

**Support to learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools
of Mahikeng**

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Dissertation accepted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree *Master of Education in Special Needs Education* at the North
West University

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Graduation ceremony: May 2021

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DECLARATION

I declare that **Support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng** is my own work and that all the sources quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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(25639129)

_____02/11/2020_____

DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to:

- The God Lord Almighty who kept me throughout this journey.
- Dr N. Shaikhnag for consistent support and guidance throughout the duration of this research project.
- Mrs A. Masunungure for her valuable input.
- The teachers who participated in this study.
- The principals who welcomed me to conduct my research in their schools.
- Sub District Manager Dr M.C. Mojafi for granting me permission to conduct my research in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my loving mother Mrs Didimalang Sylvia Madiba, who showered this study with her unending prayers, positivity and light.

ABSTRACT

Background: The South African Inclusive education policies stipulate that mainstream schools should accommodate and support learners' diverse learning needs. However, the pragmatic realities show that there is usually a gap between policy and practice.

Aim of the study: The aim of this study is to investigate the support to learners with special education needs in the mainstreams secondary schools of Mafikeng.

Research methods: The research study employed qualitative research methods, where data was collected using focus group interviews, observations and field notes with six purposively selected schools and, six teacher participants teaching grade 8 classes from each school. Data was analysed and interpreted using thematic and content analysis methods.

Findings: The study revealed that the nature of support in mainstream secondary schools in supporting the learning needs of learners with special education needs has been lacking. Furthermore, teachers were found functioning in isolation, with non-existent support from parents, the Department of Education and the community as a whole. It was established that the majority of teachers have not been trained, equipped and prepared to operate under inclusive education practices. The study observed that the overall predicament ultimately placed learners at a disadvantaged position, as a result of lack of educational support.

Recommendations: The recommendations put forth by the study suggested that teachers undergo practical training pertaining to special and inclusive education practices; for schools to foster active parents' meetings to orientate parents on matters of inclusive education and special education needs; for functional communication channels to be initiated and maintained between the District Based Support Teams (DBST) and the School Based Support Teams (SBST); and for school principals to assume their responsibilities in the overall inclusion, accommodation and support of learners with learning disabilities, where they prioritise and fully enforce the functioning of inclusive education practices.

Key words: special education needs; inclusive education practices; barriers to learning; mainstream schools, accommodation, support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACPF	African Child Policy Forum
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBST	District-Based Support Team
ILST	Institutional Level Support Team
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
QLTSM	Quality Learning and Teaching Support Methods
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994:7) realised and advocated for the right of equal access to learners with disabilities in the general education system. This afforded those learners with special education needs and disabilities full participation and equal opportunity to education within inclusive education settings, where learners' diverse learning needs are to be addressed, and to avail necessary support to learners with barriers to learning.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action affirmed that including learners with diverse learning needs and those with learning disabilities should be actively accommodated and supported in mainstream schools, incorporating child-centred pedagogy in the teaching and learning process (UNESCO, 1994:7). Subsequent to the directives laid out by the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, the South African government, through the Education White Paper 6, then realised the need to strengthen support in order to reduce barriers within mainstream schools (White Paper 6, 2001:28).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (Department of Social Development, 2015:17) access to or accommodation within the mainstream schools denotes being given individualised support to enhance an individual's academic and social development, which would be consistent by far with the goal of full inclusion as stipulated in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994:7).

From the Baseline Country Report, the South African government further reconfirmed its responsibility towards the fulfilment of the policy, which states necessary intentions of supporting mainstream education practices as a national priority (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, 2013: 25).

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, cited in the National Development Plan 2030 for persons with disabilities being equal citizens, incorporates obligations of the Bill of Rights; this states it is mandatory for the South African mainstream schools to admit learners with special education needs and intellectual disabilities. In these schools they would be served with their educational requirements, through empowering mainstream school systems, and

ensuring that each learner receives the necessary support (Department of Social Development, 2015:47).

From the initial adoption of the Salamanca Statement on the resolutions regarding the inclusion of learners with special education needs or disability, the South African Department of Education has been working towards the establishment of an inclusive education and training system within mainstream schools, with the purpose of addressing the educational needs of those learners with barriers to learning (White Paper 6, 2010). Although the initiative is on-going, not much progress has been made. Furthermore, many learners continue to experience barriers to learning due to the education system failing to recognise, accommodate and further support learners' diverse learning needs (ACPF, 2011:5).

The South African Constitution affirms and guarantees the right to basic and further education to every child (South Africa, 1996a), and thereby recognises the need to accommodate learners with special education needs and those with disabilities (White Paper 6, 2015:6; UNESCO, 1994:12). However, the struggle to provide and achieve quality education and necessary support to the majority of learners with special education needs continues to be prevalent in South Africa (ACPF, 2011:5). Even with conceptualised regulations and policies around inclusive education, challenges around the issue of inclusion and support to learners with special education needs in South Africa remains a problem where, despite incentives and regulated policies put in place, implementation to that effect remains minimal.

For Donohue and Bornman (2014: 4), the dilemma facing South Africa's inclusive education system largely stems from a "general lack of support and resources." Furthermore, Donohue and Bornman (2014: 4) account for the general lack of support in inclusive education practices to be as a result of ambiguous guidelines on how inclusive education is to be practiced in mainstream schools. Assertions made imply that there is little guidance given from the Education White Paper 6 on how the policy may be implemented in inclusive education practices.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research study involving school principals in Gauteng Province in South Africa, conducted by Nel, Muller and Rheeders (2011: 49), cited by (Donohue & Bornman, 2014:5), discovered that learners with special education needs and disabilities "received specialised support services either 'seldom' or 'never'". In the study of Phasha, Mahlo and Dei (2017: 2), one of the major reasons South Africa encounters challenges regarding the inclusion or needed requirements to support learners with special education needs lies within the

misconceptions around the idea of inclusion. For Phasha *et al.* (2017:2) “the idea of inclusion as addressing fundamental questions of power and equality, promoting a link between students’ myriad identities has not always been taken seriously.”

Phasha *et al.* (2017:2) further reported that, as a result of over populated classrooms in mainstream schools of Umkhayakude District, KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, teachers often struggled to support the specific educational needs of learners. Furthermore, teachers “bemoan the fact that they are not all provided with assistance in the form of practical and theoretical training which is essential in their classes” (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016: 9).

Assertions presented by the Baseline Country Report (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, 2013: 25) on the grounds of Section 12 of the South African Schools Act, 1996, considered it imperative and a matter of priority for learners with special education needs and disabilities to be provided with the relevant and necessary support services, where considerable measures will be taken to ensure that physical facilities in mainstream schools are accessible to learners with intellectual disabilities (South Africa, 1996b; Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, 2013: 25).

Support for the diverse learning needs of learners within mainstream schools, as well as the implementation on the directives of policy in the education White Paper 6, which pledged education support to learners with special needs, coupled with intervention strategies in assisting teachers to cope with the diversity of learners’ learning needs (Education White Paper 6, 2001:10) have been worrying factors in the South African mainstream school system. This according to Donohue and Bornman (2014) and Hodgson and Khumalo (2016) needs to be addressed urgently.

- needs?

1.3.2 Research aim and objectives

1.3.2.1 Aim

The aim of the research was to investigate the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng.

1.3.2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the research were to determine:

- How learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng;

- What factors influence the support presently given to learners with special education needs;
- what support strategies are needed for learners with special education needs in the mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng.

1.3 PROBLEM QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Research Question

What is the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng?

1.3.1.1 Sub-questions

The situation around the support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng prompted the following questions:

- How are learners with special education needs supported in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng?
- What factors influence the support presently given to learners with special education needs?

What support strategies are needed for learners with special education

1.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Punch (2009: 112) defines research design as “issues involved in planning and executing a research project from identifying the problem through to reporting and publishing the results.” For Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011:32), research design refers to the plan set out in knowledge building and inquiry. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014:36), the collected data in a qualitative research design would reflect the reality which would be socially constructed by the participants through their use of language in sharing their life experiences and expressing their beliefs, perceptions and ideologies.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory underpinning this study is the Eco-systemic perspective, based on Bronfenbrenner’s model of child development.

Bronfenbrenner’s model of child development holds that individuals and groups at different levels of the society are all linked in an independent manner, and that such individuals form

part of interactional relationships (Donald, Lazarus & Moolla, 2014:39). Donald *et al.* (2014:40) explain Bronfenbrenner's ecological concept as interdependency between systems that interact with each other for the development of a child. According to Bronfenbrenner, systems do not function alone, or in isolation, but in reciprocity and an interdependent manner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

There should be a positive relationship between learners and the related systems the learners interact with on a daily basis, such as the microsystem, which consists of parental care, and support towards the educational needs of a learner in a home setting through an interaction with the school system (teachers and the school-based support team). The second inter-related system is the mesosystem, consisting of adequate training of teachers and their acquired skills towards tending to the special educational needs of the learners. To accomplish such a mandate, this is where the mesosystem (school-based support team) has to function in collaboration with the microsystem (the cooperation of caregivers/parents) as well as the exosystem (District Based Support Team) for further training and development (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013:4)

The third inter-related system in Bronfenbrenner's systems theory is the exosystem, which consists of the District Based Support Team (DBST), intended for teacher training and development on how to accommodate and foster support for learners' special learning needs. Lastly, the macrosystem, which encompasses the educational department as a whole, administering support to all educational structures.

The purpose of incorporating Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework in this research study, was to show that, should all systems contributing to the child's development interact with each other in close proximity, the adequate support to the educational needs of learners would be achieved.

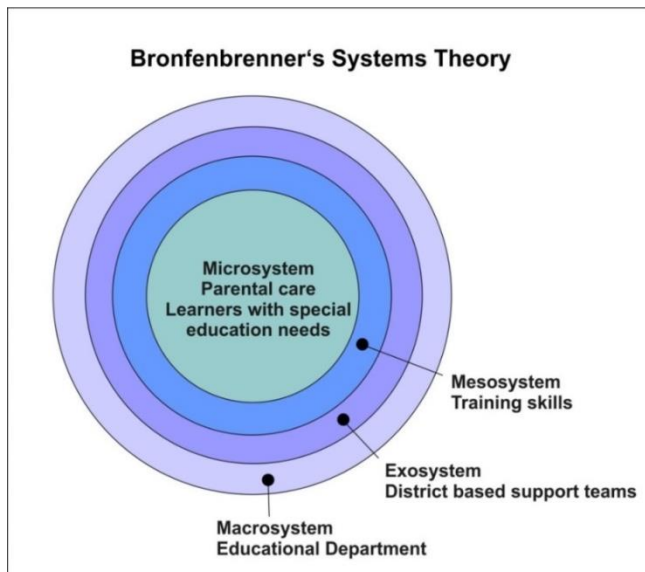


Figure 1.1 Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory (Donald *et al*, 2014: 39).

1.6 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

Bogdan and Biklen (2003:22) define 'paradigm' as a "collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research". It is often referred to as a 'theoretical perspective' which refers to the perceived assumptions people have regarding what is important in their world. Johnson and Christensen (2014:33) conceptualise paradigm as a perspective held by researchers based on common values, shared assumptions and practices which can be brought down to an approach one adopts when executing a research.

The research paradigm of this study is social constructivism, which indicates that support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools is constructed by complex views, perceptions and ideologies of all role players within the inclusive education practices, such as teachers, principals and parents (Oosthuizen, Grosser, Simmonds & van der Vyver, 2017:59; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:5).

According to Mertens (2015:237) and Oosthuizen *et al.* (2017:59), social constructivism stands by the ontological assumptions that observe reality as something that is not absolute, but rather socially and actively constructed by its participants as they are confronted with multiple realities on a daily basis, and where subjective assumptions and meanings are created by individuals as a result of their life experiences.

1.6.2 Research Design

Qualitative research design is conceptualised by Punch (2009:112, 117); Johnson and Christensen (2014:36), along with Bogdan and Biklen (2012:9) as an overall plan and decisions taken when conducting a research study; this has direct implications for the plans and decisions relating to how data is collected mainly to inform the research objectives. Furthermore, the research design includes all planned measures and tools to utilise in order to resolve the research problem in question.

The current research study will utilise the phenomenological approach as a research design in order to explore the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng. According to Oosthuizen *et al.* (2017:147) and Johnson and Christensen (2014:48), the phenomenological approach refers to an effort taken to understand and interpret people's perceptions and perspectives of particular events that occur, or situations that they find themselves in.

1.6.3 Research Method

Utilising qualitative research methods was considered advantageous in that the teachers' personal encounters, opinions and everyday experiences with regards to the needed support of learners' special educational needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng was explored based on the fact that qualitative research design, function to reflect the everyday reality through the research participants by sharing their opinions, beliefs and experiences. Where, according to Kielmann, Cataldo and Seeley (2012:9), Mertens (2015:238) as well as Johnson & Christensen (2014:35), the qualitative research method is used to understand people's experiences and is commonly used to express others' perspectives on a particular subject.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003:2); Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011:4) and O'Leary (2014:130) conceptualise qualitative research as a research method where the collected data would be considered a meaningful attribute of peoples' experiences and a description of how they come to generate such meanings, which is contrary to inquiries conducted by statistical procedures. The expected results of the current research study using qualitative research method intended to explore the general nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng.

In relation to the grounds laid down by Bogdan and Biklen (2003:2), Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011:4) and O'Leary (2014:130), the main aim of using the qualitative research method in this research study was to draw an understanding of the general nature of support to learners with special education needs within the mainstream educational setting of the selected schools in Mafikeng.

1.7 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Preliminary Literature Study

The main purpose of literature review in this study is to provide insight into the support given to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools. It assists in determining the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs within mainstream secondary schools, as well as exploring the factors influencing support to learners with special education needs; and lastly, to further evaluate strategies in which support can be offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng. The literature study was guided by the objectives of the study.

- How learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools ;
- The factors influencing the support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools;
- Strategies in which support can be offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools.

1.7.1.1 How learners with special needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools

According to the inclusive education policy (White Paper 6, 2010), plans have been formulated on how learners with special education needs are to be supported within inclusive education practices. The Education White Paper 6 guarantees their access to education, and their attainment of quality education which will be responsive to their learning needs (Pather, 2011: 1104). From the incentives forwarded by the Education White Paper 6 on the Guidelines for Full-service and Inclusive Schools, it has been proposed that, in ensuring support to learners within mainstream settings, teachers must receive an on-going training and support from the School Based Support Team, strengthened by the District Based Support Team (White Paper 6, 2010).

1.7.1.2 Factors influencing the support offered to learners with special education needs in the school setting

The main factors influencing support offered to learners with special educational needs in South Africa have been identified to be policy implementation, insufficient funding and lack of implementation capacity (Pather, 2011:1105). Apart from policy-related factors, lack of a supportive learning or school environment, learner stress and lack of collaboration between parents and teachers were also viewed and experienced as factors hindering the support needed in mainstream schools (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013; Pather, 2011:1105).

1.7.1.3 Strategies in which support can be offered to learners with special education needs

The existing strategies laid out by the education White Paper 6 (2010) regarding support to learners with special education needs suggests mobilisation and advocacy of support in the form of curriculum support, and teacher training (Pather, 2011: 1104). Furthermore in an effort to support all learners, strategies have been established by the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development to align content frameworks of learning subjects which will assist teachers with rich content achieved through pedagogical courses and workshops (Chisholm, 2011:55). This, according to Hogson and Khumalo (2016) as well as Donohue and Bornman (2014), serves no basis for support if there continue to be no clear practical guidelines on the implementation of such strategies.

However, Donohue and Bornman (2014) argue that taking most necessary factors into consideration, such as lack of resources, prevailing negative perceptions and lack of clarity in the education policy document (ACPF, 2011: 27), reiterates the evidence of absent practical guidelines on the implementation of policies, incentives and regulations addressing support to learners with special education needs in the mainstream education context. This is to say, there still remains a non-existing correlation between the incentives stipulated in the policy document, and the present conditions found in schools regarding the issue of educational support.

To reach the above mentioned objectives, a selection of literature will be used including:

- Guidelines as outlined in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, adopted at the world's conference held at Salamanca, Spain from the 7th to the 10th of June 1994.
- Directives and recommendations as stipulated in the White Paper 6 on the rights of persons with disabilities in South Africa.

National, international, primary and secondary sources were consulted in order to acquire appropriate information to further respond to the questions posed in this study.

1.7.2 Empirical Research

1.7.2.1 Site selection

Eight mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng were considered for the research study. The eight selected mainstream secondary schools are located in Mafikeng district, Ngaka Modiri Molema Municipality.

1.7.2.2 Participant selection

The current research purposefully selected 6 teachers in each selected mainstream secondary school, who are teaching grade 8 classes, who have over 5 years teaching experience, due to the level of knowledge and experience they would have acquired over the years within inclusive education settings.

1.7.2.3 Data collection

In addition to the literature study, different data collection strategies were employed in order to yield data for the study. The data collection strategies included focus group interviews, which will yield data through an interactive environment triggering “thoughts and ideas among participants” (Lichtman, 2013:207); and observations which assisted in studying educational support related aspects within the mainstream educational settings where educational support is administered (Thomas, 2009:183). Finally, field notes were gathered to put on record significant information which relates to the studied phenomenon by virtue of documenting the reflections and registering emotional responses of the respondents (Pacheco-Vega, 2019:1).

According to Thomas (2009:111), triangulation is an acceptable process of “viewing things from several directions” through which more than one method will be achieved. Triangulation of data collection methods regarding the data has been utilised in the research study. This advocates the dependability of the research findings.

1.7.2.4 Data analysis and interpretation

The researcher immersed himself in the data in order to be familiar with the information, with the data gathered from the focus group interviews, observations, and field notes. Thematic content analysis was performed to interpret and describe data with the purpose of determining the general existing nature of support in mainstream education practices.

1.7.2.5 Trustworthiness

According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2011:392), trustworthiness refers to the manner in which the researcher convinces the audience that the research findings are dependable and credible. Within the current research study, the researcher determined the credibility and dependability of the received data through the use of triangulation methods of data collection, and data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher utilised the process of member checking, where, after the data was analysed, the research participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their responses.

1.7.2.6 Researcher's role

In this research study, the researcher was not functioning in isolation from the research proceedings, but formed part of the research as a facilitator who allowed an objective construction of meaning in the process of the research interviews. According to Lichtman (2013), the role of the researcher is most crucial in the research study. In essence, the role of the researcher lies in understanding, interpreting and making sense of the phenomena according to the participants' experiences (Mertens, 2015:236).

1.7.2.7 Ethical consideration

According to Lichtman (2013:52), permission to conduct the research project must go through the process of approval by the institutional review board. Permission was requested from the North-West University (ROE) research group, and the Department of Education Mafikeng Area Office for the research to be conducted, which involved teacher participants from the selected mainstream secondary schools. Permission was also requested and acquired from schools which formed part of the research process.

Before the research was administered, the informed consent form was handed to the research participants during the briefing process, where the purpose and confidentiality terms were outlined. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:109), informed consent has to do with "agreeing to participate in a study after being informed of its purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternative procedures, and limits of confidentiality."

The respondents' participation was voluntary; they were given the right to withdraw from the research study at any stage during the course of the study should they feel uncomfortable (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:117). Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. According to Lichtman (2013:53), confidentiality means that no one will have access to the data and the names of the research participants. Anonymity is defined by Johnson and Christensen (2008:119) as ensuring that "the identity of the participants is not known."

1.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study intends to add value to the existing literature, fostering support and care to learners' special learning needs in a learning environment that represents and fosters the same values of support. The study upholds collaboration between relevant systems to interact with school systems in an effort to deter teachers within mainstream education practices from functioning in isolation. The study further advocates for the amendment or simplification of inclusive education policies and its guidelines/directives thereof.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter one concentrated on the problem statement of the research, the research objectives and the description of the research design. Chapter two will concentrate on the literature review regarding the support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng.

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters to follow in this research study are presented in the following order;

Chapter 1: Orientation. In this chapter the focus is on the research aims, purpose and objectives guided by the research questions, as well as the research design and methodology. The chapter shortly explained how the research process will take place

Chapter 2: Literature review. This chapter presents the relevant literature regarding support to learners with special education needs in mainstream schools of South Africa, while also reviewing international literature sources to enquire on the phenomenon on a global perspective.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology. In this chapter, aspects regarding the research design, population and sample, collection of data, data analysis and interpretation and trustworthiness along with ethical consideration of the research study are dealt with in detail.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and Interpretation. This chapter served to describe, analyse and interpret the research data gathered.

