

**PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL
CIRCUIT**

by

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DECLARATION

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

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

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

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Date: 06 May 2024



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Mr Jackson Mandavha and Mrs Munzhedzi, Maemu Mavhungu, and my late sister, Mrs Elsienah Ntsandeni Muthavhine, for giving me life, comfort, and education – the greatest gifts I have ever received. May our Heavenly Father bless you wherever you are.

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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 focuses on principals' experiences in the implementation of inclusive education policy to understand what they consider critical in ensuring that their schools implement inclusive education policy effectively in all schools within the Nzhelele Central Circuit (NCC). The study was conducted in five public primary schools, and a qualitative research approach was adopted using a case study design. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural cognitive theory was adopted. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the research site and participants for the study. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews (SSIs) with 5 principals, 5 departmental heads (DHs), 5 teachers, and 5 parents. Data were analysed thematically and 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's findings revealed that most participants were unaware of the importance of implementing inclusive education in primary schools. It was also revealed that the challenges that impede implementation include inadequate space and overcrowded classrooms, insufficient time for teaching diverse learners, and inadequate parental involvement and support. The study recommended that for inclusive education to prosper, principals, DHs, teachers, and parents should undergo training for adequate policy implementation in the implementation of inclusive education policy. Schools should receive adequate funds to address the prerequisites of all learners, and a lithe curriculum is crucial to providing every child with an opportunity to learn and benefit from education. All education stakeholders should participate actively to successfully implement inclusive education in primary schools.

Key terms: children with a disability; inclusion; inclusive education; full-service schools; learner diversity; special educational needs; policy implementation

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CWD	Children with Disability
DSMS	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHs	Departmental Head
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
EFA	Education for All
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IEP	Inclusive Education Policy
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCC	Nzhelele Central Circuit
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
SEN	Special Education Needs
SGB	School Governing Body
SNAs	Special Needs Assistants
SNE	Special Needs Education
SSIs	Semi-Structured Interviews
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The study focused on principals' experiences implementing inclusive education policies in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit (NCC). A UNESCO World Conference held in Spain in 1994 on the theme of Quality and Access in Education adopted the principle of inclusive education. Governments of 92 countries, including South Africa, and 25 international organisations agreed to a statement on education that called for inclusion to be the norm for learners experiencing disabilities in their various medical, social, and economic senses (Themane & Thobejane, 2019). The framework suggested that schools should accommodate all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions.

The South African government ensures that all children of school age experiencing barriers to learning, including those with disabilities, have reasonable access to inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with other young people in the communities in which they live. The fundamental principle of inclusive schools is for all learners to learn together, irrespective of any difficulties or differences they may have (Hope & Hall, 2018). Ebubedike, Boampong, James, Shuaibu and Monyeh (2022) define inclusive education as the process of identifying and responding to the diversity of learners' needs, seeking increased learning and participation in their communities and reducing social exclusion.

It is important that inclusive schools recognise and respond to the special needs of their learners, accommodating different rates and styles of learning and ensuring that quality education is delivered to all through appropriate curricular, teaching strategies, resource use, and partnerships with their communities (Csizér & Kontra, 2020). Inclusive education should also focus on all the developments to make mainstream schools accessible to learners who are vulnerable to educational marginalisation and exclusion at all levels of organisation, culture, and pedagogy (Department of Education [DBE], 2013). Many qualitative studies focus on understating the experiences of learners, such approaches can influence the presence, participation, and achievement of all learners (Messiou, 2016).

In other words, schools should promote equal educational opportunities for all learners by ensuring the same access to education and those with barriers to learning and development. Inclusive schools must provide quality education by supplying all learners with a range of learning needs and strive to achieve equity, access, quality, and social justice in education (DBE, 2010). Inclusion might have a different meaning to different people as varieties of inclusion exist in other international education contexts. However, understanding a comprehensive framework is theoretical and philosophical, description from human development and educational change theories, paradigm shifts in educational support, as well as insight into historical, social, political and educational processes (Education White Paper 6, 2001:9). Understanding the international and South African context of inclusion is fundamental for one to understand the difference and uniqueness in local histories as well as interpretations of inclusion (Cociña, Frediani, Acuto & Levy, 2019). According to Aucoin, Porter and Baker-Korotkov (2020), inclusive schooling is for all learners, targeting personalised instruction that helps individuals learn both academical and socially/emotionally alongside their peers and have the right to education regardless of their race, gender, nationality, or disability. Furthermore, inclusive education strengthens the education system's capacity to reach out to all learners. Overall, inclusive education should guide all education policies and practices since education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society.

According to the DBE (2010), inclusive schools provide effective education to most children and improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. Inclusive education is not an end but a means to an end, that of the realisation of an inclusive society. Inclusion is, therefore, about an extension of the comprehensive ideal in education. Inclusive education involves the transformation of schools and learning centres to cater to learners from all ethnic and linguistic minorities. It is a complex concept requiring experts with a sound knowledge base for informed decisions (Makopoulou, Penney, Neville & Thomas, 2022).

Messiou (2016) highlights that inclusive education is understood in different ways. Messiou (2016) presents three different ways, which are concerned with disability and special educational needs, a response to disciplinary exclusions, and all groups vulnerable to exclusion. Ferreira (2019) maintains that the South African government has developed various policies to promote equality and inclusivity in education.

Despite all the efforts, not all children in one of the conceptualisations belong to a predetermined category (such as special educational needs). Thus, principals in the NCC still encounter inclusive education implementation; therefore, this study's findings would not only provide answers, but also assist participants in finding solutions to their questions. Messiou's study recommended that schools be provided with copies of White Paper 6, which serves as the key document on inclusive education and its implementation principles. Principals and teachers should be trained on how to implement inclusive education. Furthermore, it was recommended that principals should be sincere with the commitment stated in their school's mission statements on admitting all learners regardless of any learning barriers (Mdhluli, 2017).

Teachers' attitudes and lack of training negatively impact learner performance and interest in learning, leading to students failing at the end of the year. Therefore, learners with disability need support to pass. Education White Paper 6, gazetted in terms of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996), provides for the incremental identification of certain schools to serve as demonstration full-service or inclusive schools. The ineffective implementation of inclusive education policy (IEP) may negatively impact the ability to cater to the diverse needs of learners within primary schools in the circuit. Thus, the possibility of a high dropout rate of learners with diverse educational needs cannot be underestimated.

1.2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for studying the experiences of principals in implementing inclusive education policy stems from the critical role they play in shaping inclusive practices within schools. Principals are key decision-makers and influencers in creating environments that support diverse learners' special needs. While policies are designed to ensure equal access to education for all learners, including those with disabilities, challenges often arise in their practical implementation of the policy. The investigation of primary school principals' experiences provides valuable insights into the barriers, strategies, and successes encountered during this process of implementing the policy.

This research is essential as it highlights the real-world application of inclusive education policies and identifies gaps between policy design and its execution. The understanding of the experiences can inform future policy development, provide targeted support and professional development for school leaders, and promote a

more effective and inclusive education system. Additionally, it can reveal how school principals direct resource limitations, teacher training, and community attitudes, which are crucial to the success of inclusive education. Overall, this study contributes to improving the effectiveness of inclusive education by focusing on the key figures responsible for its implementation.

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Quality education contributes to personal and professional development, as well as critical knowledge and skills needed to solve societal problems. Therefore, improving schools' conditions could contribute to the quality of the provided education (Budiharso & Tarman, 2020). This study aims to explore experiences of principals as they implement inclusive education policy. The principal is responsible for ensuring that the school is managed satisfactorily in compliance with applicable legislation and regulation as prescribed by the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of 1998. The aim was to ensure that education was accordingly promoted in line with approved policies of the DBE (DBE, 2001).

The DBE's White Paper 6 Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training (2001), states that integrating professional support structures such as District-Based Support Teams (comprising district officials, e.g., specialists responsible for special needs education) and the school-based support team (comprising of the SMT, class educator, and any community member with necessary skills and knowledge). However, few educators have been trained to provide additional support to learners with barriers; therefore, basic professional training is required. Teachers respond to a wide range of learners' queries (Mbelu, 2020). Teachers had negative attitudes towards disability and marginalised children; thus, it was difficult for teachers who were not receptive to inclusive education. Additionally, teachers were not trained on how to teach learners with disabilities; as a result, they seldom teach children with disabilities in an inclusive and friendly manner.

Inclusive education requires teachers to be well-prepared to accommodate students with diverse needs, including disabilities, learning difficulties, and language barriers. Principals often face the challenge of providing effective professional development to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge (Maebana & Themane, 2019).

Implementing inclusive education policies often demands additional resources, including assistive technology, classroom aides, and specialized instructional materials. Many principals struggle with securing the necessary financial and physical resources to meet the diverse needs of all students (Sharma, Armstrong, Merumeru, Simi, and Yared, 2019).

Cheelo (2016) conducted a study to establish the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education in selected rural primary schools of Solwezi District. The above-mentioned has been proved by the researchers at work to evaluate the infrastructure used by pupils in rural primary schools in the Solwezi District. Research shows that implementing inclusive education is a shared problem troubling researchers, government officials, principals, and school teachers. This study sought to find a comprehensive understanding of the challenges of inclusive education, which principals mainly faced regarding the quality of teaching and learning. In public schools, principals were not provided with guidelines for implementing inclusive education. When they were expected to implement IEP in mainstream schools, they experienced many challenges. Teachers were not well-trained in dealing with inclusivity in mainstream schools. School principals were left behind in the implementation of inclusive education. As a result, they could not provide leadership and direction on implementing inclusive education. Principals were pedagogical leaders who ensured efficient curriculum delivery (Cheelo, 2016).

1.3.1. Research questions

According to Kara (2015), research questions should be specific and have limits. The research questions should not show bias or an opinion towards the expected outcome of the research. Dawson (2019) also argues that research questions should have five basic words: what, why, who, where, and when. In addition, Hunt, Pollock, Campbell, Estcourt and Brunton (2018) state that formulating research questions is usually the first step in any research project. It is the primary interrogation point of the research,

and it sets the pace for the work. Moreover, they should be grounded on the main topics. The researcher converted the problem statement into the main and sub-research questions guided by all the study phases.

1.3.1.1. Main research question

What are the principals' experiences in implementing the inclusive education policy in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?

1.3.1.2. Sub-questions

The following sub-questions were formulated to support the main research question.

- How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy?
- What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?
- What are the factors that hinder principals from fully implementing inclusive education policies?
- How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing an inclusive education policy?

1.3.2. Aim and objectives of the study

1.3.2.1. Aim of the study

The primary aim of the research was to explore principals' experiences in implementing inclusive education in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit.

1.3.2.2. The objectives of the study were:

- To assess how principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Nzhelele Central Circuit.
- To identify the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools.
- To determine the factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.
- To establish ways in which principals can overcome the challenges faced in implementing an inclusive education policy.

1.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discussed aspects of the theoretical framework that underpins the study. Social constructivism theory guided the study. The proponent of the theory was Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1978), social constructivism is when language and culture serve as frameworks through which people experience, communicate, and understand reality. The crucial claim of social constructivism was that a sociological analysis of science and scientific knowledge was fruitful and revealed the social nature of science. The development of scientific knowledge was determined by social forces, essentially contingent and independent of rational methods, and analyzed in terms of causal processes of belief formation. There were three main social constructivist approaches. Social constructivism about the social was an internationalist programme of social ontology to clarify how social entities like social groups and institutions were constructed.

Vygotsky (1978) posits that individuals are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge. Vygotsky believed that learning occurs primarily in social and cultural settings rather than solely within the individual. The social constructivism theory focuses heavily on small groups. Learners learn primarily through interactions with their peers, teachers, and parents, whereas teachers stimulate and facilitate conversation by harnessing the natural flow of conversation in the classroom. Social constructivism suggests that successful teaching and learning heavily depend on interpersonal interaction and discussion, primarily focusing on the learners' understanding of the discussion.

One of the core constructs of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism was the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which emphasises the role of the instructor in an individual's learning. The ZPD delineates the activities that a student could do without help and the activities that the student could not do without the help of an instructor. The ZPD suggests that, with the help of an instructor, students can understand and master knowledge and skills that they are not able to do on their own. Once the learners master a particular skill, they can complete it independently. In this theory, the instructor plays an integral role in the student's knowledge acquisition rather than serving as a passive figure. The choice of the theory was informed by its common features that prevail in the school context, where learners learn primarily through

interactions with their peers, teachers, and parents. In contrast, teachers stimulate and facilitate conversation by harnessing the classroom's natural flow of conversation.

1.5. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.5.1. Inclusive education in South Africa

To understand inclusive education in the South African context, a reflection on the history of education was important. Before 1994, the Education Department had 18 unequally funded education departments that were racially and demographically separated. There was no provision for all learners, and the vulnerable groups were marginalised (Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh & Susuman, 2018). Inclusive education might have a different meaning for individuals or groups (Messiou, 2016). Hence, inclusive education is about addressing and responding to the diverse needs of children in learning, regardless of their personal characteristics (Hui, Vickery, Njelesani & Cameron, 2018). Despite the diversity among them, their educational needs are similar. This includes their curriculum, classrooms, play areas, toilets, and transport, which are appropriate for all children at all levels (Chichevska & Canevska, 2020).

The Ministry of Education (MoE) released the Education White Paper on Education and Training in 1997 to address imbalances and promote equality and non-discrimination (DBE, 1997). In the same year, the MoE appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to make recommendations on aspects of special needs and support services (DBE, 1997). The successful implementation of IEP advocates for the creation of awareness in schools in order to understand their own prevailing challenges, assets, and resources necessary for transformation by highlighting the inequalities in the curriculum, teaching material, teaching, and learning (Bibiana, Madrine, Eric, & Simon, 2020). The DBE (2002) further defines inclusive education as a system that respects and acknowledges the differences in learners, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, class, HIV status, or language.

1.5.2. Policy implementation

Successful policy implementation relied on the identification of key levers for policy change and innovation within our provincial systems and our education and training institutions (Auld & Morris, 2016). This approach lies at the heart of this White Paper 6, revealing a determination to establish an inclusive education and training system as our response to the call to action to establish a caring and humane society. Recognition might be made within an education and training system engaging in multiple and simultaneous policy changes under severe resource constraints (Bell, Self, Davis III, Conway, Washburn, & Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). It was important to research inclusive education because all children have equal opportunity to learn together. They have equal access to the general education system. Learners and teachers feel valued, respected, and listened to. Disabled learners need support from whoever is interested in their education. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers, and all who are concerned about learners with disabilities to support them (Hamburg & Bucksch, 2017).

The United Nations (UN) (2016) recommends that states must ensure the realisation of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels, including pre-schools, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extra-curricular and social activities, and for all students, including persons with disabilities, without discrimination and on equal terms with others (Harpur & Stein, 2018). Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton (2016) maintained that 'inclusive' education is in the context of policy and practice in a number of countries, particularly in relation to children and young people of school age. At the heart of the idea of inclusive education lie serious issues concerning 'human rights,' 'equal opportunities,' and 'social justice.' How societies construct and respond to disabilities, gender, race, and cultural differences is of fundamental importance.

1.5.3. Features of inclusive education policy in primary schools

Primary education enables learners to learn basic skills such as writing, reading, calculating, listening, speaking, and being independent. In primary school, learners are expected to master the basic techniques of thinking and reasoning (Akrim &

Harfiani, 2019). Kaur (2021) states that successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional. Students with disabilities should attend mainstream schools. It is compulsory for each student to acquire primary basic education since every student is accepted and regarded as a full and valued member of the class and the school community. Additionally, all students receive an education that addresses their individual needs. In South Africa, no student is excluded from education based on the type or degree of disability (Navarro, Zervas, Gesa, & Sampson 2016).

1.5.4. Learner disabilities and impairment

Learning disability (LD) is internationally defined as a neurological disorder in one or more basic processes involved in understanding spoken or written language. This brain variance influences an individual's ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, reason, organise information, or do mathematical calculations (Mbatha, 2018). Disability has now evolved its meaning throughout the years. This concept refers to permanent shortcomings in a learner's make up (Cole, 2022). Learners are either born with such disabilities or are affected by illness or an accident. These disabilities include physical disabilities (affects the appearance or movement), sensory disabilities (when senses are affected, i.e., blindness/deafness), intellectual disability (when a learner is less capable of understating than an average person), and multiple disabilities (when a learner suffers from more than on disability). Impairments affect a learner's development and learning. They referred to a specific deficit, i.e., physical (hearing and epilepsy), physiological (brain damage), and personality problems (emotional needs) (Abongdia, Foncha, & Dakada, 2015).

1.5.5. Key barriers to learning

Barriers to learning refer to something that prevents the learner from benefiting from education. Learning barriers may arise from internal or external factors. Internal barriers to learning are considered to rise from the individual learner, whereas external barriers to learning might arise from the environment and/or broader social context of the individual. These include socioeconomic barriers, such as insufficient resources and an inadequate number of learning centres; lack of access to basic services, such as transport systems and medical centres; poverty and underdevelopment, such as

lack of basic needs (shelter and nutrition); poorly resourced learning facilities; and inadequately trained teachers (Mbatha, 2018).

1.5.6. Challenges of implementing inclusive education

In Malawi, (Chimwaza 2016, Sijuola, and Davidova, 2022, Sari, Sarofah, and Fadli, 2022) conducted a study on the challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education. He found that children grow, develop, and learn in difficult situations that negatively and positively impact them. It was also noted that a school principal plays a vital role in forming an educational climate that provides learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. For about 40 years now, Nigeria has been unable to successfully implement the National Policy on Education [NPE] (Odukoya, Bowale & Okunlola, 2018). Education is a fundamental human right. The relationship between education and development has been established, and education is now internationally accepted as a key development index (UNDP, 2016).

1.5.7. Inclusive learning environment

An inclusive learning environment is an environment that promotes the full personal, academic, and professional development of learners regardless of their race, class, gender, disability, and religion. An inclusive learning environment encompasses characteristics such as a flexible curriculum that meets the diverse needs of the learner populations, respect for all people, and caring and supportive communities in the classroom on solutions for effective learning, not the “barriers” (Ciobanu, 2017). According to Coleman, Clarkson and Cassim (2016), inclusion should become a central part of each school's organisation, planning, and teaching. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address challenges that school manager's encounter in implementing IEP (Kinsella, 2020). The key to managing inclusivity is ensuring that barriers are identified and addressed by the relevant support structures within the school community, including teachers, district-based support teams, institutional-level support teams, parents, and special schools as resource centres (Navarro, Zervas, Gesa, & Sampson, 2016)

1.5.8. Full-service schools

Full-service schools are community schools that focus on partnerships between a school and its community. It integrates academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development (Min, Anderson & Chen, 2017). To promote the success of a learner, Harmon and Schaft (2018) suggest that each full-service school should improve a school culture and teaching plan useful to learners' growth and staff development. Around the world, inclusive education means that learners' rights and needs are considered, and education systems must adapt to accommodate the diversity of individuals (Ayaya, Makoelle, & van der Merwe, 2020). Learners who require low-intensive support receive this in ordinary schools, and those requiring moderate support receive it in full-service schools. Conversely, learners who require high-intensive educational support would continue to receive such support in special schools because they worry about what kind of educational experience would be available to learners with moderate to severe disabilities in mainstream education (Räty, Vehkakoski & Pirttimaa, 2019).

1.5.9. Special schools

Special schools provide a quality and relevant learning experience. An inclusive education and training system does not mean that the department should declare it as policy and hope that its implementation will proceed smoothly within all provincial systems and all education and training institutions (Madani, 2019). Instead, the successful implementation of the policy depends on a substantive understanding of the real experiences and capabilities of provincial systems and education and training institutions, setting achievable policy objectives and priorities over time, and regular reporting on these (Cairney, St Denny, & Kippin, 2021).

1.5.10. Barriers to learning and development

The key to managing inclusivity is ensuring that barriers are identified and addressed by all the relevant support structures within the school community, including teachers, district-based support teams, institutional-level support teams, parents, and special schools as resource centres (Kinsella, 2020). Barriers to learning simply translate to the hindering factors that prevent learners from education. These include barriers within the learner, the education system, the learning centre, and social, economic, and political contexts. The concept of barriers to learning replaces the concept of special educational needs defined by the White Paper 6.

The required resources for the reduction of barriers can be found. However, most teachers have limited experience in training and information, which leads to a limited understanding of barriers and how to address them. Learning barriers can be grouped into systematic, societal, pedagogical, and intrinsic categories. Systematic barriers, including limited infrastructure and shortage of skilled teachers, were identified as serious factors to be addressed by the government in implementing inclusive education (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and Van Deventer, 2016).

Societal barriers include poverty as a result of illness and the death of family breadwinners. Learners become heads of the family and are responsible for their siblings due to being orphaned. These include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. All these, directly and indirectly, influence a learner's behaviour and performance at school. Pedagogical barriers include inappropriate teaching and assessment methods in the classroom. This could be due to a lack of knowledge, multi-level skills, and curriculum adaptation. A shortage of relevant teaching and learning material results in learners failing to meet the required standards of the curriculum (Pangrazi & Beighle, 2019).

Intrinsic barriers exist within a learner; these include physical, sensory, neurological, and cognitive disorders. Schools must be aware of the health department networks around the area for easy accessibility in case of medical emergencies. Some learners may be disadvantaged (i.e., communication disorders, motor skills disorders, sensory disorders, learning disorders, mental retardation, behaviour disorders, chronic disorders, etc.) (Pangrazi & Beighle, 2019).

The literature review was aligned with the research objectives of the study, namely assessing how principals perceive the implementation of IEP in the NCC, identifying the main features of IEP in primary schools, determining the factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools, as well as suggesting strategies principals can employ to implement IEP.

1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.6.1. Research paradigm

A research paradigm constitutes abstract and principles that shape the views of the researcher in relation to the world and their interpretation thereof (Kivunja & Kuyini,

2017). Bogna, Raineri and Dell (2020) further state that paradigm is the perspectives from which research is performed. Interpretivism is the guiding framework for this study. Interpretivism enables analysis and perspective of the situation under examination to increase understanding of how certain people make sense of their circumstances (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Interpretivists look at the specific context in-depth and do not assume that their results can be generalised across different contexts.

1.6.2 Research approach

This study was guided by a qualitative research approach because it facilitates an in-depth investigation into understanding a specific situation, which was the implementation of IEP in primary schools in the NCC. According to Teherani (2015), the qualitative research approach is generally used in social research and involves a systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals or groups behave, how organisations function, and how interactions shape relationships. This approach allowed flexibility in directly collecting data from the source (participants), which led to richer data collection than data gathered through questionnaires since researchers could observe verbal and non-verbal responses. Creswell and Poth (2013) state that qualitative research has specific characteristics, including a natural setting and direct data collection, thus allowing for face-to-face interaction. Process orientation enables the researcher to focus on how and why behaviours occur.

1.6.3. Research design

Peel (2020) defines a research design as the overall plan or strategy for conceptualising the research problem through writing research questions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, as well as reports to achieve empirical research. This study used an explanatory case study design as it focused on real-world phenomena and aimed to explain causal phenomena that might be difficult to explain using other methods due to a lack of control over research events. The phenomenon at hand was the implementation of inclusive education by principals and

its challenges in primary schools. Interviews were held with principals and teachers to explore their experiences of IEP implementation.

1.6.3.1. Population

Rahi (2017) defined a population as an entire group or a group of items and events that the researcher intended to study. Furthermore, Wagnet and Dong (2018) define a population as a group of people or events whereby a sample is drawn and whose results can be easily summarised. The study covered public primary schools under the NCC, which comprises 17 primary schools. The population consists of principals, teachers, and learners of the Vhembe West district Limpopo Province schools. The school environment consists of principals, teachers, parents, and learners from different upbringings, beliefs, and views. Hence, it is important to include a selection of these participants to give a holistic description of the natural school environment to answer the main research question.

1.6.3.2. Sampling

Sampling is a procedure employed to systematically select a relatively smaller number of representatives from a pre-defined population to serve for observation as per objectives (Kuckartz, 2019). The type of sampling to be used in this study was sampling. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), purposive sampling was a technique used to provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling allowed for the judgement of the researcher to determine the makeup of the sample. In applying this technique, the sample size should be sufficient to extract rich data without being too large to hinder data saturation. Pacho (2015) mentions that purposive sampling is quite subjective and that case studies can produce results more quickly and at a low cost. In that regard, five primary schools, five principals, five teachers, five DHs, and five parent representatives were sampled. Thus, a total of 25 participants were sampled in the study.

1.7. INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Instrumentation refers to the tools or means by which investigators attempt to measure variables or items of interest in the data-collection process (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). According to Niewenhuis (2016), qualitative studies rarely treat the collection and

analysis of data as independent processes. In this study, data were gathered using semi-structured interviews (SSIs). The data were then analysed using a thematic analysis strategy of categorising data into themes.

1.7.1. Semi-structured interviews

Busetto (2020) specifies that data can be collected verbally, individually, or in groups using semi-structured protocols. SSIs allowed information to be obtained through verbal and non-verbal responses by participants, and conversations were made between the researcher and participants in the data collection process. Collected data were analysed through content analysis. Population and sampling were done through purposeful selection (Busetto, 2020).

Individual SSIs were conducted with all selected participants to obtain more candid and reflective responses for the study. This approach was selected to increase the comparability of responses, reduce interviewer effects or bias, and facilitate the organisation and analysis of the resulting data (Baker, 2019). This technique was chosen as it affords the researcher an opportunity to explore, in an in-depth manner, matters that are unique to the experiences of the interviewees, allowing insights into how different phenomena of interest are experienced and perceived (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019).

SSIs were conducted one-on-one and were used to study an individual's views, perspectives, experiences, beliefs, and motivations in depth (Guha, Viecegli, Wong, Manera & Tong, 2021). Topics were predetermined, questions were written out, and all interviewees were asked similar questions, with the opportunity for the researchers to ask additional questions (Raskind, Shelton, Comeau, Cooper, Griffith & Kegler, 2019). The goal for using this method was also to give participants (principals and teachers) the opportunity as developers of inclusive education to share their views, knowledge, and experiences on the problem under investigation (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A voice recorder was used to record the responses. Consent with participants was thought before interviews and later transcribed into verbatim reports.

1.7.2. Data analysis and interpretation

Data collected from the sampled participants was thematically analysed. Lewis (2015) maintains that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning

to the mass of the collected data during a research process. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) indicated that data analysis is an ongoing, cyclical process that is integrated into all phases of qualitative research. Smith (2005) interprets data analysis as a process that requires the analyst to capture an understanding of the data in writing. A thematic data analysis strategy was employed to analyse and interpret data, and data were transcribed into written form. Quotations from the participants' interviews were analysed and interpreted.

After the interviews, a direct transcription of the data was compiled. According to (Mayer, 2015), thematic or content analysis emphasises the role of the researcher in making replicable and valid conclusions from texts to the context of their use. Once the interviews have been documented, the data could be reduced into manageable amounts of meaningful information. Furthermore, content analysis has high transparency and flexibility as it can be used for different unstructured information (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Coding was applied after analysis by marking segments of data symbols, descriptive words, and unique identifying names. The coded data allow the researcher to draw conclusions while presenting their findings (Graue, 2015).

Interpretation is the terminal phase of qualitative inquiry (Ngulube, 2015). Discussing the interpretation of data in qualitative research is difficult, as it is a hotly contested area. The main challenge in discussing the interpretation of qualitative data stems from the fact that interpretation is regarded as an art that is not agreeable to formal rules, as the "Processes that define the practices of interpretation and representation are always ongoing, emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished" (Ngulube, 2015). Furthermore, the interpretation of data is the core of qualitative research (Ngulube, 2015). This phase entails the assessment, analysis, and interpretation of the empirical evidence that has been collected. The different points of view of the participants were presented in sufficient detail and depth so that the reader may be able to gauge the accuracy of the analysis. In other words, a thick description was presented as an analytical narrative (Ngulube, 2015). The data were used to illustrate and validate the interpretation of the data. The participants' pertinent words and comments were quoted. Chenail (2012) cautioned that qualitative researchers should be able to refer to their original data and construct evidence of the code from the data. Furthermore, qualitative researchers should not say more than what the data says.

1.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness is of importance as it is the truth value piece of research. When a research project reflects the reality, ideas, and experiences of the participants, it is believed to be trustworthy (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). There are four criteria to be considered to achieve trustworthiness in this study, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Nhemachena, 2020). The participants were given an opportunity to review the researcher's interpretation of the data and ask for explanations where they needed clarity. The researcher also kept in constant contact with the supervisor to guarantee enough guidance regarding the trustworthiness of the research.

1.8.1. Credibility

Credibility is one of the key criteria addressed by positivist researchers to ensure internal validity, in which they seek to ensure that their study measures or tests what is actually intended (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). In this study, SSIs were conducted, and the participants' exact words were transcribed. The participants were allowed to verify and make changes to the content. The assumption was that the participants' responses were informed by their experiences and, therefore, would be in touch with reality.

1.8.2. Dependability

Dependability is defined as an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation (for example, conceptual structures or theoretical models). It refers to the stability of data over time and varying conditions (Kyngäs, 2020). Dependability would be maintained through the layout of all the procedures followed to implement the research design, gathering of data, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the processes of inquiry.

1.8.3. Transferability

According to Kyngäs (2020), transferability means that the findings of the research project could be applicable to similar situations or participants. According to Nowell,

Norris, White, & Moules, (2017), transferability means the capacity of the results to be applied in various contexts or with various populations is known as transferability. The nature of transferability -the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings is different from other aspects of research in that readers determine how applicable the findings are to their situations. In this study, the sampling approach will be carefully considered to ensure a diverse and representative sample that reflects the broader population or target group of interest; these will help to capture a range of perspectives and experiences. Detailed descriptions of the research context, including information about the setting, participant characteristics, and any specific criteria used for participant selection, will allow readers to assess the similarities and differences between the study context and their own context. This study establishes transferability through the comprehensive reference to similar research that was carried out in different contexts.

1.8.4. Confirmability

According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), conformability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached. . Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, (2011) explain conformability as established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. The researcher adhered to the following concepts to ensure conformability of the findings: Triangulation to reduce the effect of investigator bias. Recognition of shortcomings in the study's method and their potential effects. Methodological description to allow the integrity of research results to be scrutinised. The researcher ensured that the information recorded was not destroyed and the field notes taken during the process could be used to confirm the data collected.

1.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations in research are a set of principles that guide research designs and practices. Scientists and researchers must always adhere to a certain code of conduct when collecting data from people (Hintz & Dean, 2020). It is imperative that ethical issues are considered during data collection and that research ethics are

upheld. One ethical consideration delineates asking permission from a study's human subjects before performing an experiment.

1.9.1. Permission to conduct study

After the ethics clearance from the University of South Africa (UNISA), the researcher requested authorisation to enter and slot in with the study from site authorities. Schools were requested in writing to the DBE and relevant district officers. Participants would be made aware of the purpose of the project, who or what group was funding it, how the findings would be used, if there were any potential adverse impacts of their participation, and who would have access to the findings. The main purpose of informed consent was that the participants could make an informed decision as to whether they would participate in the evaluation.

1.9.2. Anonymity and confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity are ethical practices designed to protect the privacy of human subjects while collecting, analysing, and reporting data. According to Coffelt (2017), confidentiality refers to separating or modifying any personal, identifying information provided by participants from the data. On the other hand, anonymity refers to collecting data without obtaining personal, identifying information. Typically, anonymity is followed in quantitative studies, and confidentiality is maintained in qualitative studies. In this study, participants will also be informed that anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured. The researcher will ensure that every participant's right to privacy is respected. Pseudonyms will be used when necessary.

Moreover, all information obtained from the participants was handled discreetly in this study; the researcher indicated to all the participants how the research data would be stored. The researcher conducted the study after seeking permission from the appropriate authorities of the Department of Basic Education, Limpopo Province. Participating schools shall be referred to as School A, School B, etc.

1.9.3. Voluntary participation

Researchers cannot force anyone to take part in their research without their consent or knowledge (Brittain, Ibbett, de Lange, Downward, Hoyte, Marino, Milner-Gulland,

Neath, Rakotonarivo, Veríssimo & Lewis, 2020). Hence, the participants in this study were made aware that their participation was of free will; therefore, voluntary and informed consent was obtained. As a result, participants had the freedom to terminate their participation in the study any time without any unfavourable consequences.

1.9.4. Protection from harm

Participants were informed that their participation or non-participation would not expose them to any harm. The researcher declares that any legal, dignitary, physiological, or social harm or threat to the participants should be avoided (Kisselburgh & Beever, 2022).

