



**An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of Screening, Identification,
Assessment, and Support of Learners with Learning Barriers in a
Mainstream School.**

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, **Nombulelo Mhlongo**, declare that:

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Student Signature

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Date



Supervisor's Signature

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Date

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late parents, my dad, Mphumuzeni Nene and my mom, Tinini Mabiyela Nene. I know that if you are still alive you would be very much proud of this achievement. You provided me with opportunities and keys to education and success. You are forever in my thoughts and prayers. May Your Soul Rest in Eternal Peace!

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DBST | District -Based Support Team |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| EWP6 | Education White Paper 6 |
| IE | Inclusive Education |
| ISP | Individual Support Plan |
| LSAs | Learning Support Assistants |
| NEPA | National Education Policy Act |
| SASA | South African Schools Act |
| SBST | School-Based Support Team |
| SEN | Special Educational Needs |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| SIAS | Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support |
| SMT | School Management Team |
| SNET | Special Needs in Education and Training |
| UNESCO | United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |

Abstract

Inclusive education has become a global concern (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). This study sought to investigate teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support within a mainstream schooling context. The study was a qualitative study located within the interpretive paradigm. The data to respond to the key research questions of the study was generated through in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews as well as document analysis. The participants for the study were purposely selected from three primary schools in the Circuit of Mahlabathini, Zululand District, KwaZulu Natal Province. The participants were from the schools which were implementing the Policy on SIAS. All the participants had a minimum of six years in the field of education.

The findings of the study revealed that the teachers had a good understanding of inclusive education, as contained in Education White Paper 6 and the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. The teachers reported a range of challenges they experienced in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. However, findings revealed that the teachers used their agency to navigate challenges to ensure that their learners who were experiencing barriers to learning were supported.

The findings point to the fact that the effective implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support is at the core of the efforts of the basic education sector to build an inclusive education and training system. From a social rights perspective, this presents a mechanism for redressing past imbalances, enfranchising the disenfranchised and ensuring equitable access to education for all.

Keywords: Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support; barriers to learning; inclusive education; mainstream school

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Declaration..... | iii |
| Dedication | iv |
| Acknowledgement | v |
| List of Abbreviations and Acronyms | vii |
| Abstract..... | viii |
| Appendices..... | xiv |
| Appendix A: Questions for the semi-structured interviews | xiv |
| Appendix B: Focus group interview questions..... | xiv |
| Appendix C: Letter to the school | xiv |
| Appendix D: Permission to conduct research – KwaZulu Natal Department of Education | |
| Appendix E: Letter to the participants..... | xiv |
| Appendix F: Ethical Clearance | xiv |
| Appendix G: Certificate from the language editor..... | xiv |
| Appendix H: Originality report..... | xiv |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION | - 1 - |
| 1.1 Introduction | - 1 - |
| 1.2 Background | - 1 - |
| 1.3 Focus and the aim of the study..... | - 2 - |
| 1.4 Rationale of the study | - 3 - |
| 1.5 Key research questions | - 4 - |
| 1.6 Objectives of the study | - 4 - |
| 1.7 Definition of key concepts | - 5 - |
| 1.8 Overview of methodology and design of the study..... | - 5 - |
| 1.9 Organisation of the thesis | - 5 - |
| 1.10 Conclusion..... | - 6 - |

| | | |
|-------|--|--------|
| 2. | CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW | - 7 - |
| 2.1 | Introduction | - 7 - |
| 2.2 | Deconstructing the notion of inclusive education | - 7 - |
| 2.3 | Inclusive education: An international perspective | - 9 - |
| 2.4 | Inclusive Education: South African perspective | - 10 - |
| 2.5 | Legislative and policy framework for inclusive education in South Africa | - 12 - |
| 2.5.1 | Constitution of the Republic of South Africa | - 12 - |
| 2.5.2 | South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 | - 12 - |
| 2.5.3 | Education White Paper 6 | - 12 - |
| 2.5.4 | Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support..... | - 13 - |
| 2.6 | Roles and responsibilities concerning SIAS policy implementation..... | - 13 - |
| 2.7 | Factors affecting the implementation of SIAS policy..... | - 15 - |
| 2.7.1 | Inadequate skills and knowledge | - 15 - |
| 2.7.2 | Inadequate resources | - 17 - |
| 2.7.3 | Inadequate curriculum access | - 17 - |
| 2.7.4 | Time constraints..... | - 18 - |
| 2.7.5 | Teacher-learner ratio | - 18 - |
| 2.7.6 | Inadequate parental support..... | - 18 - |
| 2.8 | Conceptual framework | - 19 - |
| 2.9 | Conclusion..... | - 23 - |
| | CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY..... | - 24 - |
| 3.1 | Introduction | - 24 - |
| 3.2 | Research paradigm | - 24 - |
| 3.3 | Research approach..... | - 26 - |
| 3.4 | Research design | - 26 - |
| 3.5 | Description of the research site..... | - 26 - |
| 3.6 | Sample and sampling techniques | - 27 - |