Chapter 5: Summary of the research findings and conclusion. In this chapter, information regarding the research findings will be provided.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The objectives guiding this study seek to determine the nature of support given to learners with special education needs, and how learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng. The study further explores possible factors influencing support given to learners with special education needs. This study seeks to explore possible support strategies required for learners with special education needs in the mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The purpose of the historical background in this study serves to offer a clear insight from where the establishment of support to learners with special education needs in mainstream schools comes.

During the 1960s and 1970s, strong criticisms were raised in some developed countries questioning the quality of education that children with disabilities received (Michailakis & Reich, 2009:25), where Artiles, Kozileski, Don and Christensen (2016:67) showed this was due to the fact that the education of learners with disabilities was organised in segregated settings. After integration in schools was formulated and documented in educational policies as objectives, school authorities in some countries were then obliged by legal terms to enrol every child in mainstream schools. However, the level of care and support given to learners in mainstream schools at that time were deemed insufficient (Artiles, Kozileski, Dorn and Christensen, 2006:67).

Michailakis and Reich further stipulate that, at that time in developed countries, during the integration stage, the majority of learners with physical disabilities were admitted in the mainstream education system which was organizationally related to ordinary schools, while those with intellectual disabilities were left out (Michailakis & Reich, 2009:25). According to Artiles *et al.* (2006:67) and Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000:279) this was the education system based on the pedagogy of segregation, which had to be eradicated by incorporating directives and policies that uplifted equality within the education system. A turning point in the universal dilemma towards supporting learners with special education needs in mainstream schools came through the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994).

The above information is proof that educational support to learners with special education needs could never have thrived without support being the basis of every process; where mandatory aspects such as collaboration and implementation of inclusive education, availability of resources, appropriate infrastructure, and access to quality educational support played a major role.

2.2.1 South African Historical Perspective

The South African inclusive education historical background is complex due to having been based on the heritage of colonial education. The South Africa education structure under the apartheid era was based on abuse, and the oppression of human rights (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018:75).

During the apartheid era, learners not only received their education separately as result of the existing racial boundaries, but also due to the differences that existed between learners who were considered normal, and those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Due to that, the special education system functioned in isolation (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013:1).

It was in 1996 when the South African Constitution legally legislated human rights for all, breaking barriers of exclusion, prohibiting any unfair discrimination, and thereby pronouncing equal rights for all, including that of basic education (South Africa, 1996a). Furthermore, the Constitution embarked on a critical challenge of affording every learner a fundamental right to education (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015:2). Thus it was done with the intention of addressing past imbalances, the key central issues of concern being redress, access and equality (du Plessis, 2013:80).

With the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework For Action, which states that “Schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic, or other condition” (UNESCO, 1994:6), the South African education system has thus been a work in progress, even with aspects of support, especially in mainstream schools (Guidelines for Full/Inclusive schools, 2009).

South Africa’s history renders it imperative to promote and embrace inclusion in mainstream schools, where aspects of diversity in teaching, anti-oppressive education and the right to education regardless of disabilities may lead the way to an inclusive education setting, where overall educational support is deemed most crucial in all aspects (Dreyer, 2017:1).

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Rachmawati, Nu’man, Widiasmara and Wibisono (2016: 586), as well as Artiles *et al.* (2006:67), conceptualise inclusive education to be a teaching practice within mainstream

schooling where learners, both able and disabled, are admitted in one classroom, and where support of their learning needs are administered. It is where teachers in the mainstream education environment would most likely have learners with particular learning needs in their classrooms, where care and support to learners' learning needs is of concern (Michailakis & Reich, 2009:26).

According to Engelbrecht and Green (2018:7), inclusive education advocates for educational policies and legislation that uplifts the rights of persons with disability. For Engelbrecht and Green, this does not imply that all learners with disabilities have to be in mainstream classrooms all the time, but that, in the process, integration aspects regarding the severity of the condition in a disabled learner would be evaluated. This affords equality of learners living with disability to be educationally supported, and catered for in the same proportion as those without disabilities (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018).

2.4 A WORLDWIDE PERSPECTIVE IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

It is of importance to note that, although there has been a worldwide drive towards supporting learners' special educational needs in mainstream schools, as influenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, the question is whether support is thoroughly administered in similar terms worldwide, and whether it still stands as a predicament (Geiger, 2012:2). Challenges faced by the South African education system regarding the support of learners with special education needs in mainstream schools seem to be also experienced globally (Chisholm, 2011:53).

2.4.1 United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, a major concern and a persistent criticism around the issue of care and support towards learners with special education needs has been the lack of teacher preparation (Webster, 2015:93). Furthermore, in the United Kingdom, the attitudes of mainstream teachers were observed to be a barrier towards the inclusion of learners with special education needs (Macfarlane & Woolfson, 2013:46).

2.4.2 Ireland and United States of America

According to Shevlin, Winter & Flynn (2013), cited by Mcconkey, Kelley, Craig and Sherlin, (2015:2) the encountered difficulties in Ireland are reported to have been due to access to support of learners with special education needs. For Mcconkey et al. (2015:2), such difficulties tend to place learners at the risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. According

to Hoppey (2016:14), mainstream education teachers in the United States of America reported “their preparation as lacking the development of skills needed to effectively teach diverse students in their classrooms.”

2.4.3 India and Pakistan

In India and Pakistan, the uncertainty of inclusive education teachers, and their insufficient skills, coupled with unsupportive views of parents, and communities around the inclusion of learners with special education needs, have indeed been observed to hinder any possible support learners could acquire (Sharma, Forlin, Depperler & Guang-xue, 2013:9). Cornelius and Balakrishnan (2012:83) express that the range of challenges faced with catering to the learning needs of learners with special education needs in India has been identified as threatening.

2.4.4 Kenya and Nigeria

According to Andrew, Rop, Ogola and Wesonga (2015:30), what perpetuates inadequate support to learners with special education needs in Kenya is lack of clear guidelines and implementation strategies in inclusive education policies. In Nigeria, the difficulties experienced in rendering support to learners with special education needs lies with lack of proper learner placement, influenced by lack of appropriate diagnosis or identification of learners’ learning needs, for which the Department of Education is to be held accountable (Michael & Oboegbulem, 2013:313).

2.4.5 Zimbabwe and South Africa

Due to limited training programmes, early-childhood teacher preparation, and shortage of special needs education teachers, the complex and diverse learning needs of learners tend not to be attended to in Zimbabwe (Mpofu & Shumba, 2012:328). According to Mpofu and Shumba (2012:329), frequent use of learner assessment may be utilised as an effective tool for monitoring progress and measuring the further support needed. In South Africa, within the Umkhanyakude district in Kwazulu-Natal, Hodgson and Khumalo (2016:7) revealed that the necessary support to learners with special education needs is hindered by lack of necessary resources, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teacher training or expertise purposed for the learning needs of learners, and dealing with the embedded demands and shortcomings of inclusive education practices in mainstream schools.

2.5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

From Geiger's (2012:2) point of view, inclusive education should be understood as a movement that advocates for social justice in educational matters, taking its origins from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which publicly affirmed the right to education for all and free education for all.

2.5.1 Right to Equal Access to Education and Learning

The aim of the South African education system is to provide quality education to its learners, providing them with lifelong learning, and affording every learner a meaningful participation regardless of their intellectual proficiency. The aim necessitates special education learners acquiring knowledge and reproducing the same knowledge through interaction so that they will be able to engage within mainstream education settings (White Paper 6, 2001).

For Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016:2), together with DeMatthews (2015:145), inclusivity in educational settings alone should be described fundamentally as a just act of ensuring equal educational access to mainstream schools, with full participation in the quality learning process, without being discriminated against.

Obligations are placed on the South African government to eliminate traces of any form of prejudice and discrimination which manifest through exclusion and total disregard of learners' right to free and equal education in mainstream education practices (du Plessis, 2013:84).

2.5.2 Diversity of Learning Needs in Mainstream Schools

Within the scope of inclusive education, mainstream schools have been granted the mandate of including a greater number of learners with a diversity of learning needs, including those with special education needs. This is to act in the social model of disability, where learners with special education needs would be offered the necessary educational support (Mitiku, Alemu & Mengsitu, 2014:118) and treated as valued and needed members of the society.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol document placed obligations on the education system of the South African government to realise, and thereby fully act on the right of providing fair, and equal opportunity to everyone, especially those with disabilities within the mainstream education `system, without discrimination, realising the implications of support thereof (Department of Social Development, 2015).

For Mitiku *et al.* (2014:118), inclusion is not a mere process of placing learners with disabilities and special education needs in mainstream schools, but also to realise that all learners have diverse learning needs that requires teachers with adequate knowledge, and training on inclusive education (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015:2). It is further stipulated that learners in mainstream schools who are identified to require both moderate and low level of support should not be referred to special schools, but receive educational support in mainstream schools (White Paper 6, 2015:51).

2.6 POLICY ON THE SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

The Education White Paper 6, which was fairly constructed in accordance with the National Education Policy Act (Act 79 of 1996), makes provision for schools to admit learners in discrimination-free educational settings, capable of serving the educational requirements of every learner. This prohibits mainstream schools from rendering admission tests or assessments when admitting learners (Basic Education Department, 2014).

Furthermore, section 12 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) discloses the manner in which the process of such placement should occur. From the SASA, a member of an executive council should, where necessary, provide mainstream schools with appropriate educational support, taking into consideration varying complexities of disabilities that learners have, ensuring that each learner receives support applicable to his/her needs (South Africa, 1996b).

2.7 SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT (SIAS) GUIDELINES

The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2014:25) describes steps and strategies, as well as channels which should be followed when screening and identifying barriers to learning among learners in mainstream schools for support purposes.

2.7.1 National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The South African Department of Education, through practical guidelines stipulated in the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) document, developed a strategy on how learners with special education needs may be supported throughout their learning process (Department of Education, 2008).

Moreover, the Education White Paper 6 provides guidelines in bringing clarity with regards to the implementation of inclusive education vision in the mainstream education system.

2.7.2 Processes of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

Support in mainstream education practices may be implemented at different levels of the education system, with specific focus and intervention on each level. There are three applicable stages at which support through intervention may be applied, namely, the initial Screening guided by the learner profile, Identification and Addressing Barriers to learning Development at school level, and lastly, Identifying and Addressing Barriers to learning and development at district level (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:24).

Stage 1: Initial Screening Guided by Learner Profile

With the initial screening process, teachers are obliged to screen learners and record their findings during the admission level, as well as in each phase. The instrument utilised is called the learner profile (LP).

Stage 2: Identifying/ Addressing Barriers to learning at school level

Upon a learner's learning needs being identified, it lies with the teacher as a case manager to coordinate the support process. Parents and caregivers are to be involved in the discussion within the same process of screening. This initiates the stage of teacher intervention as informed by the learner profile findings (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:25). In the process of identifying and screening barriers to learning, teachers ought to access the following information in the support needs assessment form (SNA1):

- Teachers are to discuss their findings with parents/caregivers, further determining if there has been an earlier interaction on account of the learner's barriers to learning.
- Discussing individual support plan with the purpose of supporting the learning needs of the learner in question, with dates for review and evaluation plans.
- Should the support planned and formulated by the teacher be deemed ineffective, the teacher is urged to involve the school governing body in further decision-making.

The second level of support within stage 2 involves an intervention through special needs assessment 2, which guides the school based support team upon referrals of the learner. Within this intervention there are three processes:

- A review completed by the teacher where barriers to learning are identified, accompanied by applicable interventions thereof.

- A plan of action through which the teacher/school could strengthen the support (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:25).
- The implementation of a “plan of action” with a specific review date where ... a discussion on account of progress or lack of progress will be discussed”, where an analysis and determination of the level of support needed will be discussed.

The final process within stage 2 of the SIAS protocol involves cases of necessary referrals in ensuring appropriate support of learners’ learning needs. In cases where there might be probable causes of vulnerability to abuse, deviation from the standard procedure may be allowed (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:25).

Stage 3: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to learning at district level

An SNA3 instrument is utilised to guide the district-based support team (DBST) in their duty to intervene, and draw a strategy towards their intervention plan. They therefore evaluate the action plan from the teacher, and the school-based support team (SBST). The DBST, together with the teacher and the SBST decide collectively and reach a conclusion on how learners’ learning needs may be supported. The available information gathered at school level may be used for long-term support plans, where aspects such as funding and budget may be planned for, as well as additional activities such as training, counselling, mentoring, and resource and support allocation (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:25).

2.8 LEVELS OF SUPPORT IN THE MAINSTREAM EDUCATION SYSTEM

According to DeMatthews (2015:143) and Rachmawati *et al.* (2016: 587), learners with special education needs in mainstream school are often limited in their performance due to their endured intellectual impairments, preventing their optimum cognitive performance. Such learners would most likely have been diagnosed with disorders or learning difficulties such as ADHD, emotional and behavioural disorders, mental retardation, sensory disorders, disorders of speech and language, while Santrock expresses that gifted students are those with abilities above the average (Rachmawati *et al.*, 2016: 587).

Today in any classroom, learners display diversity in many different ways, for example in their developmental level, their use of language, type of intelligence, their learning style and many other characteristics (Stephinah, 2014:1634). Learners may even come from vastly different economic, social, cultural and racial backgrounds (UNESCO, 1994:7). With such enormous differences and diversity, there will be specific individual learning needs that the

education system or a teacher in a mainstream classroom will have to recognise and support (Hall & Theron, 2016: 1).

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, and the White Paper 6 (2015), view supporting such learners within the educational setting as a tool which promotes human rights, initiating and promoting equality among everyone. The Salamanca Statement, in its guiding principle, states that all learners within schools should be supported academically regardless of their physical conditions, intellectual capacities, social standards, emotional positions, linguistic capabilities or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994:6).

It then follows that teachers' general support in mainstream schools will be dictated by support methods and approaches used when confronted with diversity of learning needs within inclusive education practices (Yeo, Chong, Neihart & Huan, 2014:4) looking at whether teachers will accommodate, support and address such barriers in their classrooms or whether they will segregate, isolate and react impersonally in such circumstances (Mcconkey *et al.*, 2015:2).

The line of thinking of Hall and Theron (2016:2) supposes that adequate support across all the levels of the education department is one of the key strategies towards the support implementation in mainstream schools, where, from the Department of Education's already set out plans and strategies, such support strategy would be made possible through the establishment and functioning of district-based support, as well as school-based support (Nel *et al.*, 2016:2).

The nature of support in the South African Department of Education, as clearly stated in the Education White Paper 6, and the South African School Act, is based on the developed policies obliged by the commitment of its directives, where the challenge remains to be with the implementation of the support expected therein (Guidelines for Full/Inclusive schools, 2009).

From the Education White Paper 6, measures of support and intervention strategies have been laid out, and are aimed at ensuring that all learners who are experiencing barriers to learning are educationally supported, to the level of the demands of their experienced disabilities (White Paper 6, 2015).

The claims posed by the National Planning Commission (2011:304), as also professed by Yeo *et al.* (2014:4), are the directives which should be adhered to in order to achieve support

by adopting the same curriculum for all education systems, and by formulating a compulsory education irrespective of whether learners are in mainstream schools or special schools.

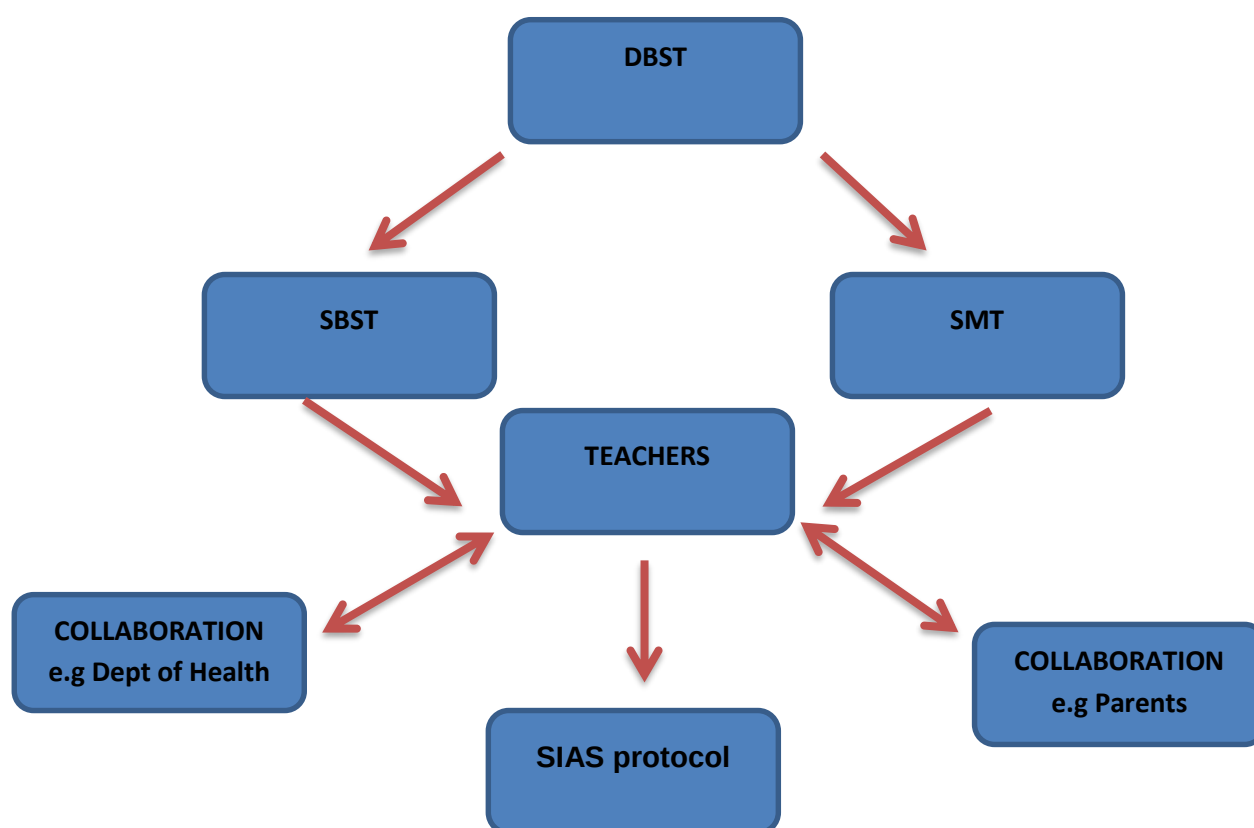


Figure 2.1 Nature of Support in inclusive education practices

2.8.1 Support at National Level

The Department of Education strongly affirms that it is within their duty as an education system to combat prevalence of barriers to learning thriving within school systems. It is thus in the long term plan of the South African Department of Education to uncover and counteract barriers to learning by investing more in the necessary support needed in inclusive education practices (White Paper 6, 2015). Engaging in such, the first strategy is said to work on the “implementation of a national advocacy and information programme in support of the inclusive model” (du Plessis, 2013:83). Second, turning or converting special schools into resource centres as an integrated strategy of equipping the staff members of special schools into the District Based Support Teams (DBST), which will be assigned to the neighbouring schools to grant support (National Planning Commission, 2011:310).

The third strategy of the Department of Education, as stated in the White Paper 6 (2015), upon placing support programmes in place, and integrating special schools into support and

resource centres, will be the establishment of full service schools as part of the short-term planning goal.

2.8.2 Support at Provincial and District Levels

The intentions of the district, provincial and national departments of education are said to rest in the intent to “identify learners who are being excluded from the system, and find ways to bring them into the system” (Guidelines for Full/Inclusive schools, 2009:45). The efforts of the education departments at the district, provincial and national level are said to focus on formulating collaboration with other related key entities, such as NGOs, to ensure support in inclusive education.

According to the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2014:35), the District-Based Support Teams (DBST) have a direct obligation to lead and provide support to learners, schools and teachers. The National Planning Commission (2011:310), in the National Development Plan for 2030, stated that poor performance on matters of lack of support to learners with special education needs at school level are a direct reflection of weaknesses at the district level. In this regard the Education White Paper 6 (2001:28) recognises that it is up to the DBST to strengthen the education support services, by building capacity in schools, and having training centres to recognise and address learners’ learning needs, from severe to mild.

2.8.3 Support at School-Based Level

The responsibilities of school-based support teams, as described within the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2014:28) document, is to possess a full comprehension and conceptual understanding of the diverse learning needs of learners in the school systems, with provision of necessary directives and strategies, involving the District-Based Support Teams (DBST), and external sources of support such as the Department of Social Development, together with social workers (Nel *et al.*, 2016:3).