1.10. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.10.1. Limitations of the study

The limitations of a study are its flaws or shortcomings, which could be the result of the unavailability of resources, small sample size, and flawed methodology (Sovacool, Aksen & Sorrell, 2018). The researcher recorded the limitations encountered when the study was conducted. The researcher had enough information on the drawbacks encountered when implementing data collection methods. The study was a small-scale research on a wide topic. Since the study was conducted in only one district in the province, generalised findings might be lacking. A possible limitation involved subjectivity on the part of the researcher. The researcher used weekends and school holidays to accelerate the study; gathering the participants was a challenge due to their personal commitments. Therefore, each participant had to be allowed to select a suitable time slot.

1.10.2. Delimitations of the study

Delimitations are self-imposed restrictions to the study compared to limitations, which have inherent restrictions to the methodology (Miles & Scott, 2017). Furthermore, delimitations are further limitations actively put in place by the researcher in order to control factors that might affect the results or to focus more specifically on a problem (Terrell, 2016). The researcher controlled the delimitations. In some studies, it was

common to have a delimitation as to the size or nature of the group questioned. The delimitations include the sample size; including more schools to participate would bring a broader view; however, only a respectable size participated due to limited resources. This study only focused on public schools in South Africa, Limpopo Province, Vhembe District (NCC). The study gathered information from principals, teachers, DHs, and parent representatives, excluding learners.

1.11. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.11.1. Inclusive education

Cologon (2019) defines inclusive education as a wide range of strategies, activities, and processes that seek to make a reality of the universal right to quality, relevant, and appropriate education. Additionally, Hilt (2017) relates inclusive education to enhancing human rights and dignity, especially for learners with disabilities. In this study, inclusive education without compromising all these dynamics means an education system that caters to and supports learners with different abilities and needs.

1.11.2. Full-service school

Makhalemele and Staden (2018) define a full-service school as a district-based support team aimed at introducing strategies and interventions that assist teachers in the mainstream school system to cope with teaching needs and learning diversity. A full-service school strives to achieve access to equity, quality, and social justice in education (Abongdia, Foncha, and Dakada, 2015). In this study, a full-service school is supported by the DBE with the required material and personnel for the full range of learning needs.

1.11.3. Special educational needs

According to Nusser (2021), special educational needs refer to learners with learning challenges or disabilities that make it more difficult for them to learn than most children of the same age. Special educational needs include learners with reading, writing, and numeracy work challenges. In this study, special educational needs refer to learners

with LDs who would require specialists and extra support to make learning, expressing themselves, and understanding others easy for them.

1.11.4. Inclusion

Portelli and Koneeny (2018) define inclusion as a universal human right. According to Mutua (2017), inclusion is an expression of individual human rights and social justice, which originated in the international human rights movement. In educational terms, it refers to the value and well-being of all pupils (Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2016). In this study, inclusion is defined as access that all learners with disabilities have to participate in the general school system.

1.11.5. Inclusive education policy

As defined by UNESCO (2009), IEP is the guiding principle that informs a framework that schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. Yeni (2012) defines IEP as one of the policies generated to transform the provision of education by addressing the needs of all learners, including those who were vulnerable and excluded. In this study, IEP is a non-discriminative guideline that integrates all learners to access mainstream schools and facilitates an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect by corresponding to individual requirements or needs.

1.12. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study comprised five chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter outlines the preliminary backdrop of the impact of school principals' experiences on implementing IEP in the NCC. This chapter provided an introduction and background to the study, rationale of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and definition of concepts.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review

The chapter presents a review of the literature on the topic under study. The literature review focused on a comprehensive review of relevant publications, such as recent

journals, books, articles, and published and unpublished dissertations. The following concepts were discussed in detail: the strategies principals use when implementing IEP and the challenges experienced by principals in implementing IEP. Furthermore, the factors hindering the implementation of the policy were also discussed.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

The chapter focused on research design and methodology, which outlines how data were gathered from participants. The study methods include explicit procedures, research population, sampling, and instrumentation.

Chapter 4: Research findings, analysis and interpretation

The chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of collected data. Moreover, the responses to the research questions were obtained, presented, analysed, and examined.

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The chapter presented major findings and a summary of the entire study. It also included the results, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

1.13. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the study and provided the background. The researcher also outlined the study's rationale, problem statement, and preliminary literature review. The researcher also highlighted the methodology to be implemented, the quality declaration, and the ethical reflection to be observed. At the end of the study, it is anticipated that a better understanding of principals' experiences implementing IEP in primary schools in the Nzhelele West Central Circuit will surface.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlines the preliminary background on the impact of principals' experiences in implementing IEP. The rationale of the study, statement of the problem, aims, and objectives of the study were discussed. Additionally, the preliminary literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, ethics, and

clarification of key concepts were discussed. This chapter focuses on discussing the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section deals with aspects of a theoretical framework that underpin the study, which is social constructivism theory. The proponent of the theory is Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1978), the social constructivism theory states that language and culture serve as frameworks through which people experience, communicate, and understand reality. The crucial claim of social constructivism is that a sociological analysis of science and scientific knowledge is fruitful and reveals the social nature of science. The development of scientific knowledge is determined by social forces, essentially contingent and independent of rational methods, and analyse in terms of causal processes of belief formation. There are three main social constructivist approaches, namely social constructivist programmes, small group interactions, and teachers and peers jointly contributing to learning.

Vygotsky (1978) posits that individuals are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge. Vygotsky believed that learning occurs primarily in social and cultural settings rather than solely within the individual. The social constructivism theory focuses heavily on small groups of people. Learners learn primarily through interactions with their peers, teachers, and parents. In contrast, teachers stimulate and facilitate conversation by harnessing the natural flow of conversation in the classroom. Social constructivism suggests that successful teaching and learning is dependent on interpersonal interaction and discussion, with the primary focus on the learners' understanding of the discussion.

One of the core constructs of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism is the ZPD, which emphasises the role of the instructor in an individual's learning. The ZPD delineates the activities that a student can do without help and the activities the student cannot do without the help of an instructor. The ZPD suggests that, with the help of an instructor, students are able to understand and master knowledge and skills that they would not be able to on their own. Once the learners master a particular skill, they can complete it independently. In this theory, the instructor is integral to the student's knowledge acquisition rather than serving as a passive figure.

Social constructivism is concerned with its implications for teaching and learning. Social constructivism extends constructivism by incorporating the role of other actors and cultures in development. In the constructivist classroom, both teacher and learners think of knowledge as dynamic or ever-changing, with students needing to develop the ability to successfully stretch and explore their views. Learners are expected to construct their knowledge when they learn. They are not expected to memorise the learning content.

2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Maree (2020) is of the view that a literature review provides an overview of current and not-so-current literature relevant to the researcher's topic and salient facets of the topic. In addition, Mouton (2015) highlighted that a literature review is a study that provides an overview of scholarship in a certain discipline through an analysis of trends and debates. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche' and Delport (2018) state that a literature review is the body of literature to researchers, which indicates the relationship between the proposed study and the existing body of knowledge. According to McCombes (2022), a literature review is a survey of scholarly sources (such as books, journal articles, and theses) related to a specific topic or research question. It is often written as part of a thesis, dissertation, or research paper in order to situate your work in relation to existing knowledge. The literature review was developed to respond to the research questions and the study aims and objectives. The chapter offers a review of the literature on the phenomenon under investigation. The literature review focuses on a broad review of relevant writings such as the latest journals, major books, articles, and published and unpublished dissertations. The following concepts will be discussed in detail: the strategies principals use when implementing IEP and the challenges experienced by principals in implementing IEP. Furthermore, the factors hindering policy implementation will also be discussed.

White Paper 6 (2001) reveals that inclusive education recognises that all children and youth can learn and need support, allowing education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners; on the other hand, recognising and respecting differences in learners due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV status, or other infectious diseases. Therefore, learning also occurs in the home and community and within formal and informal settings. The

structures change attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula, and environment to meet the needs of all learners. Masalesa (2022) is of the view that by maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning, the ministry appreciates that a broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population at any point in time and that where these are not met, learners may fail to learn effectively and excluded from the learning system. In this regard, different learning needs arise from various factors, including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, and differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences, or socioeconomic deprivation.

2.3.1. Inclusive education in South Africa

To understand inclusive education in the South African context, a reflection on the history is important. Before 1994, the DBE had 18 unequally funded education departments which were racially and demographically separated. There was no provision for all learners, and the vulnerable groups were marginalised (Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh & Susuman, 2018). Inclusive education may have different meanings for individuals or groups (Messiou, 2016). Hence, inclusive education is about addressing and responding to the diverse needs of children in learning, regardless of their personal characteristics (Hui, Vickery, Njelesani & Cameron, 2018). Despite the diversity among them, their educational needs are similar. This includes their curriculum, classrooms, play areas, toilets, and transport, which are appropriate for all children at all levels (Chichevska & Canevska, 2020).

This approach lies at the heart of this White Paper 6, which reveals a determination to establish an inclusive education and training system as our response to the call to action to establish a caring and humane society. Recognition must be made within an education and training system that is engaging in multiple and simultaneous policy changes under conditions of severe resource constraints (Bell, Self, Davis III, C., Conway, Washburn, & Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). The MoE released the Education White Paper on Education and Training in 1997 with a purpose of addressing imbalances and promoting equality and non-discrimination (DBE, 1997). In the same year, the MoE appointed the NCSNET and the National Committee on Education

Support Services (NCESS) to make recommendations on aspects of special needs and support services (DBE, 1997).

The successful implementation of IEP advocates for the creation of awareness in schools in order to understand their own prevailing challenges, assets, and resources necessary for transformation by highlighting the inequalities in the curriculum, teaching material, teaching, and learning (Bibiana, Madrine, Eric, & Simon, 2020). The DBE (2002) further argues that inclusive education is a system that respects and acknowledges the differences in learners, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, class, HIV status, or language. Wide-reaching inspiration, uses the term specific learning disorder. Therefore, the jargon changed in South Africa when South Africa's Integrated National Disability strategy was adopted to resemble the document's vocabulary. Moreover, learners with learning impairment in South Africa are only considered learning disabled if the system fails to accommodate it. Dednam and Du Plessis (2017), Bergold, Wirthwein, & Steinmayr, (2020) also state that the learners' intellectual abilities are at least average. Learning impairments are mainly situated in the central nervous system, although they may occur concurrently with ecological difficulties and demonstrative barriers.

2.3.2. Learning disabilities and impairment

Dednam and Du Plessis (2017 , Bergold, Wirthwein, & Steinmayr, 2020) posit that Samuel Kirk was the first person to use the term LDs. Formerly, the term was used in South Africa, and many other sources still use it to refer to learners experiencing learning difficulties in their inherent natural surroundings. On the other hand, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which has

Cicerchia (2022) points out that learning is a problematic disorder that can cause an individual to experience problems in the classroom. LD is a condition that disturbs literacy, skills development, and maths and also affects memories. Furthermore, learning difficulty is also a disorder in which students struggle to carry out learning activities. Drigas, Mitsea and Skianis (2022) are of the view that LDs are a set of neurodevelopmental disorders of biological basis that induce cognitive abnormalities as well as symptoms related to emotional and behavioural disorders. Hence, biological

aetiology is a mixture of genetic, epigenetic, and environmental factors that change the brain's ability to know verbal or non-verbal information successfully and accurately.

Pullen, Lane, Ashworth and Lovelace (2017) propose that LDs affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, co-ordinate movements, or direct attention. Although LDs occur in very young children, the disorders are usually not recognised until the child reaches school age. Furthermore, Bansal (2015) posits that disability in India is still regarded in terms of misfortune with a "better dead than disabled" approach, the idea being that it is not possible for children with disability to enjoy and lead a good quality of life. This disorder manifests itself in difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instructions, inadequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity. LD is also a neurological disorder and affects an individual in such a way that their brain works differently from others (Penney, 2018).

The researcher is of the view that LD refers to a condition in the brain that causes difficulties in the ability to learn different methods. Furthermore, a LD is not an emotional disturbance; intellectual disabilities or sensory impairments disabilities are not caused by inadequate parenting opportunities. LDs are also disorders that interrupt the ability to understand and use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, co-ordinate movements, or direct attention. There are five common LDs in children.

2.3.3. Dyslexia learning disability

Bornman and Rose (2017) refer to dyslexia as a combination of two words meaning "not" or "difficult," and lexia, which means "reading" or language. Dyslexia means difficulty with words (Bornman & Rose 2017). This suggests that the term dyslexia has been applied to people across educational ability, ranging from a learning difficulty that affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent reading and spelling. On the other hand, dyslexia is a neurologically based familial disorder interfering with acquisition and processing. Thus, dyslexia can run in families as genetic, environmental, and other factors are involved. Furthermore, dyslexia makes reading, writing, and spelling difficult (Bornman & Rose, 2017).

According to Cicerchia and Freeman (2022), dyslexia is the greatest learning problem recognised as a LD in the United States. The greatest type is phonological dyslexia, which affects how people break words down into element parts. The significance of decoding in reading causes spelling and writing difficulties. Thus, reading and writing are most important to the school curriculum, also to children with undiagnosed dyslexia, which can quickly fall behind their peers as they experience problems with, for instance, notes taking, reading, writing homework, assignments, assessments (Cicerchia & Freeman, 2022). These authors also posit that dyslexia is not associated with lower intellect, but language problems can cause children to believe they are less intelligent than their peers, resulting in low- self-confidence and poor self-image.

Dyslexia has some common signs, including problems reading out loud in terms of spelling, losing one's place on a page, poor grasp of phonic letter reversals, and halted writing due to trouble with spelling and vocabulary that's more limited in scope. Hadler (2016) believes that dyslexia is a language-based LD characterised by difficulties with decoding, that is, sounding out words, fluent word recognition, and reading comprehension skills. He further suggests that children with dyslexia often develop secondary problems with comprehension, spelling, writing, and knowledge acquisition. Thus, children with dyslexia also experience intense frustration. On the other hand, children may act violently with others, become targets of bullying, and develop low self-esteem, mental health problems, anxiety, and depression.

Margareth, Snowling and Hulme (1989) are of the notion that dyslexia is a particular problem with reading and spelling that is somehow unexpected and, therefore, requires a diagnosis and an explanation, as well as specialist intervention. Snowling, Hulme and Nation (2020) posit that dyslexia is a difficulty in learning to decode or read aloud and spell. Snowling, Hulme and Nation (2020) also contend that it is an inevitable consequence of removing the discrepancy definition that more children with poor reading in the context of broader and more serious language difficulties will be labelled 'dyslexic. Raid (2016) believes that dyslexia in learning is a processing difference, frequently characterised by snags in literacy acquisition affecting reading, writing, and spelling. Moreover, Peterson and Pennington (2015) contend that individuals with dyslexia have trouble with the accuracy of words and recognition of spelling, regardless of sufficient instruction. In addition, Tabassum and Kumari (2016) maintain that dyslexia is the supreme predominant LD among children. They also suggest that

the notion of LD also refers to children who can see and hear and do not have any noticeable intelligent deficit.

On the other hand, those with LD display some abnormality in their performance. Therefore, children often show some irregularity in their psychological makeup, to such a point that they are unable to adjust at home. Hence, needing to learn by everyday methods in school. Furthermore, those with the problem have significant difficulty with word recognition, reading comprehension, and typically written spelling. When children read aloud, they also omit, add, and pervert the pronunciation of words to an extent that is unusual for their age.

2.3.4. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Dednam and Du Plessis (2017) are of the view that learning impairment and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) often live in learners, suggesting that learners with learning impairment have to deal with the barriers of ADHD as well. They also propose that the vital feature of ADHD is determined by a pattern of inattention and hyperactivity. Thus, learners with ADHD often have difficulties organising tasks and activities. Hung and Patel (2015) state that ADHD is the most important prevalent psychiatric condition in childhood, affecting school age children worldwide. Thus, this type of disorder affects more than 6.4 million children at some point. It is difficult for them to pay attention and stay on the job. Children can be distracted and face difficulty in old-fashioned school settings. Furthermore, experts link ADHD to brain structure, and there is evidence that ADHD may have a genetic component as well. Unlike typical LDs, which require educational interference,

According to Bornman and Rose (2017), ADHD is a tenacious pattern of inattentiveness that interferes with the development of learners. It also has symptoms that present more scenes, for example, at home, at school, with friends or with family, and negatively influences social or academic operations. The indications have been presented before the age of 12 years. Leffa, Caye and Rohde (2022) hypothesise that ADHD is a chronic condition that affects millions of children and continues into adulthood. Hence, ADHD, on the other hand, includes a combination of tenacious problems like sustaining attention, hyperactivity, and impulsive behaviour.

Moreover, children with ADHD struggle with low self-esteem and worry about relationships, and their performance at school is poor. The symptoms sometimes can become less with age. There is evidence that ADHD can successfully be treated with medications and behavioural therapies. It is evident that children with ADHD disturb others. Learners with ADHD also have a problem awaiting their turn and talk disproportionately. As a result, they also have difficulty participating quietly in leisure activities.

2.3.5. Dyscalculia learning disabilities

Bornman and Rose (2017) state that dyscalculia comes from the Greek and Latin words meaning “counting badly.” Additionally, learners with dyscalculia know how to understand the concept of weight, space direction, and time as they use numbers. According to Kucian and Aster (2015), dyscalculia refers to difficulty performing arithmetical calculations resulting from damage to the brain. May and Ahmad (2020) define dyscalculia as a LD in Mathematics. They also suggest that the percentage rate of dyscalculia among the population is between 4 and 6%. This LD affects academic achievement, social relationships, and lifestyle.

Dyscalculia is related to developmental dyscalculia, math disability, mathematical disability, mathematical LD, math difficulties, a disorder in mathematics, numeracy, deficit, math anxiety, etc. (Monei & Pedro, 2017). One may deduce that dyscalculia is a learning disorder that damages children's brains in terms of mathematics performance in society. Children also experience difficulties in performing arithmetical calculations, which results from damage to the brain.

2.3.6. Dysgraphia learning disabilities

Dysgraphia comes from the Greek words *dys*, meaning not or impaired, and *graphia*, which means making letters by hand (Bornman & Rose, 2017; Chung & Patel, 2015). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) prefers the term as an impairment in written expression. It is a disorder that articulates itself during writing or typing. Furthermore, dysgraphia also affects eye-hand co-ordination. Dimauro, Bevilacqua, Colizzi and Pierro (2020) state that dysgraphia is known as a writing disorder. Dysgraphia manifests difficulty writing illegibly, at a slow rate, with spelling and syntax difficulties and the arrangement of words. Dysgraphia is a language

processing disorder that excludes the motor component of writing, sometimes called “dysorthograph” or linguistic dysgraphia.

Experts differ on the specific definition and classification of dysgraphia, depending on the presumed difficulty with written language. Despite their differences, they have one thing in common about dysgraphia. The above discussion confirms that other specialists refer to dysgraphia as the difficulties that the child experiences in co-ordinating movements to write letters. When specialists test children with this condition, they show deficiencies in fine motor tasks like tapping, force, and stamina. Dysgraphia is recognised as a writing disorder and a well-defined disorder of writing abilities. Children with signs of dysgraphia write irregularly, and their hands flow with difficulty on a writing surface. Their handwriting is often incorrect, and their bodies’ positions are often inadequate. Generally, dysgraphia is a condition of writing ability.

2.3.7. Dyspraxia learning disabilities

Bornman, and Rose (2017) are of the view that dyspraxia comes from the words *dys*, meaning “no” or impaired and *praxis*, which means “doing something.” Dyspraxia affects the planning of what to do and how to do it. Dyspraxia is associated with the problem with perception. On the other hand, language, short-term memory, and organisation are important. Learners have a marked difficulty carrying out routine tasks involving balance, fine motor control, and kinaesthetic co-ordination. The movement of the learner’s dyspraxia is dawdling and tentative.

Ashur (2016) noted that dyspraxia is a hindrance in the organisation of movement that leads to problems related to verbal communication, perception, and thought and is related to the skills necessary for many tasks. This interruption is related to the learning process, which affects concentration, memory, and reading. On the other hand, Bodison (2015, Zhran, Almasaeid, and Elnour, 2020, Cunha, 2022) refers to dyspraxia as difficulty in the child's developmental motor synergy, which expresses the presence of developmental disorders. The child has a disability or immaturity in the organisation of movement, leading to problems related to communication, perception, and thought, making the tasks related to the learning process difficult. Many studies agree that people with developmental and autistic LDs are more likely to develop this disorder.

2.4. KEY BARRIERS TO LEARNING

South Africa became a democracy in 1994 after the African National Congress, led by a black majority, ended the apartheid era. This was the same year that the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994) was released, calling for education for all (EFA), regardless of LDs; hence, South Africa's journey to inclusive education. In 2001, the Education White Paper 6 on special needs education (DBE, 2001) was introduced as a measure to address schooling for children with barriers to learning. It was outlined as a major step towards inclusive education that some ordinary schools would be covered into full-service schools where children with barriers to learning could be taught in inclusive classes together with ordinary learners.

According to Chimhenga (2014), barriers to learning refer to something that prevents learners from benefiting from education (Visser, 2002). Furthermore, it also refers to barriers to learning as the difficulties learners experience in accessing education or understanding concepts they are taught within the centre of learning or the education system or the broader social economic and political context. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a study about barriers to learning, which is anything that stands in the way of a child's ability to learn efficiently.

2.5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

According to the UN (2016), ensuring that states must ensure the realisation of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels, including pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extra-curricular and social activities, and for all students, including persons with disabilities, without discrimination, and on equal terms with others (Harpur & Stein, 2018). Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton (2016) maintained that "inclusive" education in the context of policy and practice in several different countries, particularly in relation to children and young people of school age. At the heart of the idea of inclusive education lie serious issues concerning 'human rights,' 'equal opportunities,' and 'social justice.' How societies construct and respond to disabilities, gender, race, and cultural differences is of fundamental importance. Successful policy implementation relies on the identification of key levers for policy

change and innovation within our provincial systems and our education and training institutions.

It is important to research inclusive education because all children should have equal opportunity to learn together and equal access to the general education system. On the other hand, children should receive individual accommodation. Learners and teachers will feel valued, respected, and listened to. Disabled learners need support from whoever is interested in their education. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers, and all who are concerned about this.

2.5.1. Challenges of implementing inclusive education

Schuelka (2018) suggests that while the government has tried to create policies that are inclusive for people with disabilities, their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of “education for all” across the country (Singh, 2016). Inclusive education as a worldwide movement arose over the past 30 years to ensure that quality mainstream education is for all learners. The study revealed that Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and Van Deventer (2016) indicated that since 1994, the newly democratic South Africa also had expectations and the political will to change education by adjusting legislation and policies. However, the vision of an inclusive education system in South Africa has been difficult to achieve. The results regarding the implementation of inclusive education remain questionable. The researcher is of the view that inclusive education is an international movement that emerged over the previous years to make certain quality normal education for all learners in South Africa, but it fails because of some obstacles on the way out. Therefore, inclusive education has challenges that delay the implementation of education in South Africa. Those challenges are discussed below.

2.5.2. Lack of policy and legal support

Policymakers worldwide continue to include inclusion or inclusive education in their work. Unfortunately, this has not translated into successful inclusive practices within systems and individual schools. As a result, Slee (2018) describes the current rhetoric in policy as “an empty language” (Slee, 2018). There are many reasons for this. One such reason is that inclusion policy has been legislated alongside other reform agendas, such as standardisation and competition (Schlessinger, (2018), which run

counterintuitively to the philosophical underpinnings of inclusive education (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016).

This type of paradoxical policy implementation is challenging for practitioners (Etkins, 2013); when there are competing discourses from different sectors within an educational organisation, which are they to adhere to? Another reason is that "... policymakers often advocate inclusive education without an understanding of the pedagogical approaches that teachers can use to operationalize the policy" (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006). Without an understanding of how to enact inclusion and the support required for its implementation, school leaders and teachers will not have the systemic support they need to deliver the policy outcomes.

2.5.3. Inadequate school resources and facilities

Most primary schools in the State have suffered greatly from the unequal distribution of these facilities. This has also created enormous challenges for teachers and learners at Delta State. Basic education is a foundation of development in every nation (Ojeje & Adodo, 2018). Furthermore, teachers require systematic support through access to appropriate resources in order to foster an inclusive climate. Educational resourcing is always flagged as a perennial issue in schools (Boyle & Richard, 2019).

2.5.4. Inadequate specialised school staff

Teachers are often unskilled and unsupportive to children with LDS, which makes these children among the most side-lined in terms of educational opportunity and attainment. Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (2006) maintain that inclusive education is a concept that permits students with special needs to be placed and receive instruction in mainstream classes and taught by mainstream teachers.

2.5.5. Inadequate teacher training in inclusive education thinking and technology

Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (2006) propose that teachers were unprepared to implement inclusive education. On the other hand, teachers also experience challenges because they might not be able to assist learners according to their needs. According to Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (2006), teachers with inadequate information are less supportive in mainstream schools due to the lack of training becoming less supportive in

mainstream schools. Although some teachers did not receive training, they were exposed to experiences that helped them adapt to teaching in schools with diverse learners.

Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (2006) maintain that the role of teacher training institutes is critical. Teacher training institutes should adopt the concept of inclusion as part of the curriculum. Many important aspects of special education and special needs are stressed throughout the duration of the courses. On the other hand, it includes the facets of inclusive education. They further state that some courses are open to students from other programmes, which indirectly helps to prepare the trainee teachers to gain knowledge in relation to students with special needs. As part of the teacher training programme, it is recommended that education courses make room for important conversations concerning issues and concepts of inclusion and teaching effectiveness. On the other hand, it is also suggested that trainee teachers be given structured opportunities to experience inclusive education in practice. Experience teaching children with special needs in an inclusive setting is one of the essential components in the process of breaking down barriers and building positive attitudes (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas 2006).

2.5.6. Rigid curriculum that offers no accommodation, modification, or personalisation

Zwane and Malale (2018) suggest that the curriculum and teaching methods used by teachers play an essential role in reaching operative teaching in inclusive classrooms. A rigid and inflexible curriculum that does not allow for individual changes can lead to a learning breakdown. On the other hand, destructive effects on education include aspects such as lack of relevance of subject content, resources and assistive devices, lack of appropriate learning materials, inflexible teaching and classroom management styles, and inappropriate ways of assessing learning. Additional follow-ups are one of the most serious barriers to learning, and they can be found in the curriculum and relate primarily to their rigid nature. This prevents it from meeting diverse needs among learners; hence, the curriculum should be adapted to suit all learners. The principle of learner-centeredness must also be considered rather than focusing solely on teacher-centredness (Zwane & Malale, 2018).

The inflexible nature of the curriculum prevents it from meeting learners' different needs. Zwane and Malale (2018) discovered that the curriculum used at the school was not adapted to accommodate learners with a wide range of educational needs. On the other hand, teaching pupils with LDs using mainstream techniques makes learning and teaching challenging for the teacher and the learner in an inclusive class. Therefore, for example, in a curriculum modified for so-called normal learners, a teacher can teach pupils by writing on the board. However, this is not appropriate in the case where some pupils cannot see. The use of concrete objects must, therefore, be emphasised in the inclusive curriculum for all learners to benefit.

Schuelka (2018) posits that a rigid, centralised curriculum without opportunity for change or flexibility does not support inclusive school education. Departments of Education and other national educational policy groups have an effect regarding allowing the curriculum to be of better quality, providing alternative forms of assessment, and allowing teachers and students to have tenure of the curriculum and learning outcomes. Siddik and Kawai (2020) believe that primary schools in Bangladesh follow the national curriculum. Furthermore, all schools use the same books. When children with special needs enter GPS', their teachers find it difficult to use the same books and lesson plans for all their students. As a result, their abilities and requirements differ.

Additionally, the primary education sub-sector in Bangladesh follows a national curriculum implemented throughout the country. Therefore, GPS teachers do not have the power to amend the curriculum to teach different learners with various needs. GPS teachers do not have enough knowledge about the development and implementation of IEP.

2.5.7. Parental involvement in educating children with disabilities

According to Hill (2022), parental involvement in education encompasses families' engagement at school, with teachers, at home, and with their children. Whereas schools are focused on what parents do in relation to schoolwork, parents experience their involvement as unified into the rest of their parenting principles. Furthermore, Hill (2022) stated that parental involvement takes many forms, including good parenting in the home, the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation,

parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values, and high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship.

2.5.8. Inadequate training

With the ever-changing curriculum policy in South Africa, the principal can become a central component in the education system to help teachers understand and be able to gadget the changes (RSA, 2009). Furthermore, the issue is that the principal, like all teachers, is not well-trained in the new curriculum developments (Tapala, 2021). Principals, who are a daunting part of the school staff by virtue of being members of the teaching staff and also part of the SMT, need training and development in order to be able to carry out their responsibilities to their best abilities (Tapala, 2021). Finally, it is incumbent upon the school management and the DBE to assist the principal in that affection.

Education and knowledge are vigorous and ever-changing, creating barriers for principals if not kept up to date (Tapala, 2021); hence, principals must be betrothed in continuous and life-long training and development so that they remain relevant and current in terms of knowledge and skill. As curriculum leaders, principals have an immense responsibility, which requires some training and development (Tapala, 2021). Given the situation in South Africa, where there is no formal preparation for one to become a principal, there is a great need for curriculum leadership training for principals who will be developed to lead the curriculum implementation.

2.5.9. Work allocation to teachers

In terms of the EEA 64 of 1998 (RSA, 1998), Principals are expected to perform roles pertaining to administration, teaching, personnel management, extra- and co-curricular activities, and communication. Moreover, they are responsible for providing and co-ordinating guidance on the latest ideas and approaches to the subject, method, techniques, and evaluation, along with assisting and effectively communicating these to the staff members concerned and co-operating with colleagues to maintain good teaching practices (DBE, 2000). Principals' woes are worsened by challenges in implementing the prescribed goals due to teacher absenteeism and lack of punctuality, managing curriculum coverage, and giving feedback, which is credited to their

abnormal workloads (Sengai, 2021). Principals have an immense task to ensure that all these roles and responsibilities are conducted effectively and efficiently.

The lack of time for principals to do managerial work due to having too much teaching load is also seen as a logistical barrier for principals. Principal recourse to working after hours, over the weekend, during public holidays, and school holidays. The result is often exhaustion, which may lead to underperformance of the principals. The principals must undergo the circumstances under which they work, rendering them ineffective and having to continually fend off such barriers (Tapala, 2021). Principals are confronted with several competing priorities, including meetings, monitoring, and moderation of learners' and educators' work, personnel-related matters, conflict, and decision-making, which become barriers as the principals can't perform all of them simultaneously. These priorities impede principals from performing their work effectively and efficiently. Principals may know what is expected from them but struggle to be good at it due to workloads, rendering them inept (Tapala, 2021).

2.5.10. Lack of resources

Schools need resources like textbooks, classroom space, laboratory equipment, audio-visual equipment, internet connection, computers, furniture, and printers to enhance the provision of quality teaching and learning. If principals are not provided with these resources in their personal capacity or in their capacity as educational managers and leaders, the likelihood of them performing poorly or becoming despairing is high (Tapala, 2021). It is also imperative that principals receive training on the use and management of resources.

The shortage of educators is also an area of concern for principals as it leads to the overwork of some members of staff, a situation which the principals must manage (Tapala, 2021). Additionally, where there is a shortage of educators, the principals must organise their available personnel fairly in order to relieve overloading a section of their department. Shortage of resources becomes a barrier for principals to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place. When this does not happen, principals are forced to account for and explain how and why it happens. This becomes very awkward for the principals. Such instances stress the principals and hinder their ability

to function optimally as they are always thinking of how to resolve other people's problems rather than how to be inventive in their own work (Tapala, 2021).

2.5.11. Principals' leadership style

Asmal (2000) maintains that leadership is about guiding people to achieve the school's objectives and getting things done. On the other hand, leadership is about organising and coordinating schools, ensuring that what needs to happen happens and that it brings the school closer to its vision and mission. Furthermore, the role of leadership is to organise the school so that teaching and learning is a model of how responsible people behave in a democracy.

Despite thousands of articles, journals, theses, and books that endeavour to define the concept of leadership, there is no accord among researchers of leadership as to what the term means. For instance, some researchers define leadership in terms of the characteristics of the individual; however, others understand it as a procedure or outcome. According to Tannenbaum and Schmidt (2017), leadership cannot be looked at in isolation. Furthermore, leadership occurs within complex organisational and social contexts. On the other hand, Sørensen, Hansen and Villadsen (2022) mention that good leadership is the exercise of influence and charisma over others to achieve a specified goal. To provide good leadership, the leader must be capable of doing the chores.

Moreover, Yukl (2022) refers to leadership as learning. He stated that the leadership process is situated within and contingent on contextual structures that may allow or make the interaction between manager and employees. Northouse (2021) believes that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Sergiovanni (2022) revealed that in the same manner, effective school leadership is the connection that draws teachers together with their jobs to eventually thrive in their jobs and get gratification. Sergiovanni (2020) outlines the facet of leadership as "bonding." Leaders and followers have a set pair of values and commitments that bond them together in a common cause to meet a common goal.

