



**Exploring educators' experiences with regard  
to coping-strategies within an inclusive  
educational setting**

**M Jansen van Vuuren**

 **orcid.org/ 0000-0002-2046-6962**

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Supervisor: Prof Werner de Klerk

Co-supervisor: Mrs Monique de Klerk

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## SUMMARY

Exploring educators' experiences with regard to coping strategies within an inclusive educational setting

*Keywords:* children with disabilities, coping strategies, educators, inclusive classroom, qualitative research

In South Africa, inclusive education has been recognized as an important model of education for all learners, including those with disabilities. However, although this model is implemented within a South African context, many challenges to make it feasible remain. As educators can be identified as pivotal in the successful implementation thereof, facilitating and managing these settings result in a variety of occupational demands and stressors. To ameliorate these experiences, educators concurrently apply various coping strategies in reaction to these demands.

Although studies focussing on inclusive educators' coping strategies are well described, attention to these educators' experiences thereof is negligent. Moreover, relevant literature regarding this topic of interest within a South African context is lacking. Yet it is stated that knowledge related to the stress and coping skills of inclusive educators provides an essential backdrop for established and effective inclusive educational practices.

This qualitative research study followed a phenomenological research design to explore, identify, and describe educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting. Purposive sampling allowed for the focus to be drawn to educators within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in the North West Province of South Africa. The final sample for this research study consisted of eight female participants aged 24-57. Data collection consisted of demographic questionnaires and in-depth interviews, whereas thematic analysis was followed to identify relevant themes for this research study. Thematic

analysis yielded the following main themes: utilised coping strategies within the inclusive classroom; situational aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof; personal aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof; and knowledge gained during inclusive teaching career.

This research study pioneered in research focusing on educators' experiences of their own coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting. The findings can therefore be used as a foundation for future research studies related to inclusive education within a South African context, as it identified the pivotal role educators' coping strategies and the related experiences thereof play in the effective implementation of inclusive educational practices. Additionally, the identified needs and further suggestions within this research study can also be taken into consideration in future, as it provides a framework to develop educator- and child-based intervention programs to further enhance the quality of inclusive education within a South African context.

## PREFACE

- The stipulated article by the North-West University in the A-rules, is adhered to within this mini-dissertation.
- This article will be submitted to the *International Journal of Special Education* for possible publishing.
- This mini-dissertation complies with the guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA, 6th edition). Section 2 of this mini-dissertation was compiled according to the author guidelines specified by the *International Journal of Special Education*.
- Chronological page numbering is followed, starting with Section 1 and ending with Appendix D.
- The language editing of this mini-dissertation was conducted by a qualified language practitioner.
- Data collection for this research study occurred in the preferred language of the participants. Both English and Afrikaans interview questions were therefore established and stated during the interview process.
- The submission of this mini-dissertation for examination purposes (in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Clinical Psychology) was approved by the research supervisor, Dr Werner de Klerk.
- This mini-dissertation was submitted to Turn-it-in (10 %).

## **PERMISSION LETTER FROM SUPERVISOR**

I, Dr Werner de Klerk, herewith grant permission for Megan Jansen van Vuuren to submit this mini-dissertation entitled “Exploring educators’ experiences with regard to coping-strategies within an inclusive educational setting” for examination purposes.

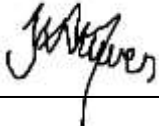


Prof Werner de Klerk

13/11/2019

## DECLARATION

I, Megan Jansen van Vuuren, declare that this research study with the title “Exploring educators’ experiences with regard to coping strategies within an inclusive educational setting” is the initial work of myself. This research study serves in partial fulfilment of my Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology completed at the North-West University. This work has never been submitted for examination. Necessary consent of all relevant parties was obtained to conduct this research study. Throughout this mini-dissertation, required acknowledgement is provided to all reference material.



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Megan Jansen van Vuuren

05/11/2019

Date

Student number: 24217654

## **STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH**

This mini-dissertation has been divided into three sections. Section 1 (see pp. 1) provides a literature overview to provide the necessary and relevant information relating to the topic of discussion. In Section 2 (see pp. 27) the article is presented where the methodology applied in this research study is described, the findings are discussed, and a conclusion is given. Section 3 (see pp. 56) provides the researcher's critical reflection regarding the study and an overview of contributions. Possible wider applications of the research study are presented.

## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

In Section 1 of this mini-dissertation an in-depth overview relating to the topic of interest is provided to allow for a clear understanding of the essential concepts relevant to this research study. Reviewed concepts include: 1) basic education in South Africa; 2) inclusive education in the South African context; 3) inclusive schools as opposed to special and integrated schools; 4) proposed challenges of inclusive education in South African schools; 5) learners with disabilities; 6) statistics regarding learners with disabilities in South African schools; 7) educators in an inclusive educational setting; 8) roles and responsibilities of inclusive educators; 9) common demands and challenges encountered in an inclusive educating environment; 10) coping strategies as well as 11) utilization of coping strategies within an inclusive educational setting. To conclude this section the problem statement is set out and the aim of the research study is presented.

### **Literature Overview**

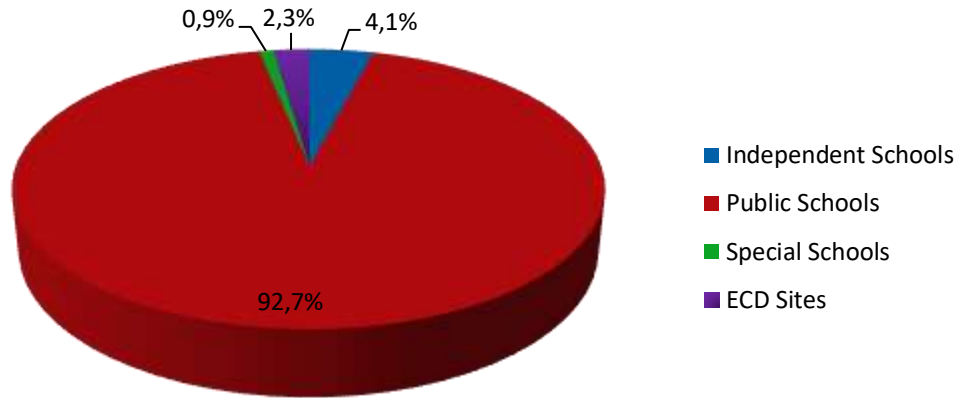
For the purpose of this mini-dissertation, the following terms were investigated for Section 1 – Literature overview: *basic education, inclusive education, special and integrated schools, disability, educator, educators and inclusive education, coping strategies, and challenges/stressors in inclusive educating* by consulting various databases, including Science Direct, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost.

### **Basic Education in South Africa**

Section 29 of the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) states that every individual in South Africa has the right to basic education. Basic education refers to both primary and lower-secondary education that

constitute the first nine years of education in South Africa (Gehring et al., 2011) and includes acquiring basic skills in literacy, problem solving, numeracy, and general knowledge (Simbo, 2012). This is significant as it allows a child the acquisition and exploration of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes (Simbo, 2012) as well as the enriching opportunity to contribute to societal growth that, in turn, promote communal stability (Arendse, 2011; Basic Education Coalition, 2011).

The latest official available statistics from the Department of Basic Education ([DBE], 2016), indicated that 25 741 ordinary schools exist in South Africa – 14 927 primary schools accommodating approximately 6 655 171 learners and 201 673 employed educators; 6 068 secondary schools with approximately 3 910 643 learners and 143 990 employed educators, and 4 746 combined and intermediate schools accommodating 2 089 622 learners with 79 427 employed educators. A total of 13 068 855 learners were concurrently enrolled in sectors of the basic education system (DBE, 2016), of which 12 117 015 (92%) were in public schools; 538 421 (4.1%) in ordinary independent schools; 295 942 (2.3%) in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres, and only 117 477 (0.9%) in special schools. The pie-graph in Figure 1 (see following page) provides a breakdown of percentages representing learners in different educational settings in 2014 (DBE, 2016). Thus, a total of 13 068 855 learners were involved in the basic education system, attending 30 500 established educational institutions, and served by 448 105 educators (DBE, 2016).



*Figure 1.* Percentage distribution of learners within the South African education system of 2014 (DBE, 2016)

### **Inclusive Education in the South African Context**

**History and development of inclusive education in South Africa.** The concept of inclusive education first presented itself in the United States in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (also referred to as EAHCA/EHA, or Public Law [PL] 94-142). This act was an amendment to Part B of the Education of the Handicapped Act enacted in 1966. In 1990, the United States Congress reauthorized EHA and amended the title to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, in short referred to as IDEA (Torreno, 2012). This act stipulated the responsibility of all school districts to provide (free) education to all children, including those with disabilities (IDEA website, 2018). This was initiated in reaction to the former education system which excluded children with disabilities from public schools (and therefore from mainstream education) by placing them in special schools (Torreno, 2012). Legislation protecting the educational rights of disabled children followed, including the No Child left behind Act of 2001 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, all of which expanded educational opportunities for these children. This resulted

in approximately 90% of disabled learners in the United States receiving an equal educational opportunity (Torreno, 2012).

Zulu (2007) explains that inclusive education first realised in developed countries such as the United States due to the extensive and relatively sophisticated developed special needs educational systems. Lacking such systems, inclusive education was only introduced to South Africa during the development of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996 (Engelbrecht, 2006; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2010). Considering international trends in education, it became of utmost importance in South Africa to provide equal services and opportunities to all individuals (Walton, Nel, Hugo, & Muller, 2009) including those with disabilities. As such, children diagnosed with a disability obtained the right to be regarded as equals amongst other learners, entitled to basic education along with their peers (Srivastavaab et al., 2015). Dalton, Mckenzie, and Kahonde (2012) indicate that the DBE initiated inclusive educational policies through the development of The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). Consequently, general guidelines for parental and educator roles were established in inclusive education together with assessment principles regarding the level of support needed by a learner with a disability. The subsequent implementation of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in educational settings throughout South Africa enables educators to comply with various and different educational needs relating to individual learners in the classroom (Dalton et al., 2012), allowing for the DBE to implement a system focusing on the facilitation of inclusion while reducing multiple barriers to learning. This was achieved through activating targeted support structures and mechanisms aimed at improving the retention and accommodation of vulnerable and disabled learners in the education system of South Africa (South African Yearbook, 2016).

**Inclusive schools, special schools, and integrated schools: A comparison.** The education system of South Africa covers inclusive education, special education as well as integration in an educational setting for learners with disabilities (Bridge, 2014; Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017). Florian (2008) defines a special school as an educational setting aimed at both including and excluding learners with specific learning disabilities. This is achieved by admitting these learners into mainstream schools, yet excluding them from their peers (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006) by being placed in a separate classroom. Concomitantly, integration entails the process of providing additional educational support to children with special educational needs and integrating them into a normal classroom routine to fit into an existing system at the appropriate time (Education White Paper 6, 2001). This is done by placing learners with special needs in a regular classroom for a specified period to provide for the necessary interventions, where after special education is received for the remainder of the school day (Education White Paper 6, 2001).

Inclusive education, however, is aimed at adapting the educational environment to the extent that the setting is responsive to the diverse needs of all children (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, & Tlale, 2015; Ghergut, 2012; Mittler, 2012). The aim of this type of education is to alter the educational setting to accommodate every learner – with or without a disability – to ensure equal opportunities for all (Education White Paper 6, 2001). Inclusive education can therefore be described as an educational setting promoting successful learning to all children including those with a physical, emotional, intellectual, and/or social disability (Department of Education [DoE], 2002; Education White Paper 6, 2001; Ghergut, 2012). This can be attributed to the respectful behaviour towards, and provision of support, to all learners despite their differences, weaknesses and/or needs (DoE, 2002). For the purpose of this research study, inclusive education (as derived from the above-mentioned definitions) will refer to an educational setting in a mainstream school comprised of the same classes where equal

learning opportunities are provided to all children – including those with disabilities – to attain and explore knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

**Proposed challenges of inclusive education in South Africa.** Although inclusive education is viewed as an ideal model of education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Mittler, 2012; Rayner, 2007), many challenges regarding the implementation thereof remain in a South African context (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). The most evident challenges include various cultural barriers and the policy of inclusive education itself (Donohue & Bornman, 2014); discrimination and inaccessibility to schools (Statistics South Africa [STATS SA], 2011); a lack of resources and skills to adapt the curriculum according to the diverse needs of the learners (Dalton et al., 2012); misinformed educators and their attitudes toward inclusive education (De Boer, 2009; Ruwandi, 2012; Unianu, 2012); educators' unpreparedness; and lack of skills in an inclusive educational setting (Dalton et al., 2012; Zulu, 2007). However, despite the identified lack of both competency and positivity toward inclusive education in South Africa, educators are increasingly deemed responsible for providing education and instruction to ensure that the diverse needs of all learners are met whether disabled or not (Dalton et al., 2012).

### **Learners with Disabilities**

According to the World Health Organization ([WHO], 2013), a child with a disability refers to an individual suffering from sensory, motor, communicative, learning, or behavioural problems as well as bodily function impairment, and/or difficulties with executive functioning that influences participation in various life situations. According to Disabled World (2015), different categories of disability include mobile or physical impairment; spinal cord disabilities; visual, auditory, or hearing disabilities; cognitive and learning disabilities; and psychological or mental impairments. In this research study,

children with a disability will consequently refer to learners in an inclusive educational setting living with disabilities related to hearing impairments, cognitive impairments, visual impairments, and physical disabilities.

**Statistical information regarding learners with disabilities in South African schools.** The latest available statistics from the DBE (2016) indicated that a total of 117 477 learners attend special needs educational settings, while 447 Special Needs Education (SNE) schools can be found in South Africa together with 10 364 employed educators in these settings. Table 1 presents a statistical outline regarding the number of schools, educators, and learners in SNE classified according to province in South Africa in 2014\* (DBE, 2016).

**Table 1**  
*2014 Special Needs Education Statistics in South Africa*

Province	Learners	Educators	Schools
North West	6 943	592	32
Free State	6 149	638	21
Gauteng	44 065	3 602	136
Limpopo	8 530	705	34
Mpumalanga	3 872	418	20
KwaZulu-Natal	17 180	1 528	72
Eastern Cape	9 236	888	42
Northern Cape	1 897	185	11
Western Cape	19 605	1 808	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>117 477</b>	<b>10 364</b>	<b>447</b>

The target population for this research study includes educators in inclusive schools in the North West Province of South Africa. As noted above, 117 477 learners can be found in special needs educational sectors, of which 6 943 are in the North-West Province (DBE, 2016). There are 32 inclusive schools in the North West Province, positioning this province

as the sixth highest in South Africa regarding the number of inclusive schools (DBE, 2016). However, the number of educators within the SNE sector of South Africa totals 10 364, while only 592 of these educators are employed in the North West Province (DBE, 2016). Consequently, the learner-to-educator ratio in the North West Province is 11.7 (DBE, 2016). The DBE (2016) notes that 2 081 of these learners are mildly to moderately intellectually disabled and 593 learners struggle with a specific learning disorder. 192 learners are partially sighted, 19 are permanently blind, 327 are deaf, and 83 find it difficult to hear. 327 learners are deaf-blind disabled while 222 are diagnosed with a physical disability.

### **Educators in Inclusive Educational Settings**

The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 refers to an educator as an individual who teaches, educates, or trains others through providing professional educational services while appointed in an educational post. Merriam Webster (2015) adds to this definition by defining an educator as someone who transfers information or skills to another individual. Kutlu and Coskun (2014) refers to the responsibility of facilitating numerous children in the attainment and usage of relevant information as well as new information generation. Educators therefore play a vital role to enhance scholastic learning – and concurrently, achievement – in a classroom (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). In this research study, an educator will refer to an individual who provides equal and comprehensive academic opportunities for all learners in an educational setting through the ability to adapt to the fluctuating demands of diverse learner needs. This individual also has the necessary skills to ensure scholar achievement.

**Roles and responsibilities of the inclusive educator.** Inclusive education, however, alters the fundamental responsibilities of educators in mainstream classes (Engelbrecht, Swart, & Eloff, 2001). As educators play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of

inclusive education (Engelbrecht et al., 2001), educators must adopt various roles and attend to numerous responsibilities in the inclusive classroom. Inclusive educators must understand and attend to the range of diverse needs in their inclusive classrooms (Dalton et al., 2012); acquire the necessary skills while furthermore developing new and innovative methods of education to enable competent and quality education to various learners and their unique set of needs (Machi, 2007). Inclusive educators should therefore accept responsibility for the academic achievement of learners (Paulse, 2005), promote learners' personal growth, and provide the necessary knowledge (Stojiljkovic, Djigic, & Zlatkovic, 2012), environment, and setting comfortable enough for learners with disabilities to engage optimally in an educational setting. Additional roles include being a classroom supporter, creative curriculum specialist, mentor, and learning facilitator (Harrison & Killion, 2007), while simultaneously motivating learners, regulating social relations in the classroom, and promoting an optimal learning environment for all (Stojiljkovic et al., 2012). As inclusive educators attend to the wide variety of roles and responsibilities posed in their occupation, they are prone to experience numerous sources of occupational stress (Kaur, 2017) and other demands.

**Common demands and challenges encountered in an inclusive educating environment.** The sources of occupational stress and other demands include (but are not limited to) inadequate working conditions; time and work pressures; role conflict and ambiguity; inadequate salaries; low decision-making powers; unsatisfactory classroom climate; little to no willingness of parent collaboration; pupil problems; equality in the classroom; an inflexible curriculum; parent expectations; doubt in professional competencies; lack of adequate training; lack of additional support structures; questioned efficacy, and an overwhelming workload (Brackenreed, 2008; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Montgomery, Mostert, & Jackson, 2005; Paulse, 2005; Unianu, 2011).

Educators apply various coping strategies in reaction to these demands to minimize stress and prevent work-related burnout (Hedderich, 2016). Numerous studies in South Africa have been conducted regarding educator stress and burnout and the relation to the various factors thereof (Chrisholm et al., 2005; Engelbrecht et al., 2001; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Montgomery et al., 2005; Paulse, 2005; Peltzer, Shisana, Zuma, Van Wyk, & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2008; Schulze & Steyn, 2007; Van Zyl, 2015). However, despite existing publications regarding coping strategies of special education teachers in reaction to these identified stressors (Boujut, Popa-Roch, Palomares, Dean, & Cappe, 2017; Brackenreed, 2011; Engelbrecht et al., 2001; Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, & Eloff, 2003; Heiman, 2004; Molbaek 2017), research focussing on inclusive educators' coping strategies in a South African context is lacking (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014).