| | | |
|--|---|--------|
| 3.7 | Data collection | - 27 - |
| 3.7.1 | In-depth semi-structured interviews | - 27 - |
| 3.7.2 | Focus group interviews | - 28 - |
| 3.7.3 | Document analysis | - 29 - |
| 3.8 | Data analysis | - 29 - |
| 3.8.1 | Data coding and analysis..... | - 29 - |
| 3.8.2 | Identifying themes | - 30 - |
| 3.9 | Ethical considerations | - 30 - |
| 3.10 | Credibility and trustworthiness..... | - 31 - |
| 3.11 | Limitations..... | - 32 - |
| 3.12 | Conclusion..... | - 32 - |
| CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS..... | | - 33 - |
| 4.1 | Introduction | - 33 - |
| 4.2 | Organisation of themes | - 33 - |
| 4.2.1 | Themes and sub-themes..... | - 33 - |
| 4.2.1.1 | Teachers' understanding of the notion of inclusive education | - 33 - |
| 4.2.1.2 | Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support..... | - 34 - |
| 4.3 | Profiles of the participants..... | - 34 - |
| 4.4 | Theme 1: Teachers' understanding on notion of inclusive education..... | - 35 - |
| 4.4.1 | Discussion..... | - 35 - |
| 4.5 | Theme 2: Teachers' understanding of SIAS policy..... | - 38 - |
| 4.6 | Theme 3: Factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support | - 39 - |
| 4.6.1. | Knowledge, capacity and clarity of the policy..... | - 39 - |
| 4.6.2. | Availability of a clear and relevant policy implementation plan | - 40 - |
| 4.6.3 | National curriculum policy statement | - 42 - |

| | | |
|--|---|--------|
| 4.6.4 | Support from key structures and stakeholders | - 44 - |
| 4.6.5 | Support from the Institutional-Level Support Team..... | - 45 - |
| 4.6.6 | Support from the District-Based Support Team | - 47 - |
| 4.6.7 | Support from parents..... | - 49 - |
| 4.6.8 | Support from the School Governing Body | - 50 - |
| 4.6.9 | Support from other stakeholders | - 51 - |
| 4.7 | Theme 4: Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support..... | - 52 - |
| 4.8. | Theme 5: Teachers' negotiation of the challenges in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support | - 54 - |
| 4.9 | Conclusion..... | - 55 - |
| CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... | | - 57 - |
| 5.1 | Introduction | - 57 - |
| 5.2 | Key research questions and objectives of the research study..... | - 57 - |
| 5.3 | Summary of the key findings | - 58 - |
| 5.3.1 | Teachers' understanding of the notion of inclusive education | - 58 - |
| 5.3.2 | Teachers' understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support | - 58 - |
| 5.3.3 | Factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support..... | - 58 - |
| 5.3.4 | Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support..... | - 59 - |
| 5.3.5 | Teachers' negotiation of the challenges in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support | - 59 - |
| 5.4 | Purpose and significance of the study findings | - 59 - |
| 5.5 | Reflections on methodological and design issues | - 60 - |
| 5.6 | Implications of the study | - 60 - |
| 5.7 | Recommendations for further study | - 61 - |

| | | |
|-----|---|--------|
| 5.8 | Limitations of the study | - 61 - |
| 5.9 | Concluding thoughts | - 62 - |
| | References | - 63 - |
| | APPENDICES | - 74 - |
| | Appendix A: Questions for semi-structured interviews..... | - 74 - |
| | Appendix B: Focus group interview questions..... | - 76 - |
| | Appendix C: Letter to the school | - 79 - |
| | Appendix D: Permission to conduct research: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education | - 81 - |
| | Appendix E: Letter to the participants..... | - 82 - |
| | Appendix G: Certificate from Language Editor | - 85 - |
| | Annexure H: Originality report..... | - 86 - |