Leng, Muliatie, Ekowati and Rahmawati (2021) suggest that principals occupy positions that carry unique responsibilities and opportunities and work within a

particular tradition of practice with their own strengths. Leadership is a word taken from the mutual terminology and amalgamated into the technical expressions of a systematic discipline without being exactly redefined. It also indicated that leadership is an interactive and give-and-take process through which a front-runner influences one or more employees to attain a goal. Leadership cannot be viewed as isolated; it influences employees towards achieving organisational goals and excellence (Amanchuku, Stanley & Ololube, (2015), Chandler, & Kirsch, (2018), Goleman, (2021).

Goleman, (2021) point out that leadership styles to many are not born, but rather made. However, in order to be a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience, and, most importantly, the skill to negotiate and work with others to achieve goals. Good leaders are thus made, not born. This principle is efficient. Gandolfi (2018) proclaims that leadership must have one or more leaders. Leadership must have followers and be action-orientated with a legitimate course of action, goals, and objectives. Gandolfi (2018) refers to a leader as one or more people who select, equip, train, and influence followers with diverse gifts, abilities, and skills. On the other hand, it focuses the followers on the organisations' mission and objectives, causing the followers to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted, co-ordinated effort to achieve the organisational mission and objectives (Winston & Patterson, 2006). It is against this background that Northouse (2004) refers leadership to a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Most researchers focus on leadership styles in South African Schools, whereby leadership style refers to many leaders who are not born but made. Leadership style is increasingly accepted; however, in order to be a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience, and, most importantly, the skill to negotiate and work with others to achieve goals. Furthermore, the autocratic leadership style is an extreme form of transactional leadership where leaders have complete power over staff, wherein staff and team members have little opportunity to make suggestions, even if these are in the best interest of the team and organisation.

Oudat (2020) believes that school principals play an effective role in facing the challenges they encounter. Additionally, the researcher concurs with A'shoor and Alshagran (2015) that the principal has to toil to improve the organisational climate,

make the school environment conducive for teaching, and develop the teachers' work in a way that keeps pace with the scientific and technological developments.

Abdullahi, Anarfo and Anyigba (2020) stated that the bureaucratic leadership style is when leaders follow the rules rigorously and ensure that their staff follow procedures precisely. Furthermore, Abdullahi, Anarfo and Anyigba (2020) declared that in a democratic leadership style, leaders make decision, but include team members in the decision-making process. Also, leadership encourages creativity, and team members often engage highly in projects and decisions. On the other hand, team members tend to have high job satisfaction and are productive because they are more involved.

Goodnight (2011) is of the view that the laissez-faire leadership style may be the best or worst leadership style. Laissez-faire refers to "let it be" when applied to leadership, leaders who allow people to work independently. Lastly, the transactional leadership style starts with team members agreeing to obey their leader when they accept a job. Similarly, the transaction usually involves the organisation paying team members in return for their effort and compliance. The leader has a right to punish team members if their work doesn't meet an appropriate standard. Principals are in charge of a large team of staff and a huge number of students. Thus, principals mediate between students, teachers, and their parents. As a result, principals must be strong leaders so that students, staff, and parents respect and listen to what they say.

Principals should have previous experience in various other teaching leadership roles, such as DH or organiser of a co-curricular activity. This allows them to develop their leadership skills by managing a smaller team before taking on the role of principal, where they are in charge of everyone in the school. The principal is accountable for leading and handling the school and is answerable to the employer and, through the SGB, to the school community. They are responsible for leading, managing, and assessing the curriculum.

Finally, the principal should create a school organisation where all staff members understand that every learner must be supported. The principal should also create conditions that will prepare learners for the future. Furthermore, the principals create a climate of review that tests the school community. Principals as leaders play a crucial role in moving organisations successfully and resourcefully.

2.6. FEATURES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

Surelymanov (2015) states that inclusive education educates learners with special educational needs in regular education settings. The author cautions that inclusive education is not limited to placement. Furthermore, it facilitates educating students with special needs with provisions that include curriculum adaptation, adapted teaching methods, modified assessment techniques, and accessibility arrangements.

2.6.1. First, educational justification

IE demands the development of ways of teaching that respond to children's different needs and weaknesses so that all children can take advantage of the classroom process. UNESCO policy guidelines for inclusive education also give three main reasons for inclusive education.

2.6.2. Second, social justification

Social justification is that inclusive education is a goodwill idea to change attitudes toward diversity and form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society.

2.6.3. Third, economic justification

Economic justification is more cost-effective in establishing and maintaining schools that educate all children together than in setting up a complex system of different types of schools specialising in different groups of children (UNESCO, 2009).

2.7. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

According to White paper 6 (DBE, 2011), different learning needs may arise because of the barriers to learning, such as visual impairments, which can have a negative impact on the child's development from birth and can also start from things like negative attitudes, stereotyping, inadequately trained teachers, lack of support services and communication, and lack of parental involvement.

2.7.1. Full-service schools

Full-service schools offer inclusive education to diverse learners because of the implementation of the 2001 Education White Paper 6, a special needs education (DBE, 2001). According to Ayaya (2020), full-service schools were intended to provide

education indiscriminately to all learners with or without barriers to learning. Moreover, the DBE (2008) maintains that full-service schools are ordinary and specially furnished to address a full range of barriers to learning in inclusive situations.

In addition, the DBE (2010) states that inclusive schools are mainstream education institutions that provide quality education to all learners by supplying the full range of learning needs in an equitable manner. Furthermore, the Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning (2010) posit that full-service schools are ordinary schools that are specially resourced and orientated to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting.

The researcher outlined full-service schools as engaged in the process of inclusion, meaning increasing the membership of all learners in the school and attempting to reduce the barriers that may hinder learning and participation. On the other hand, full-service schools are commonplace schools that are particularly resourced and positioned in order to address barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting.

2.7.2. Special schools

The issue of special schools came up as educators' serene need to place learners with barriers to learning in these schools, and they also needed guidance from these schools about how they could support these learners. Educators were of the view that the government was not putting in enough effort to assist special schools and was undervaluing the significant role special schools play in supporting mainstream schools (Nel, Tlale & Engelbrecht, 2016).

Special schools are schools that are equipped to deliver education to learners requiring high-intensive educational and other support either on a full-time or a part-time basis (Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning, 2010). Furthermore, special schools provide education to learners who need high-level individualised and specialised support on a high-frequency basis. The role of the schools is two-fold: full-time provision of suitable and excellent education and supporting learners registered at such schools, and providing training, advice, guidelines, and monitoring on a consultative and part-time basis to both learners and teachers in ordinary schools about instruction matters, assessment, and curriculum (DBE, 2011).

The NCSNET, together with the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997), states that “special needs” in education refer to needs or priorities that the individual or the system may have, which must be addressed to ensure effective learning. The researcher acknowledges that special needs often arise due to barriers within the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context. The study revealed that special schools are amenities where education programmes for special needs students are delivered by special educators. In addition, special schools provide education for children with special educational needs.

2.8. BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Ainscow (2020) believes that barriers to learning have already been asserted. Barriers can be located within the learner, centre of learning, education system, and broader social, economic, and political context (NCSNET & NCESS, 1997). These barriers manifest themselves in different ways and only become apparent when learning breakdown occurs when learners ‘drop-out’ of the system or when the excluded become visible. Additionally, according to Education White Paper 6 (2001), the main purpose of any education system is to provide quality education for learners so that they can reach their full potential and meaningfully contribute to and participate in society throughout their lives.

Moreover, within the South African context, there are two distinct categories of learners in our country, i.e., those learners who form the majority with “ordinary needs” and a small minority of learners with “special needs” (learners who experience barriers to learning) learners who require support in order to engage in some form of the learning process. In South Africa, barriers to learning are not caused by a single factor, but by multifaceted factors. These factors can be classified into two categories: socioeconomic barriers and educational barriers. As South Africans, learners have the right to be educated in an inclusive classroom, as acknowledged in our country's constitution.

Furthermore, it is universal that the main objective of any education system in a democratic society is to provide quality education for all learners so that they will be able to reach their full potential and able be to meaningfully contribute to and participate in that society throughout their lives (NCSNET, 1997). Barriers to learning

is when learning breaks down and prevent learners from accessing provision of education.

2.9. FEATURES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

Policy developments (UNESCO, 2000; UN, 2007) put inclusive education (IE) on the universal reform agenda. Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and Van Deventer (2016) posit that the Post-1994 education policy documents specifically drew on what was judged to be the best international practices at the time and then set out a vision of what an ideal education system might look like, which is based on the following sets of principles: equality and human rights and human resource development.

Education in South Africa fails to improve the freedom of all. The idea is then that “with freedom comes responsibilities” to respect and promote constitutional imperatives to social justice. On the other hand, education has not received the full and concerted attention of the government. Additionally, structural change and the institutional transformation of education and society are required in addition to measures of positive discrimination that operate largely in terms of historical rectification and at the individual level. Positive discrimination is on its own, and in the absence of far-reaching institutional transformation, it is likely to leave the status quo unchanged (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016).

2.9.1. Present

Ainscow (2023) points out that inclusion is a process. He added that inclusion must be understood as an everlasting search to find better ways of replying to multiplicity. Furthermore, it is about learning how to live and learn from the difference. As a result, inclusion is about the presence, participation, achievement, and support of all students. Ainscow (2023) suggests that presence is apprehensive about where children are educated and how reliably and punctually they attend. Ainscow and Mel (2019) highlight that all children and young people should learn in the surroundings that best meet their needs. Children and young people should be wholly involved in the life of their school, from side-to-side, and in the inclusive ethos, culture, and values of the school. Ainscow, (2019) note that children and young people receive full-time education and lithe approaches to meet their needs. Children and young people must

be present in person or engaged via virtual means to benefit from learning. Lastly, presence is an important prerequisite of inclusive practice.

2.9.2. Participation

Ainscow (2023) contends that participation relates to the quality of their experiences at the same time as they are there and, consequently, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves. On the other hand, Ainscow and Miles (2019) posit that children and young people should have their voices heard when making decisions. Furthermore, children and young people devise the chance to participate and be involved in all aspects of school as fully as possible. That is, primary learning and childcare life, trips, and extracurricular activities. Young people should be supported and encouraged to donate to their learning. In addition, Ainscow, (2019 suggest that participation does not only refer to school work, homework, and involvement in subjects, which may pose challenges for individual children and young people. Participation is about addressing involvement in the broader school and local community. Moreover, it is about feeling involved as a peer, forming firm relations and friendships, and lifelong learning and success. Participation is full involvement in the lifetime of the school through events, trips, school plays, sports, and public events. It is also about finding an opportunity for children and young people to contribute and feel their contribution is valued. Ainscow, (2019) maintain that all chances to participate in the life of the school should be accessible to all pupils, including those needing additional support, and these should be suitably maintained.

2.9.3. Achieving

Ainscow (2023) suggests that achievement is the aftermath of learning across the curriculum, not just test or scrutiny outcomes. He adds that all children and young people should attain their full potential and have access to a modern curriculum made-to-order to meet their needs. Ainscow (2023) adds that this guidance clarifies the Scottish Government's ambition for every child and young person in Scotland. He further stated that all children and young people should receive the support they need to reach their full potential in education, life, and labour. Children and young people can also have their learning known from side-to-side methods to broader success.

2.9.4. Supported

Ainscow (2023) points out that all-inclusive children and young people benefit from the ethos and beliefs of the school, learning, and teaching. Besides, all practices and relationships between children and young people should be given the right help at the right time from the right people to support their well-being in the right place. Children and young people should be supported in participating in school life and in overcoming barriers to learning. Moreover, he suggests that support is mainly about how children and young people are allowed to achieve their full potential. Barriers to learning must be documented through robust assessment. So, it is addressed for all children and young people by providing flexible learning pathways.

In addition, children and young people are able to participate in all parts of school life. In order to support the interests of all children and young people, it is important to consider the well-being indicators of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included children. Children and young people's well-being must be considered against these indicators, and appropriate support must be provided (Ainscow, 2023).

2.10. FACTORS HINDERING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.10.1. Policy development issues

Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and Van Deventer (2016) note that the Post-1994 education policy documents sketched what was referred to as the best international practices at the time. They also denote that it is a set of visions of what the best education system might look like based on the next principles, namely equality, human rights, and human resource development.

The White Paper of 1995 (also known as White Paper 1) and the South African Schools Act (1996) moulded the basis to enable a paradigm shift in views of difference regarding learning needs in classrooms from a medical deficit model of difference to a social model of difference (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000; Swart & Pettipher 2011; Terzi, 2010). Policymakers who do not comprehend the concept of inclusive education are barriers to the implementation of inclusive education. According to Maluleke (2015) (cited in DBE, 1999), curriculum policy is a plan of action prescribed

by the government which, through the policy, outlines its vision and plan of how things should be done (DBE, 1999).

Shaturaev (2021) points out that the Indonesian education policy in modern history was recognised by Suharto, the former state president, and his advisors regarding the importance of agricultural production. The recognition was of the importance of providing people with the means of obtaining food. Consequently, for them to buy food, they must have a job.

It is against this background that job creation in Indonesia started with education. Everything was done accordingly in agriculture; Suharto and the Indonesian government transformed the country's education system, which was almost non-existent under Sukarno's presidency. Additionally, Indonesia's national programme increased the elementary school enrolment from 69 to 83 % in the 1970s. Wherein the current wages for education in the region of birth of the wage earner concludes that one extra school per 1000 children led to an increase in wages of 1.5 to 2.7%. Further, this also counters the general concern that the results of increasing quantity will be offset by the reduction of quality. Likewise, the quantity of education also plays an important role.

In the days of Suharto, the Indonesian system was based on the American school system. Hence, six years of elementary school followed by three years of junior high school with a total of nine years of compulsory education. The students choose a vocational school or senior high school, followed by a university. Lastly, there are several school standards, such as the national standard, national plus, and international standard. On the other hand, the difference is the quality and amount of English they use in the class (Shaturaev, 2021),

Foreman and Arthur-Kelly (2017) further suggest that the priorities of the government in New Zealand policy are currently promoting literacy and numeracy skills for all students, more broadly and increasing students' prospects for employment, additional training, and higher-level education (MoE New Zealand, 2013c). The New Zealand Ministry made strong statements about IEP: Coupled with a fully inclusive school, where all students are welcome and able to participate in all aspects of school life, diversity is respected and upheld. Inclusive schools believe that all students are confident, connected, and actively involved, and lifelong learners work toward this

within the New Zealand curriculum. Student's identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised, and their learning needs are addressed (MoE New Zealand). Moreover, inclusive schools in New Zealand have ethical standards and leadership that shape the culture of an inclusive school. They also have well-organised systems that show effective teamwork and constructive relationships that identify and support the inclusion of all students.

The New Zealand government announces its vision to be a fully inclusive education system with inclusions, coupled with confident students, parents, school teachers, and leaders. The MoE again describes inclusive education as being about the participation and achievement of all learners, with all students becoming capable, connected lifelong learners (MoE, 2015). Added to the government programme operating in New Zealand, the intensive Wraparound service is designed as a holistic programme for students whose challenging behaviour and learning problems may make it difficult to remain at school (MoE, 2015).

2.10.2. Teacher attitudes

Another way of forming and developing teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in the context of the educational system in order to have good practice in this field includes restructuring the curricular help from supporting the educational activities and also decreasing the number of students in one class. Furthermore, to create partnerships between teachers and students and support teachers, reforming the curriculum should also be done in parallel with proper teacher training regarding their knowledge of inclusive education. Snags are inborn to reform. It is essential to improve an educational system that adequately retorts to all the needs, characteristics, and individual differences of all children in schools (Unianu, 2012).

2.10.3. Teachers and staff training

Schulka (2018) is of the view that teachers often feel that inclusive education is something they are told to do – often without support and resources – and it becomes a top-down burden rather than a collaborative process. Thus, it is important for teachers to have the knowledge and skills to create inclusive classrooms and for school leadership to provide an inclusive and innovative environment for teachers to flourish. Teachers can also be motivated to be more inclusive by providing more

structured and supported expectations regarding how they teach and what inclusive education 'looks like' in the classroom. Chumo (2020) argues that the school administration plan reinforces the teachers' professional status and encourages their career development; this helps ensure teachers are motivated to make a meaningful contribution to the school's growth, enabling a greater degree of influence to be exercised on the main issues relevant to their work. It also increases their logic of control over activities. On the other hand, staff training provides opportunities to participate in joint policy-making, planning, co-operation, and involves leadership and growth job management.

The School Policy on Training and Development for Staff who Work in Schools (1998) states that training is gaining particular skills and knowledge through formal training and education programmes, then informally through practical experience and training on the job. Moreover, principals are responsible for improving staff and training them; likewise, they plan for the staff who are reliable with the needs of the school, staff, and students. On the other hand, the principals should also ensure the implementation and funding of these plans, which is the provision of a minimum of three days of training and development for all teaching staff during the designated period.

2.10.4. Adequate support and resources

Mpu and Adu (2021) caution that obtaining adequate resources is an important utility of school headship since a key barrier to the successful formation of ecology for inclusion is the lack of suitable resources. UNESCO (2009) detailed that inadequate funding for schools, to a great extent, hinders the implementation of inclusive education. Belay indicated that inadequate teaching and learning resources hindered the school from practising effective inclusive education. Belay(2020) also narrated that unsuitable infrastructure, inadequate learning resources, and a shortage of trained teachers in inclusive education could all be attributed to insufficient funding by the government and the school (Belay & Yihun, 2020). UNESCO (2009) also distinguished that the lack of policies and the issue of inadequate funding to extend them hinder the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

The Namibian education policy maintains that learner-centred education should promote a broader awareness of what resources are available and a critical way of using resources. Teachers must be trained to work effectively in inclusive

environments, and teachers with disabilities must be recruited and trained. Teachers with disabilities in schools will help promote equal rights, provide unique expertise and skills, contribute to breaking down barriers, and serve as important role models.

2.10.5. Curriculum issues

According to UNESCO (2009), inadequate learning resources, such as school books and learning resources that support the needs of particular groups of learners, such as Braille and easy reading materials, are significant barriers for visually impaired students in different countries. In addition to poor access and shortage of resources, the implementation of inclusive education in some countries is poor. UNESCO (2009) also noted that a lack of policies and inadequate funding hinders the implementation of inclusive education in schools. The Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE Namibia, 2007) emphasises that assessment and examinations should support learning, but not drive learning. Dave (2020) contends that curriculum adaptation is elementary to success in academic areas. Thus, primary teachers have the ability to acclimatise the curriculum to meet the individual needs of children with special needs.

2.10.6. Teachers' competencies

Sulasmi and Akrim (2020) suggest that in inclusive education, teachers are required to develop their abilities in order to be able to make changes using various developments in science and technology that will be offered to students. Teachers, particularly primary school teachers, are critical in having the ability to pinpoint potential students, including those with special needs. Moreover, it is likely to find children with special needs for apprentice classes or in basic school. However, these children's reality is typically unfamiliar to their teacher. All this happens because the teachers are not experts on children with special needs. In addition, primary school teachers generally know about children who are, for example, blind, deaf, and who experience autism because it is easy to recognise and identify them. It is clear that others who are not so clearly recognised are likely to be given the wrong treatment. Therefore, homeroom teachers are required to improve their competence to prove professionalism. In Indonesia, competence is an absorption word from English that means skills and abilities. Furthermore, the researcher cites Echols and Shadily Musfah (2011) about the meaning of the word competence, which they refer to as “a

collection of knowledge, behaviours and skills that teachers must possess to achieve learning and education goals.”

Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (2006) believe that the inclusive education programme could be successfully implemented if the level of the teachers' competency is increased. Thus, opportunities to attend courses related to the inclusive education programme have to be created, especially for those who lack exposure and training in special education. Adjustments towards the pedagogical aspects can be made internally by experienced teachers to the new teachers. The effort towards collaborative teaching between mainstream and special education teachers should be implemented. Indirectly, this effort could help to reinforce a co-operative spirit in implementing inclusive education.

2.10.7. Lack of infrastructure

According to Mpu (2021), in South Africa, the average class size of learners is enormous due to the challenges concerning infrastructure. He also points out that inclusive education methods, such as learning accommodations and flexible response options, become necessary to reach all learners when class sizes are big. Simorangkir (2021) notes that inclusive school facilities and infrastructure for teaching also need to be considered for inclusive schools; it cannot be denied that not all-inclusive schools fulfil the facilities and infrastructure according to the needs of children with special needs. Moreover, Simorangkir (2021) notes that co-ordinates and infrastructure for inclusive education, both software and hardware, are crucial to optimise teaching and learning activities and are a means of supporting the mobilisation of children with special needs in these schools.

From this perspective, the maximum possible educational facilities and infrastructures must be provided so that children with special needs learning activities can be adequately conducted. The availability of educational facilities and infrastructure for children with special needs is sometimes hampered by costs and the inability of educators to prepare for the needs of students with special needs (Winda, 2012). This research measured the availability of facilities and infrastructure in inclusive schools to support learning activities for children with special needs.

2.11. CHALLENGES PRINCIPALS ENCOUNTER IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

According to Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube (2015), Fernández Cruz, Egido Galvez, & Carballo Santaolalla, (2016), Stronge & Xu, (2021) school management is one factor that determines the quality of education. Sunaengsih, Anggarani, Amalia, Nurfatmala and Naelin (2019) reasoned that school management is one factor that determines the quality of education (Lessa, Spier & Felipe, 2018) since it indirectly determines the effectiveness of the curriculum, learning facilities and infrastructure, time, and learning process (Salmagundi, 2015).

Tapala (2021) postulates that principals face numerous challenges in their roles, including lack of time, experience, effective communication, work skills and knowledge, underdevelopment, changes in education policy and curriculum, lack of support, heavy workloads, and constant pressure. A study in New Zealand found that principals struggled to manage and balance huge workloads, internal pressure, and diverse demands (Nemaston, 2020). This resulted in tensions between teachers and school principals. Furthermore, principals must be warned of the imminent barriers in their work and be strained in overcoming them. In schools in the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia, it is revealed that principals view just as tubes for their own initiatives and leave little room for DH initiatives (Tapala, 2021). This situation does not allow the principal to grow and face their own challenges. The support from the school management may assist the principal to be more productive in their obligations.

2.12. PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Dednam and Du Plessis (2017) suggest that perception is the ability to give meaning to information gathered by the senses, such as the eyes, ears, and skin. Thus, they must not be confused with the ability to see, hear, and feel.

a) Perceptions of principals in the implementation of IE

Principals' perceptions of implementing IEP vary based on several factors, including their own attitudes, beliefs, training, and the resources available to them. Principals may perceive resource allocation as a significant challenge in implementing inclusive education policies. This includes concerns about funding, staffing, and access to

appropriate materials and facilities (Ackah & Fluckiger, 2023). Principals often perceive a need for ongoing professional development for themselves and their staff to effectively implement inclusive education practices (Jackson, 2021). Principals recognise the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive school culture where diversity is valued, and all students feel welcome and included (Soloman, 2023). Principals may perceive the need to establish collaborative partnerships with families, community organisations, and other stakeholders to support the successful implementation of inclusive education policies (Geesa, Mayes, Lowery, Quick, Boyland, Kim, Elam & McDonald, 2022).

Some principals may perceive a tension between the need to comply with inclusive education policies mandated by government authorities and the genuine desire to create inclusive environments that meet the diverse needs of all students (Nind, Rix, Sheehy & Simmons, 2023). Principals recognise the importance of providing individualised support and accommodations for students with diverse learning needs to ensure their success in inclusive settings (DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey & Sharma, 2020). Principals may perceive the need to address and potentially change the attitudes and beliefs of teachers towards inclusive education, as teacher buy-in and commitment are crucial for successful implementation (Khaleel, Alhosani & Duyar, 2021). Principals often perceive the importance of ongoing evaluation and monitoring of inclusive education practices to identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement (Neumerski, Grissom, Goldring, Rubin, Cannata, Schuermann & Drake, 2018). These perceptions highlight the complex nature of inclusive education policies and the various factors principals must consider in creating inclusive learning environments.

b) Perceptions of teachers

Teachers' perceptions of implementing inclusive education vary based on several factors, such as training, support, resources, and personal beliefs. According to Nel, Tlale, Engelbrencht and Nel (2016), one of the challenges teachers face in their actions to support learners who have learning barriers is the non-involvement of parents and the fact that some parents are uneducated.

On the other hand, Magumise (2020) restates that teachers view inclusive education as expert knowledge and skills as insufficient to effectively educate learners with disabilities in regular schools. In addition, inadequate resources are compounded by their inability to effectively assist learners with disabilities in inclusion. Likewise, Engelbrecht, Oswald, and Forlin (2006) introduce Inclusive education as worsening stress among teachers who already have pupils with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms, further citing administrative issues and teachers with low self-worth in inclusive education, lack of co-operation with parents, and insufficient support, as some of the traumatic areas (Magumise, 2020).

Here are some common perceptions drawn from research studies. Teachers often perceive inclusive education as beneficial for students with and without disabilities. They believe it promotes diversity, fosters empathy, and prepares students for life in a diverse society (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Inclusive education is seen as a means to promote social justice and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities (Mugambi, 2017). Teachers appreciate the opportunity for professional growth and development that comes with implementing inclusive practices, as it challenges them to adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020).

Challenges and concerns include inadequate resources, including funding, specialised personnel, and support services, which is a significant concern for teachers implementing inclusive education. This can lead to feelings of frustration and inadequacy (Šiška, Bekele, Beadle-Brown & Záhorský, 2020). Teachers may feel overwhelmed by the diverse needs within their classrooms and struggle to differentiate instruction effectively (Nepal, Walker & Dillon-Wallace, 2024).

Concerns about managing behaviour and maintaining classroom order may arise when including students with significant behavioural challenges in mainstream classrooms (Manolev, Sullivan & Slee, 2020). Teachers often express a need for ongoing training and professional development in inclusive education practices to feel confident and competent in meeting the diverse needs of their students (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Collaboration and support from school administrators, special education professionals, and colleagues are viewed as essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Chow, de Bruin & Sharma, 2023). Teachers'

attitudes and beliefs about disability and inclusion can significantly influence their perceptions of inclusive education. Those with positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion tend to be more supportive of inclusive practice (Kunz, Luder & Kassis, 2021).

In some cases, negative attitudes or misconceptions about students with disabilities (Kilibarda, Radevic, Maricic, Parezanovic Ilic, Djordjic, Colovic, Radmanovic, Sekulic, Djordjevic & Niciforovic, 2022). These perceptions are based on various studies in the field of inclusive education. It is important to note that perceptions may vary depending on the context, cultural factors, and individual experiences of teachers.

c) Parents' perceptions of the implementation of IE

Parents' perceptions of implementing inclusive education vary widely depending on several factors, such as their personal experiences, cultural background, and the specific context of the education system. Magumise and Sefotho (2020) believe that parents and teachers observe inclusive education as the cure-all to the non-existence of all-inclusive improvement of those with disabilities in special schools. Furthermore, they also feel much needs to be done to improve inclusive education.

Magumise (2020) maintains that teachers and parents also observe inclusive education as the solution to the lack of complete expansion of those with disabilities. On the other hand, they believe much must be done to improve inclusive education. Furthermore, teachers have faith in taking up inclusive education that is honourable, but are disappointed by factors including a shortage of resources. Here are some common perceptions that have been identified in the literature. Some parents perceive inclusive education as empowering because it promotes equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities (Pandey & Singh, 2015). Inclusive education is often seen as fostering social inclusion and acceptance of diversity, which can be beneficial for both children with disabilities and typically developing children (Kart & Kart, 2021).

Parents may perceive that inclusive education leads to better academic and social outcomes for their children, including increased self-esteem and improved communication skills (UNESCO, 2009). Some parents express concerns about the

adequacy of resources and support available in inclusive settings, including specialised instruction, assistive technology, and staff training (Stevens & Wurf, 2020).

Parents of children with disabilities may worry about their children facing stigma or discrimination from peers, teachers, or the community in inclusive settings (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020). Parents often emphasise the importance of individualised support and accommodations to meet the diverse needs of their children within inclusive classrooms (Horn, Parks & An, 2019). Effective communication and collaboration between parents and educators are critical for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Ng & Kwan, 2020). Parents who are actively involved in decision-making processes regarding their child's education tend to have more positive perceptions of inclusive education (Lalvani & Hale, 2015).

Cultural beliefs and values can influence parents' perceptions of disability and inclusive education. Some cultures may have more positive attitudes towards inclusion, while others may view disability as a source of shame or stigma (Opoku, Nketsia, Agyei-Okyere, Oginni & Torgbenu, 2022). Socioeconomic status can impact parents' access to information, resources, and support networks related to inclusive education, which in turn influences their perceptions and experiences (Papoudi, Jørgensen, Guldborg & Meadan, 2021). Parents of children with disabilities often engage in advocacy efforts to promote inclusive education policies and practices within their communities and educational systems (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020). Peer support networks and parent advocacy groups can provide valuable emotional support, information, and resources for parents navigating the challenges of inclusive education (McCrossin, Mitchell, Grantzidis, Clancy & Lach, 2022.) These perceptions highlight the complexity and diversity of parent experiences in implementing inclusive education, underscoring the importance of considering individual needs and perspectives in policy and practice.

2.12.1. Parents and teachers perceptions

According to Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016), one of the challenges teachers face in providing support to learners who have barriers to learning is the non-parents and the fact that some parents are uneducated. Magumise and Sefotho (2020) are of the view that parents and teachers view inclusive education as the cure-all to the non-

existence of all-inclusive improvement of those with disabilities in special schools. Furthermore, they also believe much must be done to improve inclusive education.

Magumise (2020) maintains that teachers and parents also observe inclusive education as the solution to the lack of complete expansion of those with disabilities. On the other hand, they believe that much needs to be done to improve inclusive education. Furthermore, teachers have faith in taking up inclusive education that is honourable, but are disappointed by factors including a shortage of resources. On the other hand, Magumise (2020) states that teachers view inclusive education as expert knowledge and skills as insufficient to effectively educate learners with disabilities in regular schools. In addition, inadequate resources are compounded by their inability to effectively assist learners with disabilities in inclusion. Likewise, Engelbrecht., Oswald, and Forlin (2006) introduce Inclusive education as worsening stress among teachers who already have pupils with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms, further citing administrative issues and teachers with low self-worth in inclusive education, lack of co-operation with parents, and insufficient support, as some of the traumatic areas (Magumise, 2020).

2.13. PRINCIPALS' ROLE

According to Leng, Muliati, Ekowati and Rahmawati (2021), the principals occupy positions that carry unique responsibilities and opportunities, and they work within a particular tradition of practice with its own strengths. Canon-shilon (2018) mentioned that principals also need to engage in professional activities, both pedagogical and managerial. Asmal (2000), Lárusdóttir and O'Connor (2017) points out that at the professional level of the day-to-day running of the school, the principal has the ability to ensure that decisions are made and chores are finalised. This may occur collaboratively with others or may happen by way of delegation, depending on what is suitable, along a continuum that runs from being authoritative to being democratic (Asmal, 2000), Lárusdóttir and O'Connor, 2017). Furthermore, Asmal states that three common leadership styles in South African Schools can be used, i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, and laissez-faire. Despite the suggestions made by Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube (2015, Bwalya, 2023, Alodhiani, 2024) leadership styles are the approaches used to motivate followers. Leadership is not a "one size fits all"

phenomenon. Leadership styles should be selected and adapted to fit organisations, situations, groups, and individuals.

Asmal (2014, Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube ,2015, Danbaba, & Panshak, 2021) believes authoritarian leaders prefer to keep tight control over staff and learners and often rely on rules and procedures to run their schools. It is clear that the authoritative style is when a principal orders everyone to evacuate the school because of a bomb threat. Moreover, authoritarianism is when the principal makes orders on curriculum matters. In contrast, leaders adopt a laissez-faire approach, which does not give their staff much guidance or direction and does not engage creatively with staff members in order to lead them. In addition, democratic leaders share planning and decision-making and guide their staff rather than telling them what to do. The principal is the senior person in the organisation and, therefore, should be in charge. On the other hand, the principal should give teachers direction and make them accountable for their work. Furthermore, in authoritarian leadership, the principal should help teachers accept responsibility for completing their work (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015:10, Danbaba, & Panshak, 2021)

Since the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) in many countries, school systems are undergoing significant changes. Within this transformation, teachers and school principals face different challenges concerning the successful implementation of inclusion in schools. In order to ensure the premise of organising learning environments that address diverse students' learning needs, an adequate basis has to be established at the school level, meeting the required conditions. This is closely linked to the question of how inclusive education can be implemented at school in the best possible way. Concerning this matter, school principals are considered a key component for the development of inclusive schools due to their influence with regard to schools.

The Guidelines for Full-Service Schools (2010) state that the role of the principal is to address school policies, improvement plans, programmes, and ethos developed in a manner that reflects inclusive practices. The assumption is that the principal and their SMT should have a steadfast belief in the significance of inclusive schooling and substantial understanding and talents for translating the perception into run-through. It is clear that the principal creates a safe, friendly, and welcoming school climate for

learners, parents, and staff to foster teamwork and inclusivity. Moreover, the principal and his management promote the view that special needs education is a service, not a place. The principal also finds tactics to celebrate the varied accomplishments of all learners.