The involvement of the external sources of support in the case of the Department of Social Development will serve to meet the social welfare aspect of learners’ needs providing support to families and communities (Hall & Theron, 2016:9). These external sources of support services include psychosocial support, social grants, protective placements, victim support and empowerment programmes (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:32). It is observed that school-based support teams cannot function in isolation, therefore collaboration of support services is deemed significant in the provisioning of support at school level (Guidelines for Full/Inclusive schools, 2009:45).

2.9 STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

du Plessis (2013) maintains that the directives as laid out by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Standards Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) refer to the fact that educational progress aimed at supporting the diversity of learners' learning needs should be implemented as laid down by the educational policy makers (Basic Education Department, 2015:8).

Upon access being gained into mainstream schools to administer support to learners with special education needs, a learner-centred pedagogy needs to be implemented within teaching practices (UNESCO, 1994). The Education White Paper 6 (2001) asserts that support can be offered to mainstream schools by conducting inclusive education orientation programmes on a regular basis. This would be a way of empowering mainstream schools which, through their changing overviews, would allow conceptualisation of inclusive education practices (Hall & Theron, 2016:2). That can be achieved through eradicating discriminatory attitudes and creating supportive communities, asserts du Plessis (2013:80).

As far as the implementation of support in mainstream schools is concerned, the Education White Paper 6 (2001) stipulates that:

- It is within the constitutional right of every learner to receive support in the process of their learning, even those with special education needs.
- In being effective with regards to support, key role players within the inclusive education practices would have to acknowledge and respect the diversity that lies within each learner in terms of their disability, language, gender, race, ethnicity, age and class.
- To ensure support to learners with special education needs, the attitudes of teachers as key role players within inclusive education practices would have to shift from that of a medical model of disability, to that of a social model of disability.

Through support given to school systems, and directly to learners with special education needs, participation in the educational culture would be maximised reducing the existing learning barriers (Schilder, Broadstone & Curenton, 2017:1072). In accordance with the Education White Paper 6 (2015), there is a need for mainstream schools to perform early child diagnosis of learning barriers, and to provide the support needed thereof.

Dreyer (2017:1) believes that the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools is one of the key strategies to support at all levels. Therefore, from the plans and strategies already set out by the Department of Education, such support strategies would be

widely possible through the establishment and functioning of district-based support, although she firmly contends that there still exists a huge gap between policy and implementation.

2.9.1 School Support

Schools need to have the capacity to involve related role players outside the school system, such as parents, where continual positive partnership in supporting learners with special education needs may be maintained (Schilder *et al.*, 2017:1072). Research findings of Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:11) indicate that schools lacked constructive effort in involving parents, thus lack of support to learners with special education needs became prevalent.

However, due to the fact that support is not always made available in schools where there exists a demand for support. Teachers are therefore encouraged to increase knowledge on such aspects of support (Morewood & Condo, 2012:16). This approach rather establishes teachers as interventionists in their own practices, functioning to combat existing barriers.

According to the Salamanca Statement, rendering of educational services to everyone, even those with intellectual disabilities, within the mainstream education system can be achieved through inclusive methods (UNESCO, 1994:6), where Rachmawati *et al.* (2016; 585) state such inclusive methods are governed by the principles of warmth, diversity and a cooperative learning approach. Support in mainstream schools can be achieved through preparing teachers to teach interactively (UNESCO, 1994:7).

2.9.2 Teacher Support

Schools and teachers, as the main catalysts for inclusive education practices, have on their shoulders the responsibility of being the source of support, functioning to adapt and modify the learning and teaching programme that is fitting to the needs of every learner (Morewood & Condo, 2012:16; UNESCO, 1994:7).

For learners with special education needs to be practically supported during the assessment period, the Procedural Manual for the Assessment of Learners who experience Barriers to Assessment from grade R to 12 states that learners are to be provided with a reader and scribe during examinations (Basic Education Department, 2016:18). The manual of the amended National Education Policy, (Act No. 27 of 1996), states that the reader and the scribe ought to be current or retired teachers. Such reader is expected to read to a certain number of candidates, and write down verbatim the answer of learners struggling to write. Furthermore, the venue of the examination needs to meet the minimum requirements of assessment standards (Basic Education Department, 2014:8).

2.9.3 Learner Support

To support learners' learning needs in mainstream schools, necessary systems functioning in accordance with the procedures laid out in the strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support need to be accessible. According to the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive schools (2009:25), in order to determine the level and nature of support required by learners, the following would need to be considered:

- That learners should not be transferred or moved to certain confinements or a conditioned environment to meet their learning needs.
- For additional support needed, the capacity of expertise would have to be reviewed for accommodation purposes. Schools would have to collaborate with District-Based Support Teams for support and training.
- Learners with moderate, high, and excessively high support needs would have to be supported within mainstream schooling utilising precautionary measures of SIAS.
- Factors to take into account is in understanding that barriers are not always directly, and intrinsically linked with the actual disability in question, but circumstances originating from learners' living environment or the educational environment.
- For intervention purposes, the District-Based Support Team (DBST) should serve to provide training to educators, together with the necessary material resources (Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools, 2009:19).

2.9.4 Parental Support

In compliance with the South African Schools Act (SASA), parents have been acknowledged as equal partners in education and schooling, where their collaboration, contributions and involvement is expected (South Africa, 1996a).

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action reiterates the fact that the education of learners with special education needs is a shared task both of parents and the education professions (UNESCO, 1994; 37). For the inclusion process, learners with special education need to be assigned thorough provision of support which serves to address the overall learning needs of all learners. Schilder *et al.* (2017:1072) strongly believe that this could be achieved through reciprocal efforts from both parents and teachers (Fittig, Schultz & Ostrosky, 2013:3).

Parental support is deemed significant and mandatory, where there should be an existing equal and supportive partnership between schools and parents, more so in the decision-making that pertains to the inclusion process of learners, and support thereof (Nel *et al.*, 2016:2).

The Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools (2009:18) document proposes that arrangements be made for involving parents in the decision-making processes regarding the education of their children. The recommendations laid out by the Education White Paper 6 places emphasis on communication channels between parents and schools being opened.

2.9.5 School Management Team

The National Planning Commission (2011:310) and Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools (2009:13) charges school principals, and their school management teams (SMTs) with an obligation to see to it that inclusion in mainstream schools thrives with considerable support to teachers and to learners with barriers to learning.

It is therefore noted that school principals, together with the school management teams, have a considerable determining factor on whether the school adopts an inclusive approach or not, and with whether they act on necessary measures to support it (Yan & Sin, 2015:206). From the National Planning Commission (2011:309), School Management Team (SMT) members and principals are expected to ensure that all efforts are invested in addressing school policies, programmes and improvement plans towards the proper functioning, development and support towards inclusive education practices.

Furthermore, in their efforts to foster collaboration within mainstream schools, school management team members, along with the principals, are expected to create a conducive environment for learners, teachers and parents. According to Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive schools (2009:14), principals' primary task is to be creative in their collaborative approach in creating an inclusive education environment.

The responsibilities of principals and schools management are to use a collaborative approach which should serve to equip the administration of inclusive activities and programmes. Factors and aspects contributing to such may include:

- The allocation of time where school-based support teams may engage in support programmes and training at institutional level.
- Fostering of discussions around the placement of learners within mainstream schools, where decisions around their support are discussed alongside the necessary resources that are required to have an impact on support.
- Inviting and engaging parents in matters regarding the decisions reached where the learner is concerned.

2.10 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT (CPTD)

Continuing Professional Teachers Development (CPTD) is a support strategy initiated by the Department of Education, and established by the National Norms for Educators. The purpose of this initiative is to address teachers' classroom-related needs, and holistically address the professional development of teachers (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015:3). Through this initiative, goals and objectives of inclusive outcomes are also identified, providing an on-going support, and training sessions organised with a purpose of addressing existing learning, and teaching barriers (Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools, 2009:19).

This development programme urges teachers to explore the various tenets of professional development such as 'diversity,' which implicates understanding learners' different learning needs (Morewood & Condo, 2012:16). Intellectual abilities and social backgrounds as contributing factors requiring professional expertise of an inclusive educator are taken into account, and considered throughout the teaching and learning process for support measures (Nel *et al.*, 2016:2).

As asserted by the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009:22), it is the responsibilities of principals to ensure that the Institutional-Level Support Team (ILST) is formulated and functional within schools. It is further stipulated that with the intensive training that the ILST would have acquired, they would be in a better position to assist teachers to address barriers to learning and teaching (Education Review Office, 2015:15), so further establishing a solid structured approach towards the implementation of the Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). According to the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009:22), the ILST is obligated to perform the following duties and responsibilities in mainstream schools;

- To guide and orientate teachers around the guidelines of inclusive learning and teaching.
- To implement individual support plans and effective curriculum differentiation.
- Establishing Individual Support Planning (ISP) teams in every phase in order to coordinate and control individual support planning.
- Functioning to organise consultation meeting with parents and/or caregivers.
- Coordinators serve to identify individual educators' needs whereby necessary training or staff development would be organised.

Morewood and Condo (2012:16) and Yeo *et al.* (2014:4) added that the manner in which teachers may further develop is through increasing teachers' knowledge in the content of

their learning area, curriculum issues, and their study methods. Moreover, deep understanding and comprehension in such areas will further assist in their professional confidence, thus making concise instructional decisions. Furthermore Schilder *et al.* (2017:1072) maintain that the success of professional development can be achieved when executed collaboratively.

2.11 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOSYSTEMIC PERSPECCTIVE (THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK)

Bronfenbrenner's model of child development and ecological framework is underpinned in this study to understand support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools. The framework serves to explain how different systems come to influence the child's educational development.

According to Bronfenbrenner, there are five subsystems which have an influence on the child development outcomes, namely:

- The microsystem, which consists of the child's direct and immediate family, where close relationships are formed (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013).
- The mesosystem: formulates sets of microsystems, which are constantly in an interactional relationship e.g. schools system, community and home systems (Donald, Lazarus & Moolla, 2014: 39).
- The exosystem, consisting of settings that learners are not directly involved with as active participants, but are however affected by their events, such as the decisions taken by the School Management Teams (SMTs), and the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) with regards to provisioning of support-related matters (Nel *et al.*, 2016:3).
- The macrosystem consists of bigger structures of cultural, economic, value and belief systems, which all have an influence on the social systems (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018:197).
- The chronosystem depicts changes that develop over time, affecting interactions that occur between systems that have an influence on the development of the child (Donald *et al.*, 2014: 39).

2.11.1 Value Systems of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Education Practices

Teaching 'Inclusive Education' to teachers may assist them to be accepting of each learner's differences, which in turn would cultivate team-building values, attitudes and positive perceptions within the education system (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018:197).

Engelbrecht and Green (2018:201) assert that support in mainstream schools may be through collaborative networks and community involvement. In this way, partnership can be achieved through awareness programmes, where schools engage with the community in providing guidance to learners, parents, and teachers. This engagement leads to profitable decision-making, and direction of learning (Nel *et al.*, 2016:3).

Bruijn, Regeer, Cornielje, Wolting, van Veen and Maharaj (2012:26) assert that there are value systems that are being held dormant in teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and ideologies around inclusive education practices. According to Engelbrecht and Green (2018:216), the school's values and culture largely influence teachers' held perceptions about inclusive education practices, where such value systems within schools determine whether teachers' reactions towards inclusive education would be in a withdrawal mode of class-support or interactional mode (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015:2).

The evaluation results from the Education Review Office (2015:10), examining how learners with special education needs are included in mainstream schools, proposed that the norms and cultures in an institution are a significant determining factor on whether an institution will thrive or not. Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective is in agreement with the above claims, and further points out that goals and values within the system are often influenced by the system as a whole (Donald *et al.*, 2014:43). Furthermore, Bruijn *et al.* (2012:32) assert that teachers' perceptions, held ideas and attitudes in mainstream schools are a counterpart to and an influence of a wider part of a social systems e.g. direct relationship between teachers and learners as well as parents.

Geldenuys and Wevers (2013:7) allocate the dilemmas of inclusive education to three levels of the education system, these being the level of macrosystem of education (e.g. rigid curriculum and unrealistic policies), and within the mesosystems where school organisations are concerned, as well as level of the individual classroom interaction. Their assertions coupled with those of Stephinah (2014:1634), suggest that, in order to support the learning needs of learners in mainstream schools, modification and re-evaluation of certain aspects within the macrosystem of education will be required.

Both Geldenuys and Wevers (2013) further argue from a sociological and ecosystemic perspective, maintaining that the tensions within inclusive education may not be fully resolved. However, they need to be addressed in such a way that the outcomes will benefit individuals affected. That is to say, when these tensions are not addressed, imbalances occur, which are later realised as prevailing negative attitudes hindering support in mainstream education settings.

2.11.2 System Approach to Support

The ecosystemic perspective has been adopted into the South African education system and the education policies which, according to du Plessis (2013:84), serves to remove barriers from the learner, and locate them in all the systems which act as barriers in the learning process.

The education White Paper 6 regards collaboration of systems within the community such as parental involvement, and community involvement as the path towards implementing support needed for learners with special education needs and disabilities (White Paper 6, 2010). However, du Plessis (2013) allocates such probabilities to the individuals' capacity and abilities to willingly participate and contribute in that quest.

2.11.2.1 Collaboration towards supporting learners with special education needs

According to the Guidelines for Full/Inclusive schools (2009), one of the ways in which support implementation services may be rendered in mainstream schools is to involve all the people within the field of support services to support the implementation process.

Cornelius and Balakrishnan (2012:84) point out that what school systems and other role players in the community can work towards is establishing correct positive beliefs, values and attitudes regarding the issue of inclusivity in mainstream education. In addition, this would require a great deal of collaboration with the community and the education system. Furthermore, teachers would now be required to break down walls of discrimination, and work collaboratively (Hoppey, 2016:13).

To reach such a goal, the Department of Education calls for collaborative support in the form of parental involvement, as well as community partnership. This, however, according to Schilder *et al.* (2017:1072), will depend on every individuals' ability to perform their duties meaningfully by effectively contributing their expertise on identifying, preventing and counteracting the existing barriers to learning. Dreyer (2017:1) adds that, for support in mainstream schools to thrive, all stakeholders, including development agencies, and various private sectors, should take a stand.

2.11.2.2 Roles of School Principals

However, due to non-existent collaboration between teachers, parents and learners, a heavy burden of managing a change which should build to a climax of collaboration of support to learners with special education needs rests with school managers (Hodgson & Khumalo,

2016:10). Education Review Office (2015:15) urges school principals and governing bodies to take into account, the rights and wishes of learners' special education needs, by engaging in the decision-making process to determine the place of such learners.

2.11.2.3 Roles of Teachers

According to Morewood and Condo (2012:16), teachers must regularly engage in professional development and other related activities where they go beyond the content they are teaching. Furthermore, teachers in mainstream schools are expected to acquire skills and expertise to identify and support learners with special education needs. Likewise, they are therefore further expected to collaborate with other support providers in determining the levels and extent of the support needed by learners (White Paper 6, 2015).

The Education White Paper 6 (2015) further requires teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of learners with special education needs. However, this does not take into account the flexibility and adaptability that teachers have to be prepared for in dealing with factors such as large class sizes, cultural diversity, linguistic backgrounds and curriculum differentiation (du Plessis, 2013:88). Thus, it implies that teachers need to be well organised, and have the required expertise needed in the ever-changing classroom conditions (Hall & Theron, 2016:10).

2.11.2.4 Community Involvement

According to Rachmawati *et al.* (2016: 587), inclusive education practices are so diverse in nature that the philosophy behind 'inclusion' considers everyone to be a valuable part of the 'mainstream society', who should be supported regardless of the differences they may have. This Implies support from the community members towards learners with special education needs in mainstream schools is an act of eradicating discriminatory attitudes, and building welcoming communities (UNESCO, 1994:7).

The community needs to be responsive to the needs of the school system in general, and align its interest in supporting inclusive practices in mainstream schools. In compliance with the National Planning Commission (2011:303), education institutions may be assisted by the community and stakeholders through:

- The capacity to implement policy in order to addresses urgent priorities.
- Valuing teachers' efforts.
- Engaging in school's educational and administrative affairs with the purpose of building and initiating cohesion.
- Maintaining communication with the education institutions.

2.12 MEDICAL AND SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

2.12.1 Medical Model of Disability

According to Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel and Tlale, (2015:5), the Medical Model of Disability is an approach that views people with disabilities or impairments as disempowered, and thereby they are restricted and prevented from reaching their full potential, not necessarily because of their impairments, but because of the discriminatory, and negative attitudes surfacing as barriers (Bruijn *et al.*, 2012:18).

2.12.2 Social Model of Disability

This model views disability as a lack of fit between the individual and the environment. It identifies limitations that lie within the environment which are disabling and discriminatory in nature. In addition, it seeks to redress dormant ideologies of the medical model through subverting discriminatory values of injustice and prejudice towards people of disability. This way, the environment becomes enabling and celebratory towards diversity (Yeo *et al.*, 2014:2). This model focuses on maximising the learners' potential by enabling the environment, even the education environment.

2.12.3 Influences of the Medical and Social Models of Disability in Mainstream Schools

Evidence acquired from the research done by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013: 9) suggests that teachers still operate under the medical model of disability. According to Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013), teachers' responses in the conducted research showed a pattern of high expectancy in intellectual performance, and the pressure to perform, from learners with special education needs, and those without special education needs. Furthermore, learners with special education needs failed to reach the required academic and cognitive performance under such circumstances. Such learners then resorted to absenteeism and eventually dropped out. Thus, the research findings revealed teacher participants to have negatively-perceived inclusive education training.

An informative report from Education Review Office (2015:26), which served to examine the challenges identified by schools towards supporting learners' special learning needs, indicated that teachers who emphasised the pathological and endogenous nature of disability tended to see their responsibilities towards special education needs learners as insignificant, whereas teachers who emphasised both learning and learning difficulties expressed interventionist beliefs. Suffice to say that perceptions of teachers within mainstream schools become factors that either hinder or positively influence support, the

distinguishing factor being whether teachers function under the influence of the medical model or the social model of disability (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2015:2).

The success of support implementation in mainstream schools depends on the attitudes of teachers within inclusive education practices (Yeo *et al.*, 2014:3). Teachers are in direct relationship with learners on a daily basis; this affords them the opportunity to rethink their roles and responsibilities. To successfully administer support in mainstream schools, they would need a reconstruction of appropriate knowledge in all areas of concern (Engelbrecht and Green, 2018).

Elias (2014:5), through her literature study, revealed that when a learning disability is discussed in line with the medical model's perspective, blame tends to be shifted to an individual learner with a disability. This leads to an individual suffering loss of emotional attachment, low self-esteem as well as social exclusion.

Rauter (2016: 63) states that there is no quick fix to disability or in trying to normalize children with learning disabilities e.g. dyslexia, but that what is necessary is a complete paradigm shift away from wishing to 'normalize' the child, which only implies rejection. Parents as well as teachers should rather embark on letting go of wishing the image of perfection upon their children, such as wishing that they were able-bodied or able-minded (Stephinah, 2014:1634), but rather "accepting reality with an open, loving heart for a child who exists and deserves love in its vulnerability and dependency" (Rauter, 2016: 63). One among other factors that can influence the inclusion of learners with special education needs in mainstream schools is through the subversion of the medical model in order to establish the culture of a social model of disability (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2015:2).

On the ideological position of the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, Bruijn *et al.*, (2012:18) suggest that it should not be the disability within the learner which is being viewed, but on how the teacher and other role-players can overcome such difficulties through the administration of support and care. They further contend that the existing learning difficulties do not necessarily lie within the learners with special education needs, but with matters of teacher competence, enabling infrastructure and with whether the curriculum is fitting to the learners' learning needs.

Literature covered this far is deemed significant in this study, as the use of the medical model and social model of disability in inclusive education practices may either hinder or advance the success of support of learners with special education needs in mainstream schools. This literature further assists to determine the extent to which teachers in inclusive education practices function under the influences of the medical or social model of disability.

This study takes into consideration the fact that prevalence of teachers functioning under the social model may perceive learners with special education needs in a positive and interventionist light, which will propel more support, while on the other hand, the opposite may be inferred to teachers functioning under the influence of the medical model of disability.

2.13 FACTORS INFLUENCING SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

2.13.1 General Factors

According to Dreyer (2017:1), there is a wide range of closely related factors influencing the necessary support given to learners with special education needs in South Africa, such factors are noted to be societal beliefs or perceptions about diversity; schools' beliefs systems and attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with learning disabilities, provision and access of quality educational support.

