance of inclusive education principles.”*

Teacher 4: *“In my view, parents serve as a watchdog for accountability within the inclusive education system. They hold educational institutions and policymakers accountable for providing the necessary resources, accommodations, and support services to meet their child's needs; through their vigilance, they ensure that the promises of inclusive education are upheld.”*

The responses from the participants closely echoed the viewpoints presented by Mashou (2016), as detailed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7), where the South African Schools Act of 1996 highlighted the vital role of parents as among the most influential stakeholders in their children's education, primarily through governing bodies. Evidently, their multifaceted role as advocates, supporters, champions of acceptance, community engagers, and vigilant overseers plays a pivotal part in shaping the educational journeys of their children, especially those with disabilities. By actively engaging in their child's educational journey, advocating for inclusivity, providing support within the home environment, and cultivating a culture of acceptance, parents contribute to the success of their children and significantly to broader societal acceptance of inclusive education principles.

During the interviews, various responses highlighted the crucial role of parents in implementing inclusive education. This perspective aligns with the research presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7), conducted by Pile and Gilchrist (2020), which emphasises that parents play a crucial role in cultivating a positive home environment and offering support by actively engaging in school activities. This notion is consistent with the findings that underscore the essential nature of parents as key stakeholders in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Through their collaboration with educational institutions, parents empower their children to thrive and contribute significantly to the broader societal acceptance of inclusive education, fostering a more equitable and inclusive society for all learners. Their involvement is pivotal in establishing equitable and diverse learning environments that prepare students for a more inclusive and accepting society.

The researcher asked the teachers, “What do you understand about the community as a stakeholder?” This question was intended to understand how local communities perceive and engage with inclusive education initiatives, their role in advocating for equitable educational opportunities, and the extent to which they contribute to creating an inclusive culture within schools and to explore community partnerships, resources, and awareness-building efforts that can enhance the implementation of inclusive education, by investigating the community's role as stakeholders. The researcher aimed to uncover how community support, attitudes, and

collaboration can influence the success of inclusive education programmes, eventually contributing to more inclusive and equitable educational environments for all learners in public primary schools. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Well, I think the community serves as a critical conduit for raising awareness and understanding of inclusive education principles. By engaging in educational campaigns, workshops, and public forums, community members enhance their understanding of the value of diversity and inclusion in education. These efforts help dispel misconceptions and stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive attitude toward learners with diverse needs.”*

Teacher 2: *“Community organisations and businesses can offer tangible support to public primary schools by providing resources, funding, or volunteer assistance. This support might include accessible infrastructure enhancements, assistive technologies, adapted learning materials, or financial contributions to cover the costs of inclusive programmes. These resources play a crucial role in ensuring that schools can effectively implement inclusive education practices.”*

Teacher 3: *“Community members can actively engage as volunteers within the school environment. They can offer their time and expertise to assist with activities, provide mentoring or tutoring to students, or contribute to extracurricular programmes. By volunteering, community members not only offer direct support to students but also become firsthand witnesses to the benefits of inclusive education.”*

Teacher 4: *“Community involvement includes celebrating the diversity of its members, including students with disabilities. Local events, cultural festivals, and awareness campaigns that highlight the unique talents and contributions of all learners create an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation. Such celebrations promote the idea that every individual, regardless of their abilities, has something valuable to offer to the community.”*

The insights gathered above underscore the essential role of the community as a central stakeholder in the execution of inclusive education. Their contributions, including raising awareness, fostering understanding and acceptance of diversity, celebrating differences, offering resources, volunteering, building a supportive network, and advocating for inclusion, hold immense value. These findings align with Allen (2017), as Chapter 2 (section 2.5.7.) outlines. Allen's study

emphasised that the community's involvement can encompass providing resources, offering volunteer assistance, and actively advocating for the extension of inclusive education beyond the confines of the classroom and into society at large. It was clear that through active participation, the community helps to shape an educational environment where all learners, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, can learn, grow, and thrive. Ultimately, this collaborative effort between the educational institution and the community paves the way for a more inclusive and equitable society that embraces diversity and inclusion as core values. The community plays a vital role as a stakeholder in the successful implementation of inclusive education within public primary schools. It acts as a support network that extends beyond the classroom, fostering a culture of acceptance, understanding, and inclusion. The community's engagement includes promoting awareness of inclusive education principles, celebrating diversity, and offering school resources and volunteer support. Through community engagement, public primary schools can create an environment where students of all abilities and backgrounds feel valued, respected, and encouraged to thrive. This collaborative effort between the educational institution and the community contributes to the broader societal acceptance of inclusive education, shaping a more inclusive and equitable society for all learners.

4.3 OBSERVATION

The study employed non-participant observation. Non-participant observation is a highly effective method for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of inclusive education in a classroom environment. By adopting the role of an objective observer, the researcher systematically documented the multifaceted aspects of inclusive education, including teaching methods, classroom dynamics, and learner interactions, without directly participating in or influencing the ongoing activities. This perspective aligns with the research presented in Chapter 3 (section 3.5.3) by Newbold (2018). This approach allows for the collection of rich qualitative data that illuminates the visible practices and the underlying attitudes, behaviours, and challenges associated with inclusive education.