Furthermore, the principal ensures the school maintains a register of additional support needs for learners. Once more, the principal and their management team continually pursue strategies to ensure educators provide equal access for all learners. The above discussion confirms that the principal uses a collaborative approach in creating school schedules that support inclusive practices, i.e., the provision of common planning time, time allocation for educators to be involved in care and support programmes, and institution-level support team activities.

2.14. ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

According to Boyce (2017), teachers play a crucial role in building and implementing inclusive education as they are more likely to undertake additional professional development and have a clear professional identity as “support teachers.” However Radojlovic, Kilibarda, Radevic, Maricic, Parezanovic Ilic, Djordjic, Colovic., Radmanovic, Sekulic, Djordjevic, Niciforovic, Simic Vukomanovic, Janicijevic, & Radovanovic, (2022) outline that teachers have reasoned that the lack of adequate conditions as well as the lack of professional competencies intended to develop a successful inclusive educational practice. Chuaungo (2019) contends that teachers play an essential role in bringing about inclusion. Additionally, the key role accountabilities of a teacher in creating inclusive schools are underscored in the following points:

2.14.1. Developing a positive attitude

Chuaungo (2019) is of the view that inclusion takes place as a result of the leadership role that the teacher plays in creating a learning environment that ensures positive attitudes from both the teacher and learners towards inclusion. Teachers must develop positive attitudes towards the process of inclusion and set an example to encourage the learners to assume the kind of attitude the teacher possesses. As a result, a healthy learning environment will be developed.

2.14.2 Modification of curriculum

Most teachers who teach in an inclusive classroom modify their curricula to meet the needs of their special education students. Curriculum modifications can include the provision of an audio-taped text, shortened assignments and summarised chapters of the textbook, as well as tools such as graphic organisers and colour-coded chapters to enhance a student's level of comprehension. Teachers also employ different methods and strategies to fit the learning styles and paces of all learners. Therefore, the individualised instruction system is practised to make the classroom more inclusive. Chuaungo (2019) stated that communication is important for inclusion teachers to advocate the needs of their students by ensuring that resources such as peer tutoring, instructional assistants, team teaching, and staff development opportunities are available, along with consistent policies that assess the individual student's progress. Teachers should also communicate regularly with the principal to ensure that she is aware of the specific learning needs of the special education students and the academic resources necessary for them to experience success in the inclusive classroom setting.

2.14.3. Co-ordinating provisions for support services

The teacher is responsible for carrying out the groundwork for all available support services for children with special needs. All the support services available from the government, communities, family, etc., are co-ordinated by the teacher to suit the needs of the learners. This requires identification, organisation, and implementation on the part of the teacher.

2.14.4. Liasoning with different agencies

The inclusive teacher keeps in continuous contact with special educators regarding the education of children with special needs and to update and share information and knowledge regarding their education. Moreover, the teacher is expected to constantly liaise with different NGOs and private organisations working in this field to aid support services for children with special needs.

2.15. ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Paseka (2020) states that parents' attitudes differ depending on the type of disability a child has, that is, they highly support children with sensory and physical disabilities compared to children with severe cognitive disabilities and behavioural problems. Furthermore, Paseka (2020) states that parents tend to become more positive in inclusive education implementation if educated to a higher level. Various researchers have posited parental participation in education figures as one of the most important aspects of current educational reforms and as a fundamental principle of the contemporary concept of inclusive education. Numerous studies indicate that parental involvement in various school programmes has significantly contributed to the success of inclusive school programmes. Here are how parents play an important role in creating inclusive schools.

2.15.1. Encouraging positive attitude and engagement

Parents of differently-abled and normal children are responsible for developing a positive attitude and wider perspective towards others and for understanding the essence of inclusion. Parents of normal children can inculcate acceptance towards the differently-abled kids, and parents of the differently-abled can develop a positive attitude in their children to be a part of the general school environment. Further, differently-abled kids can be encouraged to participate in activities, develop friendships, and engage in the educative process (Paseka, 2020).

2.15.2. Awareness of rights

Parents should be fully aware of their child's rights to have an inclusive education. Sometimes, schools may not support a family's desire for inclusion. In such cases, the parents can influence the policy-making and decision-making process by informing them about the rights of the child to receive education in an inclusive school (Paseka, 2020).

2.15.3. Advising curriculum adaptations and teaching methods

Families of differently-abled children can often provide useful advice for curriculum adaptation and teaching methods, as they often know best the functional limitations

and the strengths of their children. Moreover, by giving parents a say in this and considering their priorities for instruction, it is more likely that skills learned at school are also applied at home. At the same time, some curriculum adaptations will benefit children who, despite not having a disability, might have some special educational needs. This is why it is always better for parent aides to be considered as available teacher support rather than assigned to individual students (Paseka, 2020).

2.15.4. Providing resources

In many cases, the school is not financially equipped to provide all the necessary resources and equipment to foster inclusion of all children. Parents can often play a significant role by providing the needs of their children with special needs to a great extent. For instance, parents of a hearing-impaired child, if possible, can provide hearing aids to the child and save the school the trouble of going beyond their limits to bring about inclusion (Paseka, 2020).

2.15.5. Supporting inclusion beyond schools

We often see that despite the inclusion initiative taken by the school for differently-abled children, they are still not fully included due to the exclusive environments outside school life. The fact that these students are not invited to their non-disabled peers' birthday parties, play dates, etc., hinders the process of inclusion in the school as well. Thus, it falls in the hands of parents to support the cause of inclusion outside the school, which will further enhance inclusion in the school environment. The family and the school can ensure the spread of desirable practices to address stigma and prejudice (Paseka, 2020).

2.16. GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A clear concept and definition of inclusive education; concrete inclusive education targets, indicators, measures, and outcomes; an understanding of existing structural, educational, and cultural challenges to successful implementation; a well-designed implementation strategy that includes a clear plan, evaluation, and school review process; providing inclusive education training, sustained support, and resources for all teachers and school leaders; and national leadership on IEP, education

management information systems, curricular-reform, and co-ordinating social systems, such as inclusive education and inclusive employment (Paseka, 2020).

2.17. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA

UNESCO (2000:102) maintains that all children have the right to receive an education that does not discriminate on any grounds, such as class, ethnicity, religion, economic status, refugee status, language, gender, or disability. These rights include “access to free and compulsory education, equity, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, the right to quality education, content, and learning process” (UNESCO, 2000:84). Hehir, Grindal, Freeman, Lamoreau, Borquaye and Burke (2016) suggest that inclusive education is an approach to schooling in which students with different kinds of disabilities and learning needs are educated in classes with non-disabled and usually developing students. In an inclusive arrangement, students who need additional support and services spend most of their time with their non-disabled peers rather than in separate classrooms or schools (Kirschner, 2015, Hosshan, Stancliffe, Bonati, and Villeneuve, 2024, Vetonemi, & Kärnä, 2021).

On the other hand, inclusive education is most often used to mean the inclusion of persons with physical and mental impairments, such as sensory or mobility limitations, intellectual disabilities, LDs, language disorders, behaviour disorders, and autism spectrum disorders. Fedulova, Ivanova, Atyukova & Nosov, (2019) note that educators and theorists also use inclusion to refer to an educational system designed to ensure access for all groups that have been marginalised in society and schools (Fedulova, Ivanova, Atyukova & Nosov, 2019). Inclusive education in Namibia was colonised by the German government from 1884 to 1915 before the South African government took over after World War One in 1920. During German colonisation, the education system was racially segregated; schools became compulsory for white children, and black children were left with missionaries (Dahlstrom, 2002, Christie, 2020, spring, 2016). When the former South African colonial government took over Namibia, they implemented the Bantu education system, which also promoted inequality. Due to intervention in 1945, the League of Nations adopted a universal declaration of human rights in education systems to promote the right of education to all children, including those with disabilities.

(Kisanji 1995, Sheetheni, 2021, Ambili, Haihambo, & Hako, 2024) indicates that children in Namibia could not complete school and that especially those living with disabilities were pushed out by the system because the system could not accommodate them. (Johnsen and Skjørten 2000, Chinhara, (2016) explain that in the 1960s. The lives of those living with disabilities by that time were limited because they could not socialise with others in society. Cushner (1996), Heyer,(2015), Lawson, and Beckett, (2021) , Cole, (2022) state that due to a campaign launched by international human rights organisations about the segregation of the disabled from their family members, things began to change for the better. Normalisation was introduced to ensure that children with disabilities could be taught in regular classrooms with other learners. By 1990, when Namibia was free from colonialism, the government embarked on a reform to promote the national goals of access, equity, quality, and democracy to apply to all Namibian children.

The Namibian government also participated in signing agreements with other countries, specifically at the Human Rights Convention and Salamanca Statements (UNESCO, 1994). Policies such as the national policy on EFA, national gender policy, inclusive education, vulnerable children and orphans policy, teenage pregnancy policy, and the HIV/AIDS policy were developed. Policies were developed to respond to the challenges in the communities and promote the national goals while also seeing that all children are educated in a less restrictive environment. There is a commitment from the Namibian government to ensure that all children enjoy equal rights to education without any form of discrimination.

Finally, it is also key to note that the past education system affected the Namibian people in terms of their literacy development skills because those who were excluded from the education system are now unskilled and unable to join the job market. Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution (1990) is clear, and it states that all children will have the right to education and that primary and secondary education are free of charge. In addition, the Namibian government has made education a priority as 23% of its budget is allocated to the MoE (SACMEQ, 2010). The MoE (2008:3) minutes that children experience exclusion, but in particular children in rural areas, children of farm workers, disabled children, and children of minority groups. School waste is also observed, especially among the marginalised children of the Himba and San communities.

IEP was developed to address differences and accommodate diversity by ensuring that children with learning differences participate fully in their communities and schools. It is important to explain the current state of inclusive education in the Namibian context and the common barriers to learning. Haitembu (2014) asserts that a lack of knowledge and correct information regarding inclusion remain challenges in Namibian schools, hindering the provision of inclusive education. This situation consequently affects the quality of education that learners with special needs should receive. Haitembu (2014) further outlines some challenges hindering the inclusion of learners with disabilities in Namibian schools, stating that the poor quality of teacher training and teacher support and the negative attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of these learners in the mainstream affect IEP implementation negatively. It effectively causes IEP to fail.

The researcher conducted the study about inclusive education, which refers to when schools serve all children, including those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities, such as learners with special educational needs and disabilities, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, and also those who have been effectively excluded from the educational process within their schools due to their slow progress.

2.18. CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.18.1. The sociocultural factors

Akinyi and Ezekiel (2015) postulate that most respondents believed that society contributed to the negative attitude toward learners with special educational needs. The motive for such failure is society's cultural beliefs and values. Several cultures blame the causes of disability on familial sins and other misdeeds. Hence, such beliefs lead to pupils being excluded from any school environment. The study revealed that the attitude re-counted was unfriendly, and many pupils, teachers, and society at large saw such learners negatively.

2.18.2. Parental factors

Furthermore, Akinyi and Ezekiel (2015) declared that parental factors also contributed to the problem of exclusion in such a way that the parents of learners with learning difficulties feel tremendous pain caused by the members of the society. Some parents were also unaware of their child's inability; meanwhile, they did not take their children to the liable centre in the county. Nevertheless, it means that the majority of community members are not ready to lend a hand. Additionally, parents are left behind to struggle with their problems, bearing in mind that most of these parents are suffering in poverty. Parents and pupils have made significant contributions to shaping the implementation of inclusion (Lindsay, 2007).

2.18.3. School-based factors

The study revealed school-based factors such as the unavailability of instructional materials, lack of an SNE learner-centred inclusive curriculum, and inadequate teaching strategies. The researcher also concluded that most of the physical facilities in the sampled schools were highly inadequate for the SNE pupils. For example, classrooms, building designs, playgrounds, play materials, and toilets were not modified to suit SNE pupils (Akinyi & Ezekiel, 2015).

2.18.4. Playing fields

Akinyi and Ezekiel (2015) state that playing fields were littered with objects, stones, grass, and pieces of wood, baring the learners to great danger, and consequently, they should be cleared of such dangerous items. Auxiliary, the play items that were available in schools need to be amended to be useful to these pupils.

2.18.5. Socioeconomic factors

Akinyi and Ezekiel (2015) contend that socioeconomic factors are the least powerful challenges to the process of SNE implementation since the government professed in 2003 that primary school education is free for all pupils. For this reason, the parent's financial encumbrance was partially settled. In addition, it is good to note that families with special children were mainly from poor economic backgrounds. Such parents do not have basic education, which makes them want their children to be better than themselves in terms of academic achievement.

Challenges in implementing inclusive education are swotted under the supply of teaching and learning resources, friendliness of learners, environment and human capital, and efficacy of the administration (Adebayo & Karen, 2015). Boyle and Anderson (2021) believe that inclusive education can be compared to a bicycle where momentum powers it forward and must continually move to stay upright. With this movement, a clear direction of travel also needs to be followed.

Chitiyo, Hughes, Chitiyo, Changara, Itimu-Phiri, Haihambo, Taukeni and Dzenga (2019) maintain that many countries embrace inclusive education. One of the main challenges African countries face in this regard is the shortage of qualified teachers with the required skills to produce adequate education for their children with special needs. Children with disabilities should have access to regular schools which would accommodate them within a centred pedagogy capable of meeting their needs in regard to inclusive education in sub-Saharan African countries like Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Imaniah & Fitria, 2018). It was evident that the educational opportunities for all, including learners with special educational needs (LSEN), remained at a policy statement level within general education policies (Booth & Pather, 2010; UNESCO, 2002).

2.18.6. Poor physical infrastructure

Mpu and Adu (2021) point out that poor school physical infrastructure is the major challenge, making teaching and learning for learners with disabilities difficult. Furthermore, the structure of school buildings, even those built under the new government, do not consider the needs of learners with physical disabilities and other disabilities. Therefore, entrances to most buildings, for example, have long staircases that cannot be accessed by physically disabled learners using wheelchairs.

2.18.7. Poor facilities

In addition, Mpu and Adu (2021) are of the view that a lack of learning materials is another challenge that constrains their learning. Additionally, many schools in South Africa do not have enough chairs and tables for the students; thus, many learners struggle to get a chair to sit on. This becomes more difficult for a student with a

disability who cannot run fast to get a chair. There are also no books for visually impaired learners.

2.18.8. Transport problems

Mpu and Adu (2021) deduce that learners with corporeal infirmities do not have transportation from their homes to schools. As a result, they are often late to classes, losing valuable time in transit. Moreover, public transport in South Africa is not wheelchair-friendly, as there is no place to keep wheelchairs.

2.19. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Cologon (2019) believes that the challenge to overcoming inclusive education is debunking the myths and misunderstandings of inclusive education. There is a need to provide educators, schools, and communities with accurate, up-to-date information. For example, inclusion is not a service or programme offered to a group of students. It doesn't happen in a classroom, nor is it an instructional strategy. Education is both a strength and a vulnerability for populations on the move (UNESCO, 2019).

Cologon (2019) also suggests that inclusive education involves valuing and facilitating the full participation and belonging of everyone in all aspects of our education communities and systems. He further states that no one is excluded from inclusive education. In addition, support for inclusion is implanted within everyday educational practices. The view is that inclusive education is about everyone learning together in all our diversity. This means that everyone has genuine opportunities to learn. In addition, together with support as needed, all students are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the curriculum accordingly, making inclusion a shared experience. Inclusion is an attitude that determines how we interact with one another. It also drives our desire to include every student in meaningful learning experiences alongside their peers regardless of ability.

2.20. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter has provided a theoretical framework and literature review to the study. The chapter commences with the introduction, social constructivism, theoretical framework, preliminary literature review, features of IEP, LDs and impairment, key barriers to learning and development are also described. The factors hindering the

implementation of inclusive education, the perceptions of stakeholders towards inclusive education, as well as the role of principals are also discussed. It briefly delineates both principal leadership, followed by the challenges principals encounter in the management of schools, a guidelines for successful inclusive education, inclusive education in Namibia, challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education, strategies to overcome challenges in the implementation of inclusive education as well as the conclusion of the study. The next chapter is focused on the methodology that was used in the study, including research paradigm, research approach, research design, and data collection instruments. The Sample size and sampling procedure were discussed. Lastly, data analysis, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study were presented.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed recent literature on the study's topic. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used in this study and how the research procedure will be disclosed. The chapter clarifies the research methods, research paradigm, research design, sampling, ethical considerations, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis methods used in the study. The research objectives and research questions guided the selection of data collection and data analysis techniques, which attempt to assess principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools in the NCC. The research methodology aspects discussed in this chapter are the research paradigm, the research design, sample, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, and ethical issues such as permission, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.

A methodology has been defined as "the method used in conducting the investigation" (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Methodology has also been described as "how should we study the world" (Kawulich, 2015). Amaren, Hamad, Mashhour and Mashni (2020) agree that a methodology is the "WAYOUT." Every researcher needs a methodology to reach the exit point when conducting scientific research. Research methodology can also be defined as the mechanism for controlling the connection process between the starting point and the arrival point of the research. Furthermore, research methods are a range of tools that are used for different types of enquiry, just as a variety of tools are used for doing different practical jobs, for example, a pick for breaking up the ground or a rake for clearing leaves. In all cases, it is necessary to know the correct tools for doing the job and how to use them to the best effect (Walliman, 2021).

According to Asanahabi (2019), research methodology is the procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic. Research methods are a variety of techniques that people use when studying a given phenomenon. They are planned, scientific, and value-neutral. A research methodology is a collective term for the structured research process. Methodologies usually include research design, data gathering, and data analysis. Research methodology seeks to inform why a research study has been undertaken.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Kumari, Lavanya, Vidhya, Premila and Lawrence (2023), a research paradigm is a process for collecting, analysing, and interpreting information to answer questions, but to qualify as research, the process must have certain characteristics. As far as possible, it must be controlled, rigorous, systematic, valid and verifiable, empirical, and critical. According to Khatri (2020), a paradigm is an elementary and complete belief system that outlooks the research phenomena. Paradigm is the worldview perspective, or school of thought, and a set of shared beliefs that inform the meaning or interpretation of research data (Khatri, 2020). Furthermore, Khatri (2020) is of the view that paradigm is perceived as a way of seeing the world that frames a research topic and influences the way that researchers think about the topic.

Additionally, Kamal (2019) states that paradigm refers to a set of beliefs about the way in which specific glitches exist and the strength of agreements on how such problems can be scrutinised. Furthermore, according to Khatri (2020), a research paradigm is a straightforward and complete belief system to view the research phenomena. It is the researcher's worldview perspective, thinking, school of thought, or set of shared dogmata that inform about the meaning or interpretation of research information.

Kivunja and Kuyuni (2017) cautioned that a paradigm is a system of beliefs, ideas, values, and habits that is a way of thinking about the real world. Further, paradigms try to be like the shared assumptions and morals that frame how a researcher sees the world and interprets and performs within that world. Maxwell (2016) suggests that through this conceptual lens, researchers look at the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed. It is important for the researcher to be aware and informed about the position of seeing and observing the world and its phenomena. It also means that there needs to be clear philosophical perspectives about how the truth is viewed, how knowledge is gained by what methods and methodology, and how values are addressed in the research being carried out based on a particular research paradigm. Kivunja (2017) posits that paradigm means a philosophical way of thinking and pattern. The word has its aetiology in Greek, which means pattern. In educational research, the term paradigm is used to describe a researcher's 'worldview.' This worldview is the perspective, thinking, school of thought, or set of shared beliefs that inform the

meaning or interpretation of research data. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) believe that the term paradigm is derived from the Greek meaning pattern and has also been generally well-defined by many academics. Khatri (2020) further declares that a research paradigm is simply known as the philosophical foundation of the framework of research work. It is also termed a comprehensive belief system and worldview that guides a researcher to frame a research process in a certain way. In other words, it is also considered as the philosophical position of the researcher in the research in which the researcher claims and justifies how the researcher views reality, assumptions about knowledge, methodology, and values. Furthermore, the research paradigm explicitly states the researcher's positions on the ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology of research.

The term paradigm is derived from the Greek meaning pattern (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) and has been broadly defined by many academics. According to Graupner, Rossouw, Lodewyk and Mthembu (2022), a paradigm is perceived as "a way of seeing the world that frames a research topic" and influences how researchers think about the topic. Kamal (2019), Khatri (2020), Ross (2020) and Atkinson (2021) further argued that a paradigm is a set of beliefs about how particular problems exist and a set of agreements on how such issues can be investigated. Burrell and Morgan (2017) also argued that "all social scientists approach their subject via explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world." Consequently, such viewpoints and assumptions through which knowledge, reality, values, and methodological approaches are defined under each paradigm are simply known as components of the research paradigm.

According to Ndou (2022), the paradigm reflects the shared assumptions and principles that frame how a researcher sees the world, interprets it, and acts within it. Through this conceptual lens, researchers examine the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed (Maxwell, 2016). The study was located in the interpretative paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1985) and Henning, (2013) in Tshabalala (2021) agree that this is a paradigm that is based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective, but is shaped by human experience and social contacts. According to Alharahsheh (2020), a paradigm includes several components that can be considered as ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Tshabalala and Maree (2020), Creswell

(2017), and Morrow (2015) claim that interpretivism aims to understand the world from the point of view of participants who support this argument.

The interpretive research paradigm is well-suited because it enables the researcher to interpret the views of principals' regarding the implementation of inclusive education. The interpretive paradigm was used together with epistemology and ontology in this study. According to Carson (2022), epistemology can be concisely defined as how reality is known by the researcher. Different paradigms have different assumptions and views in terms of ontology and epistemology. Therefore, each of them can have different assumptions in the way of reality as well as knowledge is perceived, which determines a research approach reflected within its own methodology and methods (Scotland, (2012) Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, (2020). This paradigm was well-thought-out for the study because each principal has unique experiences in the implementation of inclusive education in primary school policy change, and data collected through interviews were interpreted to arrive at such conclusions.

The perspectives of the research paradigm pronounce ontology as the nature of reality, which can be briefly defined as how reality is known by the researcher (Alharahsheh, 2020). Therefore, it is concerned with how a researcher aims to uncover knowledge to reach reality. Moreover, ontology can be defined as the nature of reality. Thus, ontology is mainly concerned with the phenomenon in terms of its nature of existence. Ontology looks for reality by indicating an existing type of knowledge. Anti-positivism is an approach that contradicts positivism as it rejects the notion that the real world exists independently of human knowledge. According to the anti-positivism approach, the separation between objective and subjective is impossible; thus, discourses or traditions which establish interpretations and meanings must be attached to social and political phenomena (Berg, 2011). Positivism is counted on the philosophical stance of natural scientists that works with observable reality within society leading to the production of generalisations (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020)

3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Bailey, Hutter and Hennink (2020), qualitative research is the method that permits the researcher to

examine people's experiences in detail by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies. Furthermore, qualitative research is an approach that allows the researcher to identify issues from the perspective of the researcher's study. According to Urcia (2021), qualitative research methodologies are the philosophical and theoretical frameworks applied in a systematic inquiry into social phenomena in a natural setting. Creswell and Poth (2018) regard qualitative research as descriptive because the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures. Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa and Varpio (2015) maintain that qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals or groups behave, how organisations function, and how interactions shape relationships. Additionally, the researcher is the main data collection instrument in qualitative research. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) allude that qualitative research is a valued paradigm of inquiry, and the complexity that surrounds qualitative research requires rigorous and methodical methods to create useful results.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Asenahabi (2019), the research design is the theoretical framework within which it is conducted; it is a research plan that offers a complete summary of data collection. Furthermore, Pandey and Pandey (2021), a research design is simply the framework or plan for a study that is used as a guide in collecting and analysing the data. It is a blueprint that is followed in completing a study. Research design is the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. It is a map that is usually developed to guide the research.

Moreover, "research design is a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collection and analysing the needed information. Research design is also a plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a research design defines the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what condition that data will be obtained.

On the other hand, Bhandari (2023) defines research design as a strategy for answering research questions using empirical data. A qualitative investigation method was used in this study because the study is designed to explain complex phenomena through verbal explanations rather than testing hypotheses with numerical values. The study strives to present a thoughtful understanding of principals' experiences in implementing IEP in the NCC primary schools. This study adopted a case study research design with data collected through interviews and focus group interviews within the NCC.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data collection instruments are tools used to gather information for research. These can include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, and experiments. Data collection instruments in research refer to instruments used to gather data relevant to a study's objectives. Properly chosen tools also align with the study's methodology and theoretical framework (Punch, 2013). Interview schedules were designed to guide the researcher when collecting qualitative data. Effective tools ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, which is essential for valid conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Semi structured interviews were used to gather data. Magaldi and Berler (2020) define the SSIs as exploratory. They further explain that the SSIs is generally based on a guide and typically focuses on the main topic that provides a general pattern. In addition, Megaldi and Berler (2020) argue that the SSIs, despite its topical trajectories provided prior to the interview, enables a researcher to go deep for a discovery (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi & Syam, 2022). The interview is mostly used to explore a life story of a person or a group of people. The SSI is flexible, allowing new questions to be brought forward during the interview due to what the interviewees have said. In the SSI, an interviewer generally has a framework of themes to be explored (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi & Syam, 2022).

Mbelu (2020) elucidates that SSIs consist of a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, guided by a flexible interview protocol with probing and follow-up questions. SSIs were selected as the means of creating data because they are suitable for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of the participants concerning complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable searching for more

information and explaining of answers. In-depth face-to-face interviews are paramount to unearthing participants' experiences, and SSIs are included for focus and direction. During the process, observations are recorded, and memos, journal entries, logs, field notes, and anecdotal records are kept. Relevant archival records and documents may be examined and analysed (Ramsook, 2018).

SSIs were conducted to take participants through the same process by asking them the same questions. Interviews were conducted with participants in a quiet and arranged office free from disturbances. A sociable atmosphere with participants was established by ensuring that participants were comfortable before the interview started. Interviews were conducted individually with participants for about 30 to 40 minutes. For the purpose of data generation, the researcher used one method for data generation, namely SSIs. Qualitative research involves more intense and continual contact with the empirical field.

3.6. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Purposive sampling was used to choose the research site and participants in this study. Purposive sampling was also applied because the selected schools and the selected participants had specific knowledge and expertise regarding the principal's experiences in the implementation of inclusive education in the primary schools in the NCC. Patton (2015) noted that in purposive sampling, the units or characters are not chosen for their representativeness but for their relevance to the research question, analytical framework, and explanations given in the research. The sample for the current study was drawn from a population with similar demographic/socioeconomic status profiles, namely African middle-class educators and principals. Palinkas (2015) indicates that purposeful sampling identifies and selects information-rich cases related to the phenomenon. Sampling details the selection of groups of elements, such as individuals, groups, or organisations. Identifying the place and the people to participate in a study is done through sampling. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), a sample is a portion of a population or universe.

On the other hand, population does not necessarily mean a number. Population also refers to the total quantity of things or cases that are our research subject. The sample constitutes a controllable number of people that could sensibly be betrothed with at

locations and within a timeframe that would allow for the generation of adequate data (Gozwana, 2018).

According to Sharma (2017), sampling is a technique (procedure or device) employed by a researcher to systematically select a relatively smaller number of representative items or individuals (a subset) from a pre-defined population to serve as subjects (data source) for observation or experimentation as per objectives of their study. Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmaetz (2016) concur that a sample is a subset of a population, and we survey the units from the sample with the aim of learning about the entire population. Kumari, Lavanya, Vidhya, Premila and Lawrence (2023) acknowledge the sampling procedure as a process of choosing part of a population to test hypotheses about the entire population. Guetterman (2015) added that sampling procedures are used to choose the number of participants, interviews, or work samples to be used in the research process.

In this study, five primary schools were sampled. The schools were sampled based on their defined characteristic of being selected by the NCC manager to function as a mainstream pilot of the five sampled primary schools. According to Rudest and Newton (2015), qualitative researchers are deliberate and purposeful in seeking participants who are likely to contribute to a deeper understanding of the questions or topics posed by the study. The schools that participated were purposively designated because they matched the requirements of the study in terms of being full-service schools.

3.6.1. Purposive sampling

Andrade (2021) alludes that research is almost always conducted on purposive samples. A purposive sample is one whose characteristics are defined for a purpose that is relevant to the study. The purpose of sampling is to draw conclusions about populations from samples. Moser and Korstjens (2018) define purposive sampling as a sampling method in which participants are selected because of some defining characteristic that makes them the holders of the data needed for the study. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying

theories or a set number of participants. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups who are proficient and well-informed about the phenomenon of interest.

The schools that participated were purposively designated because they matched the requirements of the study in terms of being full-service schools and because there were five of them. Moreover, the researcher engaged in assessing principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools in the NCC. The researcher also used purposive sampling to hand-pick participants within those five schools based on their relevance to the problem under investigation. Five principals, five DHs, five intermediate phase teachers, and five parents participated in the SSIs. According to Tenny, Brannan, Brannan and Sharts-Hopko (2017), qualitative research explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviour.

3.6.2. Profiling of the research sites

A case study that involved five full-service primary schools in one District of Education in the NCC was employed. Five of the full-service primary schools that participated were situated in rural areas, and School A is approximately 61 km apart. From School B, the distance is 35 km, and from School C, it is 15 km. School D is approximately 20 km, and the fourth school is approximately 38 km. The areas in which these five schools are located lack basic resources such as better roads, sanitation, and healthcare facilities. Road infrastructure, education, and healthcare facilities are underdeveloped.

3.6.3. Participant codes

Table 3.1 below shows the different participants who were involved in the SSIs and focus group discussions.

Table 3.1: Participants from each school who participated in the interviews

Schools	Principal (P)	Departmental Heads	Teachers	Parents
School A	Principal 1	DH 1	Teacher 1	Parent 1
School B	Principal 2	DH 2	Teacher 2	Parent 2

School C	Principal 3	DH 3	Teacher 3	Parent 3
School D	Principal 4	DH 4	Teacher 4	Parent 4
School E	Principal 5	DH 5	Teacher 5	Parent 5

A total of 25 participants were conveniently sampled to participate in this study.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) define data analysis as consisting of three flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes, interview transcriptions, photographs, drawings, and video footage (Ali, 2022). According to Watkins (2017), data reduction happens throughout the process of a project. Data were recorded at the time of data collection.

Data display was organized and compressed assembly of information that permitted the researcher to draw conclusions and take action. The display consisted of verbatim quotes from interviews, short vignettes, or narratives from ethnographic research of life histories. On the other hand, data were displayed as matrices, graphs, charts, maps or networks, and visual data such as photographs, drawings, and collages were also be displayed.

The conclusion of data analysis was the third stream of analysis activity. Researcher started to draw conclusions from the start of data collection. Further, researcher note patterns and possible explanations. However, these conclusions should only be finalised once the analysis is complete. These three streams of activity were interwoven, and researcher were involved in each activity in a cyclical way throughout a project. In addition, data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information, inform conclusions, and support decision-making. Data analysis was the process of marking meaning from the collected data. Thematic analysis methods were employed to analyse and interpret data.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clark, 2006). Data were gathered by audio recordings so they can be transcribed and analysed later on. Data were analysed qualitatively because the researcher engaged with it by reading field notes and rerunning recorded interviews instantly after the end of the interactive session with participants at the research sites. This exercise helped the researcher to make thick descriptions of the original meanings and views shared by participants, and the researcher worked on it to create apposite answers to research questions. In particular, transcription, reading through data, and thematic content analysis were employed to analyse data.

3.8. STEPS FOR THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA

The steps discussed below were adopted when analysing and interpreting data.

3.8.1. Familiarisation

The researcher familiarised herself with the collected data. Audio data were transcribed to text through MS translator software. Moreover, this study shadowed a qualitative research analysis that comprehend the transcripts from a voice recorder. Furthermore, the researcher collected data by voice recording and transcribed verbatim. Additionally, the researcher studied all interviews and relevant data before proceeding. Transcripts were consequently conveyed verbatim to a personal computer and saved on Word documents. The researcher designed a table with themes, sub-themes, and codes. The researcher wrote notes using a notebook and recorded introductory comments. The transcripts were allotted codes for the participants.

3.8.2. Look for themes in the codes

Once the familiarisation process was finalised, the researcher identified and organised meaningful preliminary codes. The second step of the research embraced the regimented reading of the transcripts to classify and record significant elements of the findings. Coding qualitative data endorsed that the researcher commences data coding by repeatedly undergoing the interview transcripts. Williams and Moser (2019) postulate that coding is a method that employs the processes that reveal themes

embedded in the data, in turn suggesting thematic directionality toward categorising data through which meaning can be negotiated, codified, and presented. Furthermore, in qualitative research, coding is a key structural operation enabling data analysis and successive steps to serve the purpose of the study. Thus, thematic coding was employed on the transcripts in this study.