The content of this literature takes a different turn from that of Dreyer (2017). This section of the literature study focuses closely on the following: teacher preparation; overloaded curriculum and lack of time; influences of the medical model of disability; racial class-based perceptions; lack of parental involvement; lack of infrastructure, and discriminatory and prevailing negative perceptions.

2.13.1.1 Teacher Preparation

Hoppey (2016:13) and Bornman and Donohue (2015:3) recognise the on-going criticisms on how teachers function within inclusive education settings, revealing the prevalence of inadequate teacher preparation and training as a factor having an influence on the support learners receive. This therefore suggested the necessary professional development, and teacher preparation in mainstream schools as a strategy to be undertaken.

For such reasons, the Department of Education intended to prioritise strategizing the improvement of teacher qualification, and specialised competencies which ought to be adequate in administering support to learners with special education needs (Basic Education Department, 2015:51).

2.13.1.2 Overloaded Curriculum and Lack of Time

For Andrew *et al.* (2015:30), what further perpetuates the vulnerability of teachers' perceptions in mainstream schools is the overloaded curriculum, where procedural knowledge is over-emphasised in favour of the development of positive values, and beliefs.

In this regard, little attention is often given to ensuring the presence of values around the principles of inclusive education practices. An overloaded curriculum, among many others, is observed as a factor attributed to the prevalence of lack of teacher and learner support in mainstream schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2014:2).

Yeo *et al.* (2014:4) added that limited time given to attend to learners' diverse learning needs, more especially those with barriers to learning, is observed as a factor detrimental to the overall support in mainstream schools.

2.13.1.3 Influences of Medical Model of Disability

The findings of Donohue and Bornman's (2014) research study determined that the medical model of disability is still dominant in mainstream schools. Thus, according to the Education Review Office (2015:17) in order for teachers' classrooms to be inclusive in nature, teachers would have to display the ability to acquire and offer support to learners away from influences of the medical model. In this way, learners' barriers to learning would be seen in the light of societal and environmental contexts, where teachers would act in an interventionist approach.

2.13.1.4 Racial class-based perceptions

In the United States of America, the marginalization of African-American learners in schools went to the extent of the majority of African American learners being tagged as intellectually disabled by teachers and school staff (DeMatthews, 2015:143). In such instances, DeMatthews strongly asserted, through a wide literature study and research results, that racial and class-based discrimination of learners with academic and behavioural challenges added to a discomforting school experience for impoverished African-American learners.

In that regard, teachers' ideologies on the matter attributed the blame of learners' behavioural, and learning barriers to their living conditions or low socio-economic family backgrounds. Thus, their attitudes were discriminatory in nature, and contributed to learners' learning needs not being catered for.

2.13.1.5 Lack of Parental Involvement

Fettig *et al.* (2013:33) observe that many learners come from unsupported homes, where parental involvement is absent. What perpetuates lack of parental support in educational aspects of learners' development, and progress has been observed to be 'low education level', 'unsympathetic behaviour' and the 'lifestyle of parents' (Nel *et al.*, 2016:14). A study conducted by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) observed that learners faced with such home

environments deteriorated in their academic performance, as those raised by their grandparents severely lacked academic progress due to the lack of support at home (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013:6).

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:8) further revealed that many parents seldom engage themselves in the educational affairs of their children, and completely leave it to the school to carry the entire burden. In addition, lack of parental support makes it unbearable for teachers and further makes it difficult for mainstream schools to function.

The above authors further asserted that the reluctance of parents to collaboratively engage in supporting learners with special education needs in mainstream schools is that they are never incorporated and included in the educational development of their children. Their findings however established that there is prevalence of a lack of cooperation and collaboration between parents and schools.

2.13.1.6 Lack of Proper Infrastructure

According to Rachmawati *et al.* (2016:587), teachers in mainstream schools should be able to embrace learners' differences, by structuring learners' learning activities in accordance with their learning capabilities (Andrew *et al.*, 2015:30). The above authors further stipulated that mainstream schools which intend on implementing inclusive education should ensure that their facilities are suitable to the diverse learning needs of learners (Pather, 2011:1106). Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel and Tlale (2015:6) observed that the shortage of equipment, teaching aids, and well-suited infrastructure poses as significant hindrances to teachers and the mainstream schooling system as a whole. From this, it is evident that lack of resources and proper facilities can be a detrimental factor to the mainstream schools for support purposes (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016:7).

2.13.2 Discriminatory and Prevailing Negative Perceptions

Pather (2011:1105) expresses the importance of observing learners' full inclusion in the mainstream education system. Where according to Bornman and Donohue (2015), for their participation to be crucial, the Department of Education would need to ensure that it happens in the absence of prevailing discriminatory attitudes. Furthermore, Hall and Theron (2016:1) argue that in order for learners with learning disabilities to be well-actualised in mainstream schools, they will need to be afforded the same opportunities as those whom are perceived as 'normal'. In that manner, walls of discrimination and segregation will be eradicated.

Dreyer (2017:3) carefully observes the unquestionable need for imparting appropriate attitudes and belief systems in mainstream schools as ways of developing an inclusive

curriculum in schools. Assertions held by Bruijn *et al.* (2012:21) are that the impartation of knowledge of systems and procedures within the pedagogical practices will assist to prevent negative perceptions prevailing within classrooms by the discriminatory and disabling attitudes of teachers (as influenced by the medical model).

Elias (2014:4) points out that the perceptions teachers have about learners with special education needs, whether positive or negative, have a lasting impact on them. Elias (2014) through the use of literature, documents that if dyslexia is not adequately addressed for one, it may lead to the feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement by learners.

According to Elias (2014:4) this tends to perpetuate depression and anti-social behaviour among learners with dyslexia. Her findings revealed that when teachers have limited access to information or training in dealing with learners with special education needs, they tend to demonstrate a sense of learned helplessness, which in turn, limits their level of required services as far as supporting learners' learning needs is concerned.

2.14 CHALLENGES IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Hodgson and Khumalo (2016:9) assert that there are various challenges affecting the support of learners with special education needs or disabilities within mainstream schools, and may be categorised as lack of teacher support; preparedness and administration issues; curriculum issues; lack of teacher support; lack of support at school level; negative teacher attitudes; policy implementation challenges and overcrowding.

2.14.1 Lack of Teacher and School Preparedness

Dreyer (2017:3) argues that, despite the efforts and necessary measures ensured by the Department of Education for equal access to quality education, there are learners whose learning needs are still not catered for. As a result of the inability of mainstream schools to retain support to learners' special learning needs, Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:8) revealed such learners end up as referral cases to special schools, or progressed to the next grade, while in some cases they are left to repeat a grade, thereby suffering low self-esteem, being victimised, and eventually dropping out of school.

Part of the challenge lies within the policy-based aspects and initiatives which are not enforced nor implemented; for example, according to the Education White Paper 6, a community-based approach is aimed at further developing support in mainstream stream schools as a recommendation. However, a contrary response has been identified by both teachers and parents that community involvement is non-existent, if not problematic (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016:7).

Earlier research conducted by Magare, Kitching and Ros (2010); Pieterse (2010); Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009) regarding educator preparedness for inclusive education in South Africa indicated that the shift towards inclusive education has had a strenuous effect on teachers, mainly due to lack of training in aspects of inclusive education practices, which Nel *et al.* (2016:2) and Dreyer (2017:1) claims to be valid even a few years later, establishing that to a certain extent, teachers still lack practical professional training in responding to the educational needs of learners.

2.14.2 Curriculum Issues

Referring to the Education White Paper 6 (2001), and Guidelines of Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009), Donohue and Bornman (2014:8) argue that the curriculum seems not to be responsive to the learning needs of learners with special education needs, and even with guidelines given, the practicality to that effect lacks correlation. Furthermore, Andrew *et al.* (2015:30) explain that the challenge with the capacity of the curriculum to accommodate the diversity of learners, and administer support to their learning needs, is the required overall curriculum transformation (Cornelius & Balakrishnan, 2012:84). Mpofu and Shumba (2012:330) observe it as irregular for teachers to be expected to adapt their skills and expertise into a rigid curriculum which is not responsive to the learning needs of all learners, especially those with special education needs (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015:2).

2.14.3 Lack of Teacher Support and Training

It is the responsibility of the key role-players in mainstream schools to ensure the safety of all learners from negative stigmatisation, and stereotyping attitudes. Likewise, Pather (2012:1105) revealed that there is often negligence from schools and parents in preventing learners with special education needs from being socially isolated due to stigmatisation, and stereotyping attitudes.

For Hodgson and Khumalo (2016:9), frustrations and complaints from teachers have been as a result of the overpopulated classrooms, which makes it almost impossible to support all learners' learning needs. According to Engelbrecht and Green (2018:84), teachers tend to feel threatened by the demands and difficulties that lie with teaching in mainstream education settings, where they tend to doubt their ability to support learners' learning needs accordingly. Moreover, Bornman and Donohue (2015:3) proved such to occur as a result of lack of teacher support, training and preparation.

2.14.4 Lack of Support at School Level

Due to unfriendly school environments, learners experiencing barriers to learning are often discriminated against, and rejected due to being perceived as different by others. According to Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013,) this kind of discriminatory attitude occurs during extramural activities where intelligence has to be utilised, and due to their inability to operate at a much advanced cognitive and intellectual level, they get to be labelled as 'stupid'. Furthermore, Nel *et al.* (2016:2) emphasised the efforts that schools and the Department of Education would have to undertake in order to counteract existing barriers hindering support, thus bringing about an effective implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools, and support to learners with special education needs.

2.14.5 Negative Teacher Attitudes

According to Donohue and Bornman (2014:4), provisions of well-articulated policies, educational services and necessary means of support by the education system will be of little value and possibly fail, should the attitudes of key role players such as teachers, parents, and the local community not align themselves with the inclusive education vision of rendering support in mainstream schools.

Despite inclusive education policies embracing values of equality and diversity, learners with special education needs, and those who come from impoverished households tend to be viewed by both teachers and learners as slightly different (Cornelius & Balakrishnan, 2012:84). where it seems as though teachers are unable to comprehend their attitudes as being discriminatory and contradictory towards the right to access of education, which have been shown to be negative (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013:47).

2.14.6 Policy Implementation Challenges

According the Department of Education, the initial calculated efforts to support and implement the inclusive education policy were observed as insufficient, especially with the measures of translating it into practice. Thus alternatively, the Education White Paper 6 was articulated to device strategies on how to practically implement support needed to learners with special education needs and disabilities (White Paper 6, 2001).

Policy content should be comprehended as a main crucial factor ready to be translated into implementation (Guidelines for Full/Inclusive schools, 2009:29). This for du Plessis (2013:87) is regarded as a crucial aspect in establishing the directives for implementation. Sharma *et al.* (2013:3) further argue that policy contents with its outlined intentions are worthless if they do not serve or fulfil the needs of those who are affected.

In an effort to implement support in mainstream schools, the Department of Education documented several guidelines towards establishing full-service schools, as well as the adaption strategies of the curriculum to meet the needs of learners with special education needs (White Paper 6, 2001). However, according to du Plessis (2013: 86) and Donohue and Bornman (2014:7), there has not been any real action documented on the implementation plans.

A real concern for du Plessis (2013:86) has been about the year 2020 implementation plan that has been behind schedule. Though necessary steps have been taken to achieve the initiative, the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support implementation plan has been scheduled from the year 2015 to the year 2019, and expected to have reached the maturity stage by the end of 2019 (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014:22), which has not been the case.

However, a serious drawback of the Department of Education is that the implementation of the White Paper 6 and SIAS strategy is still in the process of being finalised. This reveals the short-comings of the Department of Education. Furthermore, the non-functional and non-operational full-service schools within their jurisdiction are show to be of great concern (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016:9).

2.14.7 Overcrowding

For Dreyer (2017:2), the large number of learners in mainstream schools indeed tends to pose frustrations to teachers, which alternatively limits them on attending to the majority of the learning needs of learners with special education needs. In addition, large class sizes have been identified as a hindrance of support in inclusive education practices; among other contributing factors, mismanagement of disruptive behaviour is often reported as a result of overcrowding (Yeo *et al.*, 2014:4).

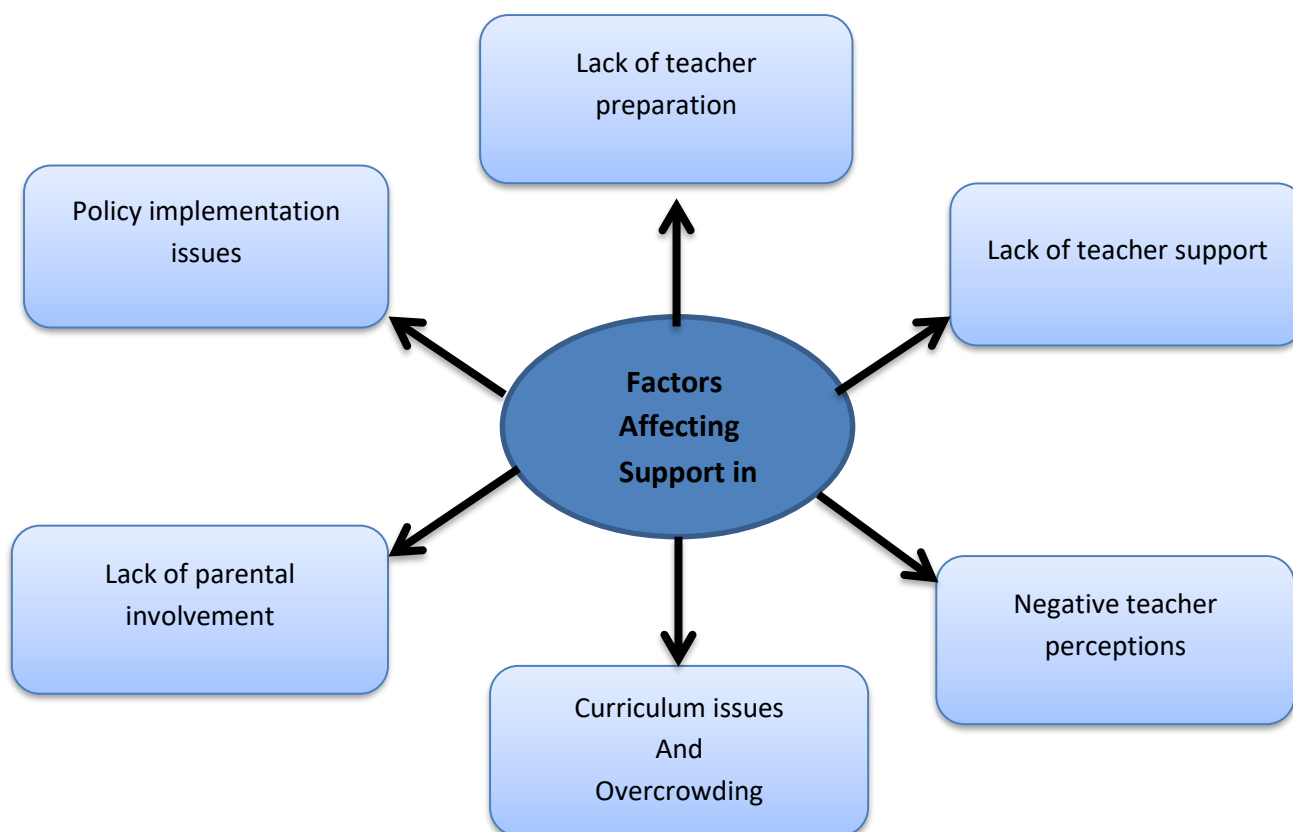


Figure 2.2 Factors influencing support to learners with special education needs

2.15 SUPPORT STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES

The inclusion of learners with special education needs can be made effective through enforcing positive attitudes of support, where all necessary resources are provided, with the purpose of transitioning mainstream education settings into inclusive education practices. Furthermore, actualising learners with special education needs in their learning environment may lead to peaceable inclusive education practices, through which teachers as leading role players may construct learning activities conducive to learners' diverse needs. Such learning activities should be structured to prepare them for real life events (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018:204).

2.15.1 Active Teaching

According to Morewood and Condo (2012:16), this mode of teaching does not require a practical instructional system or educational setting, but requires the heart of an individual with a purpose to make a difference in the lives of others. Such devotion and dedication in teaching guarantees care and support for learners, even in inclusive education settings. In

addition, Mitiku *et al.* (2014:131) suggest that teachers need to implement alternative teaching procedures for active learning and participation to occur. Consequently, this will contribute to fostering learners' active interaction within their social and physical environment, accompanied by comprehensive skills and suitable pedagogies (Sharma *et al.*, 2012:6).

2.15.2 Differentiated Instructional Approach

With regards to the strategies that may be used to offer support within inclusive education practices, Danielson, cited by Rachmawati *et al.* (2016: 587), proved by literature and through research findings, that using differentiated instruction is the art of professionalism for teachers. That in the process of effective teaching, the teacher should identify diversity of learning needs of learners, and utilize differentiated instructional approaches in order to attend to learners' diverse learning needs (Webster, 2015:994).

2.15.3 Alternative Pedagogy

Among other strategies that may be utilised around the issue of positive support in mainstream education, is the alternative pedagogy in the classroom, which is opposed to the traditional instruction normally based on "drill and memorisation" (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018:201). The Salamanca Statement proposed that sound pedagogy, which has to be learner-centred, will have to be "adapted to the needs of the child rather than the child fitted to preordained assumptions regarding the pace and nature of the learning process" (UNESCO, 1994:7). In essence, teachers should be able to incorporate other methods or alternative methods of instruction in their inclusive classrooms, to provide for every learner's special learning needs in an equal proportion (National Planning Commission, 2011:304).

2.15.4 Embracing Diversity

Teachers and schools should appreciate and celebrate diversity, and that, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, begins with recognising rights, an equal basis of participation in education, full development of human potential and sense of dignity (Department of Social Development, 2015:16).

Schools should further view diversity in terms of learners' race, culture, social and economic backgrounds, as well as learners' ethnicity (UNESCO, 1994). For Rachmawati *et al.* (2016: 587) the embrace of diversity should be observed as a tool that prevents negative teacher attitudes within inclusive education practices, or rather prevents teachers from being barriers to the learning process with their widely held negative perceptions towards practices of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

2.15.5 Clinical Teaching

MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013:46) posit that a diverse and inclusive classroom with complex educational needs calls for a teacher with positive perceptions, who modifies teaching as new needs arise. With different strategies that can be used, a teacher in a classroom will have to become a 'clinical watcher', relating with every learner individually.

According to the National Development Plan 2030 of Persons with Disabilities as Equal Citizens, teachers are supposed to be acquainted with adequate knowledge on how to include learners with various disabilities. This proposes that teachers have inherent skills of carefully observing each learner's learning process (Department of Social Development, 2015:49).

The clinical teacher can obtain information about the learner, such as the learner's current cognitive developmental level, learners' way of thinking, and level of language comprehension, together with proper intervention strategies (Hoppey, 2016, 14).

Schilder *et al.* (2017:1072) argue that inclusive education practices may be implemented or practiced by imparting support and care collaboratively. Similarly, for Hoppey (2016:14), this can be achieved through 'clinical teaching' or through 'remedial and educational therapy,' a process where a teacher would display qualities of someone who is enthusiastic, sensitive, optimistic and serious about learning.

2.16 ADDRESSING FACTORS INFLUENCING SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Two factors which have been a concern in the South African schools system as far as support to the diverse learning needs of learners in mainstream education practices is concerned are the implementation of the directives of the policy of the Education White Paper 6, coupled with intervention strategies in assisting teachers to cope with the necessary learning needs (Education White Paper 6, 2001:10).

According to Donohue and Bornman (2014), as well as Hodgson and Khumalo (2016), this has been due to the following aspects:

- Lack of clarity and poor implementation of the policy document.
- Negative teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education practices.
- Vague and ambiguous inclusive education directives provided to teachers.
- Lack of regular teacher training from the District-Based Support Teams (DBST).

In order to establish positive learner support within inclusive education practices, more so for learners with special education needs, the following measures and incentives may be adhered to:

- Building the capacity of support through increase of teachers' knowledge in their inclusive teaching techniques or approaches, employing differentiated teaching, and modification of classroom activities,
- Reinforcing active parental involvement, particularly for parents who refuse to accept that their child has special learning needs or barriers to learning,
- Embark on comprehensive school-based training programmes in areas where an individual teacher lacks particular skills (Donohue & Bornman, 2014:10),
- Re-evaluation of teacher professional development, revision of curriculum approaches and collaboration processes towards the support needed for learners with diverse learning needs,
- Addressing the existing negative teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with special education needs,
- Performance evaluation, based on observable progress of an individual learner (Basic Education Department, 2015).