Through sustained non-participant observation, the researcher identified patterns and trends in how teachers adapt their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners, how learners with disabilities engage in the learning process alongside their peers, and how the classroom environment fosters or hinders inclusion. Additionally, this method provided insights into the

social dynamics, peer relationships, and support systems that play pivotal roles in the success of inclusive education. By analysing the observed data, teachers, policymakers, and the researcher can make informed decisions to enhance the implementation of inclusive education, promote more equitable learning experiences, and support the needs of all learners in the classroom. According to Farmer, Hamm, Dawes, Barko-Alva and Cross (2019), as emphasised in Chapter 3 (section 3.5.3), non-participant observation was a valuable research method for gaining insight into teaching strategies for diverse classrooms. Through non-participant observation, the researcher could also explore the nuanced interactions within the classroom. The researcher documented how teachers facilitate peer-to-peer interactions, encouraging collaboration and understanding among learners from various backgrounds. It unveiled the importance of a teacher fostering a classroom environment that respects diversity and actively celebrates it. This approach offered an in-depth understanding of how teaching strategies evolve in response to the ever-changing landscape of a diverse classroom, shedding light on the flexibility, creativity, and empathy of teachers striving to meet the unique needs of each learner (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). In essence, non-participant observation provided a rich qualitative perspective on the art of teaching in diverse classrooms, revealing the subtleties that might otherwise remain hidden in other research methods.

The exploration of interactions among learners with diverse needs through non-participant observation offers a unique vantage point into the complexities of inclusive education, for the researcher adopting this qualitative approach enabled an in-depth examination of how learners with varying abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles interact within the classroom (Banks & Banks, 2019). It underscores how learners with diverse needs can play active roles in each other's education by offering assistance, encouragement, and understanding. The observation highlighted the social and emotional dimensions of learning, shedding light on the profound impact of these interactions on individual development and the overall classroom experience. Ultimately, non-participant observation served as a valuable tool for unravelling the intricate web of relationships and interactions that make up the mosaic of a diverse classroom, providing insights that might remain concealed through other research methodologies (Pit-ten Cate, Markova, Krischler & Krolak-Schwerdt, 2018).

This method offered a profound lens through which to examine the classroom environment for learners with learning difficulties, allowing for an unbiased and comprehensive exploration of the

various elements that shape the learning experience of these learners (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). The researcher observed the physical setup of the classroom, noting the presence of specialised learning materials, assistive technology, and seating arrangements that cater to the needs of learners with difficulties. Furthermore, the researchers captured the social interactions within the classroom, paying close attention to how teachers and peers interact with learners facing learning challenges (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs & Barnes, 2018). The emotional climate of the classroom was unveiled, emphasising the importance of fostering a nurturing, patient, and non-judgmental environment that enables learners with difficulties to thrive. Eventually, this method provided a rich and holistic perspective on the classroom environment of learners with learning difficulties, showcasing the intricacies of their daily experiences that may otherwise remain concealed (Newbold, 2018).

Non-participant observation was a powerful method for delving into school learner support systems. The researcher keenly documented how teachers, principals, and support staff work together to address the diverse needs of learners (Duffy, 2021). The researcher noted the physical resources and spaces allocated for learner support, such as counselling offices, resource rooms, and assistive technology hubs, and also paid attention to the accessibility of these resources and how learners are directed towards them. This method provided insight into the effectiveness of signage, communication, and coordination among school personnel in ensuring that learners are aware of and can access the support systems. Moreover, it allowed for the examination of the human element within these systems (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). The researcher documented interactions between learners and support staff, noting the approachability, empathy, and responsiveness of those providing assistance. She also studied collaborative efforts among teachers, counsellors, and specialists in addressing learners' unique challenges. By recording these interactions, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the holistic support structures in place and uncovered areas for improvement or innovation within the school's support system (Ngulani, 2020).

The use of technology in inclusive education, when observed through non-participant observation, provided valuable insights into integrating digital tools and resources to support learners with diverse needs (Newbold, 2018). The researcher captured the technology deployment within the classroom, highlighting the specific tools and applications used to cater for learners with varying abilities. The researcher took note of the utilisation of assistive technology, adaptive software, or

devices designed to provide accessibility features and recorded how teachers incorporate digital resources into their lessons to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. Through this method, the researcher closely examined how technology influences learner engagement, participation, and learning outcomes and documented the interactions between learners and technology, noting the extent to which it fosters independent learning and self-efficacy (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2018). Moreover, it unveiled teachers' adaptability in using technology for differentiated teaching, accommodating the needs of learners with diverse challenges. By observing the dynamic relationship between technology and inclusive education, non-participant observation offered a comprehensive view of the practicalities and effectiveness of technological integration in diverse classrooms. It sheds light on the role of technology in levelling the playing field for students with various needs and highlights opportunities for further improvement in this evolving landscape (Mestry & Du Plessis, 2020).

4.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

During fieldwork to analyse the implementation of inclusive education within a public primary school context, the researcher relied on a combination of documents, including the DoE curriculum policy, policy documents pertaining to inclusive education, and the school's mission statement. These documents serve as essential sources of information that provide insights into the framework and intentions surrounding inclusive education within the school system. The DoE curriculum policy is a foundational document that outlines the overarching guidelines and standards for curriculum development and delivery in the education system. The researcher carefully analysed this policy to understand how inclusive education is embedded within the broader educational framework. It offered valuable information on curriculum design, teacher training, and support services, enabling researchers to assess how the DoE's vision for inclusive education translates into practice.

Policy documents specific to implementing inclusive education were crucial for the researcher to examine. These documents provided details on the strategies, accommodations, and resources allocated to implement inclusive education within the school system. The researcher scrutinised these policies to assess their alignment with the broader DoE curriculum policy and evaluate whether the school has developed and implemented specific measures to ensure the inclusion of learners with diverse needs. The school's mission statement was also scrutinised to understand its

stated values, goals, and commitment to inclusive education. Comparing the mission statement with observed practices and policy documents revealed the extent to which the school's mission aligns with its actual implementation of inclusive education. The researcher analysed whether the mission statement serves as a driving force behind the school's approach to inclusivity and whether it is reflected in the school's policies, practices, and the experiences of students and educators. By examining these documents in a cycle, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and effectiveness of inclusive education within the schools and assessed the extent to which it aligns with the broader educational policies and goals set by the DBE.