3.8.3. Review themes

Now that the codes, themes, and sub-themes were known, the topic was again evaluated, verifying that everything classified as a theme matches the data and whether it exists in the data. After all the themes were adequately and thoroughly coded, comprehension was explained, backed by evidence, and connected with the codes. The research questions were also evaluated to ensure the facts and topics uncovered were relevant.

3.8.4. Finalise themes

The themes were reviewed and refined to shape the analysis and interpretation of data. Finalising the themes required explaining them in-depth and checking data and codes to see if the themes were reflected. The researcher ensured that the names of the themes appropriately described their features.

3.8.5. Report writing

In this final stage, the researcher re-examined the data to write a report. When drafting the report, enough details were provided so that clients could assess the findings. Every theme was identified and related to the results generated through the research questions.

3.9. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

When the participants' perceptions are correctly reflected in a study, it demonstrates trustworthiness. Trustworthiness refers to the quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of the qualitative research findings (Ndou, 2021). According to Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules (2017), trustworthiness is one way researchers can encourage themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention. Nowell, Norris, White

and Moules (2017) refined the concept of trustworthiness by introducing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. Trustworthiness was attained by checking the report, results, and conclusion, as well as by accessing the data's credibility.

According to Lemon and Hayes (2020), trustworthiness is important as it is the truth value piece of research. When a research project reveals the reality, ideas and experiences of the participants, it is thought to be trustworthy. The following criteria to be considered to achieve trustworthiness in this study, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity (Nhemachena, 2020). The participants will be allowed to review the researcher's interpretation of the data and ask for clarifications where they need lucidity. The researcher will also keep in continuous contact with the supervisor to guarantee sufficient leadership regarding the trustworthiness of the research.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility can also be operationalised through the process of member checking to test the findings and interpretations with the participants (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, and 2017). For this study, credibility was operationalised through the process of member checking to test the findings and interpretations with the participants. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. On the other hand, credibility establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views.

3.9.2. Dependability

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) assert that to achieve dependability, researchers must ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and documented when readers are able to examine the research process. They are better able to judge the dependability of the research (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) state that one way that a research study may

demonstrate dependability is for its process to be audited, which were discussed in further detail below. In order to establish dependability in this study, each process of the study was detailed to enable other researchers to repeat the study and achieve similar results. This proposes that other researchers can repeat the study, and the results were coherent. Furthermore, Korstjens and Moser (2018) posit that dependability is the stability of findings over time. Dependability also involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study, such that all are supported by the data received from participants.

To ensure dependability, researchers should use consistent, well-documented procedures throughout the study. Employing a clear research design, maintaining thorough records, and ensuring transparency in data collection and analysis are key. Regular audits or peer reviews of the research process can also help identify biases or inconsistencies. Reflective practices, such as keeping a research journal, support dependability by documenting decision-making and methodological adjustments over time.

3.9.3. Transferability

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) posit that transferability refers to the generalisability of inquiry. In qualitative research, this concerns only case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researcher may not know the sites where they wish to transfer the findings; however, the researcher is responsible for providing thick descriptions so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their own site can judge transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Korstjens and Moser (2018) concur that transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents. The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description.

To maintain transferability, researchers should provide detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and methods used. This allows others to assess if the findings are applicable to different settings. Ensuring consistent data collection and analysis methods while being transparent about limitations also aids transferability.

Clear documentation of assumptions and decision-making processes enables the researcher to replicate or apply the findings to similar contexts.

3.9.4. Confirmability

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) concur that confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. Further, Koch (1994) recommended that researchers include markers such as the reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study so that others can understand how and why decisions were made. Confirmability is characterised by adding that the researcher's expositions and findings are derived from the provided data. Nowell, Norris, White., & Moules, (2017) suggest that confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), it is the degree to which other researchers can confirm the findings of the research study. Confirm ability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but clearly derived from the data. To achieve confirm ability, this study demonstrated how the findings are based on participants' responses and not any researcher bias or personal motivation.

To ensure confirm ability, the findings were shaped by the data rather than researcher bias. This was achieved through keeping an audit trail, documenting the research process in detail, and reflecting on the findings to acknowledge potential biases. Debriefing of peers also helped the researcher to ensure objectivity and enhance the credibility of the study's findings.

3.9.5. Reflexivity

Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggest that reflexivity is the process of critical self-reflection about oneself as a researcher (own biases, preferences, preconceptions) and the research relationship (relationship to the respondent, and how the relationship affects participant's answers to questions).

To maintain reflexivity, researchers should actively reflect on their own biases, assumptions, and influence on the research process. Keeping a reflexive journal helps track how personal perspectives might shape data interpretation. Regular self-examination and transparency about one's role, values, and interactions with participants are crucial. Engaging in discussions with peers or mentors further supports reflexivity by encouraging critical examination of potential biases in the research process.

3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is imperative that ethical issues are considered during the formulation of the evaluation plan. Ethical considerations during evaluation include the safety of human subjects through the request of suitable ethical ethics (Arifin, 2018). In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular significance due to the in-depth nature of the study process.

3.10.1. Permission to conduct the study

The researcher obtained a clearance certificate from the UNISA before collecting data. In negotiating entry to the schools, the researcher applied for permission from the Limpopo DBE, NCC office, and the four selected public schools.

3.10.2. Voluntary participation and informed consent

The researcher explained the purpose of the research study to participants before requesting them to participate. Similarly, this study may contribute to attitude change in teachers, parents, learners, and rural communities, as well as how they relate to children with learning barriers and disabilities. In other words, the local authorities and the schools may use recommendations from the researcher, who sought permission from UNISA, and the permission was granted. Once ethical consideration delineates asking permission of a study's human subjects before performing an experiment. Schools were requested in writing from the DBE, relevant district officers, principals,

and participating school teachers. Once permission was approved, the researcher undertook the pitch work.

To maintain informed consent, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The methods, risks, and benefits to participants were fully explained. Consent was voluntary, documented, and ongoing, allowing participants to withdraw at any time. Regularly checking for understanding was continuously checked. The researcher ensured confidentiality and protected participants' rights, revisiting consent if study conditions change or new information arises.

3.10.3. Anonymity and confidentiality

According to Chang (2020), anonymity was improved when the researcher cannot identify a certain response with a particular respondent in action research. Furthermore, anonymity was practised in this study because no participants' names and school names were referred to in the research; instead, codes were used. The researcher coded the participants and their schools using the first five letters of the alphabet. According to Chiroodza (2020), in the course of the research, researchers are entrusted with information about participants, much of which is of a personal and sensitive nature. Therefore, researchers should consider privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality issues. In this study, confidentiality was escalated to alleviate uncertainties and fear; the researcher informed the respondents that no information concerning their inputs would be released to the public. The audio recordings were downloaded onto the desktop and secured with a password known only to the researcher to prevent unauthorised access. Additionally, the notebook containing the data was not labelled. The interview sessions were also conducted in private, ensuring confidentiality for the participants, and neither the names of the participants nor the schools were referenced in the research.

3.10.4. Harm and risk

Participants in the study are adults; no minor is involved. During the study, the researcher will ensure that all participants are safe and protected from any harm. Questions may not be asked as a way of exposing the participants so that they feel uncomfortable. Should the researcher notify that one of the participants is unwell

during the interview process, they will be encouraged to seek medical help immediately. Furthermore, the researcher will consider all possible causes of harm to participants. Risk and harm may come in several ways, such as social, physical, and psychological. Before the study, all possible risks of harm will be disclosed to participants, and participants will be made aware of the resources, counselling units, or services if they need those (Canning & Tombs, 2021).

3.10.5. Honesty and integrity

Research integrity means honesty, transparency, and objectivity and generally stresses the importance of sticking to the research question and avoiding bias in data interpretation Shaw and Satalkar (2018). The researcher regarded truth as the key aspect of integrity through them express this in different ways and with various emphases on honesty, transparency, and objectivity.

3.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the study's research design and methodology in detail. The qualitative research approach, research paradigm (epistemology and ontology), data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures were discussed. The sampling procedure was also detailed. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis, and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology used in this study. The study anticipated learning about principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools in the NCC. Data were collected from 5 principals, 5 DHs, 5 teachers, and 5 parents at schools in the NCC. The evidence and results of the research findings from the participants is presented in this chapter. The researcher analysed and interpreted data collected through interviews. The data were rich in detail and aimed to be interpreted and examined. Audio materials had to be methodologically taken using thematic analysis to find themes, patterns, and meanings.

Participants' responses were recorded and verbatim transferred. The following codes were used: Principal 1, Principal 2, Principal 3, Principal 4, and Principal 5; DH 1, DH 2, DH 3, DH 4, and DH 5; Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, and Teacher 5; Parent 1, Parent 2, Parent 3, Parent 4, and Parent 5.

The following main and sub-research questions guided the data presentation and analysis process:

Main research question:

What are the principals' experiences in implementing the inclusive education policy in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?

Sub-research questions

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

- How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy?
- What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?
- What are the factors that hinder teachers from fully implementing inclusive education policies?
- How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing an inclusive education policy?

4.2. PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants' biographical information is shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Participants' biographical information

Participant	Position	Code	Age	Experience	Qualification
Principal 1	Principal	Parent 1	50 years	2 years	BEd
Principal 2	Principal	Parent 2	55 years	5 years	Master's
Principal 3	Principal	Parent 3	48 years	6 years	Master's
Principal 4	Principal	Parent 4	53 years	3 years	Master's
Principal 5	Principal	Parent 5	61 years	15 years	Honours
Departmental Head 1	Departmental Head	DH 1	53 years	6 years	BEd
Departmental Head 2	Departmental Head	DH 2	55 years	12 years	BEd Honours
Departmental Head 3	Departmental Head	DH 3	50 years	3 years	BEd
Departmental Head 4	Departmental Head	DH 4	54 years	5 years	BEd Honours
Departmental Head 5	Departmental Head	DH 5	47 years	7 years	BEd Honours
Teacher 1	Teacher	T 1	56 years	16 years	BEd
Teacher 2	Teacher	T 2	49 years	9 years	BEd
Teacher 3	Teacher	T 3	38 years	5 years	BEd ACE
Teacher 4	Teacher	T 4	25 years	2 years	BEDTEF
Teacher 5	Teacher	T 5	28 years	4 years	BEDTEF
Parent 1	Parent	Par 1	56 years	N/A	Matric
Parent 2	Parent	Par 2	51 years	N/A	Matric

Parent 3	Parent	Par 3	23 years	N/A	Matric
Parent 4	Parent	Par 4	26 years	N/A	STD
Parent 5	Parent	Par 5	30 years	N/A	Matric

Anonymity was maintained throughout the study. The researcher coded the participants' data using the five letters to identify the five principals who participated in the study: (i.e., Principal 1, Principal 2, Principal 3, Principal 4, and Principal 5), five departmental heads (DH 1, DH 2, DH 3, DH 4, and DH 5), five teachers (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, and Teacher 5), and five parents (Parent 1, Parent 2, Parent 3, Parent 4, and Parent 5). The researcher maintained issues of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality through the use of codes. Experienced participants provide rich information about the topic, while inexperienced participants have less information about the topic. The age, experiences, and qualifications of participants can significantly enhance the quality of data collected in a dissertation by contributing to the depth, relevance, and reliability of the information. The researcher carefully selected participants across different ages, experiences, and qualifications. Researchers ensure a richer, more reliable, and more comprehensive dataset that enhances the overall quality and credibility of the dissertation.

4.2.1. Gender of participants

Table 4.2: Participants' gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	8	40%
Female	12	60%

Table 4.2 above presents the gender of the participants. Eighty percent of the participants interviewed in this study were male, while only 20% were females. Many of the sampled schools are led and managed by males.

4.2.2. Age of participants

Table 4.3: Age of participants

	31-40 years	41-50 years	Above 51 years
Frequency	2	14	4
Percentage	10%	70%	20%

Table 4.3 above presents the age of participants, enlightening that 20% were above 51, and 70% were between 41 and 50. Only 10% of the participants were aged between 31 and 40 years. No participant was less than 30 years old. Novice teachers were not sampled.

4.2.3. Teaching experience of participants

Table 4.4: Teaching experience of participants

	Less than 15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	Above 31 years
Frequency	5	4	3	3	5
Percentage	25%	20%	15%	15%	25%

Table 4.4 above presents information on the teaching experience of participants. The data demonstrated that 25% of the participants had less than 15 years of teaching experience, while 20% ranged between 16-25 years, 15% ranged between 26-30 years, and 25% had more than 31 years of experience. The data collected affirms that the research findings are reliable, as approximately 80% of the participants are experienced teachers. Experienced participants provide rich information about the topic, while inexperienced participants have less information about the topic.

4.2.4. Highest qualifications of participants

Table 4.5: Highest qualifications of participants

	MATRIC	STD	HDE	ACE	Bed	MA	PHD
Frequency	4	1	4	5	3	3	0
Percentage	20%	5%	20%	25%	15%	15%	0%

Table 4.5 above presents the participants' highest qualifications. Twenty percent of the participants had matric or HDE, while 25% had ACE. Only 5% of the participants had a STD, while 15% had a BEd or Master's degree. None of the participants had a doctoral degree. As a result, it is assumed that the participants are reluctant to further their studies since they receive cash bonuses.

4.2.5. Position of participants

Table 4.6: position of participants

	Principal	Departmental Head	Teacher	Parents
Frequency	5	5	5	5
Percentage	25%	25%	25%	25%

Table 4.6 above presents the positions participants hold in their different schools. The school principals were sampled to participate in the study since they are key in implementing policies. An equal number of participants were sampled in each school so that the researcher could gather sufficient data.

4.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEMES

The research questions, themes, and sub-themes are illustrated in Tables 4.3.1 to 4.3.7, followed by a comprehensive explanation. This study comprises five themes formulated from research questions. Data were collected through interviews with 20 participants. The 5 principals, 5 DHs, 5 teachers, and 5 parents were sampled from five primary schools. Participants were asked questions according to SSI schedules. Interviews were recorded with the approval of the participants. Data collected through audio recording were later transcribed. The views of the participants are cited in italics to provide the evidence. Interviews were recorded, verbatim transcribed, and analysed. The following main and sub-research questions guided the data presentation and analysis process:

Main research question:

What are the principals' experiences in implementing the inclusive education policy in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?

Sub-research questions

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

- How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy?
- What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?
- What are the factors that hinder teachers from fully implementing inclusive education policies?
- How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing an inclusive education policy?

The following data reflects findings from sub-questions, which were gathered using SSIs and analysed and categorised thematically.

4.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
What is the principals' experience in implementing inclusive education in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?	Theme 1: Experiences of principals in the implementation of an inclusive education policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role of principals in the implementation of inclusive education policy• Role of departmental heads in the implementation of an inclusive education policy• Role of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education policy• Role of parents in the implementation of inclusive education policy

<p>How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?</p>	<p>Theme 2: Perception of the implementation of inclusive education policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of principals in the implementation of an inclusive education policy • Perception of departmental heads in the implementation of an inclusive education policy • Perception of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education policy • Perception of principals in the involvement of school governing bodies (SGBs) in special educational needs • Openness of parents about children with disabilities
<p>What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?</p>	<p>Theme 3: Features of an inclusive education policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the rights of children • What can be done to raise awareness?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs of parents with children with disabilities
<p>What are the factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools?</p>	<p>Theme 4: Factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors limiting principals from implementing an inclusive education policy in full • Factors limiting education departmental heads from implementing an inclusive education policy in full • Factors limiting teachers from implementing inclusive education in full
<p>How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education policy?</p>	<p>Theme 5: Overcoming challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions to parents who are not open about talking about their children with disabilities • Challenges of parents who talk about their disabled children • Challenges of parents who bring awareness to

		<p>others with disabled children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of parents who manage learners with disabilities • Characteristics of inclusive education
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Theme 1: Experiences of principals in the implementation of inclusive education policy.

Theme 2: Perceptions of principals' implementation of inclusive education policy.

Theme 3: Features of inclusive education policy.

Theme 4: Factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education policy in primary schools.

Theme 5: Overcoming challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive education.

Principals' offices, DHs, and teachers' classrooms were used to collect data at NCC primary schools. The venues were all conducive and convenient to both participants and the researcher. However, it is worth noting that the study aims to develop tactics for principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools in the NCC. Principals, DHs, teachers, and parents were essential in establishing ways to mitigate principals' experiences in implementing IEP at schools. The participation of principals, DHs, teachers, and parents from the NCC was important to the study. Evidence from the data was provided to support themes and sub-themes that arose from empirical data and were allied to earlier findings. The gathered findings were analysed, presented, and discussed in correlated themes.

4.6. THEMES THAT EMERGED DURING DATA ANALYSIS

4.6.1. Theme 1: Experiences of principals in the implementation of an inclusive education policy

The researcher posed the following question to the principals: “What are the principals’ experiences in implementing inclusive education policies?” The purpose of this question was to establish the participants’ views concerning the experiences principals, DHs, teachers, and parents encounter in the implementation of IEP in primary schools. The principals responded in more or less similar as follows:

Principal 1: *“My experience is not good at all. Because we didn’t get enough workshops and we thought maybe we shall get enough workshops that will help us in the implementation of inclusive education. Because we are absolutely trained for that, we were told that we have to implement it, and it was not easy and it is still not easy it is difficult even today to implement that, and that’s why we also need again enough workshops, wherein we should do the practical part of it.”*

Principal 2: *“What I’ve experienced as a teacher is that inclusive education was not implemented universally or in the same way in all the schools as I have observed that some of the schools were made the pilot projects, teachers in those schools were trained, they were capacitated. They were taken through all the policies as the schools, but those schools that were not declared inclusive education schools are not benefiting from the programmes.”*

Principal 3: *“Inclusive education in our day-to-day running of the schools becomes very, very difficult because we have to implement it without proper guidance, without the resources that are needed in order for the policy to run smoothly across the board and another thing is that, policies only cannot do what is supposed to be done if the groundwork has not been done yet, so it is not easy, but for one to make it a point that this inclusive education is there you have to improvise.”*

Principal 4: *“The experience I have as the principal tells me that inclusive education, yes, is very literally. But it’s not accomplished or it’s not done to later; we always hear about it, we always persuaded to do it and are always told that our schools are inclusive schools, but when we check, we found that there are some hiccups.”*

Principal 5: *“My experience is, in the implementation of this inclusive education policy, is that the implementation is not that well, it's not implemented in a proper way. Not 100% one may say, why? Just because we are not receiving proper training.”*

Evidently, principals shared the same sentiments about implementing IEP. During the interviews, principals shared the same sentiments about principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools. They agreed that principals face various experiences when implementing inclusive education policies. When replying to the question posed, the participants' responses revealed that the challenges of not getting sufficient training still exist and won't be fixed instantly. The above response displays that some principals were not well-trained in inclusive education.

The above statements are supported by Messiou (2016), who argued that inclusive education could be understood in various ways (Ref. Ch 2; section 2.3.1). On the contrary, Darling-Hammond, Wechsler, Levin and Tozer (2022) posit that principals must ensure teachers and staff have the necessary training and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This may involve organising workshops, bringing in experts, or providing ongoing coaching and support to teachers (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

During the interview with the principals, the researcher discovered that the said managers were not well-trained in inclusive education. Some principals did not get sufficient training; thus, they needed the workshop and training on implementing IEP. Thus, this was because inclusive education requires adequate guidance, training, and workshops. Without this, inclusive education cannot be properly implemented.

The same question was posed to the DHs: “What are the principals' experiences in implementing inclusive education policies?” The question was posed to assess whether the DHs have the same experiences of IEP implementation as principals. The DHs responded as follows:

DH 2: *“Okay, our experience in the implementation of inclusive education policy in our school is that this policy normally is hampered by the lack of skilled educators and those whom who have knowledge in differentiating the curriculum or getting this*

inclusive education. So, without skilled educators, I think we are unable to implement this policy of inclusive education in our school.”

DH 4: *“My experience is that most people are not implementing the inclusion policy because educators are not qualified in Inclusive education.”*

DHs 4 and 5 shared the same sentiments with the principals about principals' experiences in the implementation of IEP in primary schools. They both agreed that various challenges hampered them from effectively implementing IEP, and both believe that they are not getting enough support from the department; thus, the number of learners in their classroom is high, presenting challenges in innovatively implementing IEP.

During the interview, the researcher requested the DHs to share their understanding of their role in implementing inclusive education. This question aimed to highlight to the stakeholders how heads of departments play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education within schools. Their leadership and support are essential for creating an environment where all students can thrive regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. DHs are responsible for developing and implementing policies that promote inclusive education within their departments and schools. This includes creating policies that address curriculum adaptations, teaching strategies, and support services for students with diverse needs (UNESCO, 2009) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1), Hogan, O'Rourke, Weeks, Silvera and Choi (2023) suggest that DHs oversee the allocation of resources, including staffing, funding, and materials, to support inclusive practices (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). This may involve ensuring adequate support staff, such as special education teachers or classroom aides, is available to assist students with disabilities. Ajani (2020) adds that DHs organise and facilitate professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in inclusive teaching practices. This may involve providing training on differentiated instruction, UDL, and behaviour management strategies (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

It was evident that the researcher concluded that DHs play a multifaceted role in the implementation of inclusive education, encompassing policy development, resource allocation, professional development, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation,

advocacy, and cultural sensitivity. Their leadership and support are essential for creating an inclusive school environment where all students can succeed.

The researcher posed the following question to the teachers: "What role do teachers play in the implementation of inclusive education?" The question was posed to discover teachers' understanding of their experiences in implementing IEP in schools. Teachers responded as follows:

Teacher 2: *"We, as the teachers, are not trained to work with the learners who are inclusive. But, it would be better if the school management could arrange the workshops whereby teachers can be trained in order to work with these learners."*

Teacher 3: *"As an educator, I am experiencing more challenges when implementing inclusive education inside my classroom because there is inadequate training for educators to know what learners are expected of those who have barriers."*

Evidently, teachers shared the same sentiments with the principals about the challenge of not being well-trained in implementing IEP. They concurred that they faced challenges working with learners without full knowledge of working with those with barriers. Most of the teachers were not trained to work with inclusive learners.

The researcher discovered that teachers have not been trained in implementing inclusive education, but they are responsible for creating a welcoming and supportive classroom environment where all students feel valued and respected. They should promote a sense of belonging among diverse learners. According to Salend (2018), creating an inclusive classroom environment involves "valuing diversity, setting high expectations, providing effective instruction, and creating a positive classroom climate (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). Teachers must differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of students with varying abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. This involves modifying teaching methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate individual differences. Friend and Bursuck (2018) add that teachers should work together to plan and deliver instruction, share strategies for supporting diverse learners, and monitor student progress (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

Furthermore, Ferreira (2019) mentioned that the South African government has developed various policies to promote equality and inclusivity in education. Despite all the efforts, not all children in one of the conceptualisations belong to a predetermined category (such as special educational needs). Teachers play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education, which aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their differences, are educated together in mainstream schools (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

The researcher believed that teachers play a multifaceted role in the implementation of inclusive education, encompassing the creation of inclusive classroom environments, differentiation of instruction, collaboration with colleagues, promotion of positive behaviour, advocacy for inclusive practices, and ongoing professional development. Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin and Soodak (2019) posit that "Teachers must proactively teach and reinforce appropriate social skills to all students." Teachers need to advocate for inclusive practices within their schools and communities. Furthermore, Ackah (2020) adds that "continuous professional development is crucial for teachers to implement inclusive practices effectively" (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

In addition, teachers play a vital role in fostering positive behaviour and social skills among all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. They should teach and model appropriate social behaviour, provide opportunities for peer interactions, and address behavioural challenges effectively.

During the interviews with the parents, the researcher discovered that the said participants have a huge challenge in implementing inclusive education policies. Therefore, the researcher posed the following question to the parents. "What role do parents play in the implementation of inclusive education?" The aim of posing such a question was to determine their understanding of their role in implementing inclusive education. The parents responded as follows:

Parent 1: *"Parents have a role to play in the inclusive education of the learner, just because parents are not allowed to disturb the education of that learner."*

Parent 2: *“Parents play a very important role because they support their children's rights to an inclusive education, and then support them during learning at home, and also with school work to create an inclusive environment.”*

Parent 3: *“Parents should be advised to consider their disabled child as other children without discrimination. Parents should not hide their disabled children. The children with disabilities must be afforded the opportunity to learn. The children have the right to learn. If parents hide their children, the future of the children will be at stake, but if the child is given the opportunity to learn with others, they will have a better future.”*

Parent 4: *“Parents play a role, like they should encourage the child to participate in all activities in schools whereby they can meet other children of the same age with different abilities. They can discuss the objectives and outlooks on how they prefer their child to be educated.”*

Parent 5: *“Okay, the role of the parent is to allow their children to attend school. Even though the parents do not know what inclusive education is, they must allow their kids to go to school. Parents should be involved in their children's education and not hide their kids at home.”*

The researcher learnt that the parents have different views about the implementation of inclusive education. For example, Parent 1 was of the view that parents are not allowed to disturb learners; Parent 2 concurs with Parent 3 about learner's rights that their parents support while they are at school or home. Furthermore, Parent 4 encouraged their children to participate in all activities that took place at school. Moreover, Parent 5 mentioned that parents should always be involved in their learners' education. Muscutt (2020) adds that parents can advocate for their children's rights to inclusive education, ensuring that schools provide appropriate support and accommodations. This includes attending meetings with educators, participating in IEP or IEP meetings, and voicing concerns or suggestions for their child's education (Ref. Ch. 2 section 2.3.1). Paseka (2020) states that parents' attitudes differ depending on the type of disability a child has, that is, they highly support children with sensory and physical disabilities compared to children with severe cognitive disabilities and behavioural problems.

Furthermore, Paseka (2020) states that if educated to a higher level, parents tend to become more positive in inclusive education implementation (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). Building positive social relationships is essential for creating inclusive school environments where all students feel accepted and valued (Lacey, Banerjee & Lester, 2023) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). Additionally, parents can monitor their child's progress in inclusive settings and provide feedback to educators on the effectiveness of interventions or accommodations. Regular communication between parents and teachers fosters a collaborative approach to supporting student learning and well-being.

The researcher asked the principals the same questions: "What role do principals play in the implementation of inclusive education?" This question was asked to ascertain their understanding of the role of the principal in the implementation of IEP. The principals responded as follows:

Principal 1: *"Teachers are the ones who are teaching these learners in their classes. And learners with special needs are seen by these teachers in their classes. They are the primary people who should take that information. I've got a learner with difficulty in the class, and we need help, and that's their role until that learner is helped. They have a role to play until that learner is taken to other schools that are meant for their needs, and then teachers play a vital role."*

Principal 2: *"Yes, teachers are always in contact with learners. Learners are in class. And classes have been assigned teachers to look after them. Now, when learners are progressing from one grade to the next, they find that basic class teacher and the class teacher is the one who completes the learner profile for each learner in his area own class, which means inclusive education or inclusivity can be or is determined by the teacher who is in class during the screening. During the identification assessment and support, the teacher in class will be able to complete the form."*

Principal 3: *"The teachers have got a very great role to play because they are the ones who are on the call phase. They face learners every day. They know how these learners do in the class. How do they feel? In the previous class, the teachers can play a very significant role in identifying learners with disabilities. Those learners who need*

assistance, those learners who need concessions, those learners who need any assistance in the classroom, who need maybe assistive devices, so teachers have got a very serious role to play in that one in order for this learner to succeed or to achieve.”

Principal 4: *“Teachers are the main role players because they are the ones who are working with kids in class, so their role there is to screen this case that we have trying to check which ones, which kids are having problems. What assistance do they need? Because they are the ones who are giving some of them support every day, so they need to screen them. They identified that this one had this problem. As I said, inclusive education is part of the SIAS policy. We were in the workshop and told that we must have the files. So, it is the role of the teacher to screen the learner by using the file and identifying the problems.”*

Principal 5: *“Teachers have got an important role to play, a vital one. What do I mean by vital one? Remember, in the classroom, the teaching and learning environment is very much important, so it is the duty and the responsibility of the teacher to make sure that he or she creates a conducive learning environment where each and every learner will feel accepted, feel accommodated, feel safety, welcomed, loved and respected. They need to be supported, and it is the responsibility of the teacher and the role of the teacher to do that.”*

The researcher discovered that most principals understood their role in implementing inclusive education as the view that all learners should be cared for by the teachers who always be in the classroom and should be treated equally, irrespective of their mental capacities. The researcher observed that both Principals 1, 2, and 4 concur with each other about their role in the implementation of inclusive education when they stated that teachers are the ones who have the most important role to play by being with the learner in the classroom and can identify learners with special needs. Moreover, Principal 5 desires a conducive learning environment where every learner will feel recognised, accommodated, safe, welcomed, loved, and respected. This study found that some principals and teachers knew their role was to recognise that all children need support irrespective of their disabilities. White Paper 6 (2001:6) reveals that inclusive education recognises that all children and youth can learn and need

support, allowing education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3).

However, it was evident that teachers and principals must be taught that their role is to identify learners with some difficulties and support them irrespective of their difficulties.

It was evident that it is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure that the department policies, including the IE, are effectively implemented in schools. To serve on the school's governing body and render all necessary assistance to the governing body in performing their functions in terms of the South African Schools Act. To cooperate with the SGB with regard to all aspects as specified in the South African Schools Act (Mbua, 2023) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

The researcher continued to probe the DHs about their roles in implementing IEP in schools to get the reasons that will offer a valuable reaction towards improving the success of inclusive education. The researcher posed the following question to the DHs: "What role do parents play in implementing inclusive education?" DHs responded as follows:

DH 1: *"The departmental head must see to it that there is an Inclusive education policy in the school. And they must be inclusive education files in the school where all documents will be filed and kept safe. The departmental head must see to it that all educators are aware of this inclusive education."*

DH 2: *"So I think the departmental heads role in the implementation of inclusive education policy is to support educators in everything they are doing, to monitor all educators and learner's work. The other thing as departmental head ,he or she should ensure that educators met all learners needs, and then, he or she should ensure that there are enough learners, teachers, learning and teaching support material for all learners. And the departmental head must ensure that classrooms are well prepared and well organised for all learners."*

DH 3: *“I think as the departmental heads, our role is to monitor and also to lead where necessary, to train and to manage my stuff so as the departmental head must also conducting research, and I think it is best to also to set goals. I must also ensure that overall day-to-day operation is runs smoothly. In our case, I must see to it that each and every teacher is in class on time and also teaching, and then each and every teacher must see to it that they give learners some activities to write so that they can know how far with regard to their understanding.”*

DH 4: *“Yeah, departmental head has to monitor the implementation, so that all learners can be catered on that school and they also have to also provide guidance. So, by so saying the departmental heads, maybe in a school should get one departmental head who involved in the course of inclusive education so that he or she can monitor the problem easily.”*

DH 5: *“The department must give support and supervise that support or implementation of inclusive education. The secondary and primary school, including the private schools, to comply with the constitution of the country and then the department must develop a policy to cater for all learners who are from different backgrounds. As long as a learner is at school must be protected because no learner is not allowed to be enrolled at the specific school without the policy; there is no school because the policy is there to guide how the school must be ruined, e.g. the department may draft the policy, like SASA, sias, those are the policies from the department, but the SGB can also draft their policies from the sasa of that school as long as the policies are in line with the SASA.”*

The researcher learnt that DH 2 agrees with DH 3 about monitoring all learners together with their work. In contrast, DH 4 states that all learners can be catered to in the school and must be guided in their learning. DHs are expected to be leaders and managers of the curriculum in the schools. They must ensure that stakeholders or community members understand the importance of inclusion and how a school's leadership team plans to address the community's changing needs. DH 2 believes that they should be responsible for the inclusive education policy in the school and must know about inclusive education files where all documents will be filed and kept safe. Additionally, UNESCO (2009) revealed that DHs are responsible for developing

policies that promote inclusive education within their departments and schools. On the other hand, policies should be created that address curriculum adaptations, teaching strategies, and support services for students with diverse needs (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

The researcher concluded that DHs play a complex role in implementing inclusive education, encircling policy development, resource allocation, professional development, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, and cultural sensitivity.