### **Coping Strategies**

Foster et al. (2015) refers to coping strategies as efforts to manage a problem through ongoing cognitive; behavioural; and/or emotional adjustments to meet specific and challenging external and internal demands. In reaction to an individual perceiving their personal competence or capacity to attend to specific environmental demands as inefficient, certain coping strategies are activated to alleviate the distressing experience thereof (Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005). De Ridder and De Wit (2006) state that the basic premise of emotional-motivational theories indicate that coping is elicited by the experience of emotional distress. Coping can be divided into two main types, namely emotion-focused coping (directed internally; including efforts to decrease negative emotions due to distress) as well as problem-focused coping (directed outside the self; action preparedness is created because of distress to solve the goal-threatening condition). Literature furthermore describes approach and engagement forms of coping as well as avoidant and

disengagement forms of coping (Calvete, Corral, & Estévez, 2008; Kirch, 2008). According to Alhija (2015), educators resort to a diversity of related cognitive, emotional, and behavioural coping strategies to achieve successful adaptation and adjustment within a demanding educational setting. In this research study, coping strategies will therefore refer to predominant conscious ways – behavioural, psychological, or emotional – to tolerate, reduce or master stressful events. Jansen van Vuuren (2015) emphasizes the importance of research about the various forms of coping and the discernment thereof as “it specifically provides information on processes [whether psychological, emotional or behavioural] related to the emotional experience” (p. 35) of certain phenomena. Experience, for the purpose of this research study, will refer to the entire life world of an individual – incorporating the actual experience of the phenomenon of interest and the meanings attributed to this experience – which reflects personal, unique and subjective perspectives (psychological, behavioural and emotional) in response to everyday life occurrences and how these occurrences are lived through and responded to (Given, 2008).

**Utilization of coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting.** Because inclusive educators are faced with strenuous situations daily, they deploy consequential coping strategies due to perceiving the environmental demands as larger than their personal competence or capacities to attend to the situation (Lambert et al., 2009; Pillay et al., 2005). Educators’ utilization of a set of behavioural, emotional, and psychological strategies to tolerate, reduce, or master stressful events (Kirch, 2008) is thus the consequence of increasing demands related to their professional roles (Liasidou, 2015). Concomitantly, appropriate coping strategies and instructional practices aid management of the environmental demands of the inclusive classroom and adjusts the inclusive academic environment according to the diverse needs of every learner. Ultimately, such a set of skills ensure equal and quality education for all in the inclusive classroom setting (Peeters et al., 2014).

## **Problem Statement**

From the foregoing discussion it can be concluded that educators in an inclusive educational setting are faced daily with challenges and numerous demands regarding their occupation and role fulfilment as inclusive practitioners in the classroom (Forlin, 2013). Existing research focuses mainly and extensively on the role of coping strategies in mainstream educator stress (Alhija, 2015; Austin & Shah, 2005; Chaaban & Du, 2017; Kyriacou, 2010; McIntyre, McIntyre, Barr, Francis, & Durand, 2017; Montgomery, Morin, & Demers, 2010; Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012; Richards, 2012; Salkovsky, Romi, & Lewis, 2015; Veresova & Mala, 2012), while international studies focusing on inclusive educators' stress and coping strategies include Boujut et al. (2017), Brackenreed (2011), Heiman (2004), and Molbaek (2017).

Despite the publication of studies regarding inclusive educators' coping strategies, relevant literature regarding the South African context is lacking (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014). Engelbrecht et al. (2001) state that the coping strategies of inclusive educators in the South African context have "either remained largely unidentified or have taken second place to the development and implementation of the educational policy" (p. 256). Accordingly, existing studies on inclusive educators' coping strategies in a South African context mainly focus on educators' coping skills regarding learners with physical disabilities (Davis, 2004), intellectual disabilities (Engelbrecht et al., 2003), and learners with Down syndrome (Engelbrecht et al., 2001).

Although studies regarding inclusive educators' coping strategies are well described, attention to educators' experiences thereof is negligent despite the pivotal role coping abilities and practices play in the South African education system, as "it is against the backdrop of stress and coping skills of such educators that the effectiveness of inclusive educational

practices must be established for inclusion to be feasible” (Engelbrecht et al., 2001, p. 256). By focussing on coping strategies, this qualitative research study and phenomenological design enabled the collection of rich data to identify and adequately describe educators’ experiences regarding their coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting.

The research question for this research study will therefore be: *What are educators’ experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting?*

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this research study was to explore, to identify, and to describe educators’ experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province of South Africa. According to the DBE (2016) there are 32 inclusive schools in the North West Province; 12 of which are situated in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], n.d.). Within these schools, 308 educators are employed (DHET, n.d.) which amounts to 52% of the total population of inclusive educators in this province (DHET, n.d.).

This research study provided an important opportunity to advance the understanding of educators’ experiences regarding coping strategies in an inclusive classroom. By providing an overview and foundation of various coping strategies within an inclusive educational setting and educators’ experiences thereof, it is anticipated that the findings of this research study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and enhance the current discussion of educator well-being in a South African context. These findings should dynamise the South African educational system through collaboration with experts in the field of psychology regarding the development of psychoeducation-based intervention programmes for educators, ultimately enhancing the quality of inclusive education in South Africa.

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## **SECTION 2: ARTICLE**

### **Exploring educators' experiences regarding coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting**

#### 2.1 Editorial policy: *International Journal of Special Education*

This article will be submitted to the *International Journal of Special Education* for possible publication. Consequently, a summary of the editorial policy proposed for this specific journal will follow.

#### **Editorial Policy**

##### **Style**

The content, organization and style of reporting should follow the current version [6<sup>th</sup> edition] of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

##### **Tables and Figures**

Tables and Figures should be inserted in the text at the appropriate places.

##### **Size**

The article should not exceed 20 pages, single spaced.

##### **Format**

Use Word.

##### **Title Page**

The title page should contain the title of the article, the names of the authors and their professional affiliations.

##### **Abstracts**

A brief abstract of the article should precede the Introduction to the topic at hand.

Articles are reviewed by the Editorial Board. The review is blind and impartial.

##### **Submissions**

Manuscripts should be sent as e-mail attachments to Dr. Marg Csapo , co-editor,  
at [margcsapo@shaw.ca](mailto:margcsapo@shaw.ca)

### **Review**

Articles are reviewed by the Editorial Board. The review is blind and impartial.

### **Journal Listings**

Annotated and Indexed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and gifted children for publication in the monthly print index, Current Index to Journals of Special Education, (CIJE) and the Quarterly Index, Exceptional Child Education Resources (ECER). The IJSE is also indexed by the Education Index (EDI).

### **Inquiries**

Whenever an inquiry is made about the article, please, include the full title of the article.

## **Exploring educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting**

**Megan Jansen van Vuuren  
Werner de Klerk  
School of Psychosocial Health,  
Monique de Klerk  
Institute of Psychology and Wellbeing,  
Community Psychosocial Research (COMPRES),  
North-West University, South Africa.  
(12998699@nwu.ac.za)**

### **Abstract**

*For effective inclusive educational practices to be established, inclusive educators can be identified as pivotal role players in the successful implementation thereof. However, the facilitation and management of these settings result in a variety of occupational demands and stressors to which educators concurrently react by applying various coping strategies. Accompanying experiences relate to the applied coping strategies. This qualitative research study followed a phenomenological research design aimed at exploring, identifying, and describing educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province, South Africa. The research sample comprised of eight female educators aged between 24 and 57 from two schools. Thematic analysis yielded the following main themes: utilised coping strategies within the inclusive classroom; situational aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof; personal aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof; and knowledge gained during an inclusive teaching career. Future studies can expand focus to both more districts and more provinces within South Africa. In doing so, a better representation of the provinces and country will be obtained. Additionally, the application of these findings to develop educator- and child-based intervention programs will benefit the inclusive educational setting at large.*

**Keywords:** children with disabilities, coping strategies, educators, inclusive classroom, qualitative research

## Contextualization

Section 29 of the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) states that every individual in South Africa has the right to basic education. The state may therefore not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone diagnosed with a disability (Dalton, Mckenzie, & Kahonde, 2012). Basic education includes primary and lower secondary education constituting the first nine years of education in South Africa (Gehring et al., 2011). Basic education is important because it allows a child the acquisition and exploration of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes (Simbo, 2012) as well as the enriching opportunity to contribute to societal growth (Arendse, 2011; Basic Education Coalition, 2011).

Although numerous articles and studies highlight the importance of education for all children (Arendse, 2011; Brown, 2014; Humanium, 2012; Lee, 2013; Mohan, 2012; Santiago, 2017; 2012; United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2012), Statistics South Africa ([STATS SA], 2011) indicate that South African “children living with disabilities were the most disadvantaged in terms of access to school” (p. xi). According to Donohue and Bornman (2014), 70% of these individuals were not attending school, while the remaining school-attending 30% were excluded from an inclusive educational setting by being placed in a special school. For this article, children with a disability in an inclusive educational setting will, as per the World Health Organization ([WHO], 2013), refer to children with disabilities regarding hearing impairments, cognitive impairments, visual impairments as well physical disabilities.

Inclusive education is aimed at adapting the educational setting for every learner, with or without a disability, to ensure equal opportunities for all (Education White Paper 6, 2001). This mode of education therefore aims to adapt schools to such an extent that the educational setting is responsive to the diverse needs of all children (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, & Tlale, 2015; Ghergut, 2012; Mittler, 2012). Inclusive education is therefore viewed as an ideal model of education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Mittler, 2012; Rayner, 2007). Inclusive teaching and learning practices are instrumental in creating and maintaining a learning environment in which all learners are fully engaged and respected despite their differences, weaknesses, and/or distinct needs (Department of Education [DoE], 2002). An educational setting promoting successful learning is thus presented to all children, including those with a physical, emotional, intellectual, and/or social disability (DoE, 2002; Education White Paper 6, 2001; Ghergut, 2012). In this article, inclusive education refers to an educational setting in a mainstream school comprised of the same classes where equal learning opportunities are provided to all children – including those with disabilities – to attain and explore knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

Inclusive education, however, alters the fundamental responsibilities of educators in mainstream classes (Engelbrecht, Swart, & Eloff, 2001). The urgent need for educators in South Africa to understand and attend to the range of diverse needs in their inclusive classrooms require educators to attain new skills (Dalton et al., 2012), to accept responsibility for the academic achievement of learners (Paulse, 2005), and to ultimately respond to various stressors in their working environment. These stressors include (but are not limited to) inadequate working conditions; time and work pressures; role conflict and ambiguity; inadequate salaries; low decision-making powers; unsatisfactory classroom climate; little to no willingness of parent collaboration; pupil problems; equality in the classroom; an inflexible curriculum; parent expectations; doubt in professional competencies; lack of

adequate training; lack of additional support structures; questioned efficacy as well as an overwhelming workload (Brackenreed, 2008; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Montgomery, Mostert, & Jackson, 2005; Paulse, 2005; Unianu, 2011). In reaction to these demands, educators use various coping strategies to minimize stress (Hedderich, 2016).

Coping strategies refer to an individual's efforts to manage a problem through on-going cognitive and behavioural adjustments to meet specific and challenging external, and internal demands (Foster et al., 2015). In reaction to an individual perceiving their personal competence or capacity to attend to specific environmental demands as inefficient, certain coping strategies are activated to alleviate the distressing experience thereof (Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005). Educators' utilization of a set of behavioural, emotional, and psychological strategies to tolerate, reduce, or master stressful events (Kirch, 2008) is thus the consequence of the increasing demands of their professional roles (Liasidou, 2015). Appropriate coping strategies and instructional practices in an educational setting ease the management of environmental demands presented in the classroom and adjust the academic environment according to the diverse needs of every learner. Ultimately, these practices and strategies facilitate a better understanding for and recognition of the needs, obstacles, and difficulties learners may face in their classroom (Peeters et al., 2014). The term *coping strategies* in this article will therefore refer to behavioural, psychological, or emotional attempts which are predominantly conscious in nature to tolerate, reduce, or master stressful events.

## **Problem Statement**

Research pertaining to educators' coping strategies include the role of coping strategies in mainstream educator stress (Alhija, 2015; Austin & Shah, 2005; Chaaban & Du, 2017; Kyriacou, 2010; McIntyre, McIntyre, Barr, Francis, & Durand, 2017; Montgomery, Morin, & Demers, 2010; Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012; Richards, 2012; Salkovsky, Romi, & Lewis, 2015; Veresova & Mala, 2012), while existing international studies focus on inclusive educators' stress and coping strategies (Boujut, Popa-Roch, Palomares, Dean, & Cappe, 2017; Brackenreed, 2011; Heiman, 2004; Molbaek, 2017). However, despite the publication of studies regarding inclusive educators' coping strategies, the literature on this topic in relation to the South African context is lacking (Mutereko & Chitakunye, 2014).

Engelbrecht et al. (2001) state that in the South African context, the coping strategies of inclusive educators have "either remained largely unidentified or have taken second place to the development and implementation of the educational policy" (p. 256). Existing studies relating to inclusive educators' coping strategies in a South African context mainly address the stress and coping skills of educators with a learner with a physical disability (Davis, 2004), intellectual disabilities (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, & Eloff, 2003) as well as learners with Down syndrome (Engelbrecht et al., 2001).

Although research on inclusive educators' coping strategies is forthcoming, minimal attention is given to the educators' experiences thereof. Hence there is an evident gap referring to research focussing on educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive educational setting. Research regarding this matter is pivotal in the South African education system, as "it is against the backdrop of stress and coping skills of such educators that the effectiveness of inclusive educational practices must be established for inclusion to be feasible" (Engelbrecht et al., 2001, p. 256). By focussing on inclusive educators' coping strategies, the phenomenological design of this study consequently enabled

the researcher to collect rich data regarding the processes related to the lived experiences thereof.

## **Goal of the Study**

The aim of this qualitative research study was to explore, identify, and describe educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province. The following research question directed this research study: *What are educators' experiences of their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting?*

## **Method of Investigation**

### **Research Method**

A qualitative research method was used for this research study. This method of research enables the acquisition of a greater understanding of what influences behaviour through exploring participants' perspectives related to a particular phenomenon (Choy, 2014). The qualitative nature of this research approach was therefore identified as appropriate, as it enabled the researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, that is, the subjective lived experiences regarding the coping strategies of educators in an inclusive classroom setting.

### **Research Design**

A phenomenological research design underpinned this research study due to the provisional nature of an in-depth understanding of the subjective, lived experiences of participants regarding a particular phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Phenomenological research focuses on a common denominator as part of an experienced phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016) that enables the researcher to explore the participants' different interpretations thereof (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This research design provided the foundation to explore the various lived experiences of inclusive classroom educators (participants) about their coping strategies (phenomenon of interest).

### **Participants and Research Context**

To realise the aim of the research study, well-defined inclusion criteria were implemented during the selection of participants. Only participants (educators) from inclusive educational settings in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province of South Africa were considered. An inclusive educational setting refers to schools that provide an educational setting for all children, including those with diverse learning needs such as physical, mental, sensory, neurological, developmental, and cognitive impairments – conditions stipulated by the Education White Paper 6 (2001). In addition, participants had to be willing to participate in the research study by signing an informed consent form; had to understand and/or speak English or Afrikaans; have a minimum of one year teaching experience in an inclusive educational setting, and had to be registered at the South African Council of Educators (SACE) with a SACE registration number as proof thereof.

The principals of the selected schools served as gatekeepers and informed the educating staff about the research study. The contact details of a mediator were displayed on an accessible notice board. Interested participants contacted the mediator confirming participation. Ultimately, the research sample comprised of eight voluntary participants

(educators) from two schools in the district. All participants were female, one being Indian in ethnicity and the other seven White. The teaching experience of all participants varied in both mainstream as well as inclusive education (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographic Information*

Participant number	Age	Ethnicity	Home language	Years of teaching experience	
				<i>Mainstream</i>	<i>Inclusive</i>
P1	54	White	Afrikaans	20 years	2 years
P2	32	Indian	English	2 years	8 years
P3	24	White	Afrikaans	2 years	1 year
P4	28	White	Afrikaans	5 years	4 years
P5	34	White	Afrikaans	11 years	1 year
P6	53	White	Afrikaans	29 years	2 years
P7	57	White	Afrikaans	20 years	4 years
P8	34	White	Afrikaans	0 years	13 years

**Data Collection**

Owing to the chosen phenomenological research design, the primary researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the root of the phenomena of interest, that is, participants' experiences of coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting on their own terms (Fouché & Shurink, 2011). Different data collection methods were used in this research study. First, the basic background information of each participant was obtained with a *demographic questionnaire*. This information included age, gender, ethnicity, home language, and the number of years teaching experience in a mainstream and inclusive educational setting. Second, *in-depth interviews* enabled the primary researcher to ask questions eliciting contributing information pertaining to the exploration of the phenomenon of interest, the determination of the participants' perceptions and opinions thereof, and their experiences regarding the topic of discussion (Greeff, 2011). In addition, the in-depth interviewing structure (probing and clarification questions) allowed for flexibility in the interviewing process thereby ensuring a detailed account of the participants' lived experience of their own coping strategies in their inclusive classroom setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Two open-ended questions guided the in-depth interviews. The first question enabled the exploration of the participants' coping strategies in the inclusive classroom, whereas the second addressed different situations and contexts and their contribution to the participants' experiences thereof. The questions were developed in accordance with Moustakas' guidelines (1994, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016) for asking in-depth interview questions appropriate to a phenomenological research design. Prior to the in-depth interview a comprehensive definition of coping strategies (i.e., behavioural, psychological, or emotional attempts which are predominantly conscious in nature to tolerate, reduce, or master stressful events) as defined for the purpose of this research study, was provided and explained to all participants. Last, the use of *field notes* suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2014) ensured "bracketing" throughout the research process during which the primary researcher identified, became aware of, and put aside any preconceived beliefs or opinions about the phenomenon studied (Polit & Beck, 2008).

## Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis, the data collected via in-depth interviews was transcribed verbatim. Through the continual revision of the described concepts in this research study, namely coping strategies, experiences and inclusive classrooms, the researcher focused on the educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting. Thematic analysis, as proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013), was done to establish themes in the collected data.