In the document analysis conducted by the researcher, the admission register for inclusive education schools was a fundamental source of data. A register served as a comprehensive record of all learners enrolled in the school, and the researcher used it to gain insights into the demographics, needs, and admission patterns (Biber & Conrad, 2019). Through a systematic review of this document, the researcher identified trends in learner populations, ensuring that the principles of inclusivity and diversity are upheld during the admission process

The researcher examined the asset register for learner equipment to assess the inventory of educational resources and technology available within the school. This analysis helped ensure resource adequacy, budget allocation, and equipment maintenance necessary for effective teaching and learning. The researcher used the register for data-driven decision-making and to optimise the learning environment (Bowen, 2017).

The researcher investigated teachers' files for lesson and assessment preparation to assess instructional methods and curriculum alignment (Pillay, 2019). These files provided insight into teachers' teaching strategies, materials, and alignment with learning objectives. The researcher used this analysis to enhance teaching practices and curriculum design to support learner learning.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented findings in accordance with the interviews and document analysis, which aimed to reveal teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools. It revealed a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities. It was found that these teachers face significant hurdles, including limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and

insufficient training, which hinder their ability to provide tailored support to learners with diverse needs. Moreover, teachers' perceptions carry considerable weight in determining the success of inclusive education. Positive attitudes, empathy, and a wholehearted commitment to inclusion create an environment conducive to equitable learning. Conversely, negative perceptions and biases can impede the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Recognising the pivotal role of education stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, and communities, is essential. These stakeholders shape the landscape of inclusive education through policies, resource allocation, and support systems, making it imperative that they work collaboratively to ensure that inclusive education thrives and provides an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students in public primary schools.

The subsequent chapter will discuss the summary of the chapters, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The summary of findings in this study unveiled a rich tapestry of themes and patterns that emerged through an in-depth exploration of teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. This research involved diverse participants, including principals, DHs, and teachers. The data collection methods employed consisted of interviews, document analysis, and observation, which were used to address the research questions and objectives. Chapter 2's literature sources were used to validate and support the findings. The preceding four chapters provided summaries of their content. Consequently, this chapter aims to elucidate the key findings of the research and utilise them to formulate recommendations and draw conclusions. Additionally, this chapter presents suggestions for potential areas of research. It concludes by discussing the limitations encountered during the study's execution. The study effectively addressed all the research questions initially envisioned during the inception of this study as follows:

Main research question:

What are the teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal?

The following sub-research questions originated from the main research question:

- How do teachers in the Pinetown District implement inclusive education in public primary schools?
- What factors impact the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- Why do teachers perceive inclusive education implementation in the same or different ways?
- To what extent do teachers' perspectives affect the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools?
- How can education stakeholders support teachers in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools?

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The research study used four public primary schools within the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal, as a case study. The primary participants in this research included principals, DHs, and teachers. Specifically, the study purposefully selected qualified principals, DHs, and teachers with over five years of experience to participate in the research.

5.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter focused on the background of the research study, introducing the reader to the problem, the rationale, and the purpose of the study. Subsequently, the researcher identified issues encountered by teachers in implementing inclusive education, including inadequate training, challenges in adapting the curriculum for learners with barriers to learning, and the struggle to balance teaching methods. This study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The research proceeded by introducing the research questions that provided the research's overarching direction, followed by a comprehensive discussion of the research aims and objectives. This was complemented by a concise review of the relevant literature, both empirical and theoretical, which

served as the foundation guiding this study. The chapter also presented the methodology and design employed in the research. It addressed the study's reliability and trustworthiness established through a combination of rigorous research methods, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, along with a clear articulation of ethical considerations. The chapter further elucidated the study's limitations and boundaries. It concluded with a detailed clarification and definition of key concepts, making it reader-friendly. This chapter effectively laid the groundwork for the subsequent five research chapters.

5.2.2 Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review

Chapter 2 presented a theoretical framework and conducted a thorough exploration of the existing literature. This study was analysed through the lenses of Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Vygotsky's theory highlighted the pivotal role of the educational and learning environment in shaping individuals with diverse abilities. In contrast, Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasised the importance of addressing interconnected systems in inclusive education to foster a supportive environment for learners with diverse needs.

This was done to compare best practices and examine the research findings pertaining to the implementation of inclusive education. In the review of relevant literature, as presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5), Hollings (2021) explored the landscape of inclusive education in South Africa both before and after the watershed year of 1994 when apartheid came to an end. The key features of inclusive education are outlined in this chapter, and the profound effects of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education implementation were explored. A comprehensive review of the factors contributing to the effective implementation of inclusive education was addressed. The chapter further presents the role of education stakeholders in implementing inclusive education. A comprehensive literature review was provided, highlighting the various challenges and barriers teachers encounter while implementing inclusive education. The history on implementing inclusive education was presented. As presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5), Al-Mahdy and Emam (2018) state that implementing and developing inclusive education remains one of the most challenging issues educational systems worldwide encounter.

5.2.3 Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

In this chapter, the research methodology was outlined as the foundational structure of the study. This chapter entailed detailing the particular methods, instruments, and approaches used to address the research inquiries. A qualitative approach was adopted to thoroughly investigate the implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, the researcher focused on the research design utilised in the study. Following this, the researcher elaborated on the interpretive paradigm that served as the foundational framework for the study. The data collection tools included semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The selection strategies involved purposive sampling, with 20 participants drawn from four public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The population consisted of four principals, four DHs, and 12 teachers, all purposefully chosen.