The researcher asked the same question to the teachers, who responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Teachers are not the same. Some may say that they are here to teach, not to support. I think we need a workshop so they can help us implement inclusive education or make changes in our school.”*

Teacher 2: *“The teacher must play an important role because the teacher’s responsibility is to identify inclusive learners in the classroom. By looking at the learner and working hand-in-hand with the learner, It is very simple for the teacher to identify a learner which is inclusive and once the teacher did that, he must go to the relevant stakeholders that is, to the seniors, HODs, and school management, so that they must report that learner on the relevant authority.”*

Teacher 3: *“Teachers identify as a special student socially, emotionally, behaviorally, physically, and academically; they must supposed to consult student parents or guardians to get more information about their needs of the limit.”*

Teacher 4: *“First of all, a teacher plays a huge role because a teacher is a nurse, a police officer, and a parent at the same time. The teacher plays an important role on each and every link in different meanings. So through the teaching, the way they teach, and the way they communicate, they build a friendship. Through the way teach learners they also build the relationship of parent and being a parent. So I would say that they play a good role, because at the same time they are to teach, guide and change to be the parent and finally change to be their friends.”*

Teacher 5: *“Teachers are responsible for studying a classroom culture that they lose diversity, promote respect and ensure that all students feel welcome and included.”*

Teacher 1 is of the view that teachers need workshops to be trained. Ackah (2020) supports Teacher 1’s view that teachers should engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills in inclusive education (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). On the other hand, Teacher 2 cautioned that teachers can identify inclusive learners in the classroom by looking at and working hand-in-hand with the learner (Salend, 2018) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). Moreover, Teacher 4 posits that teachers are being taken as nurses, police, and parents simultaneously according to their school duties. The researcher discovered that teachers are trained to provide differentiated instruction in any school. They are expected to design, implement, and administer lesson plans that cater to each learner’s needs. Additionally, they support the school management in fulfilling the department’s objectives. Similarly, they play an important role in implementing the IE policy.

4.6.2. Theme 2: Perceptions of principals in the implementation of inclusive education policy

During the interview, the researcher requested the participants to share their understanding of IEP. This theme provided information about the perception of principals in the implementation of IEP. During the interview, the researcher asked participants the following question: “How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?” The principals responded to the questions as follows:

Principal 3: *“My perception is that education policy is a very good policy, in such a way that our learners who were not benefiting in the past will now benefit.”*

Principal 4: *“I perceive it as important because when we talk about inclusive, we are talking about some of the learners, sometimes who are not physically challenged or who do not have the problem as we used to.”*

Principal 5: *“My perception is that, in inclusive education policy, we are to consider every learner in the class, regardless of the ability. These learners need to be*

accommodated, and they must not feel that they are isolated, or rather discriminated, because this one cannot speak fluently.”

While interviewing the participants, the researcher discovered that the principals did not fully express their perceptions on the prevention of inclusive education implementation. However, they each highlighted how important IEP is in accommodating physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially discriminated learners. Their perceptions might have varied based on various factors, including personal beliefs, attitudes, and training. Engelbrecht, Oswald, and Forlin (2006) introduce inclusive education as worsening stress among teachers who already have pupils with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms, further citing administrative issues and teachers with low self-worth in Inclusive education, lack of co-operation with parents, and insufficient support as some of the traumatic areas (Magumise, 2020). However, teaching all learners in one classroom ensures that learners do not miss out on the curriculum. Principals have different management styles and paces; thus, being managed by the different managers can ensure that all learners have equal access to quality education (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

Ackah and Fluckiger (2023) maintain that principals may perceive resource allocation as a significant challenge in implementing inclusive education policies (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). This includes concerns about funding, staffing, and access to appropriate materials and facilities. Cherotich (2023) concurs with principals' views since principals allocate resources to support inclusive education (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

Jackson (2021) adds that principals often perceive a need for ongoing professional development for themselves and their staff to effectively implement inclusive education practices (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Principals recognise the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive school culture where diversity is valued, and all students feel welcome and included (Solomon, 2023).

Furthermore, Khaleel, Alhosani and Duyar (2021) add that principals may perceive the need to address and potentially change the attitudes and beliefs of teachers towards inclusive education, as teacher buy-in and commitment are crucial for successful

implementation (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Principals often perceive a need for ongoing professional development for themselves and their staff to effectively implement inclusive education practices (Jackson, 2021) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10).

Principals may perceive the need to establish collaborative partnerships with families, community organisations, and other stakeholders to support the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. According to Geesa, Mayes, Lowery, Quick, Boyland, Kim, Elam and McDonald (2022), some principals may perceive a tension between the need to comply with inclusive education policies mandated by government authorities and the genuine desire to create inclusive environments that meet the diverse needs of all students (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10) (Nind, Rix, Sheehy & Simmons, 2023). DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey and Sharma (2020) posit that principals recognise the importance of individualised support and accommodations for students with diverse learning needs to ensure their success in inclusive settings (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Principals often perceive the importance of ongoing evaluation and monitoring of inclusive education practices to identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement (Neumerski, Grissom, Goldring, Rubin, Cannata, Schuermann & Drake, 2018).

The researcher understood that it was important for the principals to be capacitated to gain more knowledge to assist learners. Additionally, the principals were to understand the perceptions of highlighting the complex nature of implementing inclusive education policies and the various factors that principals must consider in creating inclusive learning environments.

During the interview, the researcher requested the participants to share their understanding of the perception of DHs in implementing inclusive education. The following question was posed to the participants: “How do departmental heads perceive the implementation of IEP in Nzhelele Central Circuit?” This question aimed to determine if the DHs understand the implementation of IEP. The participants responded as follows:

DH 2: *“As an educator. I perceive that there is inadequate training in teachers or educators, and the other thing is our school environment is unfit to accommodate learners with disability. So, in other words. The infrastructure is unfit to accommodate*

these learners, and the other thing is that we lack facilities and equipment that can accommodate the learners with facilities. And lastly, we also have overcrowded classrooms in the schools, so let us with disabilities and cannot lay in overcrowded classrooms.”

DH 3: *“My perception as the departmental head is that I regard this as the right path for the education system to implement inclusive education policy in order to cater to all the relevant structures, so in the whole community of the school. And then by so doing, I think each and every stakeholder within the school can be able to understand what is required from them.”*

DH 5: *“My perception is that educators need to know that inclusive education is meant to help learners to pass. Regardless of their barrier, it is there because learners are unique. If this school can be implemented, we will have a pass rate because educators will be able to SIAS all learners and be able to differentiate and accommodate all learners during teaching and learning because learners are unique and learn differently. They need to be trained by the department or by the school so that they have the knowledge. Or more workshops need to be done so that they can copy from what the pilot schools are doing.”*

The researcher discovered that DH 2 witnessed that implementation of IEP has been a challenge due to inadequate training of teachers, lack of infrastructure, and overcrowded classrooms in the schools. Likewise, DH 5 perceived that more workshops are needed so that they can be trained by the department and have knowledge about inclusive education. Furthermore, they highlighted that all staff members, including inclusive teachers and DHs, should receive proper training workshops for adequate implementation. However, Ajani (2020) adds that DHs should organise and facilitate professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in inclusive teaching practices. This may involve providing training on differentiated instruction, UDL, and behaviour management strategies (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1).

Perceptions of heads of departments in schools regarding the implementation of inclusive education can vary widely based on factors such as personal beliefs, training,

resources, and support structures. While the researcher cannot provide real-time citations, she can outline common perceptions documented in educational research until January 2022. DHs often perceive resource allocation as a significant challenge in implementing inclusive education. This includes financial and human resources, such as specialised staff and training programmes (Cherotich, 2023). Many DHs express concerns about the adequacy of training and professional development opportunities for themselves and their staff in effectively implementing inclusive education practices (Agenga, 2023). Implementing inclusive education requires significant administrative restructuring and co-ordination. DHs may feel overwhelmed by the administrative burden of accommodating diverse learning needs within their schools (Stepanova, Tashcheva, Stepanova, Menshikov, Kassymova, Arpentieva & Tokar, 2018). Some heads of department report facing resistance from both teaching staff and the broader community when attempting to implement inclusive education initiatives. This resistance may stem from misconceptions about inclusive education or fears about increased workload (Lozano, Wüthrich, Büchi & Sharma, 2022). Despite challenges, many DHs hold positive attitudes towards inclusive education and recognise its potential benefits for all students. They may view inclusion as a moral imperative and a means of fostering a more equitable and supportive learning environment (Ayeni, Unachukwu, Osawaru, Chisom & Adewus, 2024). DHs often emphasise the importance of collaboration and support from various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and external agencies, in the successful implementation of inclusive education practices (Mbua, 2023). Some heads of department expressed concerns about how to effectively assess and be accountable for the progress of students with diverse learning needs within the framework of inclusive education (Maki, 2023).

During the interview, the researcher found out that, despite challenges, many DHs recognise the potential benefits of inclusive practices, such as improved academic outcomes, social cohesion, and the development of a more inclusive school culture (Pathak, Sharma, Mukherjee, Sharma & Garg, 2024). These perceptions are drawn from various studies and literature in the field of inclusive education, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of implementing inclusive practices within school settings.

The researcher posed the following question to the participants: “How do departmental heads perceive the implementation of IEP in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?” The question was posed to discover teachers’ perceptions of implementing inclusive education. The participants responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“It's difficult in school because of a shortage of staff. Don't forget that the special or inclusive learner. One teacher has to teach 12 learners. Why? Because these learners are so special and they need special attention. They get tired very easily, Don't forget that you have to teach them may be 2 days in a week ,at one day you have teach them 30 minutes, after 30 minutes you have to give them work and chance to play . After coming back to class, give them another 15 minutes, give them work and give them a chance to play.”*

Teacher 2: *“Now, it is very good to introduce this policy in a school because all learners have the right to learn and wherever they want to learn in the school, all learners are allowed to go and learn on that school. So according to my perception, It is very important for the management to see to it that they must sit and organise and arrange some of the best ways whereby they can improve their teachers, they can support their teachers, because it is the right of every learner, to learn wherever they want to learn in every school, in every departmental school, or in every school of the government. All learners must be treated the same, inclusive, or exclusive.”*

Teacher 3: *“As an educator, they have been the negatively affected because when I talked to this person, they said there is inadequate training. Another thing is a problem. When I don't know how to perceive, because inadequate training school environment which were unfit to accommodate those learners with barriers learning and another thing, there is no lack of facilities for those learners who have got barriers. You see there's no ramp, there's enough no toilets of those learners who are barriers to use it. There is no enough implementation. The large number of learners where there is a problem if the is not enough space for those learners.”*

Teacher 4: *“The implementation of including inclusive learning policy is something that will help, but I feel like the learners who have autism, the learners who have different learning disabilities, so it will be better if they try by all means to divide or to*

separate the two, because, the other one might have high IQ and the other one might not have IQ. So the policy should be improved in such a way that each and every learner will get the needs or will have knowledge or we will gain knowledge out of the policy. Well, learners understand better the content, it's all about learners anyways. So the policy should try to accommodate each and every learner. I believe that each and every learner can be helped we Just have different approach when teaching content, it's not about using your chalkboard, a dusters that sometimes you can involve singing, you can involve other activities where learners can inquire knowledge through the different activities. It's not just about a formal one where learners have to respond well and not have to learn through teacher centred method. Sometimes we have to have activities. We have to have learners can sing, then, like we can learn through different ways.”

Teacher 5: *“I think inclusive education can promote the diversity, equity and the overall well-being of the learners by accommodating their unique needs and abilities, and however, I think challenges and barriers can exist and successful implementation require collaboration, training and ongoing support of teachers and school.”*

The researcher noted that teachers had an issue with inclusive education implementation. When asked about it, Teacher 1 stated: “It was difficult in their school because of the shortage of staff. The other challenge is that learners with barriers get tired very easily and need additional time to be given to them. However, more teachers are needed to eradicate staff shortage in implementing inclusive education.”

On the other hand, Teacher 2 suggested that every learner has the right to learn wherever they want to. All learners must be treated the same, inclusive or exclusive (Salend, 2018) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). Teacher 3 concurred with Teacher 4 about the school environment which was unfit to accommodate all learners with barriers, and that there is inadequate training in inclusive education.

During the interview, the researcher learnt that teachers have different views about the perception of teachers and parents. The educators perceived the implementation of IE as being negatively affected by their inadequate training, school environments unfit to accommodate learners with disabilities, the lack of facilities and equipment,

and higher learner enrolments in mainstream classrooms. Teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of inclusive education can vary based on various factors such as training, support, resources, and personal beliefs.

The researcher learnt that there was a lack of adequate resources, including funding, specialised personnel, and support services, which is a concern for teachers implementing inclusive education. This can lead to feelings of frustration and inadequacy. Teachers appreciate the opportunity for professional growth and development that comes with implementing inclusive practices, as it challenges them to adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Teachers may feel overwhelmed by the diverse needs within their classrooms and struggle to differentiate instruction effectively (Nepal, Walker & Dillon-Wallace, 2024). Furthermore, Mngo and Mngo (2018) state that teachers often perceive inclusive education as beneficial for both students with and without disabilities. They believe it promotes diversity, fosters empathy, and prepares students for life in a diverse society (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Mugambi (2017) argued that inclusive education is seen as a means to promote social justice and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10).

Manolev, Sullivan and Slee (2020) suggest that concern about managing behaviour and maintaining classroom order may arise when including students with significant behavioural challenges in mainstream classrooms (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) allude that teachers often express a need for ongoing training and professional development in inclusive education practices to feel confident and competent in meeting the diverse needs of their students (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Teachers' attitudes and beliefs about disability and inclusion can significantly influence their perceptions of inclusive education. Kunz, Luder and Kassis (2021) maintain that those with positive attitudes toward diversity and inclusion tend to be more supportive of inclusive practices (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). In some cases, negative attitudes or misconceptions about students with disabilities may hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education (Radojlovic ,Radojlovic, Kilibarda, Radevic, Maricic, Parezanovic Ilic, Djordjic, Colovic, Radmanovic, Sekulic,Djordjevic, Niciforovic, Simic Vukomanovic Janicijevic, & Radovanovic, 2022). These perceptions are based on various studies in the field of inclusive education. It is important to note

that perceptions may vary depending on teachers' context, cultural factors, and individual experiences (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10).

The researcher continued to probe the parents about their perception of inclusive education implementation. Thus, the researcher asked: "What are parents' perceptions of implementing inclusive education?" This question aimed to establish parents' challenges in implementing inclusive education. The following discussions highlight parents' views, as reviewed in the literature. Some parents perceive inclusive education as empowering because it promotes equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their ability or disability (Pandey & Singh, 2015).

Furthermore, Kart and Kart (2021) posit that IE fosters social inclusion and acceptance of diversity, which can benefit children with disabilities and typically developing children (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Parents believe that inclusive education leads to better academic and social outcomes for their children, including increased self-esteem and improved communication skills (UNESCO, 2009). Stevens and Wurf (2020) allude that some parents express concerns about the adequacy of resources and support available in inclusive settings, including specialised instruction, assistive technology, and staff training (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.10). Parents of children with disabilities may worry about their children facing stigma or discrimination from peers, teachers, or the community in inclusive settings (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020). Parents often emphasise the importance of individualised support and accommodations to meet the diverse needs of their children within inclusive classrooms (Horn & Parks, 2019).

Effective communication and collaboration between parents and educators are critical for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Ng & Kwan, 2020). Parents who are actively involved in decision-making processes regarding their child's education tend to have more positive perceptions of inclusive education (Lalvani & Hale, 2015). Cultural beliefs and values can influence parents' perceptions of disability and inclusive education. Some cultures may have more positive attitudes towards inclusion, while others may view disability as a source of shame or stigma (Opoku, Nketsia, Agyei-Okyere, Oginni & Torgbenu, 2022).

Socioeconomic status can impact parents' access to information, resources, and support networks related to inclusive education, which in turn influences their perceptions and experiences (Papoudi, Jørgensen, Guldborg & Meadan, 2021). Parents of children with disabilities often engage in advocacy efforts to promote inclusive education policies and practices within their communities and educational systems (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020). Peer support networks and parent advocacy groups can provide valuable emotional support, information, and resources for parents navigating the challenges of inclusive education (McCrossin, Mitchell, Grantzidis, Clancy & Lach, 2022). These perceptions highlight the complexity and diversity of parents' experiences in implementing inclusive education, underscoring the importance of considering individual needs and perspectives in policy and practice.

According to Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016), one of the challenges that teachers face in their actions to provide support to learners with barriers to learning is non-parents, and some parents are uneducated (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.11.1). Magumise and Sefotho (2020) are of the view that parents and teachers observe IE as the cure-all to the non-existence of all-inclusive improvement of those with disabilities in special schools (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.11.1). Magumise (2020) maintains that teachers and parents also observe IE as the solution to the lack of complete expansion of those with disabilities (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3).

In addition, the researcher asked parents the following question: "Are parents aware of the rights of children with disabilities?" The parents responded as follows:

Parents 1: *"As parents, we ought to know that inclusive education, that's the education which includes all learners, maybe he/she would have the barriers of learning or not? That learner having disability, they are allowed to register it in any school, whether the parents would like to send the learner to that particular school."*

Parent 2: *"The awareness of inclusive education may vary, but depend on things like socio-economic status, educational level, and information they have. However, parents are becoming more aware of inclusive education and its benefits. Is because we can call them and give them more information and gather them around."*

Parent 3: *“The situation is improving in public schools. Learners who are physically challenged are given the opportunity to learn with children who are not challenged in public schools. Long ago challenged children were not allowed to learn in public schools. There is no more discrimination, they learn and play together.”*

Parent 4: *“I can say that not too many are aware, if you are aware because you will find them taking the children to special education schools whereby they will be able to be accommodated in those schools. Okay, I think we can as a community or as educators, right? And advise those parents. If either these parents are aware, if we are able to have a meeting with them, we can advise them. The best way we can so that if their children have disabilities, they can take them to schools. Or it depends on what kind of disability they have, so we can teach them according to what their children's disabilities are so we can be able to refer them to specialists that can deal with that as educators.”*

Parent 5: *“Parents are not aware at all because they are not taught about inclusive education, they believed that if their child is disabled, it is safe for them to keep them indoors, they are afraid of sending them at school. They think that it may laugh at their kids at school and make jokes about them.”*

Parents are among the most important people in the lives of learners; it is critical that they understand IE in public schools. Parents include mothers and fathers, as well as other caregivers who act as parents.

While interviewing the participants, the researcher noted that Parent 1 understood that learners with a disability are allowed to register in any school. Parent 2 also mentioned that awareness of inclusive education may vary depending on socioeconomic status, educational level, and information they have. Parent 5 stipulated that parents can be educated in inclusive education. Sometimes, schools may not support a family's desire for inclusion. In such cases, the parents can influence the policy-making and decision-making process by informing them about the child's rights to receive education in an inclusive school (Refer Ch. 2; section 2.14 .2).

During the interview, the researcher requested the participants to share their understanding of the SGB's involvement in the implementation of inclusive education. The researcher posed the same question to all participants in the study: "What is your view of involving SGBs in the implementation of inclusive education?" The principals responded as follows:

Principal 2: *"If the sub-committee it's not in the forefront. So the reason why SGB should be included is that yes, in case where situation or case is determined through inclusivity. One parents that they will be in the know, having been informed by different steps during the meetings or during the Community meetings out there. Yes, I think the SGB will have to be involved and it's going to play an important role in that respect."*

Principal 4: *"So SGB, it is the main structure that if we find them on our side, whatever problems that we encounter, all of them are going to be solved. So it is important for us to include them because we cannot work without them at school. We are just having these kids that are coming from the community, so the parent figures that we have in SGB, they assist us in making parents understand how this is important the importance of inclusive education and the importance of parents to understand? If SGB understands that, then you know that even parents with these other parents will fall in. I think that's what I can say."*

While interviewing the participants, the researcher established that the core functions of the SGBs is to ensure clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction for holding school leaders accountable for the educational performance of the school, as well as controlling the school's financial performance. In addition, overseeing policy implementation is one of its critical roles. The implementation of IE policy is no exception. The involvement of SGBs in special needs education can vary depending on the educational system and policies of different regions and countries. However, the discussion below highlights general information and examples of how SGBs may be involved in special needs education.

Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis (2020) point out that SGBs often participate in the development of policies related to special needs education at the school level. This involvement may include drafting policies that address the inclusion of students with special needs, ensuring access to appropriate resources and support, and

establishing procedures for identifying and assessing students with special needs. SGBs may allocate resources and funding for special needs education within the school. This could involve budgeting for special education programmes, hiring additional staff such as special education teachers or aides, and providing necessary equipment or materials (Selemani, 2022). SGBs may oversee the implementation of special needs education programmes and services, monitoring their effectiveness, and ensuring that they meet the needs of students with disabilities. This could involve reviewing student progress, assessing the impact of interventions, and making adjustments to programmes as needed (McLeskey, 2017). Governing bodies often collaborate with various stakeholders, including parents of students with special needs, special education professionals, and community organisations, to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are adequately addressed. This collaboration may involve seeking input on policy development, soliciting feedback on the provision of services, and advocating for the rights of students with disabilities (DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey & Sharma, 2020).

The researcher asked the following question to the participants; the same question was posed to the DHs: “What is your view regarding involving SGBs in the implementation of inclusive education?” The question was posed so that the researcher could gather information from the DHs. The DHs responded as follows:

DH 1: *“I think that is very much important, because whatever is school does. The SGB must be informed. More especially concerning school finance SGBs must know what's going on. The SGB will sit down and discuss about it. With the Finance Committee and see if is right or it's possible to do what must be done, because the SGB it's a very important stakeholder. Nothing can be done without their knowledge. The principal or everybody in the school must respect the importance of the school governing bodies in a school situation.”*

DH 2: *“From my point of view, since SGB are required in all policy settings of the school, I think they will manage the school in such a way that they see to it that policy asset and implemented. That is why they should be also included in implementing this policy of inclusive education. Because they are mandated to see to it or to govern this school and to monitor the implementation of all the rules in the school, so they should also include the implementation of this policy. All policies in the school are also*

monitored by the SGB. Policy is also implemented in schools so that all learners are covered, if we do have learners with disabilities.”

DH 3: *“My view on involving school governing bodies in the implementation of inclusive education policy, I think it is relevant because I consider the school governing body as an elected structure from the different stakeholders. So, I think they represent the whole community within the surrounding area. So, it will be much easier to implement inclusive education to knowledgeable people. Because if we leave them behind, they can't understand what is needed from them. So if we involve them in the implementation of this, I think they are the best people to understand.”*

DH 4: *“I think that will be the best idea or opinion. Parent's involvement would be very vital for the implementation of inclusive education, so we need governing body to be involved so that parents can be cleared on how we are going to implement this inclusive education.”*

DH 5: *“The SGB is the core of the schools. And if it might be, nothing can be done without the SGB at the school, so the SGB will protect the children's rights to be included in the inclusive education. SGB can draft the policy to promote the rights of the children. Another one, SGB may do the fundraising so that they can have enough budget for that school. SGB can also raise awareness among the other stakeholders at school. E.g., when the learner is being referred, the parents of the learner must not be like they being stigmatised, they must understand the processes through SGB.”*

The researcher found that various reasons contribute to the involvement of SGBs. Moreover, the study discovered that most DHs are not well-equipped with certain issues regarding the involvement of the SGB in the implementation of inclusive education. DH 1 believed that the SGB must be informed about the financial statement. Meanwhile, DH 5 is of the view that the SGB must know everything concerning the school so that they can have an adequate budget for the school's needs.

Moreover, the researcher asked: “What is your view regarding involving SGBs in the implementation of inclusive education?” The question was posed so that the

researcher could gather information from the teachers. The teachers responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“Maybe the SGB can help us by going out to find donations so that we can get inclusive teachers to help learners, to treat the inclusive learners so that the inclusive teacher can support learners, can teach learners, and can gather all the information of the inclusive learners or the special learners.”*

Teacher 2: *“It is very, very, much important for the parents to be involved in this regard. Because this situation involves the parents, school governing body as the stake holder which represent the parents at school. Now we need to engage them in this type of a discussion, whereby we can sit with the parents, and they come with different plans, we gather different plans whereby, we can draft something so that we must arrange for know how these learners must be taught, how these learners must be assisted, because they have the right to be in the classroom. They are like other learners. Now, when we engage the parents, parents and teachers must work in cloves.”*

Teacher 3: *“When we come to SGB responsibilities. SGB is the one who's responsible, is the mother body of the school, the engine of the school. No one, anything happened inside the school .The first person who is going to take, responsibility is the SGB, because of the school must decide suitable for the school. As an SGB, supposed to have a fair policies about admission to exclusion from school help to protect the rights of their children to education. Their policies, even the rights of children more policies are made by SGB.”*

Teacher 4: *“If we involve the school governing (SGB), I feel like even then they will understand better because it's not just about talking if you are not in the same situation if you're not experiencing the same situation. You will have a problem, so if they are involved, they will help us out with what we do. They will also be invested in coming up with solutions, so I feel like they should be involved in giving opinions and try to come up with a solution. Because if you don't involve the SGB, if you don't involve the system itself, then there won't be any changes or movement.”*

Teacher 5: *“I think to include SGB. SGB have to give teachers the resources. They have to allocate the resources that we can use. SGB involvement can help us, and to ensure that funds and resources are allocated to support inclusive practice.”*

The study found that teachers understood the views of the SGB members in implementing inclusive education. Furthermore, Teachers 1 and 5 agree that the SGB play different roles within the schools. Consequently, the SGB helps teachers by seeking donations from funders and collaborating with the school management (Buys, du Plessis & Mestry, 2020) (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.3.1). Teacher 1 believes that the SGB can help them appoint inclusive teachers to help learners with learning difficulties (Makhubela, 2023). Teacher 2 concurs with Teacher 4 about engaging SGB members in this type of discussion, where they can sit with the parents and develop different plans to draft something that details how learners must be taught and assisted because they have a right to be in the classroom. According to Bennett and Bennett (2022), parents and teachers must work in cloves. Teacher 3 suggested that SGB is *“is the mother body of the school, the engine of the school, and is responsible for everthing that happens in the school.”* Teacher 5 suggested that the SGB should provide teachers with resources. The researcher understood it was important for the SGB to allocate the resources they could use. Moreover, SGB involvement can help ensure funds and resources to support inclusive practices.

The researcher further posed the following question to parents: “To what extent are parents open about children with disability?” The question aimed to test their understanding of being open about their child having a disability. The participants responded as follows:

Parent 1: *“Sometimes parents may be afraid to send that learner to school. But that's not the right way. Parents must be open to sending their children to school because the learner sends them there at home. He won't be educated, and well they learn fur history at school we develop so many things, just because teachers, educate them at school and they will be intelligent, they will develop intellectually and cognitively.”*

Parent 2: *“I think it's because they are afraid of discrimination or maybe judged by others. And they don't have enough information and experience to raise people with disability. And they worry about their children's future.”*

Parent 3: *“Parents who hide their challenged children are in denial. They do not accept that it is their God-given child. They hide them. Parents must accept the gift from God. It is the mercy of God to bear a child with challenges. Some parents are barren and wish to bear children, so parents should accept the gift from God.”*

Parent 4: *“Well, yes, that is true. Well, I think most of them have the biggest problem, and the biggest issue is denial, right. So most of them they do not believe that, their children has a specific condition of learning need, so this is especially true because not every individual wishes the child can wishes the child you have, so they will still have that denial that no man, my child, cannot be like this, but that denial, cannot change that. The fact that the child is in fact disabled. I think that, is one of the reasons why most of them are not open about the disability, some of them, It can be the issue of socialisation. So they will view that maybe people will view them in a bad way. Or maybe view the family in a bad way. So I think it has to means that they're scared of such views of other people viewing them as such. I think we are done with.”*

Parent 5: *“The main reason is they are not free and they are also afraid that most of people do not accept their kids. The kids with disabilities, they see they looked at them in a very bad way that they also make parents not to feel comfortable having their kids with to have their kids where to send them or to play with other kids who are in good condition, and they feel that members of the society do not accept them.”*

During the interview, the parents shared a similar view about their understanding of inclusive education. The parents shared their views. According to Parents 3 and 4, parents who hide their children with disabilities are in denial. Likewise, Parent 5 believes that most people do not accept their children as people. Moreover, Parent 2 suggested that other parents are afraid of discrimination where other learners judge their children. The majority of participants understood the openness of parents with children with disabilities. It was clear from the participants that parents fear sending their children to school. Some parents also fear that their children will be judged and

discriminated against by other learners (Faulk, 2023). Parents are not free and are also afraid that most people will not accept their child. Therefore, parental involvement and support in their children's education are vital.

The researcher learnt that it was important for the parents to be capacitated in terms of uncontrollable tears, sadness, and hopelessness. A parent may feel that they are to blame for their child being disabled. Parents may act out their anger or direct it toward another person (Greeshma, 2023).

4.6.3 Theme 3: Characteristics of inclusive education

The researcher asked the participants the following question: "What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?" This question aimed to gather information from the principals. The principals shared the following responses:

Principal 1: *"It is a very difficult question for me."*

Principal 2: *"Regarding the main features, yes, inclusivity means that all learners must have a space and time to learn at the school, irrespective of their barriers. The policy entails that all learners, whether Question 2.4 they've got barriers to learning or not even those with more, especially even those with barriers to learning, must be accommodated and given time and space to learn."*

Principal 3: *"The main features of this policy, its remediation, and that gives these learners a lot of chance to succeed. I think that, is what I call the epitome of this inclusive police they. It is a well implemented. It gives learners a lot of chances to can succeed, and those who are to get us, we apply for concession. It's if you apply. You are in the know of what positions are that part of the policy also gives. Learners have a lot of chance to can make it at the end of the year because it gives them."*

Principal 4: *"That one, I'm just there and they're actually. Some of the things you find that even though you are a principal, you are. Not even aware of because I'm telling you. We are not fully trained, and we know just a little about inclusive education, but the issue is. The features that we need to see, or the characteristic inclusive, what characteristics characterise inclusive education, is that as primary school, we need to find ourselves having learners who are different."*

Principal 5: *“The main features or the characteristics is its sense of belonging that the learner should feel, and I belong somewhere. I belong to these learners because I'm a learner and a human being. Also, I'm accommodated. I've got a home. You see, I've got a room because when we are communicating with them, they do listen to what you are saying so; we build listening skills to them.”*

The researcher discovered that the question was tricky for Principal 1 as it was the first time he had been asked such a question. Furthermore, Principal 2 concurs with White Paper 6 (2001) that inclusive education recognises that all children and youth can learn and need support, allowing education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners. Principal 4 is of the view that principals were not fully trained. Moreover, Principal 5 believes that a learner should feel a sense of belonging.

The researcher posed the following question to the DHs: “What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?” The participants responded as follows:

DH 1: *“I think the department must organised workshops for educators and educators themselves must try to Google to get information so that they can also assist one another concerning inclusive education.”*

DH 2: *“Okay, from my point of view, the features I think are the most important thing is accepting all learners or accepting all children unconditionally into regular classes. I mean those with disabilities, accept them and unconditionally and provide much support children, educators and availability of classrooms, maybe this must be done by the government. I mean supporting with classrooms and ensuring that the school environment is conducive for learning, including all learners, even learners, with disabilities; this might be done by the department that can support schools.”*

DH 3: *“I think it is based on five important principles. That is equality, respect, human rights, justice, and mutual responsibility. It is also about looking at the ways our schools, classrooms, programmes and lessons are designed, so that all children can*

participate and I think one key feature, is a positive attitude towards diversity from its teachers and administrators.”

DH 4: *“The main features I think is inclusiveness embracing each other's weakness, so they are able to assist one another. So, you have to come with a strategy for grouping them and giving those who are above average the task to assist to those who are below average with motivation; they care.”*

DH 5: *“The features of inclusive education is to promote active participation of all learners, regardless of where they come from or their barriers; educator teach without bias so that learners can feel free. Educators need to promote the sense of belonging. Learners are being valued to be in the class, unlike. Sorry, unlike discriminating or a teacher do favour others, especially educators prefer the top situation without stigmatisation them.”*

It was revealed that the participants were not well-trained. They were taken to workshops to learn about inclusive education. Some participants discuss equality, respect, human rights, justice, and mutual responsibility. It is also about looking at how schools, classrooms, programmes and lessons are planned so that all learners can participate. The researcher found that the participants were fully knowledgeable about inclusive education. Therefore, it was not easy for them to cope with learners with disabilities. White Paper 6 (2001) prescribes that inclusive education recognises that all children and youth can learn and need support, allowing education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.

The same question was posed to all parents who participated in the research study. “To what extent are parents aware of Inclusive education?” The participants responded as follows:

Parent 1: *“Not all of them, but we are busy telling them or educate them that inclusive education is very much important. Just because during their, their older time the parents used to keep their children at home but nowadays, parents are not allowed to hide that children behind. They are allowed to register their children to send them to the school just because even the department is giving them the grant so that they can*

help them while they are going to school to get that particular education, inclusive education.”

Parent 2: *“Some parents are aware, and I'm not. But those who are aware I means that they support their children's education and they support them medically. I think they must have support from the community or from professionals who can give them more information.”*

Parent 3: *“Parents are aware of the rights of children. Many a time, parents disregard or neglect the rights of their children. Denying children with disability the chance to learn is not acceptable. Children should be treated like any other human being. No, no, no. Parents are not. Many parents are unaware of the value of education and their children's rights. So there are barriers that are stopping them from having more access to such knowledge.”*

The researcher understood that the parents were not aware of the rights of children, especially those with children with disabilities. Masalesa (2022) is of the view that maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning, the ministry appreciates that a broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population at any point in time and that where these are not met, learners may fail to learn effectively and excluded from the learning system.