The thematic analysis of this research study included and followed five steps (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The primary researcher first familiarized herself with the data by transcribing the interviews verbatim while continuously reading and rereading the obtained data. Second, the primary researcher generated initial data codes relevant to the research question. Third, possible themes in the data were established by categorizing the various codes into overarching themes. Themes identified in the previous step were concurrently revised in the fourth stage of thematic analysis to ensure greater applicability to the data. During the fifth and final step, the primary researcher established and labelled the final themes and identified possible subthemes. Once themes have been established, Nieuwenhuis (2016) accentuates the importance of developing descriptions during phenomenological research. These descriptions must include a textual description of the participants' experience; a structural description regarding participant experiences relating to conditions, situations, context, and an integrated description of said experiences to capture the essence of the experience (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

## Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in this research study, Lincoln and Guba's model for trustworthiness as explained in Krefting (1991) was meticulously considered. Four aspects were of note, namely, truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality.

First, *truth value* indicates the degree of confidence within the researchers regarding the truth of their research findings related to the individual context of participants in the research study (Krefting, 1991). The researchers therefore truthfully presented accurate descriptions about the educators' experiences regarding their various coping strategies in inclusive classrooms (Krefting, 1991). Truth value was substantiated through the accurate transcription of data, active engagement through coding and re-coding of the data, and using an objective co-coder (a registered research psychologist at the Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]). The second aspect, *applicability*, describes the generalisability of a research study and how the research findings can be applied to other contexts (Krefting, 1991). To assist future research, a systematic and complete description of the methodology used in this research study is provided. When research is done in such a manner that findings would prove consistent under similar contexts (Krefting, 1991), the third aspect of *consistency* is achieved. To ensure consistency in this research study, the primary researcher followed the proposed research questions during the data collection phase, while adhering to the step-by-step procedure proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013) for data analysis. Last, Krefting (1991) explains that *neutrality* necessitates an unbiased research procedure, and results are therefore objective (Thomas, 2010). The researchers took care in reproducing a true account of the participants' responses without integrating their own subjective opinions and perspectives on the data collected. Meticulous field notes by the primary researcher (record keeping) contributed to ensure objectivity.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research study was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University with ethics number: NWU-00036-18-S1, and from the District Director of Education and Sport Development, Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province, South Africa. Following legal approval from all the relevant parties, the selected schools, their principals, and governing bodies were approached for goodwill permission to conduct the proposed research in the school of enquiry.

After permission had been obtained, an assigned mediator provided interested participants with an informed consent form (stipulating all legal and ethical information related to the research study) to be signed in agreement with the provided document. This document was concurrently signed in the presence of an eyewitness, together with the required signatures of the mediator and participants themselves. Interviews were scheduled according to the participants' convenience and conducted in an assigned, comfortable, and safe room on the school premises. Prior to conducting the in-depth interviews, the consent of every participant was confirmed verbally. The right to withdraw from the study prior to data analysis was explained and confirmed, and the importance of confidentiality reiterated. An opportunity for questions and clarification was provided. Participants were assigned a participant number upon arrival, ensuring anonymity throughout the research process of interview transcription, data analysis, and reporting of findings. The name and location of the relevant schools also remain anonymous to further confidentiality. The safekeeping, storage, and protection of all findings and data relevant to this research study is the responsibility of the North-West University and accordingly undertaken for safeguarding.

## Findings

Through the process of thematic analysis, four main themes (utilised coping strategies: theme 1; situational and personal aspects playing a role in their experiences of these coping strategies, themes 2 and 3; and knowledge gained due to the before-mentioned, theme 4) with their subthemes were identified (see Table 2). Appropriate verbatim quotations are provided in support of these themes.

**Table 2**

*Themes and Subthemes Regarding Educators' Experiences regarding their Own Coping Strategies in an Inclusive Educational Setting*

<b>Theme 1:</b>	<b>Utilised coping strategies within the inclusive classroom</b>
Subthemes:	1.1 Classroom management and approach 1.2 Scholar management and approach 1.3 Personal management and wellbeing
<b>Theme 2:</b>	<b>Situational aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof</b>
Subthemes:	2.1 Unknown and novice situations 2.2 Vicarious trauma 2.3 Parental factors 2.4 Lack of resources and support structures 2.5 Overwhelming workload 2.6 Professional lived experiences 2.7 One specific need allows for the neglect of others

<b>Theme 3:</b>	<b>Personal aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof</b>
Subthemes:	3.1 Personal lived experiences 3.2 Experienced emotions 3.3 A sense of meaning and purpose
<b>Theme 4:</b>	<b>Knowledge gained during inclusive teaching career</b>
Subthemes:	4.1 Effectivity of coping strategies 4.2 Self-growth 4.3 Importance of scholar wellbeing 4.4 Identified needs and future suggestions

### **Theme 1: Utilized Coping Strategies within the Inclusive Classroom**

As coping strategies are pivotal within this study, it was important for these to be explored prior to determining the participants' experiences thereof. During the data collection process, it was apparent that educators use a set of various behavioural, emotional, and psychological coping strategies to either tolerate, reduce, or master the stressful events associated with the inclusive educational setting. These coping strategies were both problem-focused (classroom- and pupil management and approach), and emotion-focused (personal management and wellbeing).

**Classroom management and approach.** To manage the inclusive classroom effectively and successfully, it was reported that planning, preparedness, flexibility, and adaptability were some of the important aspects for educators to cope in their classrooms. One participant stated the following:

*I think planning. You must know what you can do with them at any moment in time [...]. A person should have as much information on the presented topic as possible [...] and realize when what you are doing is taking too long [...]. You must then be able to immediately jump to something new (P1).*

Two participants added that, *"I literally look how calm my class is. If I see things are not calm, then I know okay, it's time to go to plan B [...]"* (P7) and that:

*It is really a day to day situation. Yes, you can't tell yourself [...] today I'm going to handle them this way and tomorrow this way [...]. I can't say today they will do this so I do this. [...] you have to adapt to your little group (P6).*

However, although adaptation and preparedness are both emphasised for effective classroom management, it was not identified as the only aspects important within this subtheme. Another essential classroom managerial aspect identified is that of clear expectations and rules, together with strict disciplinary measures, as noted by participant 8: *"I am very strict, [...] there's good discipline that eases it [the process] a little"*. This was a mutual feeling amongst other educators, as seen in the following statements:

*I am very strict. [...] this is how it works in my class [...], or if you cannot behave yourself, you must leave my class. Here's no place for people [who misbehave]. These are the rules, and it will remain so. This is what I want in your books, and this is how we do it (P1).*

Participant 6 furthermore indicated that *"[the children] also knows that if they cannot behave themselves there, then there are consequences"*. Emphasizing the importance of clear rules and expectations, another participant noted that:

*[I took] a whole day and explained [expectations] from scratch every day. This is how we do it. I made them stand up and say it. I really took time to explain it and then [...] it made [things] for me a lot easier if we did it like that (P3).*

Another important aspect in classroom management complimenting the above-mentioned, entails the positioning of the educator and her pupils within the classroom, as stated by one participant: *“I am not one of those teachers who sits and marks books in class. If the little ones are doing their work, I move in between them and you quickly realize this little fellow is struggling” (P7).* She added that:

*I regularly move my class around. [...] On this side all the little ones sit who require my constant attention [...]. On this side is the children who have more or less started indicating that they can manage on their own [...], and the two groups in the back are my children who are calm and can continue on their own (P7).*

When reflecting on her classroom and placements, one participant elaborated, *“[...] I just positioned myself differently in the class [...]. [...] I moved my tables differently; it just makes it easier, [...] because most of the time I move in between them” (P3).*

Adding to the coping practices related to classroom management, the allocation of pupil support and peer tutoring proved important during the interviews with educators, as one participant said, *“I cannot necessarily quickly attend to eight children to help with their sums, then I will say would you quickly help that one? [...] Sometimes they understand better if a friend explains to him rather than if teacher explains” (P5).* Another noted:

*If it sometimes becomes really difficult, then I will ask some of the children [...] to just come and sit by them to see if there is maybe something [...] that they are struggling with, [...] then they can explain to one another. Because most of the time if children explain to one another they understand it easier. [...] I usually just allocate a child to help and explain a bit (P7).*

Participant 6 further stated, *“the class has helped me so nicely, [...] it automatically then comes from the group to help and to see where it is necessary to help. [...] They help one another [...] and are supportive sometimes”.*

Last, it became apparent that for an inclusive classroom to function effectively the above-mentioned, coupled with psycho-education related to diagnoses and functioning, was needed to facilitate an empathetic and forgiving environment amongst pupils. One participant claimed:

*These children are not stupid. They knew there was something wrong with this child, she is totally different than the others. [...] I then spoke to her class as a whole at one stage, I said to them: You can see that she is different to you, so you need to help her. So I then explained it to them without telling them that this is autism, [...] let's try to keep [her] routine the same. And then things went great! Because then they understood. [...] I said to them sometimes in your brain [...] there are wires, [...] all the wires connect to a lightbulb. But they don't all connect in the same way. [Her] wires are different to yours, [...] so she behaves differently and she experiences things differently. You need to support her (P8).*

The above-mentioned coping strategies pertaining to classroom management and approach therefore proved to facilitate a more comfortable educational setting appropriate for all.

**Scholar management and approach.** While the before-mentioned focused on the practical coping strategies related to classroom challenges, the following subtheme identifies and explores the coping strategies related specifically to the pupils within these classrooms.

As a variety of educational and personal needs can be identified amongst these students, educators stated that the acquisition of an informed understanding about both the children's' functioning and situational factors related to this is necessary to manage the demands set by each individual child. One participant noted:

*I first try to know the child's background before I can cope with him in the classroom. To know why he is this way and why he is that way" (P6) and another added that, "it helps to know that the child has a problem. You handle it [the situation] in a more sensitive manner (P3).*

Ultimately, participant 7 stated: *"I always say that you should look from another persons' perspective. [...] Why is this child misbehaving? I must climb into his perspective, into his life, to be able to see why he is behaving the way that he is"*.

When the educators consequently possess an informed understanding about the children, a realistic acceptance of the child's level of functioning pertaining to their diagnosis is developed, as reported that: *"You must be very realistic. You cannot expect of a child to do this wow [thing]. [...] You quickly learn to understand a child's level [of functioning]."* (P6). Another added that:

*I've found [...] a person is inclined want to make every child a racing-horse. And the day you realize that you cannot make every child a racing-horse, rather develop him into the best horse or donkey that he can be (P1).*

Additionally, it was said that,

*This child may have an IQ of let's say 50? He is not going to understand [...]. But he may understand how to colour in nicely, and he can understand how to be creative. He can also maybe understand how to draw a brain-map. Let's rather see if we can do that (P8).*

Participant 2 concluded, *"If he does not excel in academics, he's probably excelling in sport, or in art, where others aren't. That's your forte, you stay with that then"* (P2).

As noted above, it is therefore apparent that educators adapt and evaluate according to the child's level of functioning while concomitantly setting baseline expectations. Educators are then better able to attend to the variety of needs demanded in an inclusive classroom while both cognitively stimulating scholars and adhering to the inclusion of all. This is supported by a participant who stated, *"I use 90% of the Grade 3 curriculum, [...] but I do change it. [...] I look for things that he or she can do or to which they can adapt more"* (P1), while another added:

*I write the same sums for everyone. But you [weaker child] must complete until sum 5, while you [stronger child] must complete until sum 10. And if you feel that you want to complete further than sum 5 today then you are welcome, but I will not disadvantage you if you don't. Because then I feel that he is on his level [...]. But my weaker, average child usually does a little less than the stronger child does (P6).*

Participant 5 supported the above-mentioned by noting that *"you get your strong pupils and for them you can make one, two, or three sums more challenging"* (P5).

In addition to the above-mentioned, individual attention and personal tutoring within the classroom remained important. This further allowed educators to attend to the personal- as well as the collective needs of learners within the classroom to avoid feeling overwhelmed when attending to the various needs of different learners all at once. Thus ensuring the inclusion of learners and concomitantly the academic progress of all. One participant stated that *"With these children it is much more effective to tell them: Come and sit here by me, show me what you don't understand? Let me help you. Then we sit by one another and we do it"* (P8).

However, to maintain motivation amongst pupils within the classroom, educators' positively reinforce a child's development and progress, regardless their level of performance, as noted by the following statements: "[...] you have to stick a sticker, because it is all that he could [do]" (P3), and that:

*I try to motivate them in a positive way by saying to them – wow! I can see that you are working nicely. Or I will mention a name of a child that I see is working nicely [...]. And with that positive motivation you get good results, because then the others also [...] want to. [...] I [also] reward them with stars and other things* (P7). This aided pupil cooperation and progress within the classroom, consequentially alleviating the stress related to uncooperative and unruly scholars while ultimately contributing to scholar management and approach.

Hence, it is important that educators not only possess practical coping strategies related to classroom management but also to the management and approach of pupils with various needs and demands.

**Personal management and wellbeing.** In order for personal management to take place within the inclusive classroom, self-awareness is first and foremost important, as "*they [children] have an inclination to pick up on your mood for the day [...] and I think that sometimes this may have an effect on them as well*" (P6). It was furthermore observed that when an educator's default mood may be negative in nature, "*[...] you lose yourself. [...] and I had to realize that I cannot do this, [...] it mustn't become a pattern. Because as soon as it becomes a pattern, then you forget how to deal with everything*" (P3). Participant 3 further added that "*sometimes you just wake up irritated, and they eventually pick up on that. Then I have to know that I should actually just take a deep breath*" (P3).

Emotional regulation strategies, such as self-containment, therefore aids in personal management, as it was indicated by one participant that "*you should sometimes just calm down [...] that's how I cope, I calm myself down*" (P1), while another participant stated a means for this, as "*a lot of times I just close my eyes and breathe [...] and then I continue*" (P3), further adding that "*I had to learn how to cool down, because as soon as I also became worked-up, it wouldn't of helped the situation*" (P3).

While self-containment is not always possible, the participants indicated that removing themselves from a distressing or triggering situation then proved helpful, as it was stated that:

*Then you feel that you just want to give up. Then I leave, walk out there to the bathroom and down the steps [...]. And just leaving and coming back [...], then you are alright again, then you can go on. And it is important sometimes [...] just going outside, taking a breath and coming back, then you can continue* (P6).

This was supported by another two participants indicating the following: "*I think I just remove myself out of the teaching environment*" (P1), as well as:

*I had that time where I was really angry with the kids or with the child or something, so I just walked out. I just stand outside for 2 minutes, just clear my head and then I come back. Because in that 2 minutes it is gone* (P2).

The former mentioned self-awareness, together with the latter related to removing the self from triggering situations, allowed for the realisation and acceptance of own limitations as educators in the inclusive classroom, as it was further mentioned that "*a person should actually just calm down. And then you realize that you can just do so much [...]. You must know what you are capable of [...]*" (P1). Supporting this notion, statements such as: "*I am only a class-teacher. I can just do so much*" (P8) and "*if I cannot help her, then I won't be able to help her*" (P3) came to the fore during the interviews. Hence, together with the

realization and acceptance of own limitations, the development of personal and professional boundaries is also necessary, as it was stated that *“There is no more that we can do. We can’t, [...] you need to draw a line”* (P8). When reflecting on setting boundaries, it was mentioned that *“you must know [...] where to stop, [...] this is enough now. Teacher has done her part”* (P1), while another participant added:

*You have a line that you must draw [...]. I do understand that I cannot have my candle lit at both ends. [...] now I have boundaries. I don’t have to be a mother to a child [...]. Now I am their teacher [...]. There is a line that we draw because that is how it should be. For the sake of myself, and for the children. And that boundary [...] makes things a lot easier* (P8).

Introspection was identified as another important coping mechanism facilitating personal management, as it was mentioned, *“reflection, reflection, reflection! [...] you almost do it without realizing. You come home [...] and then I think, I maybe could have handled this situation better or I could have handled this [like that]”* (P3). This was supported by another two participants who claimed that: *“I talk to myself a lot about things. I will lie in bed and think, apply [introspection] to myself [...]. Mull over things [...], sorting it out for myself”* (P1) and that *“I’ll revisit the day’s occurrences. And when everything replays, [I’ll think] here I could have maybe done something differently”* (P4). Praying and religion also assisted in personal wellbeing, as it was observed by one participant that *“[...] I really cannot think how one would do this without strong faith, because it is really [difficult]”* (P5). It was further added that *“when I felt that it becomes too much, then I just say Lord please help me”* (P3). Another participant elaborated:

*We pray like five times a day, and I feel like that calms me in every aspect [...]. Even if I go home, the first thing I do [...] is pray [...] and then I always feel like that sort of clears my mind* (P2).

Cathartic experiences such as crying and indulging in self-pity also proved as prominent coping strategies, as indicated by the following statements: *“I think I go home and cry [...]”* (P1) and *“I have an episode now and again where I just break down [emotionally], and I think after that it’s okay”* (P3). Another participant stated that *“yesterday I was really drained. I went to lie on the couch and I felt very sorry for myself. I ate some chocolates and I slept [...]. And today I feel a bit better”* (P4). Additionally, consulting with colleagues and talking also proved as cathartic, as it was said that *“I said to [colleague] this morning [...], it is nice to talk to someone, and it helps because they can give you clarity on how to approach it [situation]”* (P3), while another participant claimed that *“it helps to let go [of your emotions] by someone who is in the same working environment as you are. And afterwards you feel a little bit better [...]”* (P4). Together with the cathartic experience of talking, social support also plays a pivotal role in the management of educators’ personal wellbeing. Familial support was noted by one participant as a coping strategy, as she mentioned *“my family and friends, I have an amazing support system”* (P2), this was supported by another statement: *“that is how I handle a lot of things these days [...], I tell my family the majority of these things because they listen”* (P1) while an added claim indicated that *“luckily I have a family that is very supportive when it comes to that [...]. My support is actually very efficient in such a sense that I cannot say that don’t or I won’t be able cope [...], and it helps”* (P6). Work colleagues also assisted: *“between the teachers there is a nice support-system, where you can quickly pop in by someone and talk for a little bit. [...] Amongst ourselves we work well together; we understand one another and we help each other”* (P5). Professional support was also indicated as essential, as another participant mentioned that:

*I have a network already. I have a doctor that works with me. She knows, [...] that child is put on medication immediately and then referred to a psychologist. The psychologist I also know well [...]. The three of us work together. [...] so then we work in a triangle and we sort them out like that. And it works (P8).*

As observed, participants apply a variety of coping strategies in the inclusive classroom to ensure personal management and wellbeing. This, in turn, ensures a comfortable educational setting and experience for all.