Appendices

Appendix A: Questions for the semi-structured interviews

Appendix B: Focus group interview questions

Appendix C: Letter to the school

Appendix D: Permission to conduct research – KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

Appendix E: Letter to the participants

Appendix F: Ethical Clearance

Appendix G: Certificate from the language editor

Appendix H: Originality report

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In South Africa, inclusive education, like all other countries, has become a focal point in the efforts of supplying equitable admittance to education (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). Learners experiencing learning barriers are now allowed within a diverse learning environment in a mainstream school (Strogilos, 2018). In South Africa, inclusive learning and support of learners with diversity of tuition demands was introduced in 2001 as White Paper 6, supported by the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (DBE, 2014; DoE, 2001).

In this chapter, I begin by providing South Africa's background on mainstream schooling within the inclusion context, with a particular emphasis on where instructors are expected to implement the Policy of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy regarding learners experiencing schooling impediments. I then state the purpose, focus and the rationale of the research. I outline the key study inquiry studied through this investigation, including the intention of the study. Lastly, I provide a summary of the chapters that inform the dissertation.

1.2 Background

The pre-1994 education system in South Africa was organized based on inequality. With emergence of democracy in South Africa in 1994, a new rights-based legal and policy framework for education came into existence. This policy and legislative framework were based on the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the structure of South African law (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Section 7(1) of the Constitution characterises the Bill of Rights as the linchpin of South Africa's freedom and a guarantee for personal decency, identity and liberty (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Section 9 of the Constitution ensures equality to all irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, religion, culture, language, and sexual orientation (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Section 29 (1) of the Bill of Rights identifies rights for everyone for to schooling (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). As a commitment to pursue and fulfil these constitutional promises, the preliminary section to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 sets an educational agenda that will rectify the inequity and previous imbalances at educational provision and ensure equitable access to genuine pedagogy for everybody at school and provide a firm base to establish

talents, capabilities, society transformation , fight racism and gender based inequality that portrays unfair discrimination, encourage the economic well-being of society and sustain privilege for learners, guardians parents and teachers” (Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

In addition to the laws which were enacted, a series of macro-policies were developed between 1994 and 2001, one of which was the Education White Paper 6: Special Need Education: Building an Inclusive and Training System (DoE, 2001). In the introduction to White Paper 6, Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, touted the policy document as a post-racialism milestone policy that detached the country from its previously ugly experience and embraced important improvements for the physically challenged persons and should proceed in doing it, as a component of and not deserted from the blossoming of the country (DoE, 2001).

Minister Asmal expresses hope through White Paper 6 that the government would make on racial special needs education consolidated elements of the national tutoring approach (DoE, 2001). White Paper 6 emanated from a demand to make transformation for the arrangement of education and practice as it was “responsive and sensitive to the diverse range of learning needs” and derived its immediate mandate from Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training (1995), which “acknowledged the importance of providing an effective response to the unsatisfactory educational experiences of learners with special educational needs, including those within the mainstream whose educational needs were inadequately accommodated” (DoE, 2001, p.12).

As a corollary to White Paper 6, guidelines, strategies and supporting policies were developed (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). In 2008 a guide on SIAS policy was developed and adopted (DoE, 2008, DBE, 2014). Overall objective for SIAS policy are “to provide a policy framework for the standardization of the procedures to identify, assess and provide programs for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school” (DBE, 2014, p. 11).

1.3 Focus and the aim of the study

The focal point of the investigation were the experiences of teachers in executing SIAS policy within a mainstream school setting. The motive of the research was to investigate and explore teachers' knowledge concerning the application of the policy and analyse interactional dynamics of the factors that contribute to an enabling conducive condition for every pupil, especially those who encounter hardship to

comprehend lessons. The study also sought to investigate and identify both inclusionary and exclusionary factors that enable or impede the teachers' execution of SIAS policy. Lastly, the study also sought to survey participants' opinions about how they negotiated the challenges that they encountered in application of inclusive policy within a school setting.