The researcher also understood that in this regard, different learning needs arise from a range of factors, including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, and differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences, or socioeconomic deprivation.

The researcher posed the following question to the parents: “What can be done to raise awareness of the rights to education for learners with disabilities?” The main purpose of asking this question was to get a clear understanding of what can be done to raise awareness of the rights of children. The parents responded as follows:

Parent 1: *“We can call the Imbizo meeting, whereby we can talk about it while we call people to gather. Then, we give them that knowledge of inclusive education. We also*

call the parents meeting, every time. And also in our royal meetings there at the Chiefs crawl, we must include that item of inclusive education, because it's whereby people gathers. Everywhere we can gather. Even in the church, you just tell the parents that inclusive education is very much important. Don't hide the children with disability or with barriers learning. You direct them or send them to the school so that they can get enough education."

Parent 2: *"Okay, I think more education and training to teach us so that they can teach and understand the rights of learners with disability and know how to create inclusive learning environment and also public awareness and also to access to improve access of technology and resources to children with disability."*

Parent 3: *"It is critical to establish an institution that would look into the rights of children and the disabled. They established a system to assist parents who lack knowledge of how to treat children. It is important to accept and love the children with challenges. The parents must show love to the children without restrictions."*

Parent 4: *"I can suggest that together with fellow educators or staff members at any school or the Community, they can plan a service session that teaches the community members and employ about positive and appropriate ways of interacting with people with disabilities. Like, we can never change the system like that way, but we will teach them on how to interact with such people, and then maybe another thing, we can make new support for our community. Maybe we can write to a local newspaper so that they can advertise about such .they can raise awareness about this, the way that we're supposed to interact with them."*

Parent 5: *"I think we can talk about children with disabilities in community gatherings, in our meetings, we should talk about it, and we can also have radio programmes that talk about the importance of education to the children with the disability, and this can help the parents to bring more awareness to see them deal with disability."*

Parents 1 and 5 clearly shared the same views on raising awareness of children's rights. They agreed to call an Imbizo meeting during their gathering to ensure that parents in the community, church, royal meetings, and the chief's kraal were informed about caring for children with disabilities. These gatherings emphasised the rights of

children with disabilities, stressing that they should not be hidden but given the opportunity to attend school.

The above statement is supported by Masalesa (2022), who argued that parents must be supported in order to successfully implement inclusive education. This statement is supported by the view shared by Parent 1: *“We can call the Imbizo meeting, whereby we can tell about while we call people to gather, and then we give them that knowledge of inclusive education. If the circumstances needed to be attended to, the parents should be called upon to be taught how to treat inclusive learners, and how to treat them with love.”* Furthermore, Masalesa (2022) points out that the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions should be maximised, and barriers to learning should be minimised. The ministry appreciates that a broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population at any point in time, and that where these are not met, learners may fail to effectively learn and be excluded from the learning system. In this regard, different learning needs arise from a range of factors, including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, and differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences, or socioeconomic deprivation.

The researcher learnt that parents have different views about their children's rights. They are always there to support each other during difficult times through many different activities, such as by writing to a local newspaper so that they can advertise awareness about these rights.

The researcher posed the following question to the participants: “what are the needs of parents with children with disabilities?” The question was posed to gather information from parents. The participants shared the following responses:

Parent 1: *“The main need of the children and the parents with children having a disability is capacity building. I think children need to be capacitated or be educated about this person so that they can get relevant knowledge.”*

Parent 2: *“Okay, financial support, where they can get money to help them with the requirements and the resources, and practical support, where people can go and help with everyday tasks, like taking the child to school or taking the child for a walk, like*

doing homework, and also emotional support, where people have to go and support them emotionally.”

Parent 3: *“Some parents do not take their children to school. They keep the children at home. There are those parents and relatives who abuse the social grant of the disabled. Instead of supporting the child and making life easier, they spend the grant on many different things. The grant is used achieve ulterior motives. There parents who do not provide clothes, food and medication for the challenged children.”*

Parent 4: *“They need, right? Money is a critical expense. That is, one need. That is, the number one need. If before everything there has to be money for them. They need to have employment. The cost of a child increases if the child is disabled. So, a multi income household should be able to earn enough money for a family to live comfortably. Even though that is not a reality for other parents, because there is a difference in the African living standards because those that work, those ones will be able to afford to take care of their child.”*

Parent 5: *“I think parents with children with disability need emotional support, financial support and more awareness about the children with disabilities.”*

The researcher understood that it was important that the parents play an important role in the learning process for their children with special needs. Lack of parental immersion is a hindrance to the implementation of inclusive education. It is important for parents to be funded to support their children with diverse needs.

4.6.4. Theme 4: Factors hindering the implementation of an inclusive education policy

The researcher expected to gain more information about the factors that can encumber the implementation of inclusive education and suggested elucidations from the participants. White Paper 6 (2001:6) reveals that inclusive education recognises that all children and youth can learn and need support, allowing education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.

The researcher posed the question to the participants. “What limits the principals, DHs, and teachers from implementing an inclusive education policy?” Participants were

requested to share the causes that restrict them from implementing IEP. Participants shared the following responses:

Principal 1: *“I mean, principals believe that their plate is already full with a number of activities. Like what people always say that the principal is the CEO of a school. When things are not going well at school you are the person who will account. And you have to think of a number of things at school, also go to all the classes, sometimes enough times is not there due to lot of meetings you will be attending there and there, submissions day in and day out. And you have to avail yourself in everything you want to go and attend those things and do what is required of you, but if you like, like what?”*

Principal 2: *“Yes. As I've indicated earlier on the issue of training. If principals themselves have not been trained, how can they implement something if they are not trained? Yes, another issue is that as teachers and principals, we must be able to read. We are the readers, but it depends on who the person is.”*

Principal 3: *“Number one is knowledge. As I've already alluded to, you implement something that you have got knowledge of. So, if you like knowledge, what are you implementing? The so-called resources. For example, in our schools we still use old resources, but some do not cater to this inclusive education. Human resource. If the principal is to implement that he alone cannot do that, he must have other educators. We have good knowledge of inclusive education, he must also help all policies in place. He must also help the, so-called learning aids that will help those learners who do not have those learners, who have got disabilities. Those learners who have got hindrances. So, I think those are the things that I see when you implement, you must be in be in the know of.”*

Principal 4: *“Causes are there. One other course that one can mention is that sometimes, as we are appointed, we are told what to do. So if the information is not coming from the department for us to do things and how, sometimes you tend to forget that this is inclusive education because we need to be reminded in timeously. Secondly, some other things which are causes, is that even parents sometimes are reluctant to agree that their kids need help or they want to be assisted and we cannot do it on our own. I think some other thing is, because there is a gap between the stakeholders, because the inclusive education that we are talking about parents are*

not aware of, they know nothing about it, and when you call a parent there, your child is having your problem. This and this and this. Even when they know that from childbirth, this one had a problem, they don't agree and they don't think you are just being somehow, to you, to their child or to their kid."

Principal 5: *"Hey that one is difficult, you know. It is because parents sometimes they don't accept that this, child of mine is not 100%. Each and every parent when giving birth through the treatment does not even think that will get or will give birth to child who is not 100%. Sometimes parents, they don't accept when you are seeing your learner is failing because of this. Learner shows he forgets easily or fast. Because its slow learner cannot be said that this one is lonely and by the principal, because, we are not trained for that. Ours is to unlock the child, but in the process of unlocking the way one should be vigilant enough and be able to diagnose this one."*

The researcher recognised that both principals had issues with different challenges that prevented them from implementing IEP. Principal 1 indicated that the principals are busy, i.e., people always say that the principal is the CEO of a school. When things are not going well at school, the principal accounts for it. Principal 2 displayed that principals who have not been trained cannot implement IEP. Likewise, Principal 3 also emphasised knowledge and resources, suggesting that principals should implement inclusive education. Principal 4 stated that parents are reluctant to agree that their children need help. Principal 5 believes that it is not easy for parents to agree that their children are not 100% perfect. Furthermore, principals were not fully trained; thus, it was difficult for them to implement inclusive education in schools. The training they received from the DBE did not furnish them to work with children with disabilities.

Besides mentioning insufficient resources, principals reported a common experience of isolation and segregation. According to DeMatthews (2021), the history of segregation and a lack of training caused teachers to resist change. Principals also face the challenge of district-developed self-contained programmes, contradicting inclusive practices and systems that principals tried to establish. Additionally, most principals feel powerless to eliminate such challenges.

The researcher posed the following question to the DHs: “What limits the departmental heads of education from implementing inclusive education? The purpose of the question was to establish the participants’ views concerning the causes DHs face when implementing inclusive education at school. Moreover, the aim was to nurture awareness of the causes and complications of providing inclusive education. The DHs from selected schools shared the following responses:

DH 1: *“I think the main problem is the budget because, as we are speaking now, many school are complaining about finance. They're not getting enough money for this inclusive education to be implemented. There are so many things that must be done, such as workshop and meetings. We already talk about that. Another thing may be the school environment. You can find that there are things that need money, for example, the learner who is using a wheelchair to go to toilet, and from one class to another money is needed in the school. The school does not have enough money so I think that is the main problem.”*

DH 2: *“Okay, so far, I think that what is limiting the departmental head is that in our regular schools we do not have learners with disabilities. That is the first thing, and the other thing is that, these learners with disabilities have their own school, the special schools. They are not there in our school. So, this is why departmental head cannot exercise their powers in implementing inclusive education policy.”*

DH 3: *“The courses that limit us as department heads from implementing this system, I think, is, from my view, I think it is the political dispensation in South Africa since 1994. It brought changes in the role of us as departmental head. Why am I saying that everybody seems to have a rise wherein they can do as they wish, implementing what is in front of them so another thing, I think the establishment of a school governing body, lack of training and development. The above are the courses that limit us to implementing this system.”*

DH 4: *“Our schools, as you can see, they don't have space, they don't have classrooms or lack of space is the issue. Incapacity of most educators, you can find that maybe from 10/10 schools only one school has. Educator who have inclusive cost for the incapacity of educators. And parents reluctances.”*

DH 5: *“Because there is a lack of enough budget or funds from the Department of Education, e.g. The scarcity of lack of teachers, Classrooms, adequate facilities and scares learning material for those learners are at exist. And the department needs to train more teachers. Educators have a lot of jobs to do in this inclusive education. If it can be all educators, who are being trained by now. I think inclusive education needs to be included in their study as part of the subject throughout their studies.”*

DH 1 and DH 5 shared the same sentiments about causes that limit the implementation of inclusive education in primary school. They both agreed that various defies prevented them from successfully implementing inclusive education. They believe that they are not getting adequate support or funds from the DBE. The above statement is supported by Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh and Susuman (2018), who contend that studies indicated that before 1994, the Education Department had 18 unequally funded education departments that were racially and demographically separated. There was no provision for all learners, and the vulnerable groups were marginalised (Ref. Ch. 1; section 3.1). This study concluded that DHs encounter different reasons when implementing inclusive education at schools.

Furthermore, DH 4 shared the same thoughts about causes that limit the implementation of inclusive education. DHs stated that departmental heads are also confounded about how they can help learners with special educational needs at schools because the curriculum in mainstream schools does not cater to learners with special needs. They don't have space or classrooms to cater to their learners.

Likewise, Chichevska and Canevska (2020) stated that their educational needs are similar despite their diversity. This includes their curriculum, classrooms, play areas, toilets, and transport, which are appropriate for all children at all levels. Moreover, DH 3 shared the same sentiments about causes that limit inclusive education implementation. He said that DHs are not supported enough, and they don't have enough support from the department regarding the lack of training and development.

The MoE released the Education White Paper on Education and Training in 1997 to address imbalances and promote equality and non-discrimination (DBE, 1997).

Furthermore, the researcher concluded that DHs find implementing inclusive education at schools challenging due to conditions beyond their control. The MoE released the Education White Paper on Education and Training in 1997 to address imbalances and promote equality and non-discrimination (DBE, 1997). In the same year, the MoE appointed the NCSNET and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to make recommendations on aspects of special needs and support services (DBE, 1997) (Ref. Ch. 1; section 3.1).

The researcher learnt that implementing inclusive education policies in schools can face various challenges, and DHs may encounter several factors that limit their ability to do so effectively. Chun and Evans (2023) point out that implementing inclusive education policies in schools can present various challenges, and DHs may encounter several factors that limit their ability to do so effectively. One of the primary obstacles is the lack of sufficient resources, including funding, staff training, and specialised equipment. Inclusive education often requires additional support services, such as special education teachers, aides, and therapists, which may strain already tight budgets (Moshtari & Safarpour, 2024).

DHs may face resistance from staff members who are hesitant to adopt new teaching methods or accommodate diverse learning needs. Resistance to change can stem from fear of the unknown, reluctance to deviate from traditional practices, or concerns about increased workload (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

Many educators may lack the necessary training and expertise to effectively implement inclusive practices. Without proper professional development opportunities, teachers may struggle to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities or other exceptionalities (Sharma & Mullick, 2020). In some cases, DHs may encounter institutional barriers, such as outdated policies or a lack of support from higher-level administration. Without clear guidelines and systemic support, it can be challenging to establish inclusive practices consistently across all classrooms (Kiesnere & Baumgartner, 2019).

Adjanku (2020) adds that school infrastructure may not be conducive to inclusive education due to barriers such as inaccessible buildings, classrooms, and facilities.

Without adequate accommodations, students with disabilities may face challenges in participating fully in school activities.

Kamran, Siddiqui and Adil (2023) argue that attitudes and beliefs about disability and inclusion can pose significant obstacles to implementing inclusive education. Negative attitudes among staff, students, and parents may perpetuate stigma and discrimination, hindering efforts to create an inclusive school culture. Furthermore, Naraian (2017) adds that some parents may express concerns about inclusive education, fearing that it may compromise the quality of EFA students or fail to meet the specific needs of their child. Addressing parental apprehensions and fostering open communication is crucial for building support for inclusive practices.

Moreover, Murphy, Thompson, Doyle and Ferri (2023) posit that compliance with legal and policy requirements related to inclusive education can be complex and time-consuming. DHs must navigate a maze of regulations and guidelines at the local, state, and national levels, which may create bureaucratic hurdles. Therefore, assessing the effectiveness of inclusive practices and ensuring accountability for student outcomes can be challenging. Traditional assessment measures may not accurately capture the progress of diverse learners, requiring innovative approaches to evaluation and data collection (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2019). Chun and Evans (2023) alluded that inclusive education involves recognising and valuing cultural and linguistic diversity among students. DHs may need to address language barriers, cultural differences, and biases to create inclusive learning. Further, overcoming these barriers requires a multifaceted approach involving stakeholder collaboration, ongoing training and support, policy reform, and a commitment to fostering a culture of inclusion within schools (Ansong, Calado & Gilliland, 2021).

The researcher concluded that one of the main challenges limiting DHs from fully implementing inclusive education is the lack of resources, which also prevents learners from engaging. Nishan (2018) points out that the lack of learner-centred teaching methods and developed learning materials and a lack of teacher training consequently limits inclusivity in education. Furthermore, DHs face a challenge in implementing inclusive education due to large class sizes. Such classes overload teachers and make it difficult to attend to each learner's needs (Nishan, 2018).

The researcher posed the following question to the participants: “What factors limit teachers from implementing inclusive education policy in full?” The main purpose of asking this question was to get a clear understanding of what causes teachers to limit the implementation of inclusive education. The teachers responded as follows:

Teacher 1: *“The shortage of staff and materials. What about virtual? Maybe if the government cannot chop them, it will be better. But the problem is the stuff at school. We have a lot of weight. We have a lot of inclusive education. We have a lot of work, many learners, and a shortage of teachers. We have got lots of work, 4 to 5 subjects like in our school; we are only nine from foundation phase to Grade 7.”*

Teacher 2: *“They are afraid; some of them think that it is impossible to work with this learner. Why I'm saying so because they don't have a specific method. They don't have knowledge on how they can teach those learners now they became afraid. They take as if it is impossible to work with that learners indeed, it will be impossible because they are not trained, but if you support the teachers, You workshop them, you train them. To give them special training when it comes to this type of class. Teachers may feel free, they can enjoy to work with these learners. What the department need to do is to give a proper methodology to those teachers so that they must feel free to conduct their lessons regarding these inclusive learners. If they don't have the strategies, it means they will not be confident in them. So, I can say that the department must ensure that they provide expectations of these inclusive to come and provide a proper method to the teachers.”*

Teacher 3: *“When we come to courses that limit the teachers in implementing inclusive education policy in full. As a teacher, we have a lack of training, but as a department, if you want to minimise or want to limit those courses or don't limit those courses for implementing inclusive education, it is better to train educators because there's a shortage of teaching and learning materials that to facilitate inclusive education, there is a large number in inside the class.”*

Teacher 4: *“As I've said, lack of resource, you cannot implement something without resource, sometimes not everyone, because you find that some of the school they have resource, it means that on that cases its lack of knowledge of what to do. Even though you have resources, in most cases, when it comes to public schools, we have limited resources. So on this one, I will see that this system is hindering.”*

Teacher 5: *“I think lack of training and professional development because many teachers may not have received adequate training or professional development in inclusive teaching methods. Without these necessary skills and knowledge, they may struggle to effectively support learners with special needs and other things Limited of resources. We have insufficient resources in our school, including classroom material, assistive technology and support staff. And even though our classes are large, they are overcrowded. It's made difficult for a teacher to give individual attention to a learner with special needs.”*

The respondents indicated that the shortage of staff and materials is the problem. Another challenge is the shortage of teachers who can work with learners who need special attention, inadequate resources, and lack of training and professional development. This shows that teachers had a significant challenge; they grumbled that they were unfamiliar with the concept of inclusive education. Moreover, teachers have a significant workload and many learners.

4.6.5. Theme 5: Overcoming challenges in the implementation of an inclusive education policy

This theme provides the researcher with some of the strategies to overcome challenges parents face when they do not disclose disabilities in their children. These tasks were crucial in addressing the concerns of parents who are not open about their children having disabilities. The researcher asked the parents to share their suggestions with parents who are not open about their children's disability. The researcher asked the following question: “What can you suggest to parents who are not open about children with disability?” The question was intended to gain insights into what parents suggest for parents with children with disabilities and their challenges in implementing IEP. The researcher asked the participants to openly

share their views: “What are the suggestions to parents who are not open about children with disabilities?” The participants responded as follows:

Parent 3: *“My advice to parents who do not expose their children with disability is to encourage them the chance to socialise with other children. Disability does not mean that the child cannot prosper in life. Take the child to school to acquire skills; the child can do something in life. The disabled child can attain a profession. I see some disabled people on TV who are teachers, presenters, and many more. They are successful; some are entrepreneurs with their employees.”*

Parent 4: *“I can suggest to them that every child is different from each other, right? So, I can tell them that they should focus on their children's strengths rather than focusing on their disability on what they cannot be able to do. They should focus on what the children is able to do and work on that it might be in artwork.”*

Parent 5: *“I can tell parents that they should be open about their children's disabilities. Parents should not hide their kids because they are disabled. People with disabilities should be treated in the same way as people without disability. Parents should allow their kids to socialise and interact with one another.”*

It was discovered that in some of the schools, parents understood the importance of facing disabled children. Moreover, Parent 1 stated that parents should not harm learners with difficulties. Parents should send their children to school rather than keeping them at home. Furthermore, Parent 2 believes that parents should accept their disabled children instead of blaming themselves. Masalesa (2022) adds that parents should support their children physically and emotionally. Different learning needs arise from various factors, including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, particularly life experiences, or socioeconomic deprivation. Mulunda (2017) alludes that failure to disclose a child's disability can delay the provision of early intervention services crucial for their development (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.18.1). Early intervention is vital for addressing developmental delays and improving long-term outcomes. Tanner and Dounav (2020) posit that without disclosure, children with

disabilities may not receive timely interventions and support services crucial for their development (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.18.1). Early identification and intervention are critical for maximising a child's potential and improving outcomes later in life. Grimes, Scevak, Southgate and Buchanan (2017) found that undisclosed disabilities may result in educational challenges due to a lack of appropriate support and accommodations in the classroom. Teachers may struggle to meet the needs of students they are unaware of. Van der Merwe and Yoro (2020) stated that unrevealed disabilities can lead to educational challenges.

Teachers may not be aware of the child's needs, resulting in inappropriate teaching strategies and accommodations. This can hinder the child's academic progress and overall educational experience. Lalvani (2015) opined that families might isolate themselves and their disabled children due to fear of social stigma and discrimination (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.18.1). Lack of disclosure can lead to missed social opportunities and limited social support networks. Mitter, Ali and Scior (2019) revealed that families may choose not to disclose disabilities due to fear of social stigma or discrimination (Ref. Ch. 2; section 2.18.1). However, this reluctance can lead to isolation for both the child and the family, as they may avoid social situations or interactions with others who could provide support. Without disclosure, children may not receive appropriate medical care and therapy, leading to exacerbated health issues and reduced quality of life (Russo, 2022). Failure to disclose disabilities can result in medical neglect, as the child may not receive necessary medical treatments or therapies. This neglect can exacerbate health issues and diminish the child's quality of life (Jenny & Metz, 2020). Hershkowitz and Lamb (2015) indicated that failure to disclose disabilities may raise legal and ethical concerns, especially regarding the provision of appropriate care and support for the child. Scott and Fraser (2015) suggested that in some jurisdictions, there may be legal and ethical implications for parents who fail to disclose disabilities in their children, especially if it results in harm or neglect. Mandated reporting laws may require professionals to report suspected cases of neglect or abuse. According to Ryan and Quinlan (2018), by not disclosing disabilities, families may miss out on accessing support services and resources available to them. These services could include financial assistance, respite care, and community programmes to support individuals with disabilities and their families.

The researcher understood that these challenges underscore the importance of early identification, support, and advocacy for children with disabilities. Disclosure is a critical step in ensuring that children receive the necessary interventions and support to thrive in various aspects of life. Furthermore, addressing these challenges requires promoting awareness, reducing stigma, and providing adequate support and resources for families raising children with disabilities. Early intervention, inclusive education, and a supportive community can make a significant difference in the lives of these children and their families.

The researcher posed the following question to the participants: "In your own parent's meetings, how often do you talk about children with disabilities?" The purpose of this question was to establish if parents have the same understanding of children with disability. Parents shared the following responses:

Parent 1: *"We usually call the parents meeting once per quarter. And during that particular meeting, we also discuss each and every meeting will discuss that items of inclusive education so that other parents will have that knowledge that inclusive education is open to each and every one."*

Parent 2: *"We talk about it not more often, maybe once a while we met in three or four months."*

Parent 3: *"Yes, they talk about children with disabilities. In meetings, learners with challenges form part of the agenda items."*

Parent 4: *"Not very often. We don't talk. Yeah, we don't. We don't discuss. I think the only time whereby we can be able to discuss it is when a teacher notices something is maybe. Around with. I can't exactly say the wrong cause. Behaviors that you can notice and then say oh no, these normal children are supposed to behave like this, right?"*

Parent 5: *"We don't talk about children with disability, and it is like we are not aware that we have kids with disability. It is just like we ignore them. It's just like we are not aware that we have children with disability, like we just know that they don't exist."*

The parents' responses indicated that most parents were confident about talking to other parents concerning children with disability. Some parents were not aware of such issues. Furthermore, Parent 1 concurred with Parent 2. Together with Parent 4, they stated that they also discussed children with disabilities in their meetings. Parents may encounter stigma and discrimination from society due to misconceptions and negative attitudes towards disabilities, which can affect their emotional well-being and social interactions (Babik & Gardner, 2021). Marsack-Topolewski and Graves (2020) posit that openly discussing their child's disability may lead to increased stress and emotional burden for parents as they navigate challenges related to caregiving, acceptance, and future planning. The costs associated with raising a child with a disability, including expenses, therapies, and specialised equipment, can pose significant financial challenges for parents (Ismail, Razak, Suddin, Mahmud, Kamaralzaman & Yusri, 2022). Parents may experience social isolation or strained relationships with family and friends who may not understand or be supportive of their child's disability (Cuzzocrea, Murdaca, Costa, Filippello & Larcan, 2016). Constantly advocating for their child's needs within educational, healthcare, and community settings can lead to advocacy fatigue, where parents feel overwhelmed and exhausted by the ongoing challenges they face (Boshoff, Deanna, Rebecca, Lousie & Logan Porter, 2016).

The researcher understood that despite these challenges, open communication about disability can also lead to increased social support, access to resources, and empowerment for parents and their children. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise and address the difficulties parents may encounter while advocating for their disabled children.

The researcher asked the following question: "Are parents aware of the rights of children with disability?" The question was asked to determine the understanding of parents who bring awareness to others with disabled children. Parents shared the following responses:

Parent 1: *"We can call the Imbizo meeting, whereby we can talk about it while we call people to gather. Then, we give them that knowledge of inclusive education. We also*

call the parents meeting, every time. And also, in our royal meetings at the Chiefs crawl, we must include that item of inclusive education because it's where people gather. Everywhere we can gather. Even in the church, you tell the parents that inclusive education is very important. Don't hide the children with disability or with barriers to learning. You direct them or send them to the school so that they can get enough education."

Parent 2: *"Okay, I think more education and training to teach us so that they can teach and understand the rights of learners with disability and know how to create an inclusive learning environment and also public awareness and also to access to improve access of technology and resources to children with disability."*

Parent 3: *"It is critical to establish an institution that would look into the rights of children and the disabled. They established a system to assist parents who lack knowledge of how to treat children. It is important to accept and love the children with challenges. The parents must show love to the children without restrictions."*

Parent 4: *"I can suggest that together with fellow educators or staff members at any school or the community, they can plan a service session that teaches the community members and employ about positive and appropriate ways of interacting with people with disabilities. Like we can never change system like that, but we will teach them how to interact with such people. And then maybe another thing, we can provide new support for our community. Maybe we can write to a local newspaper so that they can. They can advertise such a thing and raise awareness about it. The way that we're supposed to interact with them."*

Parent 5: *"I think we can talk about children with disabilities in community gatherings, in our meetings, we should talk about it, and we can also have radio programmes that talk about the importance of education to the children with the disability, and this can help the parents to bring more awareness to see them deal with disability."*

The ensuing discussion highlights some challenges parents may face when bringing awareness to others about children with disabilities. Harry and Ocasio-Stoutenburg (2020) suggest that parents advocating for awareness may encounter resistance and

misunderstanding from others who may not fully comprehend the needs and abilities of children with disabilities. Claughton, Geffen, Robertson and Nice (2023) recommended that advocacy efforts can be emotionally taxing for parents as they navigate societal attitudes, stereotypes, and systemic barriers to inclusion and acceptance. Swick and Peacock (2015) maintain that engaging in advocacy activities requires significant time and energy, which may strain parents' already busy schedules and resources. Parents may encounter bureaucratic hurdles and complex systems when advocating for their children's rights and access to services and support (Smith, Dowdy & Donovan, 2015). Parents must navigate the delicate balance between advocating for their child's needs and fostering their independence and self-advocacy skills (Arndt, Conrad & Jacobsen, 2016).

From the above discussions with the participants, it was clear that despite these challenges, parental advocacy plays a crucial role in promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for children with disabilities. It is essential to recognise and support the efforts of parents who work tirelessly to raise awareness and create positive change for their children and others in similar circumstances. The researcher asked the following question: "What challenges are faced by parents with children with disabilities?" The respondents replied as follows:

Parent 1: *"Here in the rural areas, we have got so many challenges, just because we don't have enough finance, just because we also sometimes they do if the children having barriers of learning, maybe the one is using the Braille in order to read clearly, Parents might not having more money to buy that braille. Or having no money to buy the crunches. It may either be a crunches or a wheelchair, that's the challenge we have as the parents and sometimes we do we have the challenge in our schools in rural areas, so that there is no accessibility so that the children can reach each and every corner of the school. That's our main challenge as parents."*

Parent 2: *"Financial stress is when a lot of things have to be bought, like equipment, the government, and resources, and they have to pay for medical costs and emotional stress. Because when taking care of children with a disability, I think is emotionally and physically demanding."*

Parent 4: *“There are many challenges that are faced with power by parents. Some of the challenges have to do with financial instability, especially in the South African communities. There are in villages, there is financial instabilities. It will put a strain on parents to that do not, especially those that do not have work or maybe educational programmes. Here around here you'll find that in our communities we don't have such schools. So it means that they will have to get more finance or maybe more, much more finance from the government so that they can be able to sponsor. Or maybe take care of their children. With for disability, so and such schools are expensive, so you have to have money to be able to take your child to schools that can be able to include them that are inclusive for disabled children.”*

Parent 5: *“I think most of the challenges are poverty. Most children with disability come from the family where there's a lot of poverty, and there is a lack of resources that can be used to help the kids, and sometimes they feel like they are being rejected by society. This gets them to feel like if they give the kids it will, it is better and lack of education about the rights of children with disabilities and the one which is the biggest challenge to the parents.”*

The researcher found that Parents 1, 2, and 4 have the same view that parents face financial, equipment, and resource challenges. They must pay for medical costs and emotional stress. Moreover, Parent 5 emphasised poverty and the lack of resources that can be used to help the children. Befkadu and Adamek (2022) concur with Parents 1, 2 and 4 that managing a child with a disability can be financially challenging due to medical expenses, therapy costs, specialised equipment, and lost income if parents need to reduce work hours or quit their jobs to provide care. Mona and Rehab (2019) point out that parents of children with disabilities often experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression due to the constant caregiving demands and concerns about their child's well-being. Parents must navigate complex healthcare and educational systems to access appropriate services and support for their children, which can be overwhelming and time-consuming (Leung, Wandler, Pringsheim & Santana, 2022).

Currie and Szabo (2020) mentioned that caring for a child with a disability can lead to social isolation as parents may have limited time and energy for social activities, and they may also face stigma and a lack of understanding from others. Parents of children

with disabilities often face uncertainty about their child's future independence, employment opportunities, and long-term care needs, leading to additional stress and anxiety (Calandri, Graziano, Borghi & Bonino, 2022). Additionally, parents must balance their caregiving responsibilities with their own needs for self-care, relaxation, and personal fulfilment, which can be challenging amidst the demands of caring for a child with a disability (Suldo, Hoffman & Mercer, 2020).

The researcher gathered that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes access to supportive services, respite care, mental health support, and community resources for parents of children with disabilities.

In this section of the study, the researcher aimed to discover how parents deal with children with disabilities. The researcher asked this question to the participants: "How do parents deal with children with disability?" This question was intended to explore the views of parents on the education of their children with disabilities. Furthermore, the researcher investigated how parents deal with children with diverse needs. The participants responded as follows:

Parent 1: *"Parents might be patient with the children having disability just because we need to help him or her everywhere. Whereby children need support, parents must give that support to the children, is either in the school items, they must give support is either at home, there must need supervision each and every time. That children must be supervised."*

Parent 2: *"I think parents deal with disabled children differently. But the best way is to educate themselves about the Child Disability and the treatment they take. And also the resources. Also, the support group where parents come together, talk about their children disabled, and also bond with professionals who can give them more information."*

Parent 3: *"Parents should support and assist children with disabilities. It is important to care for them and love them without limits. The social workers should be involved when caring for the children. Social workers have the expertise and are knowledgeable in child care and parenting matters."*

Parent 4: *“The way that they deal with them is that, from what I've noticed, parents that deal with children with disabilities is that, these parents love their child, and they love to take care of them, even though it's hard. Some of them cannot accept it. But then they love their child regardless, so they will take care of them and try to make sure that they get the best they can in their lifetime.”*

Parent 5: *“What is important to parents is to show their kids love and to accept them. Whether they are disabled or not, they should be accepted by their parents. They must not be hidden; they must allow their children to go to school.”*

The responses from the participants indicated that parents should support their children with whatever they need. Parents 1 and 3 shared the same sentiments that parents should support and assist children with disabilities. It is important to care for them and love them without limits.