## **Theme 2: Situational Aspects contributing to Coping Strategies and the Experiences Thereof**

During the in-depth interview it was evident that certain situational aspects contributed to the coping strategies of inclusive educators' and their experiences thereof. These situational aspects include: unknown and novice situations, an overwhelming workload, lack of resources and support structures, parental factors, experienced vicarious trauma, professional lived experiences, and one specific child's needs allow for the neglect of other children's needs.

**Unknown and novice situations.** It was evident from the participants that the initial unfamiliarity of inclusive education and the novelty that accompanies tutoring a variety of educational needs had contributed to their experiences regarding their coping strategies, as it was noted that *"We as teachers don't have honours in special needs education. [...] None of them [educators] can cope with this, because no university prepares you for what you [are] going to encounter"* (P2). One participant mentioned that, *"I cried for [the first] six months every day. When I started teaching, I thought I would be this fairy-teacher that emanates only love [...]. Within the first two weeks I realized [...] you must do everything but"* (P8). This was supported by another statement:

*Two years ago, I was not coping. [...] I walked into a class with 23 different children, different personalities [...], so in those years I do not think I coped too well. There were no guidelines provided on what you should do, I was stumbling [through tutoring] (P1).*

Participant 5 admitted that, *"my first year had been quite rough, and after my first [year], I realized that I had to find my feet"*. Thus, as participants became more established in their profession as inclusive educators, certain coping strategies developed as a result thereof. This, in turn, presently facilitates a more comfortable environment for both the educator and the learner, as educators are now able to compare initial to current experiences and coping strategies which informs their current functioning in the inclusive classroom.

**Overwhelming workload.** Data indicated that educators were overwhelmed with, and depleted from, the amount of work and expectations set aside for them as inclusive educators, as noted: *"a lot is expected of you, and you must perform on every level. [...] I pour my whole life into this school, into these children, and nothing is left when I return home"* (P8).

Another participant shared the same sentiment, stating:

*My whole day revolves around my work [...]. [...] it's just too much, [...] you cannot take everything upon your plate, [...] there is too much. We have a lot of administrative work, the things that are given to us are terrible (P3).*

Evidently, the expectations set for inclusive educators contributes greatly to the development and experience of applicable coping strategies, as the lack thereof will consequently lead to burnout (see Subtheme 3.2, Experienced Emotions).

**Lack of resources and support structures.** The lack of resources and support structures for inclusive education evidently influences educators coping strategies and their experiences thereof. Commenting on the educational system, it was claimed that “*our education system has let us down [...]*” (P2). When referring specifically to school-management and inclusive education, one participant mentioned, “*with children like that, school-management is supposed to take serious steps against them, but they don’t really want to. They say that they will, but they don’t really*” (P8). The inflexible curriculum and lack of guidelines also proved challenging as: “*There is no syllabus that caters to both [types of] groups, nothing*” (P1) and that “*there is so much to be done, and it is very difficult without a curriculum. [...] Nowhere are there guidelines stating what you should do*” (P1). Adding to the lack of support structures and resources, one participant commented on public services offered to the inclusive education population, claiming that “*there are no resources. And the Department simply says there is no money. They don’t even have enough money to fill normal [educational] posts, never mind mentioning a psychologist or a counsellor*” (P8), adding to this, another participant commented the following:

*[...] and the State, that Social development? [...] how long were they striking for last year? It is very difficult. Because what can we do? [...] No-one wants to help him [child], because that lady [appointed social worker] says that they won’t offer it [remedial program] to one person, and that is the way it is* (P5).

One participant also voiced her concern related to psychological support, noting that:

*The psychologist takes up to two or three weeks. There are psychologists who you can phone now and you will only be able to get an opening in six months’ time. [...] It is unpractical, and then the term is over* (P8).

Supporting this notion, it was added that “*we do refer to [psychologists], but she is overworked and unavailable [...]. You don’t really see results [...]*” (P5) as another indicated that “*[...] he [child] sees [psychologist] too little to indicate any progress*” (P4). Hence, the lack of resources and support offered to the inclusive education population concurrently contributes to educators’ utilised coping strategies and the concomitant experiences.

**Parental factors.** As indicated by most participants, the role parents play largely influence the way in which they approach inclusive education and experience their means to cope with the challenges associated with this. Parental ignorance and apathy were referred to by a participant noting that “*I just feel that these parents have no idea of what’s going on with the child*” (P2) although, on the contrary, it is also true that “*parents acknowledge it [diagnosis], but they do not accept it*” (P4), it was added that:

*If you do call a parent to school to tell them that their child has a problem, they are extremely aggressive. [...] now you suddenly hear your child has a problem, and it’s a brain-problem. These parents don’t understand these types of cognitive-deficits, not at all* (P8).

Another said the following:

*Most of the time parents find it very difficult to accept that their child has a problem. They don’t understand it. Today a mother said to me that it is not her job to open her daughters’ school bag to see what’s going on there, it’s mine. I get paid to do that* (P3).

When the above-mentioned statement is considered, it is also evident that parents who are uncooperative are also referred to, as observed by one participant that “*the cooperation [from parents] is decreasing. It’s a constant struggle. [...] if you get it you are lucky*” (P6). She added the following: “*you try to help the parents; you try to provide a solution. But they don’t assist from their side. [...] Many times we get [parents] who work against us, [...] it makes the struggle much more difficult*” (P6). Thus, as observed, parental influence and all

the aspects it entails concurrently influence inclusive educators' experiences related to their coping strategies in reaction to the challenges accompanying the former.

**Professional lived experiences.** According to the participants, professional experience related to education, including both mainstream and inclusive, facilitated the development of various coping strategies while simultaneously allowing for a more comfortable experience related to teaching in general. The following statements support this notion:

*I was thrown into the deep end at first, and I had to learn how to survive there. I had a lot of responsibilities, and I do believe that all of that helped me to better cope with my current situations (P3).*

She added that:

*I think because it was such a rough environment last year, the current disciplinary incidents I do have this year are not a big deal anymore. I occasionally giggle about what the other teachers moan about. I think to myself; you are moaning about a child lying in his chair, last year a child threw a table at me (P3).*

Another participant stated the following:

*I was in my third year when I started teaching at a school. I did my pre-grad, followed by my honours and my Masters', everything on a fulltime basis. I was also in the hostel. [...] I am therefore very young, but I have a lot more experience than other people my age (P8).*

It can be conclusively added that "it's, I do think, only experience [...]. You get to that [reason] which you never thought you'd arrive at" (P1) and that experiences such as the above-mentioned are referred to as "a building block [...], [...] a step to becoming a better person and teacher" (P2). Professional experience in teaching therefore adds value to current coping strategies and experiences related to this within an inclusive educational setting.

**Vicarious trauma.** During data gathering several participants mentioned the vicarious trauma they are exposed to as inclusive educators as they have a variety of children from various backgrounds attending their classes. One participant recalled an upsetting incident where she was told that "there was a young man who was paying his girlfriend for the child in my class. R20! I was more upset about the R20 for which she sells her body than anything else. I was truly severely upset" (P1). Another participant also reflected on her experiences and coping related to this, stating:

*I feel sorry for this child. [...] when I sit with my pupils and this one tells me about her brother undressing her [...] or this one talks to me about x,y and z doing this [...]. That I can handle these things, and not [react] over-emotionally (P8).*

She added, "I had to learn, otherwise it becomes too emotional for me. [...] I am a very intense person; I am very emotional" (P8). It can therefore be understood that inclusive educators' experience vicarious trauma because of what they are told by their learners, and that these experiences add to their conscious decisions associated with coping strategies and their experiences as a result thereof.

**One specific need allows for the neglect of others.** When teaching within an inclusive educational setting, it was indicated by participants that when individual attention is demanded or needed, negligence of the other learners may occur. The following statements support this notion, "One child in your class that needs your attention requires that you dismiss 33 others [...]" (P8). It was added:

*Those who can for example not write, or they cannot read, your attention is immediately drawn to them [...]. The rest is basically left on their own. They were*

*dependent on themselves, because my attention had to wholeheartedly be invested in that person (P3).*

Consequently,

*[...] because [child] who sits there unable to do his work as he cannot read, I cannot attend to. Because as soon as I give him attention, the others feel that they should do something to draw my attention back to them (P8).*

Hence, *“[...] the result that makes it difficult is [...], as soon as I [...] pay attention to her [learner], the others become noisy and unruly” (P7).* Although participants therefore attempt to cope with various needs within the inclusive classroom by providing individual tutoring, this may concurrently lead to the opposite desired outcome or intent for other learners.

It is thus evident from this theme that the various situational aspects participants are exposed to and experience have a profound influence on the way in which they understand and experience their coping strategies to date.

### **Theme 3: Personal Aspects contributing to Coping Strategies and the Experiences Thereof**

During the in-depth interviews it also became evident that not only situational aspects contributed to the coping strategies of inclusive educators' and their experiences thereof, but also personal aspects. These personal aspects include the personal lived experiences of the educators; the experienced emotions related to being an inclusive educator; and the experienced sense of meaning and purpose.

**Personal lived experiences.** Various experiences within the personal life world of the educators evidently lead to an empathic understanding within the inclusive classroom, as participants reflected on both positive and negative experiences that shaped the way they approach their learners and manage their classrooms. One participant indicated that *“I stutter tremendously, [...] so, you know what? I have empathy with others” (P1).* Another shared a crucial turning point within herself, stating;

*[...] that experience changed my whole perspective about how this [current situation] is bad, but it's not that bad. It could be much worse. When I lost that baby [...] and you have to say goodbye [...], me? Someone who loves children so much must accept that the Lord has taken away my child [...]. That experience, followed by the wonderful birth of my daughter [...], puts everything into perspective. Then this happening here is not so overwhelming anymore. I am extremely thankful [...], it was the worst thing that could have happened to us, but it was the best thing that could have happened to us. It must have happened, [because] suddenly you appreciate everything [...] (P8).*

She concluded her reflection by stating that *“it was a process, [...] but it was necessary to bring about much needed balance within the inclusive setting” (P8).* One participant furthermore shared two specific experiences that contributed to her coping and her experiences thereof. She shared:

*I was married in 2011 [...] and then he was murdered. [...] So I think coping [with] that tragedy taught me a lot. [...] I learned [how] to stand on my own two feet. So, whenever I think of coping, I always think of [that]. That was way worse and I coped through that. I sort of relate it to what is happening [now] (P2).*

She additionally referred to another significant experience of having a family member diagnosed with a genetic disorder, *“My sister has Down syndrome, and that's maybe why I got a bit more patience than the average teacher. [...] if I look at her, I learn a lot as well” (P2).*

Hence, when personal lived experiences are accounted for, it contributed greatly to the development of coping strategies such as being more forthcoming, perceptive, and receptive that now prove helpful and effective in an inclusive educational setting.

**Experienced emotions.** According to the gathered data, various emotions are experienced when working in an inclusive educational setting. Emotional burnout was found to be a prominent factor in this subtheme, as one participant noted that “*a person becomes tired. Emotionally you are exhausted [...]*” (P5) and that “*eventually it gets to you. [...] you are emotionally so exhausted at the end of the day [...]*” (P8) that it consequently leads to a sense of defeat and over-sensitivity. This was indicated by the following statement:

*I'm not in the mood anymore. [...] I really want to stand in front of them and burst into tears, I'm disheartened because I can't do anything, no matter what. [...] it feels as if I am getting shoved from all directions, and then the smallest thing will upset me even more, and it is not supposed to* (P4).

Helplessness was furthermore identified as another consequential emotion, as one participant clearly stated that “*the worst [part] for me is seeing that the child wants to, but he can't*” (P3). Two other participants shared this sentiment:

*You want the best for each [child]. [...] And if he [learner] is not able to, like I said, not all these children are necessarily able to progress any further. And you want that child to do better, but cognitively they are simply not able to* (P1).

Another added:

*What occasionally gets to me is the fact that I want the children to get everything right. [...] I think that I sometimes notice the effort, but the results are not immediately present. And I think because a person cares [...], I wish I could do more. [...] Because you can see the potential, but the children don't necessarily arrive at that point as quickly [...]*” (P7).

Consequently, participants noted that the burden associated with the helplessness in inclusive education and the experienced emotions is taken home from school:

*I'm that type of teacher, I'll listen to that. No one knows about this, and then I'll take it home. And it is sitting on me and it's sitting on me until I do something, and I know that I can't really help this child* (P2).

and that:

*They [learners] are permanently in your thoughts. Permanently. Whether you go to sleep or whether you wake up, they are there. [...] you cannot distance yourself. I believe that if you really love your profession and are invested in it then you can never [distance yourself], because they do go with you* (P6).

Participants furthermore mentioned that self-blame and self-doubt in their professional competencies regularly came to the fore, as observed, “*I point it [blame] towards myself, because I look for the problem within myself [...]*” (P4) while another elaborated, “*if a child does not progress, you automatically feel as if it is your fault*” (P3). She further added that:

*I don't know what I'm doing wrong. [...] And while I was grading papers last night, I thought to myself: Am I doing enough? Am I saying enough? Do I demonstrate it enough that it [schoolwork] eventually sinks in?* (P3).

Consequentially, these emotions give rise to the way participants react to the demands of an inclusive classroom, and how they experience their coping strategies as a result thereof.

**A sense of meaning and purpose.** Despite the experienced challenges in inclusive education, participants claimed that their experienced sense of meaning and purpose was a driving force amongst times of adversity. This was clearly observable in the following statement:

*I believe I landed up here because God wanted me here. [...] It's not always pleasant, it's not always what I wanted to do. Many times I have felt like this is not where I want to be, but on the other hand, who will look after these children? [...] Here I actually mean something (P1).*

One participant elaborated that amidst overwhelming trials “[...] there was one feeling that remained – I am in the right profession” (P3). It is therefore evident that their sense of meaning and purpose resulted in an experience of hope and resilience regarding applied coping strategies, and the results it may possibly yield in future; as “that’s the beauty of being a teacher, you never know where your influence stops” (P2).

Considering the above-mentioned, it is evident that these personal aspects gave rise to the development of specific coping strategies in reaction to the discomfort and/or solace experienced not only in an inclusive educational setting but also in a personal capacity and setting. Participants now have a better understanding of their experience and could apply their insight to an inclusive educational setting as it is now possible to evaluate and compare initial and current experiences and coping strategies.

#### **Theme 4: Knowledge Gained during Inclusive Teaching Career**

When consolidating participants’ reflection on their coping strategies and their experiences thereof, an important theme emerged from the conversations. All participants found it essential to reflect on what they had learnt throughout their inclusive teaching career. This included developed wisdom related to the effectivity of various coping strategies, self-growth, the importance of scholar wellbeing, other identified needs, and future suggestions.

**Effectivity of coping strategies.** As a wide variety of coping strategies are practised in the inclusive classroom, participants briefly referred to varied results regarding the effectivity of some while mentioning the usage thereof. When referring to scholar and classroom management and approach, a mixed bag of results was obtained. Individual scholar attention and personal tutoring within the classroom proved “*much more effective to say: Come sit here by me, show me what you don’t understand. Let me help you*” (P8) because it yielded increased individual scholar performance. Contradicting the intended purpose, the opposite was true for the other learners who were not receiving individual attention as, “*I feel that it’s unfair towards them, because I’m leaving them when I can also be giving them a little extra attention to push them up a level, because it’s not to say that they’re coping*” (P2). Similarly, it was added that “*with positive motivation, you [also] achieve very good results*” (P7) when the scholar reward-system was brought into play. However, the opposite was true for one educator who claimed that “*we have our disciplinary system with the stars. [...] But [...] it feels like you are constantly playing tug of war. You do this, then I’ll do this*” (P6). The effectivity of some classroom and scholar management and approach techniques is therefore proved, although participants’ experience thereof may be contradictory to intention and result; some even unsettling.

Additionally, when personal management and well-being was referred to, concurring statements were observed. Setting personal and professional boundaries were strongly recommended as effective for both the educator and the pupils, as indicated that: “*There is a*

line that we draw because that is how it should be. For the sake of myself, and for the children. [...] And that boundary, [...] it makes it much easier” (P8), moreover with professional boundaries related to oneself as an educator, “I consciously decide that I won’t attend to any work on a Friday afternoon. [...] And it helps to just catch your breath and then carry on” (P6), as well as related to pupils within the classroom: “nobody is allowed at my table, not only for safety purposes [...] but because you need to respect my time and my space. [...] So they get that very well, [...] that works” (P2). It is therefore clear that boundaries effectively ensure various aspects related personal wellbeing as an individual and as an educator. Additional coping strategies that seemed to facilitate personal wellbeing were evaluating a child according to his/her capabilities: “[...] doing that helps me to not become frustrated when I grade the child’s schoolwork” (P3); experiencing a sense of meaning and purpose: “Here we still mean something, and I think it helps a lot to think about it to cope with the situation that you are in. To realize that you are still worth something here” (P6); together with social support related to colleagues, “We support one another a lot [...] and I do think that is a big advantage” (P6) and significant others, “My support is actually very efficient in such a sense that I cannot say that I don’t or won’t be able to cope” (P6). In general, social support was summarized as: “Definitely effective. You’ll always have those [people] that you feel will bring you down and those that will take you up. [...] I feel that you must make that choice of who you want to listen to” (P2).

Credibly, it was stated that coping is not a final destination in inclusive education, as one participant mentioned that “I cope here and there, and then I don’t cope here and there” (P2), neither exclusively automated in response, as opposingly stated that: “If a person has to think how do you cope every day? I think it is just something that happens, sometimes without you realizing it” (P6); but also a conscious decision, as noted that: “I had to decide at one point in my life whether I love the school [profession] or my children more” (P8). These decisions are nonetheless essential and “[...] absolutely effective. I find it necessary because you do become disheartened and exhausted” (P1).

Thus, the variety of coping strategies implemented largely rely on numerous factors, both internal and external, which will ultimately influence the experience of effectivity thereof.