To conclude the chapter, ethical considerations were discussed, and steps were taken to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The study discussed ethical issues over autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, informed consent, and confidentiality. Proper data storage protocols were adhered to in order to safeguard sensitive information, prevent the risk of data loss, and facilitate the effective analysis and sharing of research results.

5.2.4 Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

The data drawn from participants was analysed and discussed in this chapter. The study employed thematic analysis as the data analysis strategy, and it followed a process that included data coding, theme identification, and interpretation of findings to analyse the data related to the implementation of inclusive education. It involved stages where data were organised and displayed, patterns and relationships were examined, and meaningful insights and conclusions were drawn, contributing to a deeper understanding of the research findings. Themes and sub-themes emerged, and the data were interpreted to answer the research questions. The five themes illuminated teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools.

5.2.5 Chapter 5: Summary, findings and recommendations

Chapter 5 presents the findings validated with statements from literature in the previous chapters. The research questions were answered, and the recommendations for further study, conclusion, and limitations of the study were also discussed.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher summarises the findings drawn in relation to this study, including meaningful issues which came to light from the literature review and the empirical evidence. The research results were analysed and discussed through the utilisation of the following themes: Teachers' perspectives in implementing inclusive education in primary school; the findings revealed that based on their responses, participants seemed to understand what inclusive education entails (Lynch, 2023), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1). Participating teachers contributed actively by explaining their understanding and support for implementing inclusive education (Thompson, Verdugo, Burke & Aguayo, 2019), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1). As presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.9), Hardin and Hardin (2013) presented challenges faced by teachers implementing inclusive education in public primary schools. The findings revealed that the inclusion of learners with different abilities can be quite challenging for teachers, such as accommodating the structural needs of diverse learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning. Furthermore, as presented by Paseka and Schwab (2020) in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1), participants raised concerns about insufficient space and overcrowded classrooms, inadequate time for teaching diverse learners, and inadequate parental involvement and support. It was further emphasised that implementing inclusive education in public primary schools is a multifaceted process demanding significant commitment and dedication from teachers.

Factors impacting the implementation of inclusive education, as presented by Schuelka (2018) in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.3), revealed that the implementation of inclusive education is influenced by a multitude of factors that interact and shape the outcomes of the educational approach. The impact of teacher's perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education explored the key factors that impact the implementation of inclusive education, such as the positive and negative impact of teachers' perceptions, overcoming negative perceptions, and promoting positive impacts (Dua, 2017), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.4).

Lastly, as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.5) by Pelayo (2018), the role of education stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education shed light on the effectiveness of government initiatives, the gaps in support, and areas for improvement, ultimately contributing to more informed policymaking and ensuring teachers have the necessary resources and support to create inclusive and equitable learning environments for all learners in public primary schools. The key findings from each theme have been summarised below:

5.3.1 Theme One: Teachers perspectives in the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools

This theme delves into teachers' perspectives regarding implementing inclusive education in primary schools. An extensive investigation uncovered teachers' multifaceted perspectives and challenges when striving to create inclusive learning environments (Thompson, Verdugo, Burke & Aguayo, 2019), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1). The study offered valuable insights into the complexities of inclusive education, shedding light on the crucial role of teachers in fostering a diverse and inclusive classroom. Additionally, it underscores the need for support systems and professional development to enhance teachers' preparedness and effectiveness in catering to the diverse needs of learners, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive primary education system.

One central challenge highlighted by teachers during the interviews was the diversity of learning needs within inclusive classrooms. Participants stated that teachers are confronted with the task of tailoring their teaching methods to accommodate learners with a wide range of abilities, which can be demanding and time-consuming; resource constraints, including limited access to support staff, further compound the difficulties of delivering personalised assistance. Additionally, the study emphasised the importance of ongoing professional development and training to equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies for effective inclusive education. Participants expressed that teachers with access to such training often express higher confidence and competence in their ability to cater to the diverse needs of their learners (Mngo & Mngo, 2018), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1).

Furthermore, participants revealed that fostering positive attitudes among teachers is essential for successfully implementing inclusive education; some indicated that while some teachers embrace the concept enthusiastically, others may exhibit resistance to change. Through participants' responses, it was clear that promoting an inclusive mindset among teachers was essential. This involved highlighting the advantages of diversity, encouraging peer collaboration, and celebrating successful inclusive practices within the school community. Lastly, the study underscores the importance of support systems, including access to special education professionals, teaching assistants, and suitable learning materials, which are crucial for teachers to meet the diverse needs of learners. It was clear that collaborative teamwork among teachers, parents, and specialists was also recognised as a vital component in ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

5.3.2 Theme Two: Challenges faced by teachers implementing inclusive education in public primary schools

It was revealed from teacher's responses and observations that the challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education in public primary schools revealed a host of significant obstacles. It was evident that one of the most prominent obstacles encountered by teachers was the immense diversity of learning needs within a single classroom. This presented significant difficulties, demanding more time and effort in providing individualised support. The findings of this study also indicated that the limitations in terms of resources, including insufficient classroom space and a lack of support staff, added to the complexities. However, the findings revealed that the inadequacy of these resources made it even more challenging for teachers to create a truly inclusive learning environment that met the diverse needs of their learners, as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.2) by (Meier & West, 2020).

The findings further revealed that inadequate resources and support systems were a significant challenge. The research found that teachers often struggle to meet the diverse needs of learners with disabilities and varying learning abilities due to a lack of specialised training, insufficient teaching materials, and limited access to support staff. This leads to feelings of frustration and burnout among teachers, hindering the successful implementation of inclusive practices (Pile & Gilchrist, 2020).