The researcher asked the parents: “What is the impact on families with children with disabilities?” This question aimed to understand the impact of children with disabilities families. The participants responded as follows:

Parent 1: *“I think the impact of the family members on that learner is that family members must give love to that particular child who has a disability. They must share each and every item to the children. They must not separate that child; they must love him and give him and show him that he is also a family member like others. And other impact of the parents. They must give those children, show them love, and help him with every item where there's a need. There must be supported. I think it is the most impact on the family members. We must help him by telling him each and every time while we have the meetings or call them to show them that this learner is having a disability. They must help him every time. They must call them and maybe calling the meeting every time, he may be telling him that this learner must accept them.”*

Parent 2: *“Social Impact, where disability can impact a family, social life, maybe community activities, even relationship with friends because when we go out, we can't go all together. Someone has to stay at home and look after a disabled child.”*

Parent 3: *“Sometimes parents who have children with disability do not know where to go when they want help, when it comes to their education, they even don't know which school their kinds should go or which school should they attend, and as results, they end up keeping their kinds at home. You find that that kind of person should not even count money, which is important to our everyday lives.”*

Parent 4: *“Oh, there are many impacts that can have happen in such families, for example. For parents, having a disabled child may increase stress, take a lot on mental and physical health. It can make it difficult to find appropriate and affordable childcare. And for those that work, it will affect their decision making.”*

Parent 5: *“Okay, thank you. Sometimes, parents who have children with disability do not know where to go when they want help, when it comes to their education, they even don't know which school their kinds should go or which school should they attend, and as a result, they end up keeping their kids at home. You find that the kids should not even count money, which is important to our everyday life.”*

Whilst interviewing the participants, the researcher noted that Parent 1 understood the impact on the family with disabilities. The insights gathered above emphasise the essential part of the parents, who must show love to those children with disabilities and share each item with those children. Parents should show love to their children irrespective of disabilities. Home and family play a crucial role in a child's development and learning (Beveridge, Fowles, Masse, McGoron, Smit, Parrish, Circo & Widdoes, 2015). Families of learners with non-visible LDs face challenges such as high degrees of stress due to false hope and unrealistic expectations of the child's academic performance. This is because parents expect their children to develop according to predictable norms (Petronio, Child & Hall, 2021). However, parents and families with learners who have more visible developmental disabilities tend to make adjustments to accommodate the child's diagnosis and education. Some families experience malfunctions due to such adjustments (Petronio, Child & Hall, 2021).

The researcher understood that it was important that policymakers should consider the severity and type of disability of students when allocating teachers for schools. As found in this study, the lack of teacher assistants in the class to support regular

teachers was a challenge. Therefore, teacher assistants should be available in all schools to assist in the mainstream class. In making schools inclusive, it is common for an assistant to work in the class with students with SEN within the general curriculum Nishan (2018).

4.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Principals, teachers, and parents shared varied views on implementing inclusive education. In addition, principals, DHs, teachers, and parents shared that inclusive education provides flexibility and accessibility for them. Although there were several opportunities, participants also identified challenges to implementing IEP.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter scrutinised, discussed, and deliberated the study's findings. The study explored the principals' experiences in implementing inclusive education in primary schools. This research involved principals, DHs, teachers, and parents as participants. The data collection methods comprised interviews and document analysis, which were cast off to address the research questions and objectives. The preceding four chapters provided details of their content; consensually, this chapter presents narratives of the key findings of the research. The chapter ends by discussing the limitations encountered during its execution. The study successfully addressed all the research questions that the research questions initially projected during the initiation of this study as follows:

Main research question:

What are the principals' experiences in implementing the inclusive education policy in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit?

Sub-research questions

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

- How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education policy?
- What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?
- What are the factors that hinder teachers from fully implementing inclusive education policies?
- How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing an inclusive education policy?

5.2. OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The researcher sampled five public primary schools within the NCC. The primary participants in this research included principals, DHs, teachers, and parents. The study purposefully selected experienced principals, DHs, teachers, and parents with the experience to participate in the research. The study comprised five chapters.

5.2.1. Chapter 1: Introduction and background

The first chapter exposed the background and the rationale of the study. The research problem the study sought to address was formulated. The study's purpose and the research objectives were identified and outlined. The researcher also recognised issues encountered by the principals, DHs, teachers, and parents in implementing an inclusive education policy in primary schools in the NCC. The chapter discussed the methodology and design employed in the research and clarified the study's restrictions and boundaries. The chapter concluded with a thorough delineation and explanation of key concepts, making it approachable. This chapter successfully laid the foundation on which the other chapters were placed.

5.2.2. Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review

Chapter 2 provided a theoretical framework and literature review of the study. The chapter commences with the introduction, social constructivism, theoretical framework, preliminary literature review, features of IEP, LDs and impairment, and key barriers to learning and development. The factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education, the perceptions of stakeholders towards inclusive education, and the role of principals are also discussed. It briefly delineates both principal leadership, followed by the challenges principals encounter in the management of schools, guidelines for successful inclusive education challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education, strategies to overcome challenges in the implementation of inclusive education, and the chapter conclusion.

5.2.3. Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

In this chapter, the research methodology was delineated as the underpinning structure of the study. The chapter focused on research design and methodology, which outlines how data were gathered from participants. A qualitative approach was adopted carefully to investigate the implementation of IEP. The researcher focused on the research design of the study. The data collection methods, including explicit procedures, research population, sampling, and instrumentation, were drawn and described. The data collection tools included SSIs and document analysis. The selection strategies involved purposive sampling, with 25 participants from five primary

schools in the NCC. The population comprises five principals, five DHs, five teachers, and five parents, all purposively selected. The ethical issues were identified and discussed, and steps were taken to ensure the study's trustworthiness. Proper data management procedures were adhered to in order to defend the information from the participants.

5.2.4. Chapter 4: Research findings, analysis and interpretation

This chapter analysed and discussed the data drawn from the participants. The chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of collected data. The study used thematic analysis as the data analysis strategy and followed the process of data coding, theme identification, and interpretation of inclusive education. On the other hand, responses to the research questions were obtained, presented, analysed, and examined. Themes and sub-themes emerged, and data were interpreted to answer the research questions. Five themes emerged in line with the participants' experiences in the implementation of IEP: Theme 1: Experiences of principals in the implementation of an inclusive education policy; Theme 2: Perceptions of participants in the implementation of an inclusive education policy; Theme 3: Characteristics of inclusive education; Theme 4: Factors hindering the implementation of an inclusive education policy; and Theme 5: Overcoming challenges in the implementation of an inclusive education policy.

5.2.5. Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

This last and final chapter presents the major findings, authenticated, and summary of the study. The research findings were answered, and the results, conclusions of the study, and recommendations were included.

5.3. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher summarises the findings drawn from this study, comprising meaningful issues from the literature review and the experiential evidence. The research results were discussed and analysed through the deployment of the following themes:

Principals' experiences of implementing IEP in primary schools: the discovery exposed that, based on their responses, participants appeared to understand what inclusive education entails (Mbua, 2023), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.6.1). Participating DHs contributed actively by explaining their understanding and support for implementing inclusive education (Massouti, Shaya & Abukhait, 2023), as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.6.1) and Chapter 2 (section 2.9.4). Tapala (2021) presented challenges principals face of overabundance in implementing IEP in primary schools. The findings revealed that including learners with different abilities can be challenging for principals, DHs, teachers, and parents. Challenges in their toil include lack of time, support, experience, poor communication, work skills and knowledge, underdevelopment, changes in educational policies, workload, and pressure in their day-to-day roles.

The key findings from each theme have been summarised below:

5.3.1. Theme 1: Experiences of principals in the implementation of an inclusive education policy

This theme probes the principal's experience regarding implementing inclusive education in primary schools. The above response displays that some principals were not well-trained in inclusive education and that the principals should attend workshops before the implementation of IEP in order to have full knowledge about implementation. Principals must ensure teachers and staff have the necessary training and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This may involve organising workshops, bringing in experts, or providing ongoing coaching and support to teachers. The principals play a key role in developing and implementing policies that promote inclusion, such as creating IEPs for students with disabilities, establishing support systems for English language learners, or implementing anti-bullying initiatives to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all students. The researcher found that principals play an important role in developing and implementing policies that promote inclusion.

The principals are responsible for allocating resources, including staffing, funding, and materials, to support Inclusive education initiatives. They need to ensure that resources are distributed equitably and used effectively to meet the needs of all

students. Principals must collaborate with various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community organisations, and local agencies, to support inclusive education. The principals should regularly monitor the effectiveness of inclusive education practices and policies and make adjustments as needed. This may involve collecting data, soliciting stakeholder feedback, and conducting formal evaluations to assess progress and identify areas for improvement. The finding is that principals monitor the success of inclusive education. The principals advocate for inclusive education within their schools and in the broader community. They need to champion the rights of all students to receive quality education and actively promote inclusive practices at all levels. The finding is that principals serve as advocates for inclusive education.

5.3.2. Theme 2: Perceptions of principals in the implementation of an inclusive education policy

The findings revealed that principals' perception regarding implementing inclusive education in primary schools is inspected and veils a multi-layered challenge. The principal's perspectives regarding implementing inclusive education in primary schools. A broad investigation exposed participants' multi-layered acuties and challenges when striving to create inclusive learning environments. Principals' perceptions in the implementation of IEP can vary based on various factors, including their own attitudes, beliefs, training, and resources available to them. The principals may perceive resource allocation as a significant challenge in implementing inclusive education policies. This includes concerns about funding, staffing, and access to appropriate materials and facilities. The finding is that participants must ensure that every important resource should be provided to the responsible person in a timely manner to implement IEP. They need ongoing professional development for themselves and their staff to implement inclusive education practices effectively. The researcher believes that it is important for the principal to ensure that everybody receives adequate resources.

It is important to foster a supportive and inclusive school culture where diversity is valued, and all students feel welcome and included. The finding is that participants should be supported in embracing school cultural diversity. The principals may perceive the need to establish collaborative partnerships with families, community organisations, and other stakeholders to support the successful implementation of

inclusive education policies. In these findings, participants expressed that principals identify the need to collaborate relationship with stakeholders. Some principals may perceive a tension between the need to comply with inclusive education policies mandated by government authorities and the genuine desire to create inclusive environments that meet the diverse needs of all students. The researcher found that participants observed tautness between the need to obey inclusive education. The principals recognise the importance of individualised support and accommodations for students with diverse learning needs to ensure their success in inclusive settings. The finding is that participants should provide support and accommodation for students with varied learning needs. There is a need to address and potentially change the attitudes and beliefs of teachers towards inclusive education, as teacher buy-in and commitment are crucial for successful implementation. The finding is that participants can change the outlooks and dogmata of teachers towards inclusive education. The finding further revealed that participants regularly perceived the importance of ongoing evaluation and monitoring of inclusive education practices to detect areas of strength and areas needing development.

5.3.3. Theme 3: Characteristics of inclusive education

The findings revealed several characteristics of inclusive education. The characteristics were physical impairment as physical disability, vision impairment as a form of disability, and hearing impairment as a form of disability. Participants reliably highlighted that this theme details the characteristics of IEP. During the interviews, participants were invited to share their views on the characteristics of IEP.

5.3.4. Theme 4: Factors hindering the implementation of an IEP

The findings revealed that the principal's hands are full of copious activities. The research findings further emphasised the importance of the principal as the CEO of a school. People always say that the principal is the CEO of a school; thus, when things are not going well at school, the principal is the one who accounts for it. Interviews with principals indicated that principals were not fully trained; thus, it was difficult for them to implement inclusive education at schools. The training that they received from the DBE did not teach them about children with disabilities. It was revealed from the

principal's responses that principals reported a common experience of isolation and segregation, which were challenging due to insufficient resources.

Furthermore, the findings were that the history of segregation and a lack of training caused teachers to resist change. Lastly, principals face the challenge of district-developed self-contained programmes, which contradict the inclusive practices and systems that principals tried to establish. Additionally, most principals feel powerless to eliminate such challenges.

5.3.5. Theme 5: Overcoming challenges in the implementation of an inclusive education policy

Implementing an inclusive education policy in schools presents several challenges for principals. The challenges require strategic planning, continuous professional development, and a commitment to fostering an inclusive school culture. Addressing these issues involves collaboration among school staff, families, and the broader community to create an environment where all students can thrive. The first challenge is resource allocation, in which schools often face limitations in funding and resources, making it difficult to provide the necessary support for learners with diverse needs. Without adequate resources, inclusive education may lack the specialised staff, materials, and training required for effective implementation.

Secondly, teacher training and professional development ensure that all teachers are adequately trained in inclusive education and practices and are continuously updated on new strategies. Teachers may feel unprepared or overwhelmed by the demands of inclusive classrooms, leading to inconsistent application of inclusive practices.

The next challenge is attitudes and beliefs changing the mindset of staff, students, and the community towards accepting and valuing diversity. Resistance or lack of buy-in from teachers, parents, and students can hinder the successful integration of inclusive policies. Moreover, curriculum adaptation is also a challenge that adapts the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Standard curricula often do not accommodate diverse learning needs, requiring significant modifications and differentiation, which can be time-consuming and complex.

Furthermore, physical and environmental barriers modify the physical environment to ensure accessibility for all students. Schools may need to make significant changes to infrastructure, such as ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms, which can be costly and logistically challenging. Likewise, assessment and evaluation develop fair and appropriate assessment methods for students with diverse needs. Standardised testing may not accurately reflect the abilities of all students, leading to disparities in academic assessment and achievement. Moreover, collaboration and support services co-ordinate with external agencies and specialists to provide comprehensive student support. Effective inclusive education often requires collaboration with speech therapists, occupational therapists, counsellors, and other specialists, which can be challenging to organise and maintain.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the discoveries on the principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools in the NCC. Chapter 4 presented, analysed, and discussed the findings in relation to the research questions and objectives. This study aimed to explore the challenges of school principal's recommendations from a researcher's perspective. This section presents the recommendations derived from the research questions, scrutinized literature, and research findings as themes. Implementing inclusive education policies can present various challenges for school principals. This study presents recommendations for school principals.

5.4.1. Recommendation for the State and Department of Education

Implementing inclusive education policies effectively requires a strategic approach that addresses various aspects of the education system. The DBE should:

- Provide professional development and training and invest in inclusive and current professional development for all teachers, administrative staff, and support personnel.
- Prepare plans and strategies for inclusive teaching practice for differentiated instruction, classroom management, and assessment that accommodate various learning needs, understanding disabilities, and special educational needs.

- Provide training to all education management officials on the characteristics of different disabilities and SEN, as well as how to create supportive and accessible learning environments.
- Provide orientation on cultural competency: Promote an understanding of IEP for different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in order to foster an inclusive and respectful school climate.
- Prioritise the allocation of human resources and support services to meet the needs of all students. This embraces specialised personnel and hiring and training special education teachers, counsellors, psychologists, and other specialists to provide the necessary support.
- Provide assistive technologies and learning materials, suitable assistive devices, educational software, and accessible learning materials. Infrastructure and accessibility modify school buildings to be physically accessible, including assessment adaptations. Use multiple assessment methods to measure student progress, ensuring that assessments are fair and accessible to all students.
- Provide UDL: Adopt UDL principles to create a curriculum that provides multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression.
- Encourage parental and community engagement and foster strong partnerships with parents and the community to support inclusive education practices.
- Engage parents in the educational process through regular communication, workshops, and participation in decision-making. Community resources cooperate with local organisations, health services, and community groups to provide additional support and resources for students and families.
- Conduct awareness campaigns to promote understanding and acceptance of inclusive education within the broader community.
- Regularly review and update inclusive education policies based on evaluation findings and emerging best practices.

5.4.2. Recommendation for principals

The school principals should:

- Implementing inclusive education policies is crucial to fostering an environment that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels.
- Promote an inclusive school culture, fostering an inclusive culture that creates an environment where all students feel valued and respected.
- Lead by example in demonstrating a commitment to inclusion through words and actions, setting a tone of acceptance and respect.
- Promote inclusive values and vision eloquently and promote the school's vision and values related to inclusivity, ensuring that all staff and students understand and embrace these principles.
- Organise sessions, events, activities, and programmes that celebrate the diversity of the school community, including cultural festivals, awareness days, and inclusive assemblies.
- Ensure professional development of staff: Ongoing training and professional development are essential for equipping staff with the skills needed to support all students.
- Provide regular training, which offers continuous professional development opportunities focused on inclusive teaching practices, differentiated instruction, and understanding diverse learner needs.
- Encourage collaborative learning and peer support among teachers, allowing them to share strategies and resources for inclusive education and provide specialised staff working directly with students with specific needs, such as those with disabilities.
- Enhance resources and adequate support structures that allow for the smooth implementation of inclusive education policies.
- Encourage the use of varied assessment methods to fairly evaluate the progress of all students, including those with special educational needs.
- Engaging parents and community commitment is critical for the success of inclusive education.
- Provide effective communication that maintains open, transparent, and regular communication with parents about their child's progress and the school's inclusive practices.

5.4.3. Recommendation for departmental heads

The DHs should:

- Lead by example and ensure that inclusive teaching practices are integrated into all aspects of their subject area.
- Demonstrate effective inclusive teaching strategies in their own instruction, serving as a role model for other teachers.
- Encourage and support teachers to use various instruction methods to cater to different learning styles and abilities within the classroom.
- Facilitate collaborative planning sessions where teachers can share ideas and strategies for inclusive teaching and learn from each other's experiences.
- Providing ongoing professional development is crucial for teachers to stay informed about best practices in inclusive education.
- Identify training needs, regularly assess the training needs of their staff, and organise relevant professional development opportunities.
- Arrange workshops and training sessions focused on inclusive education, such as managing diverse classrooms, using assistive technologies, and understanding specific LDs.
- Encourage peer learning and promote peer observations and mentoring programmes, where teachers can learn from colleagues who excel in inclusive teaching.
- Enhancing resource accessibility can ensure teachers and students access necessary resources, vital for inclusive education.
- Evaluate and update the department's teaching materials and resources to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to all students.
- Advocate for and integrate assistive technologies that can help students with disabilities access the curriculum effectively.
- Create a repository of inclusive teaching resources, including lesson plans, activities, and assessments, that teachers can easily access and use.
- Critically adapt themselves to the curriculum and assessment methods to meet the needs of all learners.
- Be flexible in designing the curriculum and work with teachers to adapt it

- Develop and implement varied assessment methods that provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate their understanding and skills.
- Ensure that feedback is encouraged. Additionally, formative assessments and continuous feedback should be adapted to help students with diverse needs stay on track and make progress.
- Create a team to foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support among teachers, encouraging them to work together to solve challenges and share successful strategies.
- Support student support systems establish and maintain support systems within the department, such as peer tutoring, study groups, and student mentoring programmes.
- Play a pivotal role in ensuring that inclusive education policies are effectively implemented within their subject areas, creating a more equitable and supportive learning environment for all students.
- Creating a supportive and collaborative departmental culture is essential for the success of inclusive education.

5.4.4. Recommendation for teachers

Teachers play a fundamental role in the successful implementation of inclusive education policies in schools. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should:

- Adopt discerned instruction that involves tailoring teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students.
- Vary their teaching methods during teaching and learning in the classroom area. They should also use various instructional strategies, including visual aids, hands-on activities, group work, and technology, to accommodate different learning styles.
- Adopt flexible grouping group students strategically for activities based on their strengths, needs, and learning objectives, ensuring that all students can participate meaningfully.
- Adjust content delivery, modify the complexity of tasks, and provide various ways for students to engage with the material, ensuring it is accessible to everyone.

- Promote a sense of belonging and respect for all students through tolerance and accommodation.
- Foster a positive atmosphere to cultivate a classroom culture that values diversity and encourages respect, empathy, and student collaboration.
- Access classroom design, arrange the classroom to ensure physical accessibility, and provide necessary accommodations, such as seating arrangements that support students with disabilities.
- Use teaching materials that reflect diverse cultures, abilities, and perspectives to ensure that all students see themselves represented in the curriculum.
- Implement UDL, which aims to improve and optimise teaching for all students.
- Provide various ways for students to engage with the material, such as offering choices in activities or topics that cater to their interests and motivations.
- Present information in different formats to ensure all students can access the content.
- Allow students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in diverse ways, such as through written work, presentations, art, or projects.
- Collaborating with specialists and support staff is essential to meeting the diverse needs of students.
- Work closely with special education teachers, such as counsellors, speech therapists, and other specialists, to develop and implement IEPs and tailored support strategies.
- Maintain open lines of communication with support staff to discuss student progress, share insights, and adjust strategies as needed.
- Participate in professional learning communities (PLCs) within the school to share best practices and resources for inclusive education.
- Build strong partnerships with parents and families to support students' learning and development.
- Establish regular communication channels with parents to discuss their child's progress, strengths, and areas for improvement.
- Encourage parents to be involved in their child's education by providing opportunities for them to participate in classroom activities, school events, and decision-making processes.

- Be mindful of cultural differences and respect the diverse backgrounds of students and their families, seeking to understand their perspectives and incorporating them into the classroom environment.
- Create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that addresses the needs of all students and fosters a culture of equity and respect.

5.4.5. Recommendation for parents

Parents play a crucial role in successfully implementing inclusive education policies in schools. Their involvement, support, and advocacy can significantly enhance the effectiveness of these policies.

The parents should:

- Engaging with the school community helps parents support inclusive education and ensure their child's needs are met.
- Participate in school activities through attending school meetings, events, and parent-teacher conferences to stay informed and involved in their child's education.
- Offer to volunteer in classrooms, during school events, or in parent-teacher associations (PTAs) to foster a supportive and inclusive school environment.
- Build relationships to establish strong communication channels with teachers, administrators, and other parents to create a supportive and inclusive community.
- Support their child's specific needs to ensure that they receive appropriate support and accommodations; this encompasses understanding the child's rights. Parents should familiarise themselves with inclusive education policies and the rights of students with disabilities or special needs.
- Clearly communicate detailed information to teachers and school staff about their child's strengths and needs and provide effective strategies that work at home.
- Collaborate on individualised plans: Actively participate in developing and reviewing IEPs or 504 plans to ensure they are tailored to their child's needs.
- Reinforce what is taught in school and help their child learn at home to succeed.

- Create a conducive learning environment; they can set up a quiet, organised space for homework and study freely from interruptions.
- Develop a consistent routine for homework, reading, and other educational activities to provide structure and support; however, parents should also use inclusive materials that provide access to inclusive and diverse educational materials that reflect different abilities, cultures, and perspectives.
- Encourage social inclusion that helps children to develop positive relationships and social skills.
- Inspire friendships to facilitate playdates, group activities, and social interactions with diverse peers to foster inclusivity.
- Address bullying: Parents should also be watchful about signs of bullying and work with the school to address any issues quickly and effectively.
- Stay informed about inclusive education practices and policies that enable them to support their children and advocate for improvements.
- Educate themselves about inclusive education, different disabilities, and effective strategies to support diverse learners.
- Support different groups, online forums, and advocacy organisations to share experiences, gain knowledge, and receive support.
- Attend training and participate in workshops, webinars, and training sessions offered by schools or community organisations to stay updated on best practices in inclusive education.

5.4.6. Recommendation for further studies

The following suggestions are areas that need further research in order to deepen the understanding and practices and address challenges around inclusivity and inclusive education in schools:

- A bigger study can be conducted through the quantitative research approach.
- The evaluation of teaching strategies and practices that effectively support inclusive education. How do diverse teaching strategies impact learner outcomes across diverse populations?

- The exploration of the role of assistive technologies and digital tools in enhancing learning for students with disabilities.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of various professional development programmes in preparing teachers for inclusive education.
- Investigation of teachers' attitudes and beliefs about how inclusivity affects their teaching practices and students' outcomes.
- Examine the social experiences of students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms, including peer relationships and a sense of belonging.
- The impact of inclusive education on the emotional well-being and self-esteem of students with diverse special needs.

5.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Qualitative research frequently relies on non-random, small samples, mainly selected purposively. The most important function is exploration and discovery rather than hypothesis testing and validation. Accordingly, the findings derivative from qualitative research are usually context-specific and may not readily extend to a broader population. These findings are exceptional due to the relatively limited number of individuals participating in the research study.

Additionally, the study predominantly trusted self-reported data obtained from principals, DHs, teachers, and parents, raising concerns about potential social desirability bias in responses. Respondents have been persuaded to provide answers that align with perceived institutional goals and hopes, which can influence the correctness of the data. The limitations of this study had several implications. Trustworthiness was impacted as the study's data collection methods and sample size were constrained, potentially leading to biased or less reliable findings. Reliability suffered due to resource limitations, which hindered the consistency and reliability of data collection, ultimately reducing the study's trustworthiness.

5.7. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study's scope was demarcated to five public primary schools located in a solitary district in Limpopo Province. These schools were distinct from those in the same

province and other regional provinces. This geographic specificity infers that the unique resources, cultural factors, and local policies may not fully symbolise the challenges and strategies relevant to inclusive education in different areas. Moreover, the study used a relatively small sample size, mainly drawn from a single district. This introduced selection bias and hindered the findings' applicability to various educational institutions. Moreover, generality and transferability were likely compromised because findings specific to one district were not necessarily applicable to different educational contexts, limiting the broader relevance and transferability of the research to other districts or regions

5.8 CONCLUSION

The study's aim and objectives were achieved by answering the main and sub-research questions. The study of the principals' experiences in implementing IEP in primary schools in the NCC led to an informed understanding of the importance of inclusive education to principals, DHs, teachers, parents, and society at large. However, the study revealed that the success of the effective implementation of inclusive education is mainly related to principals', DHs', teachers', and parents' level of interest, awareness, attitude, and willingness. The study contributed to the literature on inclusive education in primary schools based on the evidence from a case study of principals' experiences implementing IEP in the five NCC primary schools. The study examined principals' experiences with the implications of IEP in the five NCC primary schools. Data were collected through interviews, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data into themes and sub-themes. These themes gave acceptable answers to the research questions and accomplished the study's objectives. The findings of the study revealed that the participating principals, DHs, teachers, and parents were aware of the importance of inclusive education, which showed their level of awareness of implementing inclusive education. Likewise, the study revealed several challenges that limit principals', DHs', teachers', and parents' exertions to implement inclusive education efficiently. 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 primary schools, which was

grounded on the evidence from a case study of principals' experiences in implementing inclusive education in the five sampled primary schools.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/04/12

Ref: **2023/04/12/46422897/26/AM**

Name: Mrs L. Sinthumule

Student No.:46422897

Dear Mrs L. Sinthumule

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2023/04/12 to 2026/04/12

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs L. Sinthumule
E-mail address: 46422897@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0725347847

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr N Ndou
E-mail address: ndoun@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0124294468

Title of research:

Principals' experiences in the implementation of inclusive Education policy in primary schools in Nzhelele Central Circuit.

Qualification: MEd Inclusive Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2023/04/12 to 2026/04/12.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/04/12 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

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



University of South Africa
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www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/04/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2023/04/12/46422897/26/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
 motlhat@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
 qakisme@unisa.ac.za



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APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT



Request for permission to conduct research at Nzhelele Central Circuit

Title of the research: **PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT**

Date: 27 March 2023

The Circuit Manager

Department of Education

Dear Sir /Madam,

I, SINTHUMULE LANGANANI, am doing research under the supervision of Prof Nndwamato Ndou, a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT**. The study aims to explore principals' experiences in implementing inclusive education in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit.

Your school has been selected because it falls in proximity to the circuit. The benefits of this study are to establish an inclusive education and training system, which will require changes to mainstream education so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early and appropriate support can be provided. Various stakeholders will benefit from the study. Learners with severe disabilities will be accommodated in these vastly improved special schools as part of an inclusive system.

No potential risks are involved in this study; it is straightforward without serious ethical problems. The research is clarified as a low-risk category. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information are involved.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

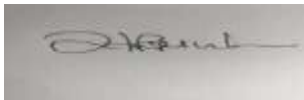
The feedback procedure will entail the following: The study findings will be shared with education authorities and the participants. Copies of the dissertation will be made available to the circuit managers and the District Director to convey the message to the relevant stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

Sinthumule Langanani

Master's in Education Student (Unisa)

0725347847

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APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION SHEET

PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION



Date: 05/08/2023

Title: **PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT.**

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is SINTHUMULELANGANANI and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Nndwamoto Ndou a Senior lecturer in the Department of EARLY CHILDHOOD towards a MED at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The benefits of this study are to establish an inclusive education and training system which will require changes to Mainstream education so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early and appropriate support provided. There are so many stakeholders that will benefit from the study. Learners with severe disabilities will be accommodated in these vastly improved special schools, as part of an inclusive system.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you are purposively sampled. This allow the participant to provide judgemental responses. The researcher would determine the makeup of the sample. In the application of this technique, the sample size will not be too large that it is difficult to extract rich data nor too small to that it is difficult to achieve data saturation.

I obtained your contact details from the Circuit office. The Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013, necessitates the disclosure of how access was gained to the personal information of prospective participants).In that regard, 2 primary schools will be sampled, targeting 2 principals, 2 teachers per school and 2 Departmental Head of education (DH) and 2 Parents representative.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves *semi-structured interviews*. Indicate what sort of questions will be asked or show the questions in this document. The expected duration of participation in the interviews is 30 - 45 minutes.



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2

Enq: Makola MC

Tel No: 015 290 9448

E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Sinthumule L

P.O. BOX 1111 ,
DZANANI
0955

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **" PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT."**
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
 - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : SINTHUMULE L Page 1

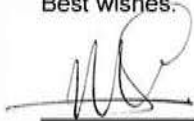
Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel:015 290 7600/7702 Fax 086 218 0560

The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



Mashaba KM
DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES

15/05/2023

Date

APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Request for permission to conduct research at Nzhelele Central Circuit

Title of the research: **PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT**

Date: 04 July 2023

The Principal

Department of Education

Dear Principal,

I, SINTHUMULE LANGANANI, am doing research under the supervision of Prof Ndwamato Ndou, a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NZHELELE CENTRAL CIRCUIT**. The study aims to explore principals' experiences in implementing inclusive education in primary schools in the Nzhelele Central Circuit.

Your school has been selected because it falls in proximity to the circuit. The benefits of this study are to establish an inclusive education and training system, which will require changes to mainstream education so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early and appropriate support can be provided. Various stakeholders will benefit from the study. Learners with severe disabilities will be accommodated in these vastly improved special schools as part of an inclusive system.

No potential risks are involved in this study; it is straightforward without serious ethical problems. The research is clarified as a low-risk category. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information are involved.

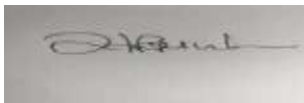
There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

The feedback procedure will entail the following: The study findings will be shared with education authorities and the participants. Copies of the dissertation will be made available to the circuit managers and the District Director to convey the message to the relevant stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

Sinthumule Langanani

0725347847

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APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What is your experience in implementing inclusive education policies in schools?
2. What is your perception of the implementation of inclusive education policy?
3. What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?
4. What are the factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools?
5. How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education policy?
6. What is your opinion on the capacity building of the principal in implementing an inclusive education policy?
7. What do you believe limits the principal from fully implementing an inclusive education policy?
8. What is your view of involving school governing bodies in implementing an inclusive education policy?
9. What role do teachers play in implementing inclusive education?
10. What role does the departmental head of education play in implementing inclusive education?
11. In relation to this topic, what additional information or insights can you provide?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DEPARTMENTAL HEAD OF EDUCATION

1. What is your experience in implementing inclusive education policies in schools?
2. What is your perception of the implementation of inclusive education policy?
3. What are the main features of inclusive education policy in primary schools?
4. What are the factors hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools?
5. How can the departmental head of education overcome the challenges of implementing inclusive education policy?
6. What is your opinion on the capacity building of the departmental head of education in implementing inclusive education policy?
7. What do you believe limits the departmental head of education from fully implementing an inclusive education policy?
8. What is your view of involving school governing bodies in implementing an inclusive education policy?
9. What role does the departmental head of education play in implementing inclusive education?
10. In relation to this topic, what additional information or insights can you provide?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

1. What are your experiences with implementing inclusive education policies in schools?
2. What is your perception of the implementation of inclusive education policies?
3. How do you report it when you identify learners with special needs in your class?
4. What factors are hindering the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools?
5. How can teachers overcome the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education policies?
6. What is your opinion on the capacity building for teachers in implementing inclusive education policies?
7. What do you believe are the factors that hinder teachers from fully implementing inclusive education policies?
8. What is your perspective on involving school governing bodies in implementing inclusive education policies?
9. What role do teachers play in the implementation of inclusive education?
10. In relation to this topic, what additional information or insights can you provide?

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

1. What role do parents play in the implementation of inclusive education?
2. What advice would you give to parents who are not open about their children's disabilities?
3. To what extent are parents aware of inclusive education?
4. Why do you believe parents are often not open about their children's disabilities?
5. In your parent's meetings, how often do you talk about children with disabilities?
6. Are parents aware of the rights of children with disabilities?
7. What can be done to raise awareness about the educational rights of learners with disabilities?
8. What challenges do parents of children with disabilities face?
9. What are the needs of parents with children with disabilities?
10. How do parents deal with children with disabilities?
11. What is the impact on families with children who have disabilities?

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1.1. Gender _____

1.2. Age ____

1.3. Teaching experience_____

1.4. Highest experience_____

2. CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

2.1. What are the principals' experiences in implementing an inclusive education policy?

2.2. How do principals perceive the implementation of inclusive education?

2.3. What are the main features of inclusive education?

2.4. In your opinion, why do school principals find it challenging to implement the inclusive education policy?

2.5. How can principals overcome the challenges faced in implementing an inclusive education policy?

2.6. What can be done to alleviate the challenges of inclusive education?