**Self-growth.** Participants eagerly compared previous experiences related to the topic of interest to current experiences, consequentially reflecting on the self-growth that developed as a result thereof. This was especially true regarding initially becoming an inclusive educator and the associated emotions to being one to date, as mentioned by one participant that “I cried at my table two years ago” (P1) where after she proudly added that “[...] This year, not even once” (P1). Another added that “Initially I was afraid of parents or being reprimanded by a parent, or any interaction with the parent. And now I’m like, bring it on! Bring the parent!” (P2). Developed assertiveness regarding unruly behaviour was also indicated, as reflected that “I was very scared the first few days. [...] But after a while I decided you know what? Go and stand in between them and calm them down” (P1) as well as:

*Normally I want to be this person they trust and look up to [...]. But that day I felt I needed to do that, so [...] I closed the door and stood in front and said: If you want to leave this classroom now, then you’ve got to go over me, and if any of you touch me, we go to the police station (P2)*

She continued, “and that was one of the big things in my life, in my teaching career, that I think really made me who I am today” (P2).

It was further observed that setting boundaries did not come easy at first, as reflected in the following statements: “I [initially] sat throughout all my afternoons [...] until I found my feet [...]” (P1); another added that “I learned that I shouldn’t work myself up about these things. I always stressed about getting my work done, now I have an attitude of: I grade papers until I’m tired and then I stop” (P3), additionally “I came to a stage where I just said no, find someone else. I can’t do everything, [...] and that also helped” (P3). When reflecting on setting boundaries, it was furthermore observed that: “[...] it took ten years to do. [...] you take on and you take on [...] and you don’t know how to say no. And then [...] you reach a point where your lifestyle starts falling apart” (P2), while another commented that:

*Our old deputy-principal [...] asked me the other day how I am. [...] She [also] asked me if I get round to doing all my chores? I then said to her that I do, but if I don’t, I’ll complete it tomorrow. She then said to me that I have grown [up] (P8).*

General areas in which participants further reflected growth had been patience: “You have to learn how to be patient” (P1); shifting from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation: “Rewards from outside don’t matter to me anymore. Now it’s about what I feel, achieve and how I feel about that. My whole life changed when I started doing that” (P8); prioritizing personal needs and wellbeing: “I realized that you should make time for others as well, you can’t permanently focus on schoolwork, you’ll make yourself ill”(P3); independence: “When I look to compare, I think from there to here, [...] I learned to stand on my own two feet [...]” (P2) and self-insight: “[...] I understand [...] the concept of burnout, [...] self-insight is very important” (P1).

Self-insight emerged as an essential aspect within self-growth. This was true when referring to identified triggering situations and the associated emotions and reactions: “I realized [...] let me get away from it, because it’s irritating me and then I’m in a bad mood. So [...] I sort of put a stop to that in a way” (P2) as well as personal functioning: “I have that inclination, and I’ve told myself that I should stop [...]”(P3), moreover “I think your personality determines whether you cope or not, to an extent. [...] I’m a rather calm person, and I think that has an effect” (P6). Ultimately, it was identified that all participants realized a degree of self-growth and/or developed self-insight in the course of being an inclusive educator. For one participant, she consciously knew when this was happening: “I think you have that moment where you hit that block. But I always feel whenever I hit that block, it’s a good thing for me, because it tells me: don’t do this again” (P2), and for others, this contributed to a more enjoyable experience, as noted that “For the first time I now enjoy my work” (P3).

**Importance of scholar wellbeing.** Although pressure related to academic performance looms within the classroom, participants identified the importance of scholar wellbeing to facilitate learner progress and performance, not only inside the classroom, but also in society. The following statements clearly depict conviction:

*It is very important to me that the children have kind hearts, caring for one another. [...] They [children] must feel good about themselves. I am not too concerned about high academic performance, but I am concerned about them being happy. They must be able to grow. [...] You must ensure that your children are emotionally well before you can attempt any schoolwork with them. [...] It is very important to me that the children feel safe and calm within my classroom, otherwise they won’t be able to give their best, otherwise they cannot concentrate (P7);*

and:

*At this stage I am much more concerned about what happens [...] with my child’s heart if he is not able to do the work. [...] That is much more important to me.*

*There are children to whom you cannot explain anything [...], it is what it is. Let's rather work on his skills. Let's make him a nice person. [...] I regularly say to my children [...] you can be as dumb as a bag of flour, but if you are a nice person, people will like you. [...] that is much more important than academic performance (P8).*

She continued,

*Now your self-image is destroyed, what is the benefit of that? [...] Now you have an unintelligent child with a low self-esteem. His EQ [Emotional Intelligence] is non-existent, what is going to happen to him? Then it's a shortcut to drugs and who knows what else. [...] Whether you are intelligent or not, that doesn't matter. You can be a good person regardless of your intelligence, and that is important to me (P8).*

**Identified needs and future suggestions.** When voicing their frustrations about varying challenges within inclusive education, numerous needs were identified and suggestions made regarding DoE-intervention and implementable support and resources. As identified in the following statement:

*If we can receive more support from the Department [of Education], even if it is just child-based, then it is okay, because then we know that if we have a child in our class with a problem [...] you can report it and they can and will help him. (P5)*

She added that, *“The state should ensure that their own system that provides support to schools is in place. Because if it is established, then it will already make a big difference”* (P5). Another participant alluded to added support within inclusive schools, stating that;

*If they can once more, like in the old days, [...] allocate a psychologist to every school [...]. He [psychologist] was a psychologist for your school, or he was allocated to two or three schools, he came on a weekly basis and saw the children (P4).*

She furthermore stated that *“[...] especially in an inclusive school, a permanent psychologist is needed”* (P4). It was also claimed that *“I think that a person, not only the teacher but also all the children, would benefit greatly from having an assistant [in the classroom]”* (P3). The following was also added: *“[we] must have modified curriculums, [...] do exactly what we do, but there's more finer and gross [motor] development, more visual [development]. Everything just needs to be more for those children”* (P2). Another suggestion was directed at the parents of children in inclusive educational settings:

*The most important is the cooperation between parent and child. And that you should accept your child as he is, not wanting to allocate a diagnosis to him if he doesn't need one. And if he does have a diagnosis, parents should be well informed about it. And support, support I believe is also very important. [...] And especially with inclusive education I think it must be even stronger than compared to a mainstream school (P6).*

Added support from numerous structures is therefore needed for inclusive education to be feasible and effective.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this qualitative research study following a phenomenological research design was to explore, to identify, and to describe educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province of South Africa. The research question that directed this research study was as follows: What are educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting?

To answer the research question, it was essential to first identify the coping strategies utilised in the inclusive classroom. Previous research completed by Alhija (2015) indicated that educators resort to a diversity of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural coping strategies to achieve successful adaptation and adjustment within a demanding educational setting. This was supported by the findings of this research study, as the application of a variety of coping strategies were reported by educators. Brackenreed (2011) additionally categorized these coping strategies into, amongst others, professional coping, and personal coping; supported by the findings of the study. The main coping strategies identified in this research were related to both professional coping, that is, classroom management and approach and scholar management; and personal coping, that is, personal management and wellbeing. The identified professional coping strategies reflected a behavioural approach to coping, while the personal coping strategies reflect a variety of emotional, behavioural, and cognitive strategies.

Hedderich (2016) indicated that common demands and challenges related to the inclusive classroom give rise to the above-mentioned coping strategies of educators and how they are consequently experienced. The following demands were identified in both the current research study and previous studies: little to no willingness of parent collaboration and other parental factors; ensuring equality in the classroom; an inflexible curriculum; doubt in professional competencies; lack of support structures; and an overwhelming workload (Brackenreed, 2008; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Montgomery et al., 2005; Paulse, 2005; Unianu, 2011), whereas this research study identified additional contributing aspects related to lived experiences (both personal and professional) with their accompanying emotions. Consequently, participants were more adept at reflecting on occupational demands and experiences and the connection between their experience of their coping strategies in reaction thereto.

In comparing activated coping strategies to alleviate the accompanying stress of the proposed occupational demands, participants reflected on the effectivity thereof. Romi, Lewis and Roache (2013) indicate that classroom and scholar management techniques must not only be effective but also appropriate and justifiable. According to Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers and Sugai (2008), various identified strategies and approaches within this research study proved to be evidence-based. This included the physical arrangement of the classroom and pupils, classroom structure and discipline accompanied with direct instruction and clear rules, peer tutoring, praise and performance feedback, individualized instruction, and token economies. Additionally, literature attesting to the effectivity of differentiated instruction (Smit & Tyler, 2011); considering differences amongst students, their diagnoses and highest level of functioning, a holistic understanding of the scholar, and planning and preparedness with simultaneous flexibility (Sakarneh & Nair, 2011) also supported the findings. This research study's findings concurred, as participants reported that when the above-mentioned coping strategies are applied in the inclusive classroom, it proves effective and appropriate in yielding desired disciplinary and academic outcomes, such as a decrease in off-task and disruptive behaviour; increased academic performance; progress and work productivity and accuracy (Simonsen et al., 2008). The effective management of, and approach to, an inclusive classroom and the attending learners can therefore have a significant impact on the student's achievements and values (Romi et al., 2013).

However, not only does effective classroom and scholar management contribute to an optimal learning environment for scholars and a more comfortable experience of coping strategies for educators in the inclusive educational setting, but also to personal management and wellbeing. Brackenreed (2011) claimed personal coping strategies as highly effective for educators teaching in an inclusive classroom. The findings of this research study concur.

Amongst these identified coping strategies in this research study, Kebbi (2018) refers to introspection and boundary setting as effective, while drawing on social support appeared to be pivotal (Brackenreed, 2011; Engelbrecht et al., 2001). Other strategies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and catharsis (Al-dyiar & Salem, 2013), together with prayer and religion (Braun-Lewensohn, 2015) also appeared to be effective in ameliorating stress in an inclusive educational setting. Participants' experiences strongly concurred with not only the above research but also with one another in this research study. Thus, personal management and wellbeing is an equally essential coping strategy for inclusive educators to provide a conducive educational environment not only for scholars but also for the educators themselves, as "it is against the backdrop of stress and coping skills of such educators that the effectiveness of inclusive educational practices must be established for inclusion to be feasible" (Engelbrecht et al., 2001, p. 256).

Additionally, to further the effectiveness of inclusive education, participants deemed it necessary to identify specific needs within the inclusive educational setting. The participants voiced their concerns related to a lack of resources and support, while this notion is supported by Naicker (2006) and Schoeman (2012) claiming that a lack of adequate resources at schools impede the integration of all learners with various disabilities. The indisputable need for educator- and child-based support programs were identified by participants, requesting increased involvement and support from not only the DoE but also other allied role players to ensure quality education is provided. The importance of scholar-wellbeing was also identified as essential in facilitating the progression of inclusive education. According to Sakarneh and Nair (2014) an optimal inclusive classroom is facilitated by building a students' self-concept and ensuring self-efficacy. In this study participants acknowledged the importance thereof while making active attempts to ensure the emotional wellbeing of their scholars. Participants identified academic performance and progress as important, but a positive self-concept and high self-efficacy not only within the classroom but also society as essential.

Although inclusive education can therefore be viewed as challenging and demanding specific coping strategies, participants manage to identify their self-growth as a result thereof. It is important to note that coping strategies and attempts thereto occur within certain contexts and that the process, rather than the outcome, should be emphasised; as the educator and their environment are continuously in a dynamic, mutual influential relationship (Romi et al., 2013). This is clearly identifiable in the identified self-growth regarding the many coping strategies and related experiences reported by the educators. Moreover, given the various coping strategies identified in an inclusive educational setting, it is clear that "specific coping styles are neither inherently good nor bad, as different situations may call for different responses" (Romi et al., 2013, p. 326). However, resilience remains the foundational aspect underpinning educators' experiences of their coping strategies, as it is concurrently expressed in their sense of moral purpose (Romi et al., 2013), meaning and self-growth within inclusive education.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

Essential limitations of this research study include a small research sample comprised of only female educators. Moreover, only one participant was Indian, while the majority (7) were White. As this indicates a limited variation within the sample, it is therefore not representative of all ethnic and gender groups and the generalisation to the broader population of educators within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District is thus not possible. Additionally, many schools listed as full-service schools by the DoE situated in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District

were upon further investigation not inclusive, while attempts to establish contact with all were profoundly delayed and difficult. Four of the listed full-service schools were willing to participate in the research study, while only two successfully followed through on arrangements to complete scheduled interviews due to work-pressures and time constraints.

Recommendations about further research related to this topic include incorporating more than one educational district into the research study, as a limited amount of full-service schools which consequently comply to the criteria thereof exist. Expanding the research sample will therefore prevent hampered data gathering due to region constraints. Moreover, this may ensure a more accurate representation of the inclusive educator population in general. As observed in subtheme 4.3, it is evident that the inclusive educating population expresses a need for increased educator- and child-based support programs. It can therefore be recommended that a possible program be developed and put in place which focuses on educator wellbeing through aspects such as effective coping- and managing strategies in the inclusive classroom. This program can furthermore contain additional established training- and support groups to ensure shared wisdom and support amongst inclusive educators, possibly resulting in improved educator wellbeing and concomitantly the enhanced quality of inclusive education. Research related to effective child-based programs for learners attending an inclusive educational setting is also encouraged, as this will further assist in providing quality and effective inclusive education to all.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this research study was to explore, to identify, and to describe educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province of South Africa. The findings stipulated the importance of various psychological, behavioural, and emotional coping strategies related to the inclusive classroom and that various situational and personal aspects contributed to the development and experience of the former. The experiences of inclusive educators regarding their coping strategies in the inclusive classroom were specified in the findings of this study and substantiated by supporting literature. This is established in identified coping strategies related to classroom and scholar management and approach together with personal management and wellbeing. A variety of contributing situational and personal aspects prove essential in the development and experience of applied coping strategies, while acquired knowledge regarding the effectivity of coping strategies and self-growth emerged as a result thereof. Coping strategies and attempts thereto conclusively occur within certain contexts, and the experiences thereof is consequentially dynamic. However, educators who establish coping strategies in the inclusive educational setting promote not only personal wellbeing, but also student wellbeing that concurrently enables and facilitates an all-inclusive and conducive educational climate. Additional support and intervention relevant to educator- and child-based programs are also required to advance quality in the inclusive educational setting.

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### **SECTION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION**

Section 3 offers a personal reflection of the researcher about her experiences of completing this research study.

#### **Critical Reflection**

To provide a comprehensive account on the researcher's experience of this research process, important elements on data collection, data analysis, the findings of this research study, and general aspects will be discussed.

#### **Data Collection**

Edwards and Holland (2013) emphasise the researcher's duty to create an interaction between the participant and the researcher so that participants feel safe enough to talk openly about their experiences, allowing for an interview that goes beyond a conversational exchange. Elmir, Schmied, Jackson, and Wilkes (2011) show that established rapport between the participant and the researcher will consequentially enhance the researcher's access to the interviewee's lived experiences. During the initial stages of data collection, I, as the researcher, felt intimidated by the process due to the considerable pressure applied to the interviewing process. I initially prepared for every interview by rehearsing my two proposed questions and other definitions. I recall leaving the first interview feeling some discomfort about the way I interviewed the participant, as I felt I could probe more into essential aspects related to the answers provided. Additionally, I do believe my anxiety also hampered my experience of established rapport between myself and the participant. However, as the data collection phase of my research progressed, I became more comfortable with the process of interviewing participants and probing where necessary. Consequently, my composure and the presence of good rapport between myself and the participant allowed for the conversational exchange during the interview to be transformed into an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

Initially, participant recruitment proved exceptionally frustrating as I had been overly optimistic in planning the time-frame during which this would take place. However, I only managed to secure the first participant more than one year after I had obtained ethical clearance. During this year I felt helpless and frustrated, as many schools indicated that they did not have the freedom of time to grant towards my research study. Some schools furthermore agreed to assist, but later declined due to time and work pressures. This ultimately resulted in the delay of my research which, in turn, taught me patience and perseverance. Additionally, it furthered my understanding that the importance of inclusive education and the associated individuals and aspects thereof was a neglected topic in general. However, the help and kindness expressed by interested role players such as the schools' principals, governing bodies, and participants allowed for my faith to be restored in completing my research timeously. I was, however, unsettled by the limited amount of inclusive schools complying with the criteria thereof. Moreover, the consequential realisation that the needs of learners with disabilities are either neglected or inappropriately managed in schools who are listed as inclusive but do not possess the appropriate resources to accommodate these learners.

According to Elmir et al. (2011) the expression of empathy is essential during the in-depth interview especially when topics that may be sensitive in nature are discussed. Various sensitive experiences were shared and I had to ensure that the needed and appropriate empathy was conveyed during such times while reminding myself that my position was that of a researcher and not of a therapist. However, participants indicated their comfortability in sharing and expressed their gratitude for the availability of debriefing services. The availability of such services allowed me to focus on the aim of the research study, as I knew participants were psychologically taken care of if needed. Furthermore, the established open-

ended questions guiding this research study allowed for the objective approach of data collection, while simultaneously allowing me to probe into identified relevant aspects.

To further ensure objectivity, Polit and Beck (2008) suggest bracketing oneself during the research process. This is not only done to allow the researcher to identify, become aware of, and put aside any preconceived opinions about the topic of interest (Polit & Beck, 2008), but also to ensure that the researcher is cognisant of how she can possibly be influenced throughout the development and execution of the research process (Laidlaw, 2014). During the interviews, I regularly had to pay attention to refrain from asking leading questions and steering participants towards answering in accordance with what I expected from the research study. Following the completion of each interview and throughout this research study in general, personal reflection about the processes, outcome, and my contribution to this was also prioritized.

Ultimately the data collection process allowed for an enriching experience true to not only my professional knowledge and techniques but also my personal wisdom and skills.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Thomas (2010) mentions that the aim of data analysis in qualitative research is to identify and establish patterns, concepts, themes, and meanings. Thematic analysis as proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013), was identified as most applicable to achieve the above-mentioned. By transcribing the interviews verbatim, this allowed for my initial familiarisation with the data. This proved as time-consuming, as the in-depth interviews were lengthy. Furthermore, reading and re-reading the interviews to identify any grammatical errors furthered familiarisation with the data. Subsequently, when the process of coding was initiated, I felt comfortable with the data at hand. Additionally, as the interviews were lengthy in time, this yielded rich data related to the topic of interest. As initial codes were generated and recoded once more, various themes emerged. I concurrently found it rather challenging to

arrange these identified codes into themes that would comprehensively and accurately represent and describe the obtained data. However, as my supervisor served as a co-coder, his guidance about the effective representation of the data allowed me to present accurate themes and subthemes with confidence and ease.