2.17 MONITORING OF FUNDING TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES

According to the Report on the Implementation of Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (Basic Education Department, 2015:51), it is stated that in ensuring an effective distribution of funds to special schools, full-service schools and mainstream schools collectively, a policy guiding such distribution of funds is being constructed and developed to avoid discrepancies and inconsistencies.

Moreover, the report reveals monetary funding to have been inconsistently distributed or allocated among provinces since the year 2007, which has occurred more so in the poorer provinces such as Limpopo and the Eastern Cape. However, such funding has been found to be highly effective in provinces such as the Western Cape, Free State and the North West province; it has helped to build greater capacity within the provincial, district and circuit offices, thus strengthening support in the inclusive education system (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016:13).

For inclusive education practices to fully function and to advance in the same proportion across the country, and in comparison to other countries, funding would have to be made available, although this often poses a problem (Ametepée & Anastasiou, 2015:150). Secondly, underlying discrepancies, and other aspects which lead to funds being misappropriated would have to be thoroughly investigated. New incentives on how funds are distributed and monitored would have to be put into effect (Michael & Oboegbulem, 2013:315).

2.18 DIFFERENTIATING THE CURRICULUM

According to the National Planning Commission (2011:304) one of the major strategies where improvements to support learners with special education needs may be impacted, is through the use of instructional and curriculum differentiation. The curriculum has been widely discussed as a notable barrier to the learning process of learners in special and mainstream schools, where according to Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009:29) the following aspects are considered as elements which such barriers arise from:

- Content
- Classroom organisation and management
- Methods and process used in teaching
- The pace of teaching and time available to complete the curriculum
- Learning material and equipment utilised
- Assessment of learning

To combat and completely eradicate such barriers, Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009:29) suggest that flexible delivery of lessons and processes of teaching and learning will allow the curriculum to be flexible “across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners.” In addition, the District Based Support Team (DBST) is tasked to assist teachers at various institutions in incorporating flexible teaching materials, and flexible assessment methods, as well as providing additional support material and assessment instruments (Berg & Schneider, 2012:128).

The available measures put forward by the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009:30) propose the following strategies:

- Comprehension of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to effectively include all learners.
- Proper and adequate comprehension of the assessment framework within the NCS within its practical assessment tools.

- The undergoing of inclusive education support training in aspects of curriculum materials.
- Teachers' reflection of their provisional inclusive education practices and monitoring of their own personal abilities.
- Evaluation of strategies used by teachers as a direct reflection of their learners' learning needs.
- Teachers' holistic comprehension of the learning needs of their learners.
- Reinforcement of peer support among learners as influenced by the teacher.

2.19 MATERIAL RESOURCES

One of the strategies through which support to learners with special education needs may be rendered in mainstream schools is through the availability of material resources. Recommendations outlined in the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (2009:38) include the following:

- On-going support services made available by organisations and private trusts to schools, together with assistance through assistive devices provided by the Department of Health, or by health care services.
- Access to assistive devices and specialised equipment as part of their QLTSM budget.
- Arrangements with collaborative organisations such as resource centres, special schools, hospitals or health care services, and the DBSTs should be made by the mainstream schools in order to adequately assess learners, and allocate devices and materials fitting to individual learning needs.

2.20 CONCLUSION

In this chapter relevant literature relating to the objectives of the current research study have been discussed in depth. Appropriate literature material has been discussed in relation to the aim of the current research study investigating the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. Assertions under different topics relevant to the objectives guiding the current research study have been sufficiently presented in proportion to the demands of the research objectives, the first research objective being 'to determine how learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng', followed by 'exploring possible factors that influence the support presently given to learners with special education needs,' and lastly 'to discover support strategies needed for learners with special education needs,

in the mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng.’ The next chapter will present the methods employed in conducting the current study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the qualitative investigation took place, providing information regarding the research design; population and sample; data collection; data analysis and interpretation, and trustworthiness, as well as ethical considerations of the research study. Methods utilised in this study were employed with the purpose of investigating support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Andriopoulos and Slater (2013:386) define ‘paradigm’ as a collection of logical interpreted assumptions, concepts, or propositions about existing social realities. It is referred to as a ‘theoretical perspective’ indicating the manner in which we look at and perceive the world as well as perceived assumptions people have regarding what is important in their world. Furthermore, Creswell (2014:37) conceptualises paradigm as a perspective held by researchers based on common values, shared assumptions and practices which can be brought down to an approach one adopts when executing a research.

The paradigm of this research is social constructivism, and through the use and application of this paradigm, subjective knowledge and understanding of teachers’ experiences was investigated regarding support within mainstream schools of Mafikeng (Wahyuni, 2012:70). Through social constructivism, the researcher intended to understand how the research participants understood or perceived support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng (Daniel, 2016:98).

In this regard, the information gathered has been provided by the research participants’ personal and subjective experiences, where the researcher utilised a phenomenological approach, which is an approach used to describe, interpret and make sense of the experiences of respondents about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014:342). With that, the researcher was in a better position to understand the participants’ relayed experiences, and

beliefs as the truth, and a reality which has been socially constructed by them as they interact with their environment.

According to Mertens (2015:237) and Oosthuizen *et al.* (2017:59), social constructivism stands by the ontological assumptions that observes reality as something that is not absolute, but rather socially and actively constructed by its participants, as they are confronted with multiple realities on daily basis, and where subjective assumptions and meanings are created by individuals as a result of their life experiences regarding certain things and aspects.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Haradhan (2018:16) conceptualises qualitative research as a research method where the collected data would be considered rich in describing conversations and the environments that people live in. In similar terms, the main aim of using the qualitative research method in this current research study was to understand the personal, subjective and internal information regarding support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. For Kielman, Cataldo and Seeley (2012:9), qualitative research methods are generally in-depth and open-ended, meaning they study people and events in their natural settings.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design refers to a plan and a blueprint of how the researcher intends to conduct the research (Trotter, 2012:399). Wahyuni (2012:72) refers to the research design as a plan of arriving here from there, where 'here' implies the initial question to respond to, and 'there' as a set of conclusions and answers discovered. In essence, the research design can be explained as the procedure which the researcher undertakes for conducting the research study, where the most significant aspects of how data will be collected, described, interpreted and planned are elaborated. It is however important to note that when it comes to a qualitative research design, there is no one structure as one would find in quantitative research (Brooks & Normore, 2015:799).

This research was qualitative in nature, conducted within a natural setting, meaning there were not any imposed influences on the variables or any direct influence within the research site, and on any of the selected research participants. The site selection, together with the participants required for the study, were identified in line with the recommendations stipulated by Walliman (2011:9).

The use of qualitative research design is to understand that reality and truth are socially constructed by people's everyday experiences and beliefs. According to the assertions posed by Mertens (2015:238) and Kielmann *et al* (2012:9), qualitative research methods allow participants to have different values, beliefs, and socially constructed meanings.

According to Mishra and Alok (2017:3), qualitative research methods usually involve a detailed explanation of the phenomenon in question, where information is collected by means of selected data collection strategies e.g. interviews. Such methods are non-statistical and non-numerical in nature. For Conrad and Serlin (2011:149), qualitative research methods are inductive in nature, where the researcher will be compelled to construct theories, conceptualisations as well as explanations narrated by the participants. Thus in the current study, data was collected within natural settings, that being schools, through interactions with the research participants. Furthermore, the participants' responses were not manipulated or tampered with in any way.

3.5 POPULATION AND STUDY SETTING

From the population of the study, which consisted of all secondary schools in Mafikeng, the target group was drawn purposefully from selected secondary schools, based in Ngaka Modiri Molema Municipality, Mafikeng district. The target group within the selected schools consisted of six teachers from eight secondary schools, teaching grade 8 classes, with a minimum of 5 years teaching experience. Out of eight secondary schools, a sample of 6 schools was drawn. The 5 years minimum teaching experience requirement is based on the fact that learners within lower grades in secondary schools tend to display cognitive and intellectual complexities where teachers are required to incorporate special needs education skills, with the ability to embrace diversity of learning and teaching in order to attend to learners' diverse learning needs. According to Kielmann *et al.* (2012:19), the manner in which the sample of the research is designed, and its sample size is drawn, depends on the aims and objectives of the study.

Table 3.1 Population and Sample

	Population	Sample
Schools	8	6
Teachers	48	36

3.6 SAMPLING

Sampling refers to the specific manner in which data sources are selected in order to collect research data with the purpose of addressing the research's objectives (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbin, 2015:1775). Data in this research study was drawn purposefully.

3.6.1 Purposeful Sampling

Purposeful sampling is described as the selection of the research participants according to the aims and objectives of the research study. Furthermore, purposeful sampling is designed to provide the study with content-rich data for the study in depth (Benoot, Karin & Bilsen, 2016:5).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

According to Creswell (2014:138), qualitative research design follows observation and in-depth interviews as methods of collecting and interpreting data. The data is often in the form of verbal quotes. Mertens (2015:386) and Kumar (2011:131) assert that an efficient way of storing data collected from interviews is through high quality tapes for audio recording purposes, while in other cases, researchers often record their interviews in notes during interview proceedings (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2017:278). However, in this study, the researcher audio-recorded interviews, and jotted down the participants' responses during interviews. Consequently, audio-recorded verbal responses were transcribed at a later stage; this was to ensure that accurate data was not missed. According to Kumar (2011:43), the manner in which the researcher stores data has a remarkable impact on how data is analysed and interpreted.

The data was collected to actualise the research aim and objectives with the intention of determining the respondents' overall understanding and perception of support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. Data collection strategies included focus groups interviews, observations and field notes which assisted in studying educational support-related aspects within mainstream education settings.

This research study utilised focus group interviews in order to yield the expected research outcomes depicting the research participants' opinions, beliefs and personal experiences regarding the phenomenon.

The purpose of these interviews was to enquire about the participants' overall perspective regarding support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng, where essential aspects pertained to the following:

- The current nature of support offered in their schools;

- Factors that influence support in their schools
- Strategies that can be utilised to effect support given to learners with special education needs in their schools.

Furthermore, observations and field notes made part of the data collection methods in this study. For this study, qualitative design was deemed suitable as it yielded constructive information relevant to the research objectives. Conrad and Serlin (2011:148) describe qualitative research as a method that focuses on the comprehensive understanding of peoples' experiences and life circumstances together with their everyday thoughts and perceptions.

3.7.1 Interview Schedules

For Jamshed (2014:87), interview guides could also be referred to as interview schedules where the researcher formulates a list of topics and questions more likely to reinforce descriptors that inform the research questions posed. A set of predetermined interview questions was prepared as an instrument that inspired participants to engage in a fruitful discussion yielding adequate data for the study.

It is, however, advised by Flick (2018:2237) to caution the researcher to prepare the interview questions in advance, before the commencement of interviews. The interview questions were structured and formulated in line with the aims and objectives of the research study, which was to determine:

- How learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng;
- To explore the factors that influence the support presently given to learners with special education needs;
- To explore support strategies needed for learners with special education needs in the mainstream secondary schools in Mafeking.

3.7.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in order to test and assess whether the procedure was going to concur with what was proposed in the study, carefully looking at how questions were asked, and how they were responded to (Flick, 2018:239). The pilot study was conducted informally in one secondary school to assess whether questions asked were appropriate and whether they resonated with the research's objectives.

3.7.3 Focus Group Interviews

According to Mertens (2015; 382) and Kielmann *et al.* (2012:34), the conversation that exists between the research participants and the researcher as the facilitator in the focus group interview is there to inspire more fruitful conversation regarding the phenomenon, which lays out research participants' personal experiences as data for the research.

Furthermore, with the research data being qualitative, the interview questions were open-ended with the purpose of eliciting personal and more meaningful experiences from the research participants. Moreover, the decision around focus group interviews as a data collection strategy in this study was selected with the purpose of evoking a strong sense of beliefs and reasoning regarding the research participants' personal experiences of the phenomenon.

This research study made use of focus group interviews (face-to-face, open-ended and unstructured) as a data collection strategy to obtain information that would answer the research questions (Qu & Dumay, 2011:245).

The researcher made use of an audio tape recorder to record the research participants' verbal responses. These were then transcribed in detail, transferred into a written format, where an individual research participant's responses were typed verbatim and saved into a document. The researcher was the one facilitating the whole interview process. The pre-determined interview questions and the observation tool are attached as appendices and field notes details well documented.

3.7.4 Observations

Observations are defined by Flick (2018:315) as a process through which an individual develops a close proximal relationship with the population in question, or those studied within their environment to witness and gain an insight into their reality. Similarly, for Petty, observations made by Thomson and Stew (2011:381) are helpful to uncover issues related to potential deception of research participants during interviews; Petty *et al.* (2011:381) see observations taking a sequence of steps as follows:

- Observation of the site or setting in which the phenomenon is to be researched, with permission obtained.
- When at the site during the observation process, the researcher needs to determine who and what to observe, as well as the duration that needs to be spent observing.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher visited teachers' classrooms to observe the general nature of support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools, as well as the intervention strategies employed where support is needed. The nature of this observation was non-participant observation.

3.7.5 Field Notes

Field notes were taken during the interview and observation process. They were written down to make sense of the obtained data as a result of what was being narrated by the research participants. Silverman (2013:68) recommends that the researcher occupies a quiet corner to discreetly jot down notes of importance based on what was observed. Silverman further asserts that upon field notes being hand written, a full version needs to be fully documented digitally into a word processor document. Field notes were therefore taken throughout the research process where interview and observation proceedings were involved.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The collected data of the research study investigating support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng were analysed using thematic and content analysis methods, where the researcher attempted to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations and determinations on the phenomenon under study (Mertens, 2015:236).

3.8.1 Content Analysis

In this study, data was analysed and interpreted using content analysis. Data was directly analysed as relayed by the research participants. In addition, data was further analysed by breaking it down into categories as directed by the research questions, in order to manage the large flow of data collected. Such categories were formulated through the direction of the research questions. All this was done with the purpose of addressing each single unit of data appropriately (Flick, 2018:258).

3.8.2 Thematic Analysis

To analyse and interpret data, the researcher used thematic analysis. According to Flick (2018:259) thematic analysis refers to a process of induction whereby the researcher processes data by reading and coding the data to form a clear understanding about what the participants have said regarding the research topic in general. This takes the form of a process of six steps, see figure 3.1.

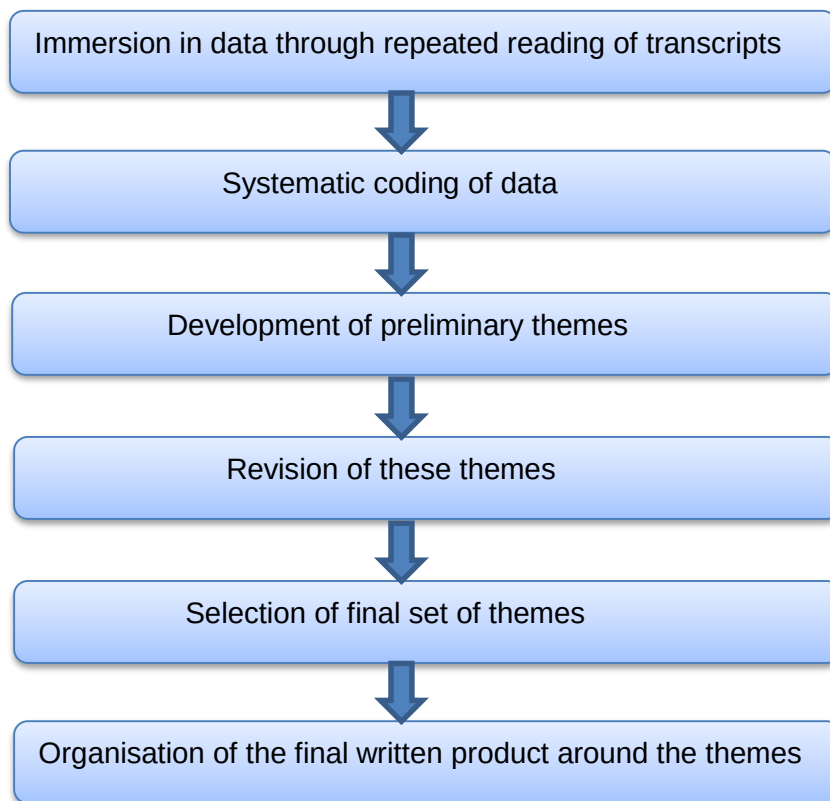


Figure 3.1 Six steps of thematic analysis (Flick, 2018:259).

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Within the current research study, the researcher determined the credibility and dependability of the received data through the use of triangulation methods of data collection, and data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher utilised the process of member checking, where, after the data was analysed, the research participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their responses.

3.9.1 Member Checking

A method utilised in the research study was member-checking. Member-checking is the process where, after interview questions are answered and recorded, the researcher then approaches the research participants with the purpose of verifying that the content of the transcripts and interpretations thereof are accurately documented, and not misunderstood or altered by the researcher (Bolderston, 2012:74).

3.9.2 Dependability and Credibility

According to Creswell (2014:276), ensuring dependability and credibility within qualitative research has to do with conducting an ethically oriented investigation that has been carefully attended to, in the manner in which data is collected, analysed and interpreted. Similarly, for Silverman (2011:367), both dependability and credibility are important aspects of field research which can be achieved through standardised methods, through which the researcher will use field notes and prepare transcripts. Furthermore, Kumar (2011:166) believes that dependability and credibility would imply the examination of the extent to which the process of data collection and data analysis are adequately applied in a compatible manner.

3.9.2.1 Dependability

Silverman (2011:630) defines dependability as the degree to which the results of the study are free from influences of inaccurate findings. This implies that, should the researcher replicate the same data collection procedure, the same outcomes would still be produced without any tampering or alterations. According to Babbie (2010:177), dependability can be addressed through employing detailed field notes and a good-quality tape.

To reinforce the dependability in this study, the researcher provided a detailed account of the aims and objectives of the study, together with possible premises which informed how the study was carried out, as well as adequate and rational reasons for such decisions.

3.9.2.2 Credibility

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), credibility is an equivalence of internal validity, and thereby concerned with truth value. The researcher may genuinely submit a critical investigation of credibility in the findings through triangulation and member-checking, methods by which the truth of the solution could be found to ensure credibility through combining different methods of data collection and findings thereof; and respondents' credibility, which entails going back "to the subject with tentative results and refine them in light of our subjects' reactions" (Kumar, 2011:166).

To guard against any potential bias and emotional influences on the research's outcome, the researcher limited such by considering issues related to open-endedness and humanism which placed the researcher in a better position to differentiate between emotional and rational responses (Silverman, 2011:177).

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical measures are an important aspect of research, especially within social settings where humans are concerned, since ethical issues are pervasive and complex in nature. According to Daniel (2016:98), ethics is a cluster of moral principles agreed upon by socially constructed groups, where there are rules governing what would be behaviourally accepted or not. Similarly, for Babbie (2012:60), aspects such as avoidance of harm, informed consent, deception of subjectivity, violation of privacy, actions and competence of researchers, release and publication of findings, and debriefing of respondents are ethical issues and measures which should be thoroughly considered and adhered to at all times.

3.10.1 Permission to Conduct the Research

Quad (2016:1) proposes that it is imperative for the researcher to seek permission from all relevant stakeholders, officials and management before entering their premises with the intention of gathering data. After the research study was ethically cleared by the North-West University Ethical Clearance Committee, the researcher sought permission from the Department of Education, Mafikeng Area Office, in order to conduct the research in eight mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. Permission was further requested from the school principals before collecting data.

3.10.2 Informed Consent

Upon informing the prospective research participants of the purpose of the research, procedures, risks and benefits, informed consent was obtained from all the teacher participants. Measures were taken to ensure that the teacher participants understood the written information on the consent forms in the language that they fully comprehended (Shahnazarian, Hagemann, Aburto & Rose, 2017:2). Furthermore, participants were requested to participate and indicated their interest to participate through written letters.

3.10.3 Voluntary Participation

The researcher informed the research participants of their right to withdraw from the research study at any given point, further explaining that their participation was voluntary; meaning no participant was to be forced to participate against their will (Silverman, 2011:98). In essence, this ensured that none of the research participants were to be exploited, bullied or coerced into participating in the study (Babbie, 2012:67). Moreover, the research participants were fully notified of their democratic power and ability to choose and to decide for themselves without any hindrances (Silverman, 2011:98).