5.3.3 Theme Three: Factors impacting the implementation of inclusive education

The findings revealed several factors impacting the implementation of inclusive education. One key factor was the role of teacher training and professional development. Participants consistently highlighted that teachers who receive specialised training and ongoing support are better equipped to implement inclusive practices effectively. The findings also revealed that teachers who are adequately prepared to work with diverse learner populations can adapt their teaching methods and provide the necessary support, thereby creating a more inclusive classroom environment (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.3).

The findings of the study also indicated that another significant factor was the level of support and commitment from school leadership and principals. The study revealed that adequate resources, such as sufficient funding for special education services, accessible facilities, and appropriate teaching materials, also play a pivotal role. Moreover, the involvement of parents and the broader community in supporting inclusive education initiatives can contribute to their success by fostering a more inclusive and accepting school culture. Overall, the research underscores the importance of a holistic approach that combines teacher training, leadership support, resource allocation, and community engagement to implement inclusive education effectively (Haug, 2017), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.3).

5.3.4 Theme Four: The impact of teachers' perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education

Research findings on the impact of teachers' perceptions on implementing inclusive education shed light on the significant influence of teachers' attitudes and beliefs. The research findings from interviews also mentioned that teachers' perceptions are a critical factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education. It was evident that positive attitudes and beliefs can lead to more inclusive classroom environments, better teaching practices, effective collaboration, and ongoing professional development, all of which benefit learners with and without disabilities (Dua, 2017), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.4). On the other hand, negative perceptions can impede progress and lead to less inclusive educational experiences. Therefore, it has been indicated that efforts to promote positive perceptions and support teachers are essential for the success of

inclusive education initiatives. Teachers revealed in their responses that factors such as training, professional development, school culture, and leadership can all shape how teachers perceive their roles and responsibilities within inclusive education. They also indicated that adequate resources, collaboration among teachers and support staff, and a commitment to inclusive pedagogy further contribute to positive teacher perceptions, which, in turn, are linked to improved learner outcomes, as mentioned in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.4) (Mathew, 2015).

5.3.5 Theme Five: The role of education stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education

The findings revealed that school principals and the DBE play a crucial role in shaping the landscape of inclusive education. The research findings further emphasised the importance of leadership in fostering an inclusive culture within educational institutions. Schools with robust and inclusive leadership are more likely to prioritise resources, training, and support for teachers, which, in turn, positively impacts the implementation of inclusive education (Pillay, Duncan & de Vries, 2022), as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.5). A discussion with the participants indicated that policymakers also have a significant role in establishing inclusive education policies and regulations, ensuring that schools have the necessary resources, and promoting a legal framework that supports the rights of learners with diverse needs. It was revealed from the teachers' responses that the successful implementation of inclusive education hinges on the collective efforts of various education stakeholders, including teachers, parents, school administrators, and policymakers, each playing a unique and critical role in fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment (Mestry & Du Plessis, 2020), as detailed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.5).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings on teachers' perspectives in implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal, Chapter 4 presented, discussed and analysed the findings in relation to the research questions and objectives. The overarching findings were examined to aid in structuring the recommendations into distinct categories. The aim of this chapter was to offer recommendations from a researcher's perspective. The recommendations

derived from the research questions, examined literature, and research findings are presented in the form of themes in this section. This study presents six recommendations, each categorised for specific stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, parents, the community, and the DoE. Each category contains a set of individual recommendations.

5.4.1 Recommendations for the school principals

- Prioritise continuous professional development for both teachers and support staff.
- Foster a collaborative leadership approach and work closely with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to create an inclusive culture through regular meetings and open communication to address concerns and celebrate successes.
- Ensure that the curriculum is designed to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities, encourage teachers to adapt and differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of every learner and regularly review and update curriculum materials to reflect inclusivity.
- Promote diversity within the teaching staff and encourage the hiring of teachers from various backgrounds, including those with experience in special education, and a diverse teaching team can better address the diverse needs of learners.
- Allocate resources, including assistive technology and learning materials, to support inclusive education and ensure that all learners have access to the necessary tools and facilities to participate fully in the learning process. They should allocate resources and time for training programmes focusing on inclusive teaching methods, understanding diverse learning needs, and dealing with behavioural issues.
- Actively involve parents in the inclusive education process, organise workshops, information sessions, and support groups for parents of children with diverse needs and create a supportive environment where parents can contribute to decision-making.
- Implement a robust data collection and assessment system to monitor learners' progress in an inclusive environment and regularly analyse this data to identify areas that need improvement and celebrate achievements.
- Understand that inclusive education is not a one-size-fits-all approach; they should embrace flexibility in policies and procedures to accommodate the unique needs of students and create IEPs when necessary.

- Develop and maintain anti-bullying programmes that promote inclusion and acceptance, promptly address any instances of discrimination, and educate learners about the importance of tolerance and empathy.
- Encourage peer support and buddy systems within the school and pair students with diverse needs with their peers, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie.

5.4.2 Recommendations for teachers

- Attend workshops, seminars, and training sessions on inclusive teaching strategies because continuous professional development is essential, and they should keep abreast of the latest research and best practices in the field of inclusive education.
- Collaborate with the school's special education team to develop and implement IEPs for learners with specific needs and regularly review and adjust these plans as learners' needs evolve.
- Foster strong partnerships with support staff, parents, and colleagues. Affective collaboration enables a more holistic approach to education and enhances the support available to learners.
- Create a welcoming and inclusive classroom atmosphere where every learner feels valued and respected, display diversity in classroom materials, and celebrate various cultures, backgrounds, and abilities.
- Implement universal design for learning (UDL) principles in lesson planning; this approach helps create lessons that are accessible to all learners from the outset and use multiple means of representation and engagement. Expression in one's teaching should embrace differentiated instruction, recognise that learners have diverse learning needs, adapt their teaching methods to accommodate these differences, and provide various learning pathways to ensure every learner's understanding and engagement.
- Familiarise themselves with and effectively utilise assistive technologies that can aid learners with diverse learning needs and be open to exploring new technologies as they become available.
- Develop and implement effective behavioural management strategies to address challenges that may arise in the inclusive classroom and work with support staff and experts to devise tailored approaches.