Ratner (2002) encourages researchers to reflect on their own biases during a research process bearing in mind the possible affection on research outcomes. This was essential during data analysis because of the likelihood of focusing on expected codes and themes evident during interviews, as opposed to additional produced codes and themes that were not as apparent and possibly even unexpected. Through regularly revisiting the aim of the research study and the research question, it proved effective in guiding the data analysis process. Self-reflection and continual monitoring of my progress by my supervisor also minimised any possible effects of my biases on the data and the analysis thereof.

## **Findings**

The aim of my research study was to explore, to identify, and to describe educators' experiences regarding their own coping strategies in an inclusive classroom setting. Initially, while reviewing the obtained data and the findings, I became overwhelmed with the description of lived experiences. Because of the rich obtained data, I felt overwhelmed in deciding how best to explain and portray the data to the reader in a clear yet descriptive manner. However, after comprehensive research, Bliss (2016) summarized lived experiences into essential elements, such as: the manner in which we react to the spaces we find ourselves in related to intersubjective relationships and contexts; common elements and central underlying meanings related to universal structures as well as perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and memories about a certain phenomenon. Pathak (2017) adds that personal insight, knowledge, and meaning also plays an essential role in the lived experience of a specific phenomenon. I was relieved to discover that the findings represented all the above-mentioned

essential elements. It strengthened my confidence in reporting the findings.

Moreover, I was pleased to discover studies confirming my findings in their related aspects (Al-dyjar & Salem, 2013; Brackenreed, 2008; Brackenreed, 2011; Braun-Lewensohn, 2015; Engelbrecht Nel, Nel, & Tlale, 2015; Kebbi, 2018; Montgomery Mostert, & Jackson, 2005; Paulse, 2005; Sakarneh & Nair, 2011; Simonsen Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008; Smit & Tyler, 2011; and Unianu, 2011). Adding to this satisfaction was the realisation that the participants as educators upholding inclusive education were applying evidence-based techniques in their classrooms. It instilled in me a sense of hope about the future of inclusive education in South Africa.

As I had found myself in various settings of facilitating special needs learners, my interest in research was automatically directed to the educational setting. Daher, Carré, Jaramillo, Olivares, and Tomicic (2017) claim that the foundation for understanding any phenomena is directly related to exchanges between a participant and a researcher pertaining to experiences and meanings. However, as these intersubjective encounters may be tainted with bias and prejudice, this does not pose an obstacle to research findings if an attitude of openness is continually maintained considering the influential elements thereof (Daher et al., 2017). As I had been deeply aware of my biases and prejudices on this topic of interest, the research findings allowed for an enriching experience regarding inclusive education. I developed a deepened sense of respect and appreciation for inclusive educators, but equally so for educators in general. I am now more informed and aware about what occurs in any classroom but more so where the wellbeing of all involved parties is at heart. I envisage that my pioneering research on this all-important topic will add to and augment existing studies. It is hoped that the research findings will draw active attention not only to the importance of inclusive education but to education in general. Education is a cornerstone on which a nation can build its future. In the words of President Nelson Mandela:

“The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation” (The Borgen Project, 2018, p. 5).

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## APPENDIX A: Ethics Approval Letter



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Fax: 018 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Research Ethics Regulatory Committee**  
Tel: 018 299-4849  
Email: [nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za](mailto:nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za)

### ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) on 22/11/2018, the NWU Health Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Study title: Exploring educators' experiences with regard to coping-strategies within an inclusive educational setting.</b>			
<b>Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr W de Klerk</b>			
<b>Student: M Jansen van Vuuren</b>			
<b>Ethics number:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>U</b>
	-	0	0
	0	0	3
	6	-	1
	8	-	A
			1
	Institution	Study Number	Year
			Status
	Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation		
<b>Application Type: Single study</b>			
<b>Commencement date: 2018/11/22</b>	<b>Risk:</b>	<b>Medium</b>	
<b>Expiry date: 2019/11/30</b>			
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of a six-monthly (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.			

### Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- Please provide the HREC with a copy of the goodwill permission letters from the principals of any additional schools to be included in the study.

### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.

- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-RERC and NWU-HREC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
    - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *NWU-HREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via [Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 1206.*

The NWU-HREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HREC or the NWU-RERC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Digitally signed by Wayne  
Towers  
Date: 2016.12.04  
19:59:03 +02'00'

Prof Wayne Towers  
Chair NWU Health Research Ethics Committee

Current details: (22351930) \\\MSB1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.2 HREC Ethical Approval Letter.docm  
3 December 2016

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

## APPENDIX B: Approval Letter from District Director



### Education and Sport Development

Department of Education and Sport Development  
Departement van Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling  
Lefapha la Thuto le Tihabololo ya Melshameko

**NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

Terrence Building, 8 O.R. Tambo Street,  
Pretoriusburg  
Private bag X1295, Potchefstroom 2520  
Tel: 018; 299-8215 / Fax: 294-8234  
e-mail: bmonale@nwps.gov.za  
Office Manager: Linda Nelson - Tel: (018) 299-8264  
e-mail: lnelson@nwps.gov.za

### OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR Dr KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

Enquiries: Linda Nelson

Tel: (018) 299 8264 / e-mail: nelson@nwps.gov.za

Fax: 018 294 8234

15 June 2018

**To:** University of the North West  
School of Psychosocial Health

**Attention:** Werner De Klerk (Research Psychologists)  
o.b.o. Megan Janse Van Vuuren (Student)

**From:** Mr. B. Monale  
District Director

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:  
"EXPOLRING EDUCATORS' EXPIRIENCES WITH REGARD TO COPING STRATEGIES  
WITHIN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTING"**

Reference is made to your correspondence signed 07 June 2018 regarding the matter above.

Accordingly, permission is hereby granted for you to conduct the research as per your request, subject to the following provisions:

1. Considering that your research work will involve randomly selected Educators operating within Inclusive Education Setting, it is directed that you take active steps to ensure that the research work itself does not compromise school functionality, in line with the principle of protection of teaching time,
2. That the onus to make individual arrangements with your targeted educators rests with you.
3. That the principle of confidentiality will be observed in its strictest terms.
4. That the research findings will be made available to the Department of Education & Sport Development upon request.

With our best wishes.

**Mr. B. Monale**  
District Director  
Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District

**CC: Ms. S. Yssel – J.B. Marks Sub-district Manager**  
**Mr. H. Molefe – Matlosana Acting Sub-district Manager**



"Towards Excellence in Education and Sport Development"

## APPENDIX C: Proof of Language Editing

### DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

7th November 2019

I hereby declare that I have edited the mini-dissertation of M Jansen van Vuuren (orcid.org/0000-0002-2046-6962) submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Clinical Psychology at the North-West University to the approval of the student and her supervisors.

**Title of dissertation:** Exploring educators' experiences with regard to coping-strategies within an inclusive educational setting

Supervisor: Dr W de Klerk

Co-supervisor: Mrs Monique de Klerk

A black and white image of a handwritten signature, 'A.D. Kotze', written in white ink on a black background. Below the signature is a horizontal line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

.....  
*Dr. A.D. Kotze*

Althéa Kotze • Independent Language practitioner •  
• PhD Afrikaans and Dutch • MA Afrikaans and Dutch • MA Applied Linguistics • BA Hons • BA • PGCE •  
4 Ixia Close • Yzerfontein • South Africa  
+27 (0) 823518509 (m)  
[althea.erasmus@gmail.com](mailto:althea.erasmus@gmail.com)

## **APPENDIX D: TRANSLATION OF PARTICIPANT QUOTES**

### **Theme 1: Utilised Coping Strategies within the Inclusive Classroom**

#### **Classroom management and approach**

P1: Ek dink beplanning. Jy moet weet wat jy volgende kan doen met hulle [...]. Mens moet soveel as moontlik inligting hê van dit wat jy wil aanbied of dit wat jy hulle wil leer, [...] En jy moet agterkom dat die situasie of dit wat jy nou aangepak het raak nou te lank [...], jy moet onmiddelik kan spring na iets nuuts toe.

*I think planning. You must know what you can do with them at any moment in time [...]. A person should have as much information on the presented topic as possible [...] and realise when what you are doing is taking too long [...]. You must then be able to immediately jump to something new.*

P7: Ek kyk letterlik hoe rustig is my klas. As ek sien dinge is nie rustig nie, dan weet ek okay dis plan B. Nou gaan ons oor na plan B toe.

*I literally look at how calm my class is. If I see things are not calm, then I know okay it's time to go to plan B [...].*

P6: Dit gaan maar van dag tot dag situasie. Ja, jy kan nie vir jouself, [...] sê vandag gaan ek dit so hanteer en more so nie [...] Ek kan nie sê vandag gaan hulle so maak nou maak ek so nie. [...] So jy moet aanpas by jou groepie.

*It is really a day to day situation. Yes, you can't tell yourself [...] today I'm going to handle them this way and tomorrow this way [...]. I can't say today they will do this so I do this. [...], you have to adapt to your little group.*

P8: Ek is bitter kwaai, [...] daars goeie disipline wat dit bietjie vergemaklik.

*I am very strict, [...] there's good discipline that eases it [the process] a little.*

P1: Ek is baie streng. [...] Dis hoe dit werk in my klas [...], of as jy jouself nie kan gedra nie, moet jy my klas verlaat. Hiers nie plek vir mense wat.. Dis die reëls en dis hoe dit bly. Dis wat ek in jou boeke wil hê en dis hoe ons dit doen.

*I am very strict. [...] this is how it works in my class [...], or if you cannot behave yourself, you must leave my class. Here's no place for people [who misbehave]. These are the rules and it will remain so. This is what I want in your books and this is how we do it.*

P6: [...] weet hulle ook dat as hulle hulle nie gedra daar nie, dan is daar maar konsekwensies dan.

*[the children] also knows that if they don't behave themselves there, then there are consequences.*

P3: [...] 'n hele dag gevat en vir elke dag van scratch af verduidelik. Dis hoe ons dit doen. Ek het hulle laat opstaan en dit sê. Ek het regtig tyd gevat om dit te verduidelik en toe [...] maak dit vir my [dinge] baie makliker in die klas as ons dit so gedoen het.

*[I took] a whole day and explained [expectations] from scratch every day. This is how we do it. I made them stand up and say it. I really took time to explain it and then [...] it made [things] for me lot easier in the class if we did it like that.*

P7: Ek is nie een van daai Juffrouens wat sit en merk in die klas nie. As die kindertjies hulle werkies doen dan beweeg ek maar tussen hulle rond, en jy kom gou agter dié outjie sukkel.

*I am not one of those teachers who sits and marks books in class. If the little ones are doing their work, I move in between them and you quickly realize this little fellow is struggling.*

P7: Ek skuif maar redelik gereeld my klas. [...] Aan die kant sit die kindertjies wat my aandag heeltyd nodig het [...]. Aan hierdie kant is die outjies wat nou al so begin hulle self nou al in toom hou [...], die agterste twee groepe is my kindertjies wat rustig is en op hulle eie kan aangaan.

*I regularly move my class around. [...] On this side all the little ones sit who require my constant attention [...]. On this side is the children who have more or less started indicating that they can manage on their own [...], and the two groups in the back are my children who are calm and can continue on their own.*

P3: So basies het ek myself anders geposisioneer in die klas [...]. [...] ek het my tafels anders geskuif. Dit maak dit net makliker. [...] Want juis, die meeste van die tyd beweeg ek so tussen hulle.

*So basically I just positioned myself differently in the class [...]. [...] I moved my tables differently; it just makes it easier. [...] Because most of the time I move in between them.*

P5: Ek kan nie noodwendig by agt kinders gou-gou uitkom om te help met die somme nie, dan sal ek sê sal jy gou daai een help? [...] Partykeer verstaan hulle beter as ‘n maatjie vir hom verduidelik as wat Juffrou verduidelik.

*I cannot necessarily quickly attend to eight children to help with their sums, then I will say would you quickly help that one? [...] sometimes they understand better if a friend explains to him rather than if teacher explains.*

P7: As dit partykeer regtig moeilik gaan dan sal ek van die kinders vra [...] om net by hulle te kom sit en te sien is daar dalk iets [...] waarmee hulle sukkel, [...] dan kan hulle aan mekaar verduidelik. Want baie keer as kinders aan mekaar verduidelik dan verstaan hulle ook makliker. [...] Ek sit ‘n kind daar wat kan bietjie help verduidelik.

*If it sometimes becomes really difficult then I will ask some of the children [...] to just come and sit by them to see if there is maybe something [...] that they are struggling with, [...] then they can explain to one another. Because most of the time if children explain to one another they understand it easier. [...] I usually just allocate a child to help and explain a bit.*

P6: Die klas het my nou al so mooi gehelp.. [...] dit kom outomaties van die groep af om te help en te sien waar is nodig om te help. [...] Hulle help mekaar en [...] is maar tog ondersteunend partykeer.

*The class has helped me so nicely, [...] it automatically then comes from the group to help and to see where it is necessary to help. [...] They help one another [...] and are supportive sometimes.*

P8: Die kinders is nie stupid nie. Hulle het geweet hiers fout met die kind. En sys dan nou heeltemal anders as die ander. [...] So toe het ek op n stadium met haar klas gepraat as geheel. En toe sê ek vir hulle – You can see that she is different to you. So you need to help her. En toe sê ek vir hulle sonder om te sê this is autism [...] let's try to keep (child's) routine the same. [...] En toe gaan dit great! Want toe verstaan hulle. [...] Ek het vir hulle gesê sometimes in your brain [...] there is wires. [...], all the wires connect to a lightbulb. But they don't all connect in the same way. (Child's) wires are different to yours. [...] So she behaves differently and she experiences things differently. You need to support her.

*These children are not stupid. They knew there was something wrong with this child, she is totally different than the others. [...] I then spoke to her class as a whole at one stage, I said to them: You can see that she is different to you, so you need to help her. So I then explained it to them without telling them that this is autism, [...] let's try to keep [her] routine the same. And then things went great! Because then they understood. [...] I said to them sometimes in your brain [...] there are wires, [...] all the wires connect to a lightbulb. But they don't all connect in the same way. [Her] wires are different to yours, [...] so she behaves differently and she experiences things differently. You need to support her.*

### **Scholar management and approach**

P6: [...] probeer ek eers om die kind se agtergrond te leer ken, voor ek met hom kan cope in die klas. Om te weet hoekom hy so is en dis hoekom hy dit is.

*I first try to know the child's background before I can cope with him in the classroom. To know why he is this way and why he is that way.*

P7: Want ek bly altyd sê kyk uit die ander ou se oog uit. [...] Hoekom gedra daai kind hom sleg? So ek moet in sy ogies inklim, in sy lewe inklim om te kan sien hoekom tree hy op soos hy optree.

*I always say that you should look from another persons' perspective. [...] Why is this child misbehaving? I must climb into his perspective, into his life, to be able to see why he is behaving the way that he is.*

P6: Jy moet baie realisties wees. Jy kan nie van 'n outjie verwag om hierdie wow te doen [nie]. [...] Jy leer vining 'n kind se vlak ken.

*You must be very realistic. You cannot expect of a child to do this wow [thing]. [...] You quickly learn to understand a child's level [of functioning].*

P1: Ek het gevind [...] 'n mens wil van elke kind 'n resies perd maak. En as jy die dag besef jy kan nie van elke kind 'n resies perd maak nie – maak eerder van hom die beste perd of donkie wat jy van hom kan maak.

*I've found [...] a person is inclined to want to make every child a racing-horse. And the day you realize that you cannot make every child a racing-horse, rather develop him into the best horse or donkey that he can be.*

P8: Hierdie kind het 'n IK van dalk kom ons sê 50? Hy gaan nie [...] verstaan nie. Maar hy kan verstaan hoe om mooi in te kleur. En hy kan verstaan hoe om kreatief te dink. Hy kan dalk verstaan om n brein-map te maak. So kom ons kyk of ons nie eerder dit kan doen nie.

*This child may have an IQ of lets' say 50? He is not going to understand [...]. But he may understand how to colour in nicely, and he can understand how to be creative. He can also maybe understand how to draw a brain-map. Let's rather see if we can do that.*

P1: Ek gebruik omtrent 90% die graad 3 se kurrikulum, [...] maar ek verander dit. [...] Ek soek maar goed wat hy of sy kan doen wat hulle meer kan aanpas.

*I use 90% of the grade 3 curriculum, [...] but I do change it. [...] I look for things that he or she can do or to which they can adapt more.*

P5: Ek skryf vir almal dieselfde sommetjies. Maar jy doen net tot by sommetjie vyf, jy doen tot by sommetjie tien. En as jy vandag voel jy wil vêrder gaan as sommetjie vyf is jy welkom. Ek gaan jou nie benadeel as jy dit nie doen nie. Want ek voel dan is hy op sy vlak. En hy doen tot waar hy kom. [...]. Maar my swakke, my gemiddelde outjie kan bietjie minder doen as die sterk outjie.

*I write the same sums for everyone. But you [weaker child] must complete until sum 5, while you [stronger child] must complete until sum 10. And if you feel that you want to complete further than sum 5 today then you are welcome, but I will not disadvantage you if you don't. Because then I feel that he is on his level. But my weaker, average child usually does a little less than the stronger child does.*

P5: Jy kry jou baie sterkes en vir hulle kan jy dalk een sommetjie bietjie meer uitdagend maak of so twee of drietjies.

*You get your strong pupils and for them you can make one, two, or three sums more challenging.*

P8: Met dié kinders is dit baie meer effektief om vir hulle te sê – kom, kom sit hier by my, wys nou vir my wat hier verstaan jy nie? Kom laat ek jou help. Dan sit ons bymekaar en dan doen ons dit.

*With these children it is much more effective to tell them: Come and sit here by me, show me what you don't understand? Let me help you. Then we sit by one another and we do it.*

P3: [...] Jy plak maar n stickertjie, want dis al wat hy kon [doen].