3.10.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality

According to Babbie (2012:71), anonymity is defined as a process in which the identity of the research participants is not disclosed and remains hidden. In this regard, the research participants were assured that none of their identities would be revealed in any report or record (Babbie, 2010:95). Identities of both participating schools and their teacher participants were not revealed; this was to be done with the purpose of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. One of the ways in which anonymity and confidentiality were utilised was by forbidding the research participants to include their names, home addresses, or school names on any form they filled. As a result, coded names were used to keep participants' names and information confidential.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter provided detailed information regarding how the research was conducted. The following chapter describes the empirical steps taken to analyse the collected data of the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research study was to investigate support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. This chapter served to describe the qualitative data gathered through the empirical steps detailed in chapter 3. The research study has analysed the data according to the focus group interview questions, observations and field notes, and is discussed in this chapter in detail.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 4.1 Number of participants per institution by gender (Interviews)

Institution	Number	Males	Females
1. School A	6	2	4
2. School B	6	1	5
3. School C	6	3	3
4. School D	6	4	2
5. School E	6	1	5
6. School F	6	3	3
Total	36	14	22

Within the first age category (26 years to 34 years), the research had fifteen participants represented, seven of whom were males and eight female. The second age category (35 years to 44 years) was represented by twelve individuals, with seven female individuals and only five males represented. And lastly, within the third age category (45 years to 65 years), the research sample had a total number of nine research participants represented, three males and six female participants.

Table 4.2 Age and number of participants by gender (Interviews)

Age Category	Number of participants represented	Males	females
1. 26 years to 34 years	15	7	8
2. 35 years to 44 years	12	5	7
3. 45 years to 65 years	9	3	6

The research targeted teachers who are teaching grade 8 learners, mainly due to the fact that secondary schools admit new learners at their elementary entry from grade 8; as a result, teachers teaching grade 8 classes tend to have a first-hand encounter with these learners. This placed these teachers in a better position of identifying learners who are academically struggling and those with special education needs.

Table 4.3 Number of participants per institution by gender (Observations)

Institution	Number	Males	Females
1. School A	2	0	2
2. School B	2	1	1
3. School C	2	0	2
4. School D	2	1	1
5. School E	2	2	0
6. School F	2	1	1
Total	12	5	7

Table 4.3 outlines the age, gender and number of the participants being observed.

Table 4.4 Age and number of participants by gender (Observations)

Age Category	Number of participants represented	Males	females
1. 26 years to 34 years	5	3	2
2. 35 years to 44 years	4	1	3
3. 45 years to 65 years	3	1	2

4.3 IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES

A qualitative data analysis process was followed to analyse and interpret the data collected by means of content and thematic analysis. The data collected was first read carefully during the first scanning.

During the first scanning, the researcher identified 'units of information' which in the analysis process formed the basis of categories leading to the actual themes of data analysis and interpretation. In this process, the transcripts, including the collected field notes, were read, and re-read; and the tape recorded responses listened to over and over again to grasp the actual reality and meaning. This was done with the purpose of addressing each single unit of data appropriately (Fick, 2018:258).

Themes from Interviews

The main themes identified in the interviews proceedings are as follows:

- Learner support needs
- Collaborative networks
- Challenges around support of learners with special education needs
- Perceptions of teachers in mainstream secondary schools

Table 4.3 outlines the main categories which guided the findings of the research study on focus group interviews.

Table 4.5 Main themes and categories (Interviews)

THEME 1	LEARNER SUPPORT NEEDS
Category 1	Nature of support administered
Category 2	Intervention support strategies
THEME 2	COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS
Category 1	Effectiveness of District-Based Support Team (DBST) and the School-Based Support Team (SBST).
Category 2	Lack of training and resources
Category 3	Parental support
THEME 3	CHALLENGES AROUND SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS
Category 1	Lack of time
Category 2	Overcrowded classrooms
Category 3	The misuse of learner progression over Implementation of support and care
Category 4	Work-overload
THEME 4	PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON THE INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The main themes and categories tabled above emerged from the reading of the transcripts and field notes.

Themes from observations

From the observations, the researcher identified 'units of information' that served as the basis for the categories. The developed categories and themes were guided by the aims and objectives of the current research study.

The main themes identified in the observations were as follows:

- Rigid instructional pedagogies
- Inclusivity values
- Support inhibition
- Support strategies

Table 4.6 depicts the main themes and categories that guided the analysis of the observations.

Table 4.6 Main themes and categories (Observations)

THEME 1	RIGID INSTRUCTIONAL PEDAGOGIES
Category 1	Unresponsive lessons
THEME 2	INCLUSIVE VALUES
Category 1	Accommodation of diverse learning needs
THEME 3	SUPPORT INHIBITION
Category 1	Over-population
Category 2	Limited contact time
Category 3	Lack of preparedness
THEME 4	SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Table 4.6 shows four main themes consisting of a number of categories. The above themes and categories will be discussed in detail in order to present the findings based on what was observed from the observation process.

The contents of the observations were guided by the items listed in the observation tool (see Appendix E); the responses were therefore informed by what the item required.

4.4 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS RESULTS

The above table 4.3 highlighted four main themes, each main theme consisting of categories. At this stage, the themes and the categories were discussed in detail, presenting the major findings based on the focus group interviews. Verbatim quotes extracted from the raw data were used to confirm and establish the findings.

4.4.1 Learner Support Needs

Table 4.7 Sampled responses on learner support needs

Research Question: What learning needs do you encounter among learners in your Classroom?
Teacher 1, School A: <i>"They can't read and if they can't read then they can't answer the questions in the examination."</i>
Teacher 2, School B: <i>"They can't cope in class, we have also noticed that they tend to have a low concentration span and unable to pay attention for a longer period of time."</i>
Teacher 4, School E: <i>"There are few who have visual problems and they can't see, in that regard, they tend to all want to seat at the front row. They often come from abusive families, in that way if the learners already has barriers to learning it worsens the situation."</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>"One of the needs I have observed is a need for extra time when doing activities as well as during examinations."</i>
Teacher 4, School D: <i>"Cognitive needs, for example processing new information and thinking Independently."</i>
Teacher 3, School F: <i>"Other learners do not have parental support, as means of assistance or internet provision to complete projects, and to some extent it is because other learners are in situations of child headed families, where now they assume the responsibilities of caring for the younger ones."</i>

Views expressed by the research participants (see table 4.7) reiterates the facts that learners in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng:

- Encounter learning difficulties of reading,
- Are not able to cope in class due to lack of concentration or paying attention,
- Have visual problems as well as cognitive-related problems,
- And some learners come from abusive families and impoverished families which directly or indirectly hinders their academic development.

Teacher 3 of School D expressed that:

“It’s often difficult to tell if my learners have any learning needs specific to the diagnosed learning barriers, because some come from impoverished areas or societies, I think that tends to affect their concentration and focus in class.”

Teacher 5 from school A when asked, “In what ways do you include (administer care and support) to learners with special education needs in your classroom?” relayed the following:

“Being a teacher back then used to be easier because we used to be part of the community and lived in the social setting of the community; we would know the challenges different families had, but today we have learners coming from all over, we do not know that when he/she is leaving schooling what is he/she is going back to... We would know that they struggle doing their homework or work in class, but it then becomes difficult assisting when necessary.”

Based on the above responses, factors related to the socio-economic aspect of the learner and issues around learners in child-headed households (see teacher 3 of school F, Table 4.4) contributes to teachers not knowing if learners in question have barriers to learning, or if such barriers to learning are rather perpetuated by the above mentioned factors.

Furthermore, learners are reported to be lacking in their reading and writing abilities, where quite a substantial number have been observed to show signs of low concentration span. It is therefore reported that such learners often fall victim to bullying, *“They are often ridiculed in class as a result of their barriers to learning or struggle”*, said teacher 5, of school D.

Out of great concern and frustration, teacher 6 from school C, exclaimed:

“The biggest factor would be time! With the curriculum we have, it becomes too much! Since we have a lot to cover, it becomes difficult to focus on learners who are struggling, at the expense of those who are not struggling.”

As already asserted by other respondents, teacher 6, of school C’s response shows the need for ‘more time’ to be a requirement for the completion of classroom activities. This in turn, tends to confront teachers with a class that is divided as far as learners’ learning needs are concerned. To some learners, the teacher would be too fast, while to others, too slow; a task which teachers profess not to have been trained to handle.

From school C, teacher 4 conveyed that:

(Deeply thinking... in a calm tone)... *“We have learners who find it difficult to follow with other learners in the same speed, and those who find it difficult to write and comprehend information being given to them, in most instances, they are discouraged to further*

participate in the learning process, and yes indeed often the resources we use to foster teaching and learning is not accommodative to their needs, and they do feel often left behind.”

Teacher 5 from school D in anticipation to contribute to the discussion at hand stated:

“Firstly I think there is a need of variety for the media we use for teaching, to accommodate all learners, maybe extra media platforms may be used to enhance their own learning and increase participation in class, because in most instances we tend to use the traditional medium such as a chalk board; there may be a need to cater to those who struggle academically.”

The responses of both teacher 4, from school C and teacher 5, from school D suggest that teachers need to make the learning environment conducive both for learners with special education needs, and those without special education needs; where those who do have special education needs would not feel compelled or pressured to compete with those without the special learning needs.

Their responses further assert that there is a need to incorporate accommodative resources (which are inclusive) in the teaching and learning processes.

4.4.1.1 Nature of support administered

Table 4.8 Sampled responses on nature of support administered

Research Question: In what ways do you include (administer care and support) learners with special education needs in your classroom?
Teacher 3, School A: <i>“Not having the skills to administer care and support to learners with special learning needs, I find myself helpless.”</i>
Teacher 2, School B: <i>“I am not trained to perform the skills of a special needs education teacher and I am not have not being trained for that.”</i>
Teacher 4, School E: <i>“We report special needs cased to the department of education, but often it does not solve the problem.”</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>“For those who cannot see properly during examinations we prepare A3 question papers for them to see.”</i>
Teacher 4, School D: <i>“It is difficult to include them with limited resources, we often want to include them, but the absence of the resources becomes the problem.”</i>

The displayed teachers' responses (see Table 4.5), on the nature of support teachers administer to the learners with special education needs reveal the following issues of concern:

- Lack of skills when coming to supporting learners' learning needs;
- Not having attained any training or preparation to be in the position of administering care and support to the learning needs of learners with special education needs;
- The ineffectiveness of the District Based Support Team (DBST) in matters relating to requested services;
- And lastly, the limited amount or absence of required resources to include, accommodate and support the diverse learning needs of learners.

Teacher 4, from school A, in his response to the manner in which he administers support to his learners, outlined the following:

"There are learners that as a teacher you could see that he/she is going through certain psychological or emotional problems, perhaps abuse or negligence of some sort from home, that would on its own make it more difficult for the learner to concentrate in class; however it becomes hard as a teacher to intervene in such circumstances, all that I can do is to report my suspicions to the school management team."

A commonly experienced challenge which limits teachers from dealing with clinical, behavioural and cognitive demands of learners in an interventionist approach within a classroom setting, appears to be lack of training and preparation as already asserted by most teachers (see Table 4.3).

Teacher 6, from school D, disclosed his employed nature of support in the following terms:

"It is very difficult to strike a balance, but the ideal way is to prepare materials that accommodate learners with the lowest intellectual capacities and the ones at the highest intellectual capacity, while not forgetting the ones functioning in the middle level."

While teacher 4 from school F rather responded:

"I do not know, I don't even know if I have learners who have special education needs, so it would be unfair for me to say this is what I would do, because I have never had the training and I have not had the experience."

Teachers' responses varied greatly in almost all schools, where some teachers affirmed they have support methods in practice, despite challenges confronted by, for example, teacher 6,

of school D, while other teachers were to some extent unaware of the existence of learners with barriers to learning in their learning institution, for example, teacher 4, from school F.

4.4.1.2 Intervention support strategies

Despite the challenges experienced around the issue of support, teacher 4, of school B relayed his intervention strategy in this manner:

“The best thing is to know them; if you can identify them then it becomes easy to deal with them, but if you treat learners as a class holistically then it becomes difficult to know who is struggling or who of the learners have difficulties. The best thing is to identify them and after identifying them, then attend to them.”

Teacher 2, of school C, deeply provoked by the discussion, had the following support strategies and sincere concerns to express:

“In my case I usually go back to the basics once in a while in order to support to the needs of the learners who have some barriers to learning, but then again it becomes boring and tedious to the majority of the learners who are ready to move forward. And you realise that each time you go to the basics, it does not do justice to the learners who are fast learners or high flyers. So that tends to create the divide among the learners and the relationship that the teacher has with the learners. I try to create more time after school to assist these learners, and incorporate the methods that can evoke memories, revising more and going to the basics.”

Teacher 3, of School E, responded:

“I intervene by having after-school classes with them, where I clarify some of the things they did not understand while in class; I also call parents to seek ways the learners’ needs can be catered for. Even that I do once in a while, it is not something that one can do on regular basis due to time constraints, and work that is overloading.”

Teacher 6, of school C, added:

“I make a point to give them homework to begin with it in class, so that those who are struggling with it there within the classroom situation can be assisted.”

Table 4.9 Sampled responses on Intervention Support Strategies

Research Question: What strategies do you use to cater to the learning needs of learners with special education needs in your classroom?
Teacher 1, School E: <i>“Character modification, you modify even the manner in which you teach, make them learn, by also working overtime, that helps to clarify other aspects.”</i>
Teacher 2, School F: <i>“You basically modify certain things that are required out of the ATP, you scale it down for those with barriers to learning for them to get it, then later on, you up the bar for others.”</i>
Teacher 4, School C: <i>“We sometimes make arrangements with the parents to see learners after school, although is not as effective as it would have been anticipated.”</i>
Teacher 5, School D: <i>“There is little to do other than improvisation because we are really not trained, however we remain limited.”</i>
Teacher 3, School B: <i>“There are specific methods that I use to accommodate these learners with learning disabilities, such as using bigger visual aids in order to assist learners who are visual impaired, and giving extra time and explaining in simpler terms. You as a teacher you have to make a plan, improvise. You can move learners that cannot hear closer to you as a teacher.”</i>
Teacher 3, School A: <i>“With limited resources, knowledge and packed curriculum, this barely takes place.”</i>
Teacher 6, School D: <i>“Calling parents and asking for help from the department of education to assist, but do they ever show up?”</i>

Teachers’ overall responses depicted a variety of applicable methods to foster support and learning. An account of teachers’ intervention strategies is depicted in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Support Strategies Used by Teachers

The nature of support through intervention strategies have largely been through improvisation, and expressed by the research participants in a form of the following teaching methods:

- ❖ Modification of the Instruction;
- ❖ Simplifying different aspects of lessons;
- ❖ Modification of the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) (however, discouraged by the subject advisors);
- ❖ After-school classes (reported not to always have successful or desired outcomes);
- ❖ Re-explanation of concepts;
- ❖ Improvisation (which its effectiveness cannot be measured);
- ❖ Quality Learning and Teaching Support (QLTS) methods e.g. utilising visual aids;
- ❖ Involvement of parents and the District-Based Support Team (DBST); (the participants reported such consultation strategies as null and void).

The above responses revealed that:

- Some of the commonly used intervention support strategies involve issuing of home-works, after school assistance and re-explaining of concepts.
- It also shows that while other teachers are confronted with bigger numbers of learners with special education needs in their classes, some had only a few.
- Quite a number of teachers are pressured and frustrated due to implicated difficulties.
- Out of six schools, only the majority of teachers from five schools have reported to be lacking in the necessary skills, required resources and anticipated training to support learners' diverse learning needs.

It is therefore, not a surprise to see most teachers' intervention support strategies are less effective, and less likely to have reached the specific learning needs of learners with special education needs or intellectual disabilities given teacher's responses, and evidence revealed.

4.4.2 Collaborative Networks

4.4.2.1 Effectiveness of District-Based Support Team (DBST) and the School-Based Support team (SBST)

Table 4.11 Sampled responses on effectiveness of DBST and SBST

Research Question: What form of training and support have you received from the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the District Based Support Team (DBST) towards supporting learners with special education needs in your classroom? How often are you supported or trained in that area?
Teacher 1, School A: <i>"We struggle, we struggle with the concessions, and whenever we go to the department of education (DBST) we do not find them there."</i>
Teacher 2, School B: <i>"Apart from University and the internet, there is absolutely no support from (SBST) or (DBST) other than meetings and mini-workshops that does not give us practical assistance."</i>
Teacher 4, School E: <i>"The (SBST) really try but they themselves are overloaded with work."</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>"There is no support or training coming from the (DBST) or even the (SBST)."</i>

From school C, teacher 1 added that:

"There is no further assistance we received from the Department of Education; once in a while they would require marks of the learners, and instead of intervening with the condition of the learners, they would only give them extra five marks, for example, just for that child to pass."

The respondents revealed that in their respective schools the SBST is not active. They further added (See Table 4.11) that although they attempt to assist, it is not enough to address their experienced difficulties. Teachers further revealed that the support they usually receive, although not often, is through meetings and mini-workshops which do not yield practical solutions. Unavailability of the DBST officials has been pointed out as a troubling factor.

4.4.2.2 Lack of training and resources

Table 4.12 Sampled responses on Lack of training and resources

Research Question: What learning needs do you encounter among learners in your Classroom?
Teacher 2, School B: <i>"Teachers need a comprehensive training with regard to inclusive education."</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>"There is a need for a thorough training sessions from the department of education, instead of just dumping us with the responsibilities and not teaching us on how to deal with it."</i>
Teacher 4, School D: <i>"I need to be taught how to care and support learners' learning needs, especially those with learning disabilities. As a teacher I am not capable of knowing one hundred per cent if learners have barriers to learning or not."</i>
Teacher 3, School C: <i>"No! I personally have not, apart from getting it from literature and further reading from the white paper 6 and on SIAS strategy, but I personally have not received proper training or training at all on how to include and accommodate learners' learning needs."</i>

In response to the question, 'what area do you think your school or classroom needs strengthening with regards to aspects of supporting the learning needs of learners with special education needs?' teacher 3, of school F responded:

"We are not trained to care and support the learning needs of these learners, and it is really unfair for such learners who now have to compete with about 40 plus more learners; how are they expected to perform to their individual abilities or highest level when such provisions are not made; I personally require training."

Teacher E, from school A, outlined the following in response to the question 'What are other areas in inclusive education practices that warrant or need to be discussed?'

"...I have not received any formal training from the Department of Education. I however have attended their mini-workshops on how to apply for the concessions for learners who have special education needs /intellectual disabilities. Even after the workshop I recently attended, I still have no clue on what to do; I understand that from the workshop they require and expect of me to be a reader and the scribe for the learners who have received the

concessions from the Department of Education during the examinations, while I still have to render all my professional duties such as invigilating certain classes allocated to me when other teachers invigilate other classes.”

Lack of training and lack of resources have predominantly been mentioned as challenges in the area of supporting learners with special education needs in mainstream schools. Drawn from the above responses and displayed in Table 4.12, the following needs and concerns have been identified (See Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 Identified Needs and Concerns

- ❖ The need for comprehensive practical training in relation to the existing demands of learner’ learning needs.
- ❖ Adequate intervention in clinical, cognitive and intellectual matters and aspects where learners’ learning needs seems to be affected.
- ❖ The need for regular content-based training sessions.

4.4.2.3 Parental support

Teacher 1, from school C, when asked if there is an existing parental involvement in the school, more so with regards to learners with special education needs, responded:

“No! It seems that when the child is under the care of an educator during school hours, that child is no longer their baby. Parents never make an effort to call to enquire on the learners’ academic progress, they don’t even check their activity books, they don’t have proper monitoring or support for their children.”

Teacher 3, from school E, concerned and quite frustrated, spoke of parents’ irresponsibility when it comes to their children’s’ academic and general wellbeing in the educational environment. According to teacher 3, parents do not care, and she added:

“No they do not, in fact, it you as the teacher who does the follow up, not them; it bothers me that I put a lot of efforts to contact the parents regarding their own children but they don’t even make an effort to come or participate on how the problem can be solved. It is a challenge!”

Teacher 4, from school F describes only a few parents who to some extent portray interest in their children’s education. He further adds:

“Only a few parents come and enquire regarding their children’s progress in class, but even within the few that do, do so when they see that the child is failing to meet the passing requirements; only then they come to school, and enquire, that’s when we sit with them and do an intervention, but after that they do not go an extra mile.”