- Encourage peer support and peer mentoring programmes in their classrooms and pair learners with diverse needs with their peers to facilitate inclusion, foster empathy, and create a sense of belonging.
- Continuously assess and provide feedback to learners, understand their progress, adapt teaching methods accordingly, and be open to constructive feedback from learners and their parents.
- Recognise and respect cultural diversity within the classroom, understand how cultural differences may influence learning, and adapt teaching to accommodate these diversities.

5.4.3 Recommendations to parents

- To effectively support inclusive education, parents should begin by developing a comprehensive understanding of its fundamental principles, advantages, and potential obstacles.
- Access reputable resources, research articles, and literature about the importance and positive outcomes of inclusive education and attend workshops, seminars, or webinars related to inclusive education to deepen their knowledge.
- Establish open lines of communication with teachers, support staff, and school principals, and actively participate in parent-teacher conferences and IEP meetings to provide valuable insights into their child's needs and get involved in school decision-making processes to ensure inclusive practices are embedded in the educational culture.
- Be proactive in advocating for their child by collaborating with the school to create and regularly update an effective IEP tailored to their child's unique needs.
- Engaging in discussions about necessary accommodations, modifications, and strategies to support their child's learning and being persistent in ensuring that the recommended services are implemented as part of their child's education plan.
- Encourage empathy, understanding, and respect for diversity and differences among siblings and family members, and parents should seek out support and guidance from other parents and advocacy groups.

5.4.4 Recommendations to the community

- Collaborate with schools by participating actively in school decision-making processes to ensure that inclusive practices are embedded in the school culture and support schools in creating an inclusive environment by providing resources, facilities, and volunteer opportunities.
- Assess the safety concerns in the community and around the school to determine if there is a need for parent patrols and consult with parents, teachers, and school principals to gather input and support for the initiative.
- Acquire the role of local governments in promoting community engagement and advocacy for inclusive education and examine the effectiveness of local campaigns and initiatives in raising awareness and building support for inclusive practices.
- Analyse the allocation of financial resources by local governments to support inclusive education and investigate the impact of funding on the availability of necessary resources and the quality of inclusive education programmes by conducting a comprehensive audit of local government financial allocations towards inclusive education, assessing the correlation between funding and the accessibility and quality of essential resources within the inclusive education programmes.

5.4.5 Recommendation for the Department of Education

- Analyse the current inclusive education policies at the national and local levels to identify areas for improvement and alignment, and research international best practices in Inclusive Education Policy development to inform policy revisions
- Assess the impact of existing policies on the inclusivity and quality of education in schools and investigate how policy changes have affected access, participation, and outcomes for students with disabilities and diverse needs.
- Review the effectiveness of teacher training and professional development programmes related to inclusive education and evaluate the extent to which teacher preparation programmes incorporate inclusive teaching practices.

- Assess the availability and quality of support services in inclusive settings, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and counselling.
- Investigate the infrastructure and accessibility of schools to accommodate learners with disabilities, investigate the allocation of resources and funding for inclusive education programmes, and assess the equity and adequacy of resource distribution to meet the diverse needs of learners.
- Analyse curriculum alignment with inclusive education principles, identify areas requiring adaptations for diverse learners, evaluate the effectiveness of existing monitoring systems, and refine success indicators for inclusive programmes.
- Review the Department's strategies for promoting parental and community engagement in inclusive education and assess the effectiveness of outreach, communication, and support mechanisms.
- Engage in comprehensive stakeholder engagement, involving surveys and interviews with parents, teachers, students, and special education professionals. This feedback should serve as a foundational element in shaping policies and programmes. Additionally, exploring partnerships with allied government entities, like health and social services, is crucial to delivering holistic support for learners with diverse needs while assessing the efficacy of interagency collaboration.

5.4.6 Recommendation for future research

Considering this study's findings and operational constraints, the insights obtained have paved the way for future research. In this section, the researcher put forth recommendations that align with the study's discoveries. These recommendations hold significance for policymakers, principals, DHs, teachers, parents, the community, and prospective researchers. The following issues were recommended for further research:

- Research should focus on measuring the effectiveness of flexible learning environments, such as personalised learning plans and project-based approaches, in promoting inclusivity and ensuring that learners with disabilities receive individualised support while remaining engaged in the general education curriculum.

- A comprehensive exploration of implementation challenges and strategies in inclusive education suggests an in-depth investigation into the practical aspects of implementing inclusive education within the educational system.
- Exploring the collaborative endeavours among stakeholders within the education ecosystem, spanning teachers, parents, policymakers, and community organisations, is a pivotal area for future research. In-depth examinations of effective collaboration models and the profound influence of robust partnerships on implementing inclusive education hold the promise of yielding invaluable insights, lessons, and exemplary practices.
- Research should examine the impact of socioeconomic disparities on inclusive education outcomes, addressing how to mitigate educational inequities and ensuring that inclusive practices are accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic background. These research efforts could inform evidence-based policies and practices that promote the full integration and success of diverse learner populations in inclusive educational settings.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Qualitative research often relies on small, non-random samples, primarily selected purposively. Its primary utility lies in exploration and discovery rather than hypothesis testing and validation. Consequently, the findings derived from qualitative research are typically context-specific and may not readily extend to a broader population. In essence, these findings tend to be unique to the relatively limited number of individuals participating in the research study.