*[...] you have to stick a sticker, because it is all that he could [do].*

P7: Ek probeer hulle positief motiveer deur vir hulle te sê sjoe! Ek sien julle werk baie mooi!  
Of ek sal 'n naam noem van een wat ek sien mooi werk [...]. En met positiewe motivering het jy 'n baie goeie resultaat, so die ander [...] wil dan ook [...]. En dan motiveer ek hulle ook met sterretjies en sulke goedjies.

*I try to motivate them in a positive way by saying to them – wow! I can see that you are working nicely. Or I will mention a name of a child that I see is working nicely [...]. And with that positive motivation you get good results, because then the others [...] also want to. [...] I also reward them with stars and other things.*

### **Personal management and wellbeing**

P6: Hulle voel jou gemoed ook aan vir die dag. [...]. En ek dink dit het partykeer nogal by hulle ook n invloed.

*They [children] have an inclination to pick up on your mood for the day [...] and I think that sometimes this may have an effect on them as well.*

P3: [...] jy verloor jouself, en ek dink dit het ook tot 'n mate gelei dat ek moes beseef jy kan dit nie doen nie. [...] dit moet nie soos n patroon raak nie. Sodra jy dit 'n patroon maak [...] dan vergeet jy hoe om met als te deal.

*you lose yourself. [...] and I had to realize that I cannot do this, [...] it mustn't become a pattern. Because as soon as it becomes a pattern, then you forget how to deal with everything.*

P3: Partykeer is jy geneig as jy net geirriteerd opgestaan het. Hulle voel dit aan eventually, en dan moet ek weet dat ek moet maar nou net asemhaal.

*Sometimes you just wake up irritated, and they eventually pick up on that. Then I have to know that I should actually just take a deep breath.*

P1: Jy moet rustig raak eintelik partykeer. [...]. Maar dis hoe ek half cope, ek probeer kalm raak.

*You should sometimes just calm down [...] that's how I cope, I calm myself down.*

P3: Baie keer maak ek net my oë toe en dan haal ek net asem [...] en dan gaan ons weer aan.

*A lot of times I just close my eyes and breathe [...] and then I continue.*

P3: Ek moes leer om af te koel, want as ek opgewerk geraak het [...], dan sou dit nie die situasie gehelp het nie.

*I had to learn how to cool down, because as soon as I also became worked-up, it wouldn't of helped the situation.*

P6: En dan voel dit net jy wil oppak. Dan loop ek tot daar by die badkamertjie, dan loop ek so af by die trappies [...]. En dan net daai uitgaan en terugkom [...] en dan's jy weer ohryt. Dan gaan jy weer aan. Dis nogal partykeer belangrik hoor. [...] Net so uitgaan en asem skep en terugkom, dan gaan jy weer aan

*Then you feel that you just want to give up. Then I leave, walk out there to the bathroom and down the steps [...]. And just leaving and coming back [...], then you are alright again, then you can go on. And it is important sometimes [...] just going outside, taking a breath and coming back, then you can continue.*

P1: Ek dink ek haal myself uit die onderrig situasie amper uit.

*I think I just remove myself out of the teaching environment.*

P1: Mens moet eintelik net kalm raak en beseef jy kan soveel doen. [...]. Jy moet weet waartoe jy instaat is.

*A person should actually just calm down. And then you realize that you can just do so much [...]. You must know what you are capable of.*

P8: Ek is 'n klasonderwyseres. Ek kan net soveel doen.

*I am only a class-teacher. I can just do so much.*

P3: En as ek haar nie kan help nie, gaan ek haar nie kan help nie.

*And if I cannot help her, then I won't be able to help her.*

P8: Daars niks meer wat ons kan doen nie. Ons kan nie, [...], jy moet 'n lyn trek.

*There is no more that we can do. We can't, [...] you need to draw a line.*

P1: Jy moet weet waartoe jy instaat is, of waar jy nou moet kan stop. Weet jy wat, dis nou genoeg. Juffrou het nou klaar haar deel gedoen.

*You must know [...] where to stop, [...] this is enough now. Teacher has done her part.*

P8: Jy het 'n streep wat jy moet trek [...]. Ek verstaan dat ek nie my kers aan altwee kante kan brand nie [...]. Nou het ek boundaries ook. Ek hoef nie vir 'n kind 'n ma te wees nie [...] nou is ek hulle Juffrou [...]. Daars 'n lyn wat ons trek want dis hoe dit moet wees. Vir my onthalwe en vir die kinders se onthalwe [...]. En daai boundary, [...] dit maak dit vit my baie makliker.

*You have a line that you must draw [...]. I do understand that I cannot have my candle lit at both ends [...]. Now I have boundaries. I don't have to be a mother to a child [...], now I am their teacher [...]. There is a line that we draw because that is how it should be. For the sake of myself, and for the children. And that boundary [...] makes things a lot easier.*

P3: Refleksie, refleksie, refleksie! [...]. Jy doen dit sonder dat jy dit besef. Jy kom by die huis [...] en dan dink ek, ek kon dit dalk beter hanteer het of ek kon hierdie so [hanteer het].

*Reflection, reflection, reflection! [...] you almost do it without realizing. You come home [...] and then I think, I maybe could have handled this situation better or I could have handled this [like that].*

P1: Ek praat baie met myself oor goed. Ek sal in die bed gaan lê en ek dink bietjie self [inspeksie] op myself toepas. [...]. Oor 'n ding [...] top. Hom uitsort [vir myself].

*I talk to myself a lot about things. I will lie in bed and think, apply [introspection] to myself [...]. Mull over things [...], sorting it out for myself.*

P4: Dan sal ek deur die dag se gebeure gaan. En dit alles replay nou half, en dan sal ek partykeer [dink], hier kon ek dit meskien dalk anderste gedoen het.

*I'll revisit the day's occurrences. And when everything replays, [I'll think] here I could have maybe done something differently.*

P5: Ek moet vir jou sê, ek kan regtig eintelik amper nie dink hoe doen mens hierdie sonder goeie geloof nie, want dit is regtig [moeilik].

*[...] I really cannot think how one would do this without strong faith, because it is really [difficult].*

P3: As ek voel hierdie is nou genoeg dan sê ek net lieue Jesus help my.

*When I felt that it becomes too much, then I just say Lord please help me.*

P1: Ek dink ekt huistoe gegaan en gehuil.

*I think I go home and cry.*

P3: So nou en dan het ek so 'n episode waar ek net afbreek. En ek dink daarna is dit okay.

*I have an episode now and again where I just break down [emotionally], and I think after that it's okay.*

P4: Ek was gister regtig getap gewees. Ek het op die bank gaan lê en ek het myself jammer gekry. Ek het chocolates geëet en ek het geslaap, [...]. En nou voel ek vandag half weer 'n bietjie beter.

*Yesterday I was really drained. I went to lie on the couch and I felt very sorry for myself. I ate some chocolates and I slept [...]. And today I feel a bit better.*

P3: Ek het vanoggend vir (colleague) gesê [...] dis lekker om met iemand te gesels, en dit help omdat hulle net vir jou bietjie helderheid gee hoe om dit te hanteer.

*I said to [colleague] this morning [...], it is nice to talk to someone, and it helps because they can give you clarity on how to approach it [situation].*

P4: Dit help nogal om by iemand af te pak wat in dieselfde werksomstandighede is as wat jy in is.

*It helps to let go [of your emotions] by someone who is in the same working environment as you are. And afterwards you feel a little bit better.*

P1: Dis hoe ek baie goed deesdae hanteer. [...]. Ek vertel vir my gesin baie daarvan want hulle luister.

*That is how I handle a lot of things these days [...], I tell my family the majority of these things because they listen.*

P6: Gelukkig het ek 'n gesin wat baie ondersteunend is met dit. [...] My ondersteuning is eintelik baie goed so ek kan nie sê dat ek doen nie of gaan nooit cope nie. [...]. En dit help.

*Luckily I have a family that is very supportive when it comes to that [...]. My support is actually very efficient in such a sense that I cannot say that don't or I won't be able cope [...], and it helps.*

P5: Tussen die onderwysers is dit eintelik 'n lekker ondersteuningsraamwerk, waar jy vining by die ene kan gaan inloer en afpak. [...] Onder mekaar werk ons baie lekker saam. Ons verstaan mekaar mooi, ons help mekaar.

*Between the teachers there is a nice support-system, where you can quickly pop in by someone and talk for a little bit. [...] Amongst ourselves we work well together; we understand one another and we help each other.*

P8: Ek het nou al 'n network. Ek het 'n dokter wat saam met my werk. Sy weet, [...] dan word daai kind onmiddelik op medikasie gesit en dan word hulle na 'n sielkundige verwys.

Die sielkundige ken ek ook goed. [...]. Die drie van ons werk saam. [...]. So dan werk ons so in 'n driehoekie en ons sort hulle so uit. En dit werk.

*I have a network already. I have a doctor that works with me. She knows, [...] that child is put on medication immediately and then referred to a psychologist. The psychologist I also know well [...]. The three of us work together. [...] so then we work in a triangle and we sort them out like that. And it works.*

## **Theme 2: Situational aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof**

### **Unknown and Novice situations**

P8: Ek het vir [die eerste] ses maande gehuil elke dag. Toe ek begin skoolgee toe't ek gedink ek kom skool toe en ek gaan hierdie feetjie juffrou wees wat net liefde uitstraal [...]. Ek het binne die eerste twee weke besef nee, nee [...] jy moet alles doen behalwe dit.

*I cried for [the first] six months every day. When I started teaching, I thought I would be this fairy-teacher that emanates only love [...]. Within the first two weeks I realized [...] you must do everything but.*

P1: Twee jaar gelede het ek nie gecope nie. [...] Hier het ek gekom met 'n klas van 23 kinders, verskillende persoonlikhede [...] so in daai jare dink ek nie ek het so goed gecope nie. [...] Daar is nêrens vir jou riglyne van dit wat jy moet doen nie, ek val rond [...].

*Two years ago, I was not coping. [...] I walked into a class with 23 different children, different personalities [...], so in those years I do not think I coped too well. There were no guidelines provided on what you should do, I was stumbling [through tutoring].*

P5: My eerste jaar was vir my nogal rof, en na my eerste [jaar] het ek begin besef maar hoor hier, ek gaan moet iewers n plek kry.

*My first year had been quite rough, and after my first [year], I realized that I had to find my feet.*

### **Overwhelming workload**

P8: Daar word so baie van jou verwag en jy moet perform op elke vlak. [...] ek pour my hele lewe in hierdie skool in, in hierdie kinders in. En daar is niks wat oorbly as ek huistoe gaan nie.

*A lot is expected of you, and you must perform on every level. [...] I pour my whole life into this school, into these children, and nothing is left when I return home.*

P3: My hele dag het gedraai om net my werk [...]. [...] Dit was alles net te veel gewees, [...] jy kan nie als op jou bord vat nie, [...] daars baie goed. Ons het baie admin, die goed wat hulle vir jou gee is verskriklik.

*My whole day revolves around my work [...]. [...] it's just too much, [...] you cannot take everything upon your plate, [...] there is too much. We have a lot of administrative work, the things that are given to us are terrible.*

### **Lack of resources and support structures**

P8: Met kinders soos daai behoort die skool-bestuurspan baie ernstige stappe te neem. En hulle wil dit ook nie regtig doen nie. Hulle sê hulle gaan, maar hulle doen dit ook nie regtig nie.

*With children like that, school-management is supposed to take serious steps against them, but they don't really want to. They say that they will, but they don't really.*

P1: Hiers nie 'n sallabus wat vir albei groepe cater nie, niks.

*There is no syllabus that caters to both [types of] groups, nothing.*

P1: Daar's baie wat gedoen moet word, en dis moeilik sonder 'n kurrikulum [...]. [...] Daar is nêrens vir jou riglyne van dit wat jy moet doen nie.

*There is so much to be done, and it is very difficult without a curriculum. [...] Nowhere are there guidelines stating what you should do.*

P8: Daar is nie resources nie. En die Departement sê net doodeenvoudig there is no money.

Hulle het nie eers genoeg geld om die gewone poste te vul nie, wat nou nog van n terapeut of n sielkundige of net n counsellor.

*There are no resources. And the Department simply says there is no money. They don't even have enough money to fill normal [educational] posts, never mind mentioning a psychologist or a counsellor.*

P5: [...] die staat sê, daai Social Development? [...] hulle het hoe lank gestaak verlede jaar?

So dit is regtig moeilik. Want wat maak jy? [...] niemand kan hom nou help nie, want daai dame sê hulle gaan dit nie vir een persoon aanbied nie en dis nou hoe dit is.

*[...] and the State, that Social development? [...] how long were they striking for last year? It is very difficult. Because what can we do? [...] No one wants to help him [child], because that lady [appointed social worker] says that they won't offer it [remedial program] to one person, and that is the way it is.*

P8: Die sielkundige vat tot twee, drie weke. Daars sielkundiges wat jy nou kan bel en jy gaan eers 'n afspraak kry in ses maande. [...] dit is onprakties. En dan is die kwartaal verby.

*[...] the psychologist takes up to two or three weeks. There are psychologists who you can phone now and you will only be able to get an opening in six months' time. [...] It is unpractical, and then the term is over.*

P5: Ons verwys na (psychologist) toe, en sy's so oorlaai en goed [...] jy kry nie regtig resultate as die kinders by haar is nie [...].

*We do refer to [psychologists], but she is overworked and unavailable [...]. You don't really see results [...].*

P4: [...] die ander kind in my klas gaan sien vir (psychologist), maar [...] hy sien haar te min om regtig vordering te toon.

*[...] He [child] sees [psychologist] too little to indicate any progress.*

### **Parental factors**

P4: Ouers erken dit maar hulle aanvaar dit nie.

*Parents acknowledge it [diagnosis], but they do not accept it.*

P8: En as jy n ouer inroep en sê daars iets fout met jou kind, is hulle ongelooflik aggressive. [...] nou hoor jy jou kind het 'n probleem. En nou's dit nog 'n brein probleem. Hierdie ouers verstaan nie daai tipe kognitiewe probleem nie. Glad nie.

*If you do call a parent to school to tell them that their child has a problem, they are extremely aggressive. [...] now you suddenly hear your child has a problem, and it's a brain-problem.*

*These parents don't understand these types of cognitive-deficits, not at all.*

P3: Baie van die tyd vind die ouers dit moeilik om te aanvaar maar hoor hier my kind het 'n probleem. Hulle verstaan ook nie altyd nie. Ek het vandag 'n mamma gehad wat vir my gesê

het dit is nie haar werk om haar dogter se tas oop te maak en te kyk wat daar aangaan nie, dit is myne. Ek word betaal daarvoor.

*Most of the time parents find it very difficult to accept that their child has a problem. They don't understand it. Today a mother said to me that it is not her job to open her daughters' school bag to see what's going on there, it's mine. I get paid to do that.*

P6: Maar die samewerking [van die ouers] raak vir my al hoe minder. Dit is 'n stryd. [...] As jy dit kry is jy gelukkig.

*The cooperation [from parents] is decreasing. It's a constant struggle. [...] if you obtain it you are lucky.*

P6: Jy probeer die ouers help, jy probeer 'n oplossing gee. Maar hulle doen nie van hulle kant af wat hulle moet nie. (...) Baie keer, baie keer kry ons wat teen mens werk. (...) Dit maak die stryd soveel moeiliker.

*You try to help the parents; you try to provide a solution. But they don't assist from their side. [...] Many times we get [parents] who work against us, [...] it makes the struggle much more difficult.*

### **Professional lived experiences**

P3: Ek was eers in die diepkant ingegooi en ek moes geleer het, jy weet, hoe om daar te survive het. Ek het baie verantwoordelikhede gehad en goed, en ek dink net dit het my gehelp om die situasies beter te hanteer.

*I was thrown into the deep end at first, and I had to learn how to survive there. I had a lot of responsibilities, and I do believe that all of that helped me to better cope with my current situations.*

P3: Ek dink omdat ek so' rowwe omstandighede verlede jaar gehad het is die bietjie disipline gevalle wat ek nou het nie so groot ding nie. Ek lag soms vir die ander, oor die goed waaroor hulle moan! Dan dink ek jy moan oor 'n kind wat op sy stoel lê, laasjaar het 'n kind my met 'n tafel gegooi.

*I think because it was such a rough environment last year, the current disciplinary incidents I do have this year are not a big deal anymore. I occasionally giggle about what the other teachers moan about. I think to myself; you are moaning about a child lying in his chair, last year a child threw a table at me.*

P8: Ek was in my derde jaar toe ek by die skool begin werk het. So ek het SPO gedoen en toe doen ek my honneurs en toe doen ek my M, alles voltyds. En ek was in die koshuis. So [...] ek is baie jonk, maar ek het baie meer ervaring as mense my ouderdom.

*I was in my third year when I started teaching at a school. I did my pre-grad, followed by my honours and my Masters', everything on a fulltime basis. I was also in the hostel. [...] I am therefore very young, but I have a lot more experience than other people my age.*

P1: Dis, ek dink net ondervinding. [...] jy kom nogal by dit uit wat jy amper nie verwag het jy gaan by uitkomst nie.

*It's, I do think, only experience [...]. You get to that [reason] which you never thought you'd arrive at.*

### **Vicarious trauma**

P1: Toe is daar 'n jong man of outjie daar wat sy girlfriend betaal vir die kind in my klas.

R20. Ek was meer ontsteld oor die R20 wat sy haar liggaam verkoop as iets anderste. Dit was regtig, ek was regtig ontsteld.

*There was a young man who was paying his girlfriend for the child in my class. R20. I was more upset about the R20 for which she sells her body than anything else. I was truly severely upset.*

P8: Nou kry ek 'n kind so jammer. [...] wanneer ek sit met kinders en hierdie kind vertel vir my hoe haar boetie haar klere uittrek, of whatever. En daai enetjie kom en x y z het dit of dat gedoen, of wat-ookal. Dat ek die goed kan handle, en nie oor-emosioneel [reageer nie].

*I feel sorry for this child. [...] when I sit with my pupils and this one tells me about her brother undressing her [...] or this one talks to me about x,y and z doing this [...]. That I can handle these things, and not [react] over-emotionally.*

P8: Ek moes leer, want anders raak dit te emosioneel vir my. [...] Ek is n baie intense mens, ek is n baie emosionele mens.

*I had to learn, otherwise it becomes too emotional for me. [...] I am a very intense person; I am very emotional.*

### **One specific need allows for the neglect of others**

P8: En die een kind in jou klas wat aandag nodig het vereis dat jy 33 ander moet los en net met daai kind werk.