Table 4.14 Sampled responses on parental support

Research Question: How is parental involvement of the learners with special education needs in your school?
Teacher 2, School A: <i>“No! there is none, but on our side as the school and as a teacher, we have called them and requested them to further take their children to the educational psychologist, they only respond when we have made the first move.”</i>
Teacher 5, School E: <i>“No! in my opinion and according to my observations the parents often have the attitude as that of their child, they don’t show any care, they don’t even mind if their children repeat the grade.”</i>
Teacher 3, School C: <i>“No!, we realise as teachers that the child or the learner is struggling and we do our own investigation, but the parents... they do not care and they do not show any interest.”</i>
Teacher 1, School B: <i>“They do not even attend the meetings, blame is always given to the Teachers.”</i>
Teacher 3, School D: <i>“No!, generally parents are not interested, they believe that teachers can do miracles, so it would be one out of ten, who would tell you that my child has a learning problem of this nature.”</i>
Teacher 6, School F: <i>“No! there has not been any parents who enquired or communicated the progress of the learner.”</i>

Teachers revealed the following:

- That due to less parental support and involvement there tends to be less that can be done on their side, other than reporting the matter to the school management team, where in most cases nothing gets done.
- Parental support has shown to be one of the prevailing challenges which prevents further intervention to be offered, due to matters of parental consent. This among many other factors further increases frustrations among teachers.

4.4.3 Challenges around Support to Learners with Special Education Needs

4.4.3.1 Lack of time

Table 4.15 Sampled responses on Lack of time

Research Question: What are the challenges or factors standing in your way in order for you to cater to the needs of learners with special needs/ disabilities?
Teacher 2, School B: <i>"Number one, time! I think we can accommodate them that is not the problem, we have the skills to improvise, however that will take time, because you will find that ninety per cent of the class don't even have this disability or this problem, now how would I divide my time to accommodate and cater to the needs of all this learners."</i>
Teacher 4, School E: <i>"Time is a factor and the demands of the department of the education as well as the pressure they are putting on us contributes to the factors that makes it difficult to include these learners."</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>"There is no way that teachers can give all this learners with special needs education, special attention because there is a lot of this learners and there is limited time in class."</i>
Teacher 3, School F: <i>"Time is the main factor, there is no time, even after school is not the best time to support the educational special needs of learners with intellectual disabilities, because like any other kids they themselves are exhausted. Secondly we lack the resources, and there is a lack of parental support, no cooperation."</i>

Teacher 2, from school D, added that:

"They make the progress in class to be slow, because we have to cater for them; we can't just move faster and they are being left behind, not understanding, not being able to capture the information just like other fast learning learners. It hinders the progress in class as it makes the teacher to wait on the learners who are struggling. They often complain that they don't have enough time to finish the work, but in my opinion I think it is not a time factor but is the fact that they don't have the intellectual capacity to move in speed that others in the same class that they are in."

From the responses of teachers above (See Table 4.15),

- Time is shown to be a major challenge preventing teachers from giving adequate attention to learners with special education needs. Furthermore, due to the fact that classrooms are over- populated, this seems to perpetuate the difficulties.
- Not knowing how to use time and divide it wisely among all learners seemed to be another underlying problem.
- Given the fact that teachers teach according to the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP), the challenge of time affects their classroom progression in relation to that, seeing that while some learners are able to grasp certain lessons, others need more time, and clarity.

4.4.3.2 Overcrowded classrooms

Table 4.16 Sampled responses on Overcrowded Classrooms

Research Question: What are the challenges or factors standing in your way in order for you to cater to the needs of learners with special needs/ disabilities?
Teacher 1, School A: <i>"The number of learners in each class is too overwhelming, let alone to attend to special needs."</i>
Teacher 2, School B: <i>"The classrooms are overcrowded which means learners do not receive individual attention and time."</i>
Teacher 4, School E: <i>"In schools where there are no factors such as overcrowding it becomes easy for teacher to focus on learners with intellectual disabilities or barriers to learning. And also in schools where there is overcrowding, such learners would not be able to get the attention they need."</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>"When you have many learners inside a class it creates its own problems where a teacher cannot give individual attention to learners who need it the most. In that way learners tend to fall behind."</i>
Teacher 4, School D: <i>"The overcrowded nature of our classes."</i>
Teacher 6, School F: <i>"Overcrowding. Overworked educators and little time to interact with individuals."</i>

- The responses of teachers show overcrowding in classrooms to contribute to the difficulties that lie with catering to the diverse learning needs of learners, especially those with special education needs.
- This predicament results in the demand of more time for teachers to attempt giving learners with special learning needs individual attention.
- In these conditions, more learners are reported to fall behind with their learning activities; where teachers report to be overwhelmed, overworked and frustrated.

Teacher 5, from school A, admits the existing challenges to be due to the overcrowding; in his explanation he maintains that:

“Due to congestion in classes, teachers find it hard to accommodate learners with special needs education or even to give them little attention; on top of that teachers end up procuring reasons as to why learners fail more than giving them necessary support.”

And to the question, “what are the factors hindering the support of learners with special education needs in your classroom?” teacher 1, from school E expressed:

“Overcrowded classrooms, and no proper facilities to can support the learning needs of other learners, and pressure from finishing the curriculum... the external factors being not getting enough support from the Department of Education on such dilemmas.”

- Teachers also seemed to share the same sentiments around classrooms being too big and overcrowded, in that teachers seem to agree on this concept or line of thinking; that spending more time on reaching out to the five per cent of the class, at the expense of the rest of the ninety five, seems irrational.
- Teachers explained how lack of proper facilities, and pressures from the Department of Education are major contributing factors preventing them from administering proper care and support to learners who most need it.
- Among other factors, overcrowding has been observed by teachers to lead to poor learner performance which is ultimately accounted for by the teachers.

4.4.3.3 The misuse of learner progression over implementation of support and care policies

Table 4.17 Sampled responses on the misuse of learner progression over Implementation of support and care policies

Research Question: What are other areas in inclusive education practices that warrants or needs to be discussed?
Teacher 3, School C: <i>“Policies that are not clear on how to accommodate the learners with special education needs.”</i> Teacher 1, School F: <i>“Policies allowing learners to be progresses without thorough interventions, instead of reaching out to the learners with special education needs or barriers to learning, where they would give them the necessary support together with the teachers.”</i> Teacher 6, School D: <i>“There are Department of education’s policies that make provisions and exemptions for learners who show barriers to learning and to be progressed when in actual fact they should be practicing other existing policies around SIAS regarding accommodating the special educational needs of those learners.”</i>

Responding to the question “what are other areas in inclusive education practices that warrant or need to be discussed?” teachers seemed to be likeminded around the issue of misuse of learner progression over implementation of support and care.

Teacher 2, from school E, maintained that:

“Progressing learners to higher grades who cannot even read without concessions poses further problems for teachers and acts as though the Department of Education does not know how to deal with and implement their policies around special needs education or wants to get rid of such learners through progression, creating unnecessary problems which will cause accountability sessions for teachers.”

And from school A, teacher 4 shares the same line of thought by reiterating the fact that:

“The progression policy unduly benefits the learners, who then won’t have to be in a particular phase or grade for such a number of years, but it therefore poses a challenge to

the teachers and the learning process. It means you will have learners in higher grades who cannot read, with no intervention that has been done or monitored.”

The research participants' responses highlighted the following:

- That the Department of Education's assistance to learners with special education needs often results in progressing such learners to the next level/grade, instead of implementing appropriate policies other than the alternative.
- The responses further pointed at the misuse of the implementation of learner progression as an on-going pattern to get rid of learners with special education needs.
- They also pointed out that the alternative (progression) only leads to learners dropping out of schools, and further presenting them with more accountability sessions when these learners eventually proceed to grade 12. For them, progression is impractical and an easy way out for the Department of Education.

4.4.3.4 Work-overload

In response to the question: What are the challenges or factors standing in your way in order for you to cater to the needs of learners with special education needs?

Teacher 6, from school C added the following:

“Well, obviously, we are all complaining about work-overload; since the department is no longer in touch with those who work at the lowest level such as the teachers, they decide on giving us over-packed syllabus, it becomes impossible to reach those children, my heart would want to reach them, but I can't because of time and the amount of work to be reached at that time which is also not possible because we are overburdened and hurried to finish the syllabus.”

From the response above as well as the sample responses (See Table 4.18) the following proves to be clear:

- That the teachers feel overburdened and overloaded with the amount of work which they are not fully keeping up with.
- The complaints forwarded further imply curriculum developers and policies makers do so inconsiderately due to lack of empathy.
- From teachers' responses, it is proper to deduce that if they are already not coping with their current situation, how much more can they cope with the added

responsibilities of supporting the learning needs of learners with special education needs? More so when they feel that the education policy guidelines are not clear, furthermore not providing any practical measures on how to go about supporting learners' learning needs.

Table 4.18 Sampled responses on Work-overload

Research Question: What are the challenges or factors standing in your way in order for you to cater to the needs of learners with special education needs?
Teacher 1, School A: <i>"There is already a lot that teachers are doing, teachers are overloaded with in-class and administrative work, where support is also needed, now if teachers were to be trained on how to cater and accommodate the learning needs of learners."</i> Teacher 4, School D: <i>"classes are too big, with the number of children ranging from 53 learners per class, and finding that you only have 3 learners with special needs/ intellectual disabilities, it becomes impossible to give those three learners with special needs education an individual attention."</i> Teacher 6, School E: <i>"overworked, teaching time is not enough, teachers are overloaded."</i> Teacher 3, School F: <i>"I feel as though the department is burying us with a lot of work and paper work that should be undertaken by them and not us, as it is, we are already buried with a lot of work."</i>

4.4.4 Perceptions of Teachers on the Inclusion of Learners with Special Education Needs

Table 4.19 Sampled responses on the perceptions of teachers on the inclusion of learners with special education needs.

Research Question: What are other areas in inclusive education practices that warrant or need to be discussed?
Teacher 5, School E: <i>“Learner support teachers in my own opinion it has to be someone who is trained specifically in the special needs education profession and well trained from the department of education regarding the policies around inclusive education e.g. remedial teachers, who can in each school focus on those learners.”</i>
Teacher 2, School E: <i>“because of the paper work, the syllabus that we have to cover in a short time, those other kids would not find the optimal education. Because of the unrealistic requirements and demands of the department these days, I think it would be better for them to be in a special school.”</i>
Teacher 5, School C: <i>“I think learners with barriers to learning are not suited in mainstream schools because we are not trained to care and actively support these learners. I have not been given any training on how to support such learners in a classroom context.”</i>
Teacher 6, School D: <i>“In my view, it is not proper to include them in a mainstream school such as this., time as a factor is a constraint, and they need proper time allocated so that their needs can be catered for, when looking at the time allocated and the manner in which the curriculum is structured it is not suiting them... You find that even the infrastructure is not suitable, the infrastructure itself becomes a constraint for them, they need a lot of material, teaching aids and more space to do all those things.”</i>
Teacher 3, School F: <i>“Emotionally I don’t really think these learners cope, because the other kids can be so harsh, their different backgrounds might have not informed them on how to behave around other people who are different from them.”</i>

From the above data expressed in Table 4.19, teachers' views regarding inclusive education practices in mainstream secondary schools are summed up in the following manner:

- Teachers view dealing with learners with special education needs as an insurmountable work which goes beyond their abilities, skills and expertise, given the challenges faced with for example, overcrowding, lack of resources and poor infrastructure.
- Teachers further view the Department of Education's demands as burdensome and mostly unrealistic. They further connect the difficulties of administering care and support to learners with special education needs with the over-crowded nature of classrooms, work over-load, lack of teacher training, lack of proper facilities/infrastructure as well as inadequate resources, etc.
- Because of these experienced challenges, teachers perceive inclusive education practices in mainstream school settings as impossible. For such reasons, teachers strongly believe that learners with intellectual disabilities are not suited to be in mainstream settings.

Reporting on their daily struggles, teacher 1, from school A, overwhelmingly narrated her on-going difficulties in this manner:

"I feel that learners with learning barriers or slow learners are not suited in the classroom situation; time is an issue, having to make time for them is an issue. As a result I cannot go slower in class for the ten per cent in my class because they are struggling or that they are slow, at the expense of the other ninety per cent. So do I accommodate the ninety per cent and leave the ten per cent? – the time issue again becomes a factor. Or do I go slower and upset the other ninety per cent? So in my opinion learners with learning disabilities are not well suited in the mainstream classrooms."

Added teacher 4, from school B:

"These learners are not fitting in the mainstream because the school or mainstream institutions does not have special resources for them, because we just carry on teaching like we normally teach from the text books, and as a result their special needs are not catered as they should. I think that there should be special schools where their needs can be catered for. We also have bigger numbers in classrooms with over forty five learners, in that case when are you going to pay attention to that learner who needs your special attention? So if they can get special schools where their needs can be appropriately catered for it would be best."

Table 4.20 Factors Influencing Support to Learners with Special Education Needs

- ❖ Effectiveness of District-Based Support Team (DBST)
- ❖ Lack of training and resources
- ❖ Parental support
- ❖ Lack of time
- ❖ Overcrowded classrooms
- ❖ Work-overload
- ❖ The misuse of learner progression over implementation of support and care policies
- ❖ Perceptions of teachers on the inclusion of learners with special education practices
- ❖ Lack of Parental Involvement
- ❖ Lack of Teacher and School Preparedness
- ❖ Policy and Curriculum Issues

4.5 OBSERVATIONS RESULTS

The researcher deemed it important to observe teachers in their classrooms using an observation tool to collect data from their teaching environment.

In the observation process, the researcher made use of two teacher participants per school, from the already-selected teacher participants of the study (see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4).

4.5.1 Over-populated Classrooms

The observation tool indicated that the number of learners in classrooms exceeded 40, and far beyond. All the observed classrooms had the capacity of 45 learners and above, where in two classes, one in school A and the other in school E, had over 55 learners in a class.

4.5.2 Rigid Pedagogies

4.5.2.1 Unresponsive Lesson planning

Teaches' preparations and lesson plans were consistent with the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). However, the lessons plans did not indicate how learners with special education needs were supported educationally. Lesson plans seemed to have been constructed, and formulated in line with the general learning needs of all learners. Lessons seemed not to be responsive to the learning needs of learners with special education needs.

4.5.3 Schools' Inclusivity

4.5.3.1 Accommodation of diverse learning needs

The level of inclusivity in schools was lacking in the following terms:

- The pedagogy or instructional approach was general to all learners learning needs, and in relation to the mainstream educational standard, rather than individual learner needs based, more so for those with special education needs.
- Although there was evidence of methods of support implemented, such as improvisation and re-explanation of concepts, their success was hindered by the overpopulated manner of classrooms.
- Classrooms did not have sufficient resources to support the learning needs of learners.
- Schools' infrastructure, classrooms and seating arrangements did not respond to the learning needs of learners.

4.5.4 Support Inhibitors

From the information gathered, the following factors and aspects were found to inhibit support in classrooms:

- Overcrowded classrooms.
- Rigid curriculum that is not responsive to the learning needs of learners with special education needs.
- Learners with special education needs were never given individual attention.
- Due to the over-populated nature of classrooms, teachers could not interact efficiently with learners who showed signs of barriers to learning.
- Teachers often struggled to guide and assess learners' work; and to generally give attention to the majority of learners.
- Insufficient time allocated to learning and teaching was identified as a stagnating factor.
- Rigid infrastructure and classroom environment.

Furthermore, unavailability of resources left learners with special education needs unattended and vulnerable. The observation further showed that most teachers were working under pressure, due to teaching more than six to eight large size classes every day.

4.5.5 Challenges of Support

4.5.5.1 Strategies of Support

Teachers showed care, support and empathy to learners with special education needs or barriers to learning; however their methodologies seemed limited, especially where support skills and expertise were not evident. Teachers employed methods of improvisation as intervention strategies.

The majority of teachers seemed helpless with regards to the application of support strategies, which might have been due to lack of skills, training, preparation and practical knowledge or approach in inclusive education practices.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the analysis and interpretation of the research findings, having conducted focus group interviews with six teachers; observations with twelve teachers; and field notes based on all data gathering proceedings at six selected mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng, with regard to support to learners with special education needs. Chapter five concludes and provides detailed information regarding the findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the research findings of the data analysed in chapter 4, and further provide the recommendations and the conclusion of the research study. The problem investigated in this study was the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. The study sought to achieve the investigation guided by the research objectives, which were to determine:

- How learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng;
- To explore the factors influencing the support given to learners with special education needs;
- To explore the support strategies needed for learners with special education needs in the mainstream secondary schools in Mafikeng.

Through the research aims and objectives, relevant literature has been consulted to establish the background and the nature of support to learners with special education needs worldwide and in South Africa. The literature largely revealed the challenges mainstream schools are faced with regarding support and care for learners' diverse learning needs, and the strategies that can be undertaken to offer support to learners in mainstream secondary schools. The contents of this chapter serve to highlight and summarise the major findings of the current research, together with most significant aspects from the literature review. This chapter will further focus on the recommendations and the limitations of the research.

5.2 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The demands of inclusive education practices in the mainstream schools with fundamental implications of support to learners with special education needs have been a worrying factor. Although well-articulated policies and directives have been put in place to fully support these learners' learning needs, such plans have not yet been fulfilled or materialised, further placing learners with special education needs at a disadvantage.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

5.3.1 Research Aim

The aim of the research was to investigate the nature of support offered to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng.

5.3.1.1 Nature of Support to Learners with Special Education Needs

The data revealed a variety of methods used by teachers to foster support and learning with the purpose of including or supporting learners with special education needs. Such methods have been identified to be in the following order:

- Instructional modification and simplifying learning topics/aspects;
- Modification of the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP);
- After-school classes (reported not to always have successful or desired outcomes);
- Improvisation (However, rendered ineffective due to lack of teacher training);
- Fostering the Quality Learning and Teaching Support Methods (QLTSM) e.g. utilising visual aids;
- Involvement of parents and the District-Based Support Team (DBST); the participants reported such consultation strategies as null and void.

Teachers attested to the fact that their support methods may have not been as successful and effective as anticipated. However, some maintained to have observed their methods yielding better results, while on the other hand, quite a number of teachers reported to have had no other methods to utilise. It was rather interesting to observe teachers' resilience despite their functioning in isolation, without prior training or preparation, and limited resources.

Even with the intervention strategies laid out above, a good number of teachers admitted such strategies to have been less effective and less likely to have reached the core root of individual learner learning needs.

From the views expressed by teachers, learners with special education needs in mainstream schools predominantly experience the learning difficulties in areas which relate to:

- Attention deficiency Hyperactive-compulsive disorder,
- Low concentration span,
- Trouble reading and writing,
- Dyslexia

- And external contributing factors which may influence or perpetuate the already existing conditions such as domestic violence, and learners coming from child-headed families.

The support methods used by teachers are in one way or another in synchronisation with the support strategies suggested by Morewood and Condo (2012:16) on active teaching; Rachmawati *et al.* (2016: 587) and Webster (2015:994) on differentiated instructional approach; Engelbrecht and Green (2018:201) and UNESCO (1994:7) on alternative pedagogy; the Department of Social Development (2015:16) on embracing diversity, and lastly, MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013:46) and Hoppey (2016: 14) on clinical teaching.

5.3.2 Objective 1. How Learners with special education needs are supported in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng

According to the White Paper 6 (2001:28), the main source of support to teachers on how to support the educational learning needs of learners in mainstream schools rests upon the District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) to strengthen the education support services, by building capacity in schools, having established training centres to recognise and address learners' learning needs, from severe to mild (White Paper 6, 2001:28). However the current research evidence reveals otherwise.

From the analysis and, interpretation of the research data received, it was established that the Department of Education's assistance to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools has been minimal and often resulted in learner progression instead of availing the necessary learning tools applicable to the learning needs required.

It is important to acknowledge that teachers are confronted with extreme difficulties supporting learners with special education needs, where, in spite of the guidelines and policies formulated, clear practical direction to effect such directives has not been given. However, methods of support varied greatly from one teacher to another, depending on whether a teacher had any special methods in practice or not.

Due to lack of teacher training and preparation observed in mainstream secondary schools, it is evident that some teachers are often unable to assist learners with increasing demands pertaining to clinical, behavioural, intellectual or cognitive states or conditions, while other teachers tended to be oblivious of such underlying conditions.

Teachers' responses around the issue of the nature of support given to learners revealed that:

- Teachers were found to lack the necessary skills required to support the learning needs of learners, which was as a direct result of not having attained any form of formal training.
- Furthermore, the nature of support to learners was found to be holistically lacking and deficient and revealed to be due to the ineffectiveness of the District-Based Support Team (DBST).
- Such disservice to mainstream schools from the Department of Education ultimately implied possibilities of limited or absence of required resources to include, accommodate and support the diverse learning needs of learners, as was shown to be the case.