1.4 Rationale of the study

As an experienced teacher, I observed that teachers regard and describe the inclusive education policy as a contextual factor in rural mainstream schools. SIAS policy persuades rigorous support system of learners with special needs that should be put in place embracing entire educational structure (DBE, 2014). Literature also attests to the fact that the majority teachers do not comprehend the content inclusive policy and depend mostly on test scores to recognize learners learning difficulties (Mkhuma, Maseko, & Tlale, 2014). This lack of knowledge in educators causes challenges to manage diversity in the classroom (Mkhuma et al., 2016). The problems arising from the deficiency in knowledge by the teachers are further compounded by more administrative duties, insufficient duration, inadequate information concerning learning demands, unconducive learning space and deficient assistance from DBSTs (Mkhuma et al., 2014).

At a personal level, I have teaching experience of twenty years in a mainstream school. I also feel inadequate with the task of implementing the precepts of inclusive policy. Except for few once-off workshops, I have not received intensive training geared towards inclusivity. This stressed me a lot as I was expected to account yearly to the District officials (as a principal) whether the process is conducted correctly in my school. I often networked with the neighbouring schools with the hope of getting tangible evidence of correct implementation. The answer that I got from these schools was that they decided to put it aside due to many factors that impede them from implementing inclusion. From discussions with these teachers from neighbouring schools, I noted that colleagues that they felt inadequate and that their challenges that they experienced were not conveyed for the attention of national based officials in the Department of Education. These personal observations echo the submission by Abongdia, Dakada, & Foncha (2016), that the duty of recognizing and providing assistance to learners is dedicated to educators with little or no skills.

The intention of this research was driven by a desire to add value to academic discussions about the actual environment of teachers' exposure to and implementation of SIAS policy. Furthermore, I wanted to highlight mainstream teachers' understanding and implementation of inclusive policy as a mechanism impacting learners who encounter barriers to meeting their schooling needs.

1.5 Key research questions

The main research question of the study was:

What are teachers' experiences with the implementation of the SIAS policy?

The subsidiary research questions that were used in the study are as follows:

1. What is the teachers' understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
2. What are the factors that enable or impede the implementation of Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
3. How do teachers navigate the factors that influence the successful implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support to enable effective teaching and learning?

1.6 Objectives of the study

The key objectives of the study were developing an understanding of teachers' experiences in the application of SIAS Policy within an inclusion setting. It was further guided by the following objectives, which were to determine:

- the teachers' understanding notion of inclusive instruction;
- teachers' understanding of SIAS policy
- factors that influence implementation of SIAS policy
- the teachers' experiences of the implementation SIAS policy; and
- how teachers negotiated the challenges they experienced in SIAS policy.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

Several concepts were deployed throughout the study. Definitions were provided for terms and concepts for a better understanding of the study by future users.

Barriers to learning refers to learning limitations discovered during curriculum deliverance that impede learners from meeting schooling demands (Department of Education, 2010).

Learning disability is a situation that hampers with the process of learning whereby a pupil shows learning disorder and indicates dysfunctionality in processing knowledge that is language-based (Hess, 2020).

Inclusive education refers to an education system where all learners are afforded an equal learning opportunity in a single system of education (Yoro, Fourie and Van der Merwe, 2020). According to Yoro et al. (2020), inclusion in schooling refers to the review and transformation of the tuition structure to embrace equal education for all learners, despite strengths or weaknesses.

Mainstream school refers to a regular school that incorporate learners with diverse needs through modification of teaching and assessment methods (Department of Education, 2011). Mainstream schools embrace transformation of inclusion to meet learning demands of all learners in a diverse environment. These schools are transformed with the purpose of stimulating conducive learning environment for all learners (Department of Education, 2013).

1.8 Overview of methodology and design of the study

The methodological approach adopted in this investigation was a narrative qualitative approach established within a critical paradigm to investigate teachers' experiences on inclusive policy in mainstream schools. This approach gave teachers the power to narrate their real lives stories on the implementation of inclusive learning (Patton, 2015). The critical approach gave me also, as a researcher, a better chance to enquire beyond assumptions and acknowledge teachers' position in application of SIAS policy. I sought answers for research questions that were previously unanswered (Patton, 2015).