*One child in your class that needs your attention requires that you dismiss 33 others [...]*

P3: Daai wat byvoorbeeld nie kan skryf nie, of hulle kan nie lees nie – jou aandag het heeltemal na hulle toe getrek. [...]. Die res moes, was basies op hulle eie. Hulle was afhanklik van hulle self gewees. En my aandag moes heeltemal na daai persoon toe gegaan het.

*Those who can for example not write, or they cannot read, your attention is immediately drawn to them [...]. The rest is basically left on their own. They were dependent on themselves, because my attention had to wholeheartedly be invested in that person.*

P8: Want (child) wat daar sit wat nie sy werk kan doen nie omdat hy nie kan lees nie, kan ek nie nou bystaan nie. Want as ek hom aandag gee dan voel die res hulle moet iets doen om my aandag te kry.

*Because [child] who sits there unable to do his work as he cannot read, I cannot attend to. Because as soon as I give him attention, the others feel that they should do something to draw my attention back to them.*

P7: So met die gevolg wat moeilik is [...], sodra ek [...] aan haar begin aandag gee, dan raak die ander raserig en onrustig.

*[...] the result that makes it difficult is [...], as soon as I [...] pay attention to her [learner], the others become noisy and unruly.*

### **Theme 3: Personal aspects contributing to coping strategies and the experiences thereof**

#### **Personal lived experiences**

P1: Ek hakkkel vreeslik, [...] so weet jy, ek het empatie met mense.

*I stutter tremendously, [...] so, you know what? I have empathy with others.*

P8: En daai ervaring het heeltemal my seining ook verander. Oor hoe, hierdie is bad, maar dis nie so bad nie. It could be much worse. Toe ek daai babatjie verloor [...] en nou moet jy afskeid neem [...]. Ek? Wat so lief is vir kinders moet aanvaar – die Here het hierdie baba

weggevat, ek gaan hom nooit weer sien nie. [...] Daai hele ervaring en dan hierdie wonderlike geboorte met hierdie babatjie, [...] dit sit alles in perspektief. Dan is hierdie wat hier gebeur nie meer so overwelming nie. Ek is ongelooflik dankbaar [...] it was the worse thing that could have happened to us, but it was the best thing that could have happened to us. Dit moes gebeur het, dan waardeer jy eweskielik alles. [...] dit was n proses, [...] en dit was nodig om balans te forseer in n skool opset.

*And that experience changed my whole perspective about how this [current situation] is bad, but it's not that bad. It could be much worse. When I lost that baby [...] and you have to say goodbye [...], me? Someone who loves children so much must accept that the Lord has taken away my child [...]. That experience, followed by the wonderful birth of my daughter [...], puts everything into perspective. Then this happening here is not so overwhelming anymore. I am extremely thankful [...], it was the worst thing that could have happened to us, but it was the best thing that could have happened to us. It must have happened, [because] suddenly you appreciate everything [...]. It was a process, [...] but it was necessary to bring about much needed balance within the inclusive setting.*

### **Experienced emotions.**

P5: Mens raak moeg. Emosioneel raak mens moeg.

*A person becomes tired. Emotionally you are exhausted [...].*

P8: Dit begin later aan jou vat. [...] jys emosioneel so uitgeput aan die einde van die dag.

*Eventually it gets to you. [...] you are emotionally so exhausted at the end of the day [...].*

P4: Eks nie meer lus nie. Dis regtig, ek wil voor hulle staan en in trane uitbars, eks moedeloos want ek kan niks doen nie maak nie saak wat nie. [...] Ek voel net asof ek hou van alle kante af kry, en dan sal die kleinste dingetjie sal my dan nog vêrder omkrap, wat nie veronderstel is om te doen nie.

*I'm not in the mood anymore. [...] I really want to stand in front of them and burst into tears, I'm disheartened because I can't do anything, no matter what. [...] it feels as if I am getting shoved from all directions, and then the smallest thing will upset me even more, and it is not supposed to.*

P3: Ek dink die ergste is om te sien die kind wil, maar hy kan nie.

*The worst [part] for me is seeing that the child wants to, but he can't.*

P1: Jy wil vir elke mens 'n beter. [...] En as hy of sy nie instaat is – soos ek sê nie al hierdie kinders is noodwendig instaat om vêrder te vorder nie. En jy wil hê daardie kind moet beter doen, maar verstandelik kan die kind net nie.

*You want the best for each [child]. [...] And if he [learner] is not able to, like I said, not all these children are necessarily able to progress any further. And you want that child to do better, but cognitively they are simply not able to.*

P7: Wat my partykeer onder kry is dat ek wil so graag hê die kinders moet alles regkry. [...] Ek dink partykeer sien ek dat 'n mens probeer, maar mens het nie dadelik resultate nie. En ek dink omdat n mens maar omgee, [...] ek wens ek kan meer doen. [...] Want jy sien die potensiaal raak, maar dis nie noodwendig dit die kinders so vining daar kom nie.

*What occasionally gets to me is the fact that I want the children to get everything right. [...] I think that I sometimes notice the effort, but the results are not immediately present. And I*

*think because a person cares [...], I wish I could do more. [...] Because you can see the potential, but the children don't necessarily arrive at that point as quickly [...].*

P6: Hulle is heeltyd in jou gedagtes. Hulle is die heeltyd. Of jy gaan slaap en of jy opstaan, hulle is daar. So dit, jy kan nie jouself afsluit van dit nie. Ek glo as jy regtig lief is vir jou beroep en belangstel daarin kan jy nooit regtig nie, want hulle gaan saam met jou.

*They [learners] are permanently in your thoughts. Permanently. Whether you go to sleep or whether you wake up, they are there. [...] you cannot distance yourself. I believe that if you really love your profession and are invested in it then you can never [distance yourself], because they do go with you.*

P4: Ek trek dit na my toe aan, want ek soek half die fout by my.

*I point it [blame] towards myself, because I look for the problem within myself [...].*

P3: Want as 'n kind nie vêrder gaan nie, voel jy outomaties dis jou skuld.

*If a child does not progress, you automatically feel as if it is your fault.*

P3: [...] Ek weet nie wat ek verkeerd doen nie. [...] En toe ek nou merk gisteraand toe dink ek by myself: Doen ek dit genoeg? Sê ek dit genoeg? Wys ek dit genoeg dat dit insink eventually?

*[...] I don't know what I'm doing wrong. [...] And while I was grading papers last night, I thought to myself: Am I doing enough? Am I saying enough? Do I demonstrate it enough that it [schoolwork] eventually sinks in?*

## **A sense of meaning and purpose**

P1: Ek het hier geland omdat die Here my hier wou hê, dink ek. [...] Dis nie altyd lekker nie, dis nie altyd wat ek wou doen nie. Ek het al 'n paar keer gevoel sjoe! Dis nie waar ek wil wees nie, maar dan aan die ander kant wie gaan na hierdie kinders kyk? [...] Wat gaan ek by die huis doen? [...] Hier beteken ek iets.

*I believe I landed up here because God wanted me here. [...] It's not always pleasant, it's not always what I wanted to do. Many times I have felt like this is not where I want to be, but on the other hand, who will look after these children? [...] Here I actually mean something.*

P3: Maar daar was iets wat ek steeds elke dag gevoel het – ek is in die regte beroep.

*[...] there was one feeling that remained – I am in the right profession.*

## **Theme 4: Knowledge gained during inclusive teaching career**

### **Effectivity of coping strategies.**

P8: Met die kinders is dit baie meer effektief om vir hulle te sê: Kom, kom sit hier by my.

Wys nou vir my wat hier verstaan jy nie? Kom laat ek jou help.

*[...] Much more effective to say: Come sit here by me, show me what you don't understand.*

*Let me help you.*

P7: Met positiewe motivering het jy 'n baie goeie resultaat.

*With positive motivation, you [also] achieve very good results.*

P6: Ons het nou al ons disipline stelsel met ons sterre, [...] maar mens wil dit nie altyd doen nie, dit voel vir my partykeer mens is so besig om tou te trek.

*We have our disciplinary system with the stars. [...] But [...] it feels like you are constantly playing tug of war. You do this, then I'll do this.*

P8: Daars 'n lyn wat ons trek want dis hoe dit moet wees. Vir my onthalwe en vir die kinders se onthalwe [...]. En daai boundary, [...] dit maak dit vit my baie makliker.

*There is a line that we draw because that is how it should be. For the sake of myself, and for the children. [...] And that boundary, [...] it makes it much easier.*

P6: Ek het nou al 'n punt daarvan gemaak dat as ek Vrydae middag, doen ek niks nie. [...] En dit help mens nogal om net weer asem te kry en dan aan te gaan.

*I consciously decide that I won't attend to any work on a Friday afternoon. [...] And it helps to just catch your breath and then carry on.*

P3: Om dit te doen sal dit my ook help om nie frustreerd te raak as ek die kind se goed merk nie.

*[...] doing that helps me to not become frustrated when I grade the child's schoolwork.*

P6: Hierso is ons nog vir hulle ietsie, en ek dink dit help mens ook baie, as jy daaraan dink, om te cope met die situasie waarin jy is. En te besef ek is nog ietsie werd hier waar ek is.

*Here we still mean something, and I think it helps a lot to think about it to cope with the situation that you are in. To realize that you are still worth something here.*

P6: Ons ondersteun mekaar baie [...] en ek dink dit is 'n groot voordeel.

*We support one another a lot [...] and I do think that is a big advantage.*

P6: My ondersteuning is eintelik baie goed so ek kan nie sê dat ek doen nie of gaan nooit cope nie. [...]. En dit help.

*My support is actually very efficient in such a sense that I cannot say that I don't or won't be able to cope. And it helps.*

P6: As 'n mens nou moet dink hoe cope jy nou regtig elke dag? Ek dink dis iets wat net gebeur, partykeer sonder dat mens daaraan dink.

*If a person has to think how do you cope every day? I think it is just something that happens, sometimes without you realizing it.*

P8: Ek moes op 'n stadium besluit, is ek liewer vir die skool of vir my kinders?

*I had to decide at one point in my life whether I love the school [profession] or my children more.*

P1: Absoluut effektief. Ek vind dit is vir my nodig want weet jy – jy word partykeer kwaad en moedeloos.

*[...] absolutely effective. I find it necessary because you do become disheartened and exhausted.*

### **Self-growth**

P1: Ek het al gaan huil by my lessenaar 2 jaar gelede, hierdie jaar nog glad nie.

*I cried at my table two years ago, [...] this year, not even once.*

P1: Ek was baie bang die eerste paar dae. [...] Maar toe beseft ek weet jy wat? Gaan staan tussen hulle en sê raak nou rustig.

*I was very scared the first few days. [...] But after a while I decided you know what? Go and stand in between them and calm them down.*

P1: Ek het middae maar gesit, en my hele eetkamer tafel was van al die grade se boeke so vol, tot ek my voete half gevind het.

*I [initially] sat throughout all my afternoons [...] until I found my feet [...].*

P3: Ek het ook geleer om myself nie op te werk oor goed nie. Ek was altyd so uitgestress oor ek moet my werk klaarkry, en nou het ek hierdie houding van: Ek merk tot ek moeg is en dan hou ek op.

*I learned that I shouldn't work myself up about these things. I always stressed about getting my work done, now I have an attitude of: I grade papers until I'm tired and then I stop.*

P3: Ek ek het regtig op 'n stadium geraak waar ek vir hulle gesê het nee, soek iemand anderste. Ek kan nie alles doen nie, [...] en dit het ook gehelp.

*I came to a stage where I just said no, find someone else. I can't do everything, [...] and that also helped.*

P8: Ons ou ouderhoof het nou die dag [...] gevra hoe gaan dit. [...] Sy sê vir my ja en kom ek deur al my goeters. Ek sê vir haar ja, en dit wat ek nie vandag doen nie doen ek more. Toe [...] sê sy vir my my kind, jyt grootgeword.

*Our old deputy-principal [...] asked me the other day how I am. [...] She [also] asked me if I get round to doing all my chores? I then said to her that I do, but if I don't, I'll complete it tomorrow. She then said to me that I have grown [up].*

P1: Mens moet geduld aanleer.

*You have to learn how to be patient.*

P8: Rewards van buite af maak ook nie meer vir my saak nie. Dit gaan vir my oor wat ek voel, bereik en hoe ek daarvoor voel. My hele lewe het eintelik verander toe ek dit begin doen het.

*Rewards from outside don't matter to me anymore. Now it's about what I feel, achieve and I how I feel about that. My whole life changed when I started doing that.*

P3: Het ek besef jy moet tyd maak vir ander ook, jy kan nie net die heeltyd fokus op skoolwerk nie. Jy maak jousef siek.

*I realized that you should make time for others as well, you can't permanently focus on schoolwork, you'll make yourself ill.*

P1: Ek snap [...] daai ding van uitbrand, [...] self-insig is baie belangrik.

*[...] I understand [...] the concept of burnout, [...] self-insight is very important.*

P3: Ek het 'n geneigdheid, en ek het gesê ek moet dit ophou doen.

*I have that inclination, and I've told myself that I should stop [...].*

P6: Ek dink dit is maar jou persoonlikheid wat maak of jy cope of nie cope nie, tot 'n mate.

[...] Eks' half 'n rustiger mens, so ek dink partykeer dit het half n effek.

*I think your personality determines whether you cope or not, to an extent. [...] I'm a rather calm person, and I think that has an effect.*

P3: Nou voel ek regtig vir die eerste keer, nou geniet ek my werk.

*For the first time I now enjoy my work.*

## **Importance of scholar wellbeing**

P7: Dis vir my baie belangrik dat my kinders sagte harte moet hê in die klas, omgee vir mekaar. [...] Hulle moet goed voel oor hulle self, dit gaan nie net vir my net oor hulle moet hoë punte hê nie. Maar ek voel hulle moet, hulle moet gelukkig wees. Hulle moet kan groei.

*It is very important to me that the children have kind hearts, caring for one another.*

*[...] They [children] must feel good about themselves. I am not too concerned about high academic performance, but I am concerned about them being happy. They must be able to grow. [...] You must ensure that your children are emotionally well before you can attempt any schoolwork with them. [...] It is very important to me that the children feel safe and calm within my classroom, otherwise they won't be able to give their best, otherwise they cannot concentrate.*

P8: Ek is baie meer concerned op hierdie stadium oor wat gebeur [...] met my kind se hart as hy daai werk nie kan doen nie. [...] dis vir my baie belangriker. Daar is kinders vir wie jy net niks kan verduidelik nie [...] it is what it is. Kom ons werk dan aan daai kind se skills. Kom ons maak hom dan 'n nice mens. [...] Ek sê baie keer vir die kinders [...] you can be as dumb as a bag of flour. But if you're a nice person, people will like you. [...] So dit is vir my baie belangriker as die akademie. Dan word jou selfbeeld verwoes, en wat is die benefit daarvan? [...] Nou sit jy met 'n dom kind wat nie n selfbeeld het nie. Sy EQ is daarmeeheen, wat gaan dan van hom word? Dan is dit 'n kortpad dwelms toe en wie weet wat nog alles. [...] Of jy nou slim is of dom is, dit maak nie saak nie. Jy kan 'n goeie mens wees ongeag jou intelligensie. En dit is vir my belangrik.

*At this stage I am much more concerned about what happens [...] with my child's heart if he is not able to do the work. [...] That is much more important to me. There are children to whom you cannot explain anything [...], it is what it is. Let's rather work on his skills. Let's*

*make him a nice person. [...] I regularly say to my children [...] you can be as dumb as a bag of flour, but if you are a nice person, people will like you. [...] that is much more important than academic performance. Now your self-image is destroyed, what is the benefit of that? [...] Now you have an unintelligent child with a low self-esteem. His EQ [Emotional Intelligence] is non-existent, what is going to happen to him? Then it's a shortcut to drugs and who knows what else. [...] Whether you are intelligent or not, that doesn't matter. You can be a good person regardless of your intelligence, and that is important to me.*

### **Identified needs and future suggestions**

P5: As mens ondersteuning kan kry van die department af wat, selfs al is dit meer child-based is dit ook reg, want dan weet ons. As jy 'n kind in jou klas het met 'n probleem [...] kan jy dit aangee, jy kan dit hanteer. Hulle kan die kind help.

*If we can receive more support from the Department [of Education], even if it is just child-based, then it is okay, because then we know that if we have a child in our class with a problem [...] you can report it and they can and will help him.*

P5: Die staat moet hulle eie sisteem, wat vir die skool back-up gee, regkry. Want as dit daar is, gaan dit alklaar 'n groot verskil maak

*The state should ensure that their own system that provides support to schools is in place. Because if it is established, then it will already make a big difference.*

P4: As hulle weer soos in die ou dae, voel ek, as hulle vir elke.. Soos (allocated psychologist) wat altyd by die skole was. Hy het gekom, hy was 'n sielkundige vir jou skool gewees. Of hy was oor twee of drie skole gewees, en hy't die kinders op 'n weeklikse basis gesien.

*If they can once more, like in the old days, [...] allocate a psychologist to every school [...]. He [psychologist] was a psychologist for your school, or he was allocated to two or three schools, he came on a weekly basis and saw the children (P4).*

P4: En veral by 'n inclusive school moet daar eintelik permanent half 'n sielkundige wees.

*And especially in an inclusive school, a permanent psychologist is needed.*

P3: Ek dink mens sal baie baat – nie net die onderwyser nie – maar al die kinders as 'n mens soos 'n assistent kan hê.

*I think that a person, not only the teacher but also all the children, would benefit greatly from having an assistant [in the classroom].*

P6: Die heel belangrikste is in alles die samewerking tussen die ouer en die kind. En dat jy jou kind aanvaar sooswat hy is. En nie vir hom 'n bordjie wil omhang as hy nie 'n bordjie moet kry nie. En as hy 'n bordjie het, weet waaroor dit gaan. En ondersteun. Ondersteuning dink ek is die belangrikste. [...] En veral by inklusiewe onderwys dink ek dit moet nog sterker wees as by 'n hoofstroom skool.

*The most important is the cooperation between parent and child. And that you should accept your child as he is, not wanting to allocate a diagnosis to him if he doesn't need one. And if he does have a diagnosis, parents should be well informed about it. And support, support I believe is also very important. [...]. And especially with inclusive education I think it must be even stronger than compared to a mainstream school.*