The study's scope was restricted to four public primary schools located in a single district in KwaZulu-Natal Province. These schools were distinct from those in the same province and other regional provinces. This geographic specificity implies that the unique local policies, resources, and cultural factors may not fully represent the challenges and strategies relevant to inclusive education in different regions. Additionally, the study employed a relatively small sample size, predominantly drawn from a single district, which introduced selection bias and hindered the findings' applicability to a broader range of educational institutions. Furthermore, the study primarily relied on self-reported data obtained from principals, DHs, and teachers, raising concerns about potential social desirability bias in responses. Respondents may have been inclined to provide answers that align with perceived expectations or institutional goals, which can influence

the accuracy of the data. The limitations of this study had several implications. Credibility was impacted as the study's data collection methods and sample size were constrained, potentially leading to biased or less reliable findings. Dependability suffered due to resource limitations, which hindered the consistency and reliability of data collection, ultimately reducing the study's trustworthiness. Moreover, generality and transferability were likely compromised because findings specific to one district were not necessarily applicable to different educational contexts, thus limiting the broader relevance and transferability of the research to other districts or regions.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This study's aim and objectives were achieved by answering the main and sub-research questions. The study of the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools led to an informed understanding of the importance of inclusive education to teachers, learners, and society at large. The study revealed that the success of the effective implementation of inclusive education is largely related to teachers' level of interest, consciousness, attitude, and willingness. The study examined teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. Data were collected through interviews and observations, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data into themes and sub-themes. These themes gave adequate answers to the research questions and accomplished the objectives the study set to achieve. The findings of the study revealed that the participating teachers, DHs, and principals were aware of the importance of inclusive education, which showed their level of awareness to implement inclusive education to a large extent.

On the other hand, the study revealed several challenges that limit teachers' efforts to implement inclusive education effectively. However, the study suggested practicable solutions that serve as a solution to the challenges identified. The study contributed to the literature on inclusive education in public primary schools based on the evidence from a case study of teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education in the four public primary schools sampled.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION



1436 M1RST

HADEBE J P MS
P O BOX 1828
DURBAN
4000

STUDENT NUMBER : 4623-355-5

ENQUIRIES NAME : MR P FOLKARD
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411

DATE : 2023-04-19

Dear Student

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

DEGREE : MED (INCLUSIVE EDUCATION) (98443)
TITLE : Teachers perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education at public primary schools in Pinetown District, KwaZulu Natal
SUPERVISOR : Dr N NDOU (ndoun@unisa.ac.za)
ACADEMIC YEAR : 2023
TYPE: DISSERTATION
SUBJECTS REGISTERED: DFIED95 MEd - Inclusive Education

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

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

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

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

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

Yours faithfully,

Prof M S Mothata
Registrar



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

APPENDIX B : REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PINETOWN DISTRICT



P.O. Box 1828

Durban

4000

20 November 2021

The Manager

Pinetown District

P.O. Box 3600

Pinetown

3610

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Request for permission to conduct research within the district

I, Ms Jabulile Princess Hadebe, am doing research under the supervision of Dr. N. Ndou, a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education, towards a Masters in Education (MEd) at the University of South Africa. I am inviting your school to participate in a study entitled **Investigating Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Primary Schools: A Case of Pinetown District.**

The study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The district has been selected because the researcher seeks to investigate how principals, HODs, and teachers implement inclusive education in their schools and what challenges they face while implementing inclusion. The study entails semi-structured interviews, where participants can reply based on their claim encounters and points of view on how inclusive education is executed in their work environment. The study may benefit the district as it explores what strategies and improvements can be used at the school, gives teachers professional development opportunities, helps them obtain high-quality learners, and increases confidence in their skills as teachers.

No reimbursement or any incentives will be provided for participating in the research. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspects of the study, my and my supervisors' contact information is provided below. After the research is conducted, the schools that participated will have access to the final report, and links will be granted.

All COVID-19 protocols will be observed during the interviews.

Yours sincerely,

Hadebe J.P.

Contact Details

1. Researcher : Jabulile Princess Hadebe
Cell Phone No. : 076 125 4155
Email address : 46233555@mylife.unisa.ac.za

2. Supervisor : Dr. N. Ndou
Cell Phone No. : 078 708 5295
Email address : ndoun@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPALS



P.O. Box 1828

Durban

4000

20 November 2021

The School Principal

_____ Primary School

Ntuzuma

4395

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Request for permission to conduct research in your school

I, Ms Jabulile Princess Hadebe, am doing research under the supervision of Dr. N. Ndou, a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education, towards a Masters in Education (MEd) at the University of South Africa. I am inviting your school to participate in a study entitled **Investigating Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Primary Schools: A Case of Pinetown District.**

The study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. Your school has been selected because it is part of Pinetown District. The study entails semi-structured interviews, where participants can reply based on their claim encounters and points of view on how inclusive education is executed in their work environment. The study may benefit teachers' professional development, help them obtain high quality learners, and increase confidence in their skills as teachers.

No reimbursement or any incentives will be provided for participating in the research. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspects of the study, my and my supervisors' contact information is provided below. After the research is conducted, the schools that participated will have access to the final report, and links will be granted.

Yours sincerely,

Hadebe J.P.