According to the Education White Paper 6 (2001) and Yeo, Chong, Neihart and Huan (2014:4), the support of learners with special education needs is dictated by support methods and approaches used when confronted with diversity of learning needs in mainstream schools/inclusive education. The directives laid out by both the Education White Paper 6 (2001) and Yeo *et al.* (2014) are not in harmony with the evidence presented within the research study.

5.3.3 Objective 2. Factors Influencing Support to Learners with Special Education Needs

5.3.3.1 Ineffectiveness of District-Based Support Team (DBST)

The ineffectiveness of the DBST is shown to be a hindrance towards the implementation of support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng. According to Engelbrecht and Green (2018:201), support in mainstream schools may be achieved through collaboration, and further proposed by Du Plessis (2013), that adequate support across all the levels of the education department, is one of the key strategies towards the implementation of inclusive education. From the plans and strategies already set out by the Department of Education, such support strategy would be made possible through the establishment and functioning of district-based support as well as school-based support (Nel *et al.*, 2016:2). On the contrary, that has not been the case in the current study.

The unresponsiveness of the DBST resulted in teachers at mainstream schools functioning in isolation, unable to fully implement the inclusive education directives. Furthermore, due to the non-involvement of the DBST in the form of the required training, and the availability of the necessary resources, teachers reported to have been overly burdened with frustrations, functioning without clear direction and guidance.

5.3.3.2 Lack of training and resources

Lack of training and the unavailability of resources posed a threat towards supporting learners with special education needs in mainstream schools. The fact that 30 teacher participants reported to have not received training of any kind on how to support learners with special education needs educationally and procedurally, depicts the strain under which both teachers and learners are functioning. The above results are in harmony with those of Hoppey (2016:13) as well Bornman and Donohue (2015:3) who in their studies discovered a prevalence of inadequate teacher preparation and training.

5.3.3.3 Parental support

The unresponsiveness of parents of learners who show signs of barriers to learning is considered a serious challenge, especially in the administrative area of support. Without clear information about learners' assessment and documentation of importance, the School-Based Support Team (SBST) would be unable to assist or intervene with urgency. In this regard, matters of parental consent and parents' tendency to be in denial about their children's learning disabilities tend to restrict possible intervention methods that could have been utilised to support learners, if parents do not actively participate in the process.

Teachers revealed that, due to lack parental support, not much can be achieved on the school's side, other than reporting the matter to the school management team (SMT), where in most cases little is done. Indeed, the findings agree with those of Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:8), who pointed to the unavailability of parents in the educational affairs of their children and that of Fetting *et al.* (2013:33), who observed that many learners come from unsupported homes, where parental involvement is minimal.

5.3.3.4 Lack of time

The relayed responses from teachers in this study point to time as a major hindrance restricting adequate support to learners' learning needs in mainstream secondary schools. Apart from the undeniable need to cater for the special learning needs of learners in the mainstream education setting, teachers emphasised the need for more time in completing the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP), which hardly ever occurs. However, to some extent, it was reported that the over-populated nature of classrooms tends to perpetuate the situation, where learner misconduct, ill-discipline, and noisemaking are contributing factors holding time and classroom progress behind. On the other hand, time predicament often rises when teachers' attention is shifted from the general population of the class to those with special education needs, or vice versa. The findings resonate with those of Yeo *et al.* (2014:4,)

proving that lack of time as a factor is detrimental to the overall support in mainstream schools.

5.3.3.5 Overcrowded classrooms

Among other factors influencing support, overcrowding is shown to be one of the contributing factors serving as a hindrance to the support of learners with special education needs. Teachers reported classes in mainstream schools to be big. Overcrowding is a problem, inevitably leading to more challenges such as the demand for more time in order to attend to learners' learning needs, and ultimately leading to increased teacher exhaustion. Similar to the outcomes of the current study, Dreyer (2017:2) revealed that the large number of learners in classes tend to frustrate teachers, further limiting the engagement teachers have with learners, leading ultimately to learner misbehaviour.

One of the teachers' general concern was that, due to the overcrowded nature of classrooms in mainstream schools, the amount of time utilised in reaching out to the five per cent of the class, (which usually constitutes learners with special education needs) at the expense of the rest seems irrational, if not perpetuating the problem. The study came to show that overcrowding as a hindrance to the learning and teaching process directly or indirectly leads to poor learner performance, which ultimately is accounted for by the teacher.

5.3.3.6 Work-overload

Exceedingly great paper work administration, coupled with the demands of further administering care and support to the learners with special education needs, seem to have over-burdened the teachers. Teachers reported that they coped poorly within the mainstream education setting, especially under the demands of inclusive education practices since they had no prior training and preparation for this the field. In reference to work-overload experienced in mainstream schools, Donohue and Bornman (2014:2) revealed work-overload to often come in a form of overloaded curriculum, further attributing to the prevalence of lack of teacher and learner support in mainstream schools.

5.3.3.7 The misuse of learner progression over implementation of support and care Policies

According to the research evidence, there is an observed trend of an increased number of learners with special education needs who are often progressed to the next grade, where in some instances are made to be in the same grade repeatedly. This has therefore been identified by the participants as a manner in which the Department of Education overlooks their policy-based support obligations and responsibilities. In a case of learners being made

to repeat one class repeatedly, the literature study and the research's evidence have shown it to lead to learners dropping out of schools. Furthermore, Dreyer (2017:3,) as well as Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:8), revealed that such learners end up as referral cases to special schools, or progress to the next grade without proper intervention strategies, while some eventually drop out of school.

5.3.3.8 Perceptions of teachers on the inclusion of learners with special education practices in mainstream schools

Mainstream education teachers professed that learners with special education needs are not well-suited in mainstream education settings. Substantiating their grounds, they pointed out that such learners' learning needs will be better supported in special schools where teachers are skilled, trained and prepared, as opposed to them. Donohue and Bornman (2014:4) assert that the provisioning of educational services and necessary means of support by the education system will be of little value and possibly fail should the attitudes of teachers not align with the inclusive education vision of rendering support in mainstream schools.

On the contrary, the research participants reported not to have been offered any educational assistance from the Department of Education. However, with the displayed discriminatory approach within mainstream schools, the Education Review Office (2015:17) determined that mainstream education schools are still functioning under the medical model of disability, where there is an absence of educational care and support.

5.3.3.9 Lack of Parental Involvement

The research participants further attested to the claims already laid by Fetting *et al.* (2013:33) and Nel *et al.* (2016:14), that most learners come from unsupported homes, where parental involvement is minimal, further resulting in the deterioration of learners' academic performance. Similar to the position of Hodgson and Khumalo (2016:7), the study showed how the unresponsiveness of parents of learners with special education needs in mainstream schools contributed to and perpetuated the already existing underlying complexities learners endured. The study indicated that such negligence led to many of the schools' dropout cases.

5.3.3.10 Lack of Teacher and School Preparedness

The research evidence has reported schools were not prepared for inclusive education practices. Evidence from the observation and interview process has shown such to have been due to:

- Lack of training and resources,
- Lack of proper infrastructure
- And teacher incompetence, which from the interview results is attributed to both lack of training and resources as well as lack of proper infrastructure.

Furthermore, the overall inhibitors of support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools have been shown to have the following effects on learners:

- Learners repeating a grade,
- Learners suffering from low self-esteem,
- And learners being victimised and bullied.

These findings support what Dreyer (2017:3) asserted, namely that, despite the necessary measures placed by the Department of Education for access to equal education and protection of the right to education, there are still learners whose rights are violated.

5.3.3.11 Policy and Curriculum Issues

An inevitable concern is that the 2020 implementation plan on inclusive education has been running behind schedule, which counts for the current challenges on the implementation of inclusive education, and that of support. To a limited extent, teachers disclosed on how the curriculum is unresponsive to learners' learning needs. According to the teachers, it seems that the curriculum lacks the capacity to accommodate the diversity of learners' learning needs, evidence of which has already been indicated by Andrew *et al.* (2015:30).

Another draw back on the implementation of inclusive education practices is that the SIAS strategy has not been thoroughly implemented and practised in schools, thus teachers reported to have been surviving on improvisation methods. It is also important to recognise how these loopholes have led to an insurmountable strain and frustrations on teachers, assertions which have already been established by Mpofu and Shumba (2012:330).

5.3.4 Objective 3. Strategies to Improve Support

The teachers' responses which emerged on support to learners with special education needs in mainstream schools suggest that support may be improved in a number of ways:

1. Through active teacher training and preparation, which should be accompanied by consistent and thorough school visitations to monitor progress and render further necessary support where needed. The assertions held by teachers concur with those of Morewood and Condo (2012:16), with regards to employing active teaching and learning as a strategy of support to learners with special education needs. For Sharma *et al.* (2012:6), such would add value in fostering learners' active interaction within their social and physical environment, accompanied by comprehensive skills and suitable pedagogies
2. By providing a remedy to the relationship between mainstream schools and the District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) where a thorough investigation on professional efficiency and development should be looked into.
3. The Department of Education would have to take it upon themselves to enquire on the demands and shortcomings inclusive education practices have, where matters that relate to insufficient time, lack of resources, over-populated classrooms, lack of teacher training and preparation would be acknowledged, with realistic strategies to resolve them. With the already-existing structures and strategies put in place by the Department of Education such as Continuing Professional Teacher Development (Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools, 2009:19), the above-mentioned may be achieved, should the implementation of such initiative focus more on special education needs.

5.4 Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic Perspective Approach to Support to Learners with Special Education Needs

So far the study depicted collaboration between all the stakeholders at the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem levels as lacking. The study has shown parental care and support to be non-existent, with a major disconnection of communication and collaboration between parents (microsystem) and teachers or the schools (mesosystem). A similar pattern is observed in the study, where the unresponsiveness of the District-Based Support Team (exosystem) towards schools or teachers (mesosystem) poses a major obstacle.

Without parental participation, engagement and consent, as well as the adequate training, mentoring and provision of the resources from the District-Based Support Team (DBST), teachers will remain incapacitated, lacking in inclusive education expertise to support the learning needs of learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools. Teachers reported to have had their efforts not reciprocated by those in the microsystem and the exosystem. Collaboration of support should be interdependent in nature, where all systems that the learner interacts with reciprocate with one another, see (Figure 5.1).

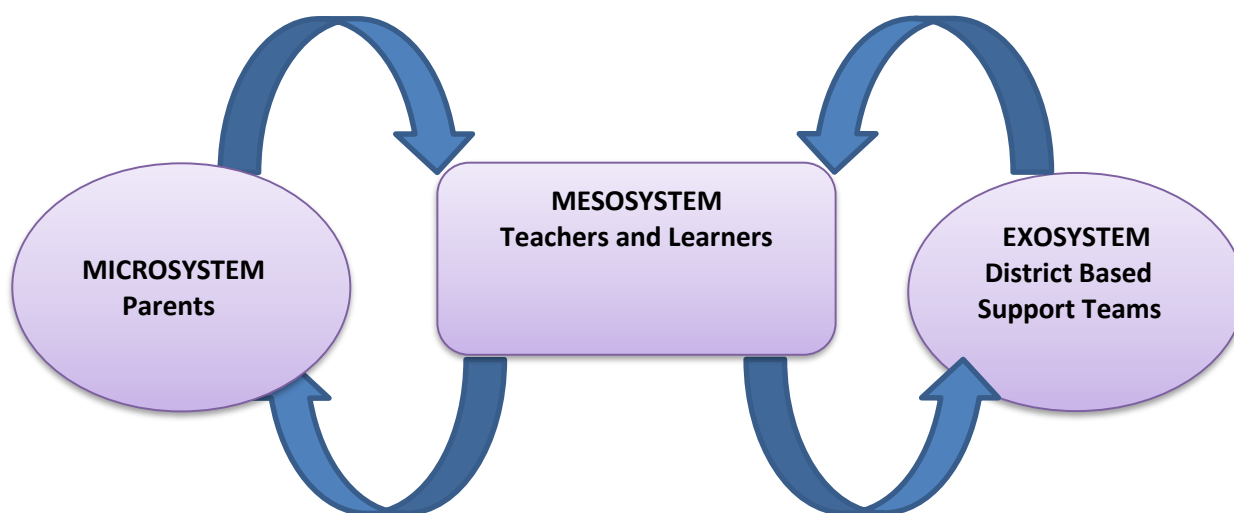


Figure 5.1 Collaboration of systems towards supporting learners in mainstream secondary schools.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made with the purpose of improving support in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng:

1. Teachers would need to undergo practical training where related special education methodologies and pedagogies are given, illustrated and initiated per school in accordance with the educational needs experienced.
2. The essence of collaboration between different structures, systems and role-players in schools would need to be realised and strengthened for support to be effected.
3. Active parents' meeting would have to be arranged to orientate parents on matters of inclusive education and learners' diverse learning needs. This will ensure that existing negative perceptions regarding learning disabilities are eradicated, for example, parents being in denial about their children's learning disabilities.
4. School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) should be given a quarterly comprehensive training and equipped on the high demands and complexities of inclusive education practices. There should be functional communication channels initiated and maintained between the DBST and the SBST.
5. School principals and the school management teams (SMTs) also need to assume responsibilities in the overall inclusion, accommodation and support of learners with learning disabilities. Their role should be to prioritise and fully enforce the functioning of inclusive education practices.

6. The Department of Education should prioritise on strategizing teacher training and preparation, in order to produce specialised competencies for inclusive education practices.
7. Policy content should be fully translated into implementation, with adequate focus on practical measures of translating it into practice.

5.6 SUMMARY

The study found that the nature of support in mainstream schools towards supporting the learning needs of learners with special education needs has been lacking. Although teachers were tenacious with their improvisation skills, they were profoundly lacking in skill and practical methodologies of handling special education needs they were presented with.

Inclusive education practices in mainstream schools have not been adequately established, and thus the practical implementation stage appears to have not taken its course. Teachers have been found to function in isolation, with absolute non-existent support from parents and the community as a whole. Despite the well-written government policy documents guiding the implementation process of inclusive education practices, there have been few efforts from responsible structures, for example, the District-Based Support Team (DBST) from the Department of Education to embark on making this a reality. As a result, teachers remain untrained and unprepared to tackle the complex tasks that come with attending to the diverse learning needs of learners, while learners' learning needs remain unsupported. Among the many other strategies that can be employed in mainstream schools, active teacher training/preparation and the provision of resources stand as urgent matters to be attended to.

5.7 CONCLUSION

From the results of the study, it is evident that teachers in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng embrace the idea and the concept of inclusive education. However, research proves teachers to have been burdened and left to function in isolation within inclusive education practices. A major concern is that they have not been trained, equipped and prepared to operate under inclusive education practices. The implications, therefore, show this to have considerably hindered teachers from meeting the inclusive education demands. The overall predicament ultimately places learners in a disadvantaged position, due to lack of educational support. So long as responsible structures and stakeholders at the higher level of the education system do not engage collaboratively in resolving the existing challenges, with practical and realistic solutions, expectation of teachers to produce the anticipated outcomes from what was never initially invested in will continue.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made for further study:

- Since the inadequacy of support from the District-Based Support Team (DBST) has been one of the major concerns implicated within the research findings, further study should include the DBST.
- Further study on the phenomenon of support to learners with special education needs should include viewpoints of parents and learners experiencing barriers to learning as well.
- This study was only conducted in secondary schools. Further study on support to learners with special education needs should be conducted in primary schools as well.

5.9 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Although the study intended to use focus group interviews as one of data collection strategies, not all interview processes were conducted in that manner, due to the unavailability of teachers during specific scheduled times.

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APPENDIX A



Education and Sport Development

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

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OFFICE OF THE SUB-DISTRICT MANAGER: MAHIKENG SUB-DISTRICT OFFICE NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT

Enquiries : M.S. Phetlhu
Cell No. : 078 304 5244
Tel No. : 018 384 3233/2828
Email : MSphetlhu@nwpg.gov.za

Date : 11 June 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission is herewith granted to **Mr O.T.C.Madiba ID No. 870427 5717 089**
(student No: 25639129) to conduct research on:

TOPIC

Support to learners with Special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng

Disturbing lessons and teaching time must be totally avoided. A copy of the research finding should be made available to the Area Office and the schools that you will be attending to.

NB. The research will be done from July 2019

Wishing you well in your study

MS M.C. Mojafi
Sub District Manager



"Towards Excellence in Education and Sport Development"

APPENDIX B

P. O. Box 2905
Mafikeng
2745

Principal

Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a Master of Education in Special Needs Education student at North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus in the process of collecting data in secondary schools of Mafikeng. My research topic is **“Support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng”**.

Methods to be used to collect data are focus group interviews, observations and document analysis. The research study requires teachers currently teaching or with the experience of teaching grade 8 classes. I thereby humbly request for permission to conduct a focus group interview under the above mentioned research topic with the assistance of teachers in your school. I request to do so on Thursday the 24th July 2019 at 14h00 or any other date and time convenient for the school.

I trust that you find all of the above in order. Please find the attached documents: letter of Goodwill from the sub-district manager; letter from NWU supervisor; proof of registration 2019; and a certified ID copy.

Regards

Cell no: 0670713511

E-mail: omphilemadiba@gmail.com

APPENDIX C

Predetermined Interview questions

The researcher will first conduct introductory pleasantries, and verbal confirmation of the purpose of the research study. The researcher will emphasise the following:

- That participation is voluntary;
- That the information will be treated with confidentiality;
- That the participants may opt out at any given point along the study,
- And that confidentiality will be assured.

Questions

1. What is your general understanding of inclusive education?
2. What learning needs do you encounter among learners in your classroom?
3. In what ways do you include (administer care and support) learners with such learning needs in your classroom?
4. What are the (internal and external) factors hindering the support of learners with special education needs in your classroom?
5. What form of training and support have you received from the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the District Based Support Team (DBST) towards supporting learners with special education needs in your classroom? How often are you supported or trained in that area?
6. In what area do you think your school or classroom needs strengthening?
7. How are aspects of support and care incorporated in the IQMS program?
8. Comment on the strategies you would use to cater to the learning needs of learners with special education needs in your classroom?
9. Comment on the community involvement towards supporting learners with special education needs in mainstream schools?
10. How is parental involvement of the learners with special education needs in your school?
11. What are the challenges or factors standing in your way in order for you to cater to the needs of learners with special needs/ disabilities?
12. What are other areas in inclusive education practices that warrant or need to be discussed?

APPENDIX D

Observation tool

Items to be observed	Comment
What are the identified learning needs?	
In what ways do teachers include learners' learning needs?	
What are the factors hindering the support of learners with special education needs?	
What are the identified areas that the learners/teachers need strengthening in?	
How inclusive are the lessons?	
What are the strategies used to foster support to learners with special education needs?	

APPENDIX E

Language editing certificate

9 Sunbird Place

Arendskloof

Safari Gardens

Rustenburg

04/11/2020

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

**SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN
MAINSTREAM SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF MAFIKENG**

Submitted by **OMPHILE TSHEPO COOPERATE MADIBA**



orcid.org 0000-0002-9355-6555

For the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION
(SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION)**

In the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

At the

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Has been edited for language by

Mary Helen Thomas (B.Sc. Hons. PGCE)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mary Helen Thomas'.

APPENDIX F

Ethical Clearance Letter



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

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

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machane@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC) on 19/07/2020, this committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) 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.

Study title: Support to learners with special education needs in mainstream secondary schools of Mafikeng

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr N Shalkhag

Student / Team: OTC Madiba (MEd - 25639129)

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	1	9	0	-	1	9	-	A	2
Institution				Study Number					Year		Status			

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Project

Commencement date: 21 November 2019

Risk: Low

Expiry date: 21 November 2020

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (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):

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/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:
 - 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 EduREC, 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-SCRE and EduREC 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 EduREC 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.

The EduREC 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 EduREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof JAK Olivier
Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (20251603) C:\Users\20251603\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
6 November 2018

Current details: (20251603) M:\06816532\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethical Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 SR-RSC-Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

APPENDIX G

Plagiarism report

25639129:Omphile_Tshepo_Cooporate_Madiba_Masters_Thesi..			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
11%	9%	5%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	hdl.handle.net Internet Source		2%
2	Toyin Mary Adewumi, Cina Mosito, Vonzell Agosto. "Experiences of teachers in implementing inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected Fort Beaufort District primary schools, South Africa", Cogent Education, 2019 Publication		1%
3	www.scielo.org.za Internet Source		1%
4	moam.info Internet Source		1%
5	Submitted to North West University Student Paper		<1%
6	www.naptosa.org.za Internet Source		<1%
7	Chinhara Henry, Sotuku Namhla. "Continuous professional development for inclusive ECD		<1%