Contact Details

1. Researcher : Jabulile Princess Hadebe
Cell Phone No. : 076 125 4155
Email address : 46233555@mylife.unisa.ac.za

2. Supervisor : Dr. N. Ndou
Cell Phone No. : 078 708 5295
Email address : ndoun@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What are your roles as the principal?
2. What kind of support do you provide for the implementation of inclusive education at your school?
3. How does the Department of Education support teachers in the implementation of inclusive education at your school?
4. How does your School Management Team encourage the implementation of inclusive education?
5. In your opinion, does the community at large, especially the one around your school, support the implementation of inclusive education? Provide examples and reasons for your responses.
6. What can your school do to involve the surrounding community to support the implementation of inclusive education in your school?
7. Does this school have the challenge of overcrowded classrooms? If yes, how does it affect the implementation of inclusive education?
8. How accessible is your school's infrastructure in accommodating learners with diverse needs? Please elaborate.
9. Do you think the teachers you work with understand the policies on inclusive education? Please elaborate.
10. What strategies do you think can enhance the implementation of inclusive education in Pinetown District public primary schools?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

Semi-structured interviews questions

1. What grades do you teach?
2. What do you understand about the implementation of inclusive education?
3. As a teacher, the Department has entrusted you with implementing inclusive education. Do you understand how to apply roles in implementing Inclusive Education in your school?
4. What factors affect the implementation of inclusive education at your school?
5. How do you manage inclusive education in your class?
6. What are the challenges of implementing inclusive education?
7. How do you deal with the challenges mentioned above? Provide examples of inclusive education implementation strategies used at your school.
8. Do you think the teachers you work with understand the policies on inclusive education? Please elaborate.
9. Do you receive any support from stakeholders? If yes, what support is given?
10. What would you like to see happening in your school regarding inclusive education implementation? We have come to the end of our interview; is there anything else you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Semi-structured interviews questions

1. What grades do you teach?
2. What do you understand about the implementation of inclusive education?
3. As a teacher, the Department has entrusted you with implementing inclusive education. Do you understand how to apply roles in implementing Inclusive Education in your school?
4. What factors affect the implementation of inclusive education at your school?
5. How do you manage inclusive education in your class?
6. What are the challenges of implementing inclusive education?
7. How do you deal with the challenges mentioned above? Provide examples of inclusive education implementation strategies used at your school.
8. Do you think the teachers you work with understand the policies on inclusive education? Please elaborate.
9. Do you receive any support from stakeholders? If yes, what support is given?
10. What would you like to see happening in your school regarding inclusive education implementation? We have come to the end of our interview; is there anything else you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION SHEET

Gender (tick)

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
HoD	<input type="checkbox"/>

Observation	Description	Purpose
Teachers have difficulties addressing pupils' learning impediments.	Does the teacher complete the proposed lesson? What challenges are experienced in the time frame?	To determine the difficulties teachers face when addressing learning impediments in the classroom.
To investigate how teachers respond to the different requirements of learners with learning challenges.	What teaching style is used? Does it allow for differentiated teaching? What support structures are used?	To evaluate the various options teachers can offer students with learning difficulties.
To gain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on the learning assistance students require.	What support are teachers given to assist learners? What support do teachers need?	Teachers must identify support to assist learners with learning difficulties.

APPENDIX H: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Type of Document

_____ Newspaper

_____ Letter

_____ Map

_____ Report

_____ Government document

_____ Other:

Describe _____

Who wrote the document? _____

What is the date of the document? _____

For whom was the document for? _____

List the information presented in this document

Why was the document written?

APPENDIX I: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT LETTER



Title: Investigating Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Primary Schools: A Case of Pinetown District

Date: 20 November 2021

Researcher: Hadebe J.P.

Supervisor: Dr. N. Ndou

Cell phone no.: 076 125 4155

Tel: 012 429 4468

Email address: 46233555@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Email Address: ndoun@unisa.ac.za

Dear Prospective Participant,

I, Ms Jabulile Princess Hadebe, am doing research under the supervision of Dr. N. Ndou, a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education, towards a Masters in Education (MEd) at the University of South Africa. I am inviting your school to participate in a study entitled **Investigating Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Primary Schools: A Case of Pinetown District**.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This research aims to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal and what strategies can be used for improvement.

WHY AM I INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are a primary school teacher; I believe we will be able to gather information to aid the research.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY?

The study will involve semi-structured interviews. As a participant, you can reply based on your claim encounters and points of view on how inclusive education is executed in your work environment. The interviews will be voice-recorded and will last approximately 1 hour. They will consist of 8-10 questions. The study will take place during learning hours.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study will be voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be given an information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving any reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefits of participating in this study will be that more information will be known about the conditions and challenges that affect teachers implementing inclusive education in primary schools so they can be closely monitored.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There will be no negative consequences in taking part in this study; all COVID-19 protocols will be observed during and after interview sessions.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

No names will be used in this study; participants' identities will be kept confidential. Interviews will be conducted one-on-one.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

All data will be stored by the researcher in a locked cabinet in the office for future research or academic purposes for a period of five years. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected laptop. This information will be destroyed; if necessary, hard copies will be shredded, and recordings will be deleted permanently.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not receive any payment or incentive, which is why participation in the study is voluntary.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Hadebe J.P. on 076 125 4155 or email 46233555@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for a period of three months. Should you have any concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, please contact Dr. N. Ndou at 012 429 4468 or email ndoun@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you,

Hadebe J.P.

Signature: _____

Date: 22 November 2012

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to the interview recording. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participants Name & Surname (please print): _____

Participant signature

Date

Researchers' Name & Surname (please print) Jabulile Princess Hadebe

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX J: EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

NIM Editorial
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www.nimeditorial.co.za

Reg. No. 2016/488856/07



05 December 2023

Editorial Certificate

To Whom It May Concern,

This certificate confirms that the dissertation entitled; **TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PINETOWN DISTRICT, KWAZULU-NATAL** by **JABULILE PRINCESS HADEBE (student number: 46233555)** was edited by an expert English editor with a PhD. The following issues were corrected: grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, phrasing, and formatting.

Signed on behalf of NIM Editorial by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N.I. Mabidi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

.....
Dr N.I. Mabidi
Founder & Chief Editor