1.9 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis comprises five chapters as indicated below:

- Chapter One provides an outline and background to the study.
- Chapter Two presents a review of literature of inclusion in schooling nationally and internationally, the policy and regulation structure guiding policy on inclusion in South Africa, roles and responsibilities in respect of SIAS policy application process, factors affecting implementation of the policy and conceptual framework that were used to read, analyse, interpret and understand the findings for this study.
- Chapter Three refers to the methodology employed in the study.
- Chapter Four provides an illustration of the data emanating from the study together with an interpretation and presentation of results.
- Chapter Five provides concluding comments based on key points emanating from the investigation.

1.10 Conclusion

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study, the description of the key concepts related to inclusive education, the aim and objectives of the study and an overall chapter layout of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide the literature review and conceptual framework that guided the study.

2. CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

To contextualize the review of literature, I begin by providing an explanation of the notion of inclusive education. Thereafter, I provide a review of legislation that underpins inclusive education policy in South Africa. I then discuss global instruments that provide the foundation of inclusive education policy. Lastly, I present the conceptual framework that was adopted to explain, interpret and comprehend the data that emerged as part of the investigation.

2.2 Deconstructing the notion of inclusive education

Inclusion is understood as the recognition, acknowledgement and accommodation of the diversity of learning and development needs of learners (Department of Education, 2001). The focus of inclusion is to provide an enabling environment that can accommodate and nurture the diversity of learning needs. This means creating an environment where the needs of all learners are embraced during the teaching and learning processes. An enabling environment implies that there is an awareness among teachers of the factors that impede the implementation of learning and that these are identified and strategies applied early to ensure that learners can learn and succeed (ibid., 2001). This means teachers must devise strategies to embrace and accommodate the individual needs of learners. This suggests that the focus of inclusion is to identify and mitigate contextual barriers or blockages to development within the education system for assurance all learners are exposed to education.

Juvonen, Lessard, Rastogi, Schacter, Smith & Juvonen (2019) describe the notion of inclusive education as a procedure of identifying challenges during learning and designing support programmes for barrier-free learning condition for all learners. This means that inclusive education is about improving access to and participation in the learning processes. Thomas and Kumar (2020) contend that inclusive education provides learners assurance of equal opportunities to fair learning and that teachers support them to increasingly have access to quality education for all. Therefore, it could be argued, inclusive is about embracing learners' needs and assisting them to reach their potential and achieve learning outcomes within an inclusive educational environment.

Inclusive education is not confined only to formal schooling; instead, it acknowledges that learning also happens outside the formal setting (DoE, 2001). It happens in the places such as homes as well as community (Department of Education, 2001). Therefore, comprehensive education takes place within formal and informal settings. Inclusive education demands transformation in teaching methods and supporting programmes. It encourages teachers to discover and acknowledge these needs within a wide range of learning contexts. Inclusive education is about equitable access for learners so that all learners can take advantage of the learning opportunity and succeed.

Sanger (2020) contends that inclusive education provides a learning environment in which an extend of differing learning demands can be accommodated. This implies that, within an inclusive learning environment, each learner is supported to learn and succeed. Zakia, Karsidi & Yusuf (2021) assert that the education system must ensure fairness when delivering curriculum. This means that an education system must establish and nurture systems for quality and equal learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of the learning challenges that they may be experiencing. Thus, education must ensure that appropriate support is rendered to give assurance that all learners that they are included for fair chances.

Klang (2019) contends that learners with exceptional learning demands deserve to receive education in centres of learning and support without any discrimination. This means that they must enjoy the right of freedom of choice in respect of which school to attend, which preferably must be schools within their communities with their peers without being isolated and separated from their neighbourhoods. Parents are important if an inclusive learning environment is to materialize as they can assist with the understanding of the problems that may be presenting as a barrier to learning and can then work with the teachers to ensure that appropriate support is provided. For this study, a definition by Juvonen et al. (2019), who emphasize that inclusion should not only focus on diversity but must also guarantee access to quality education, was preferred. The notion of quality of education elevates the importance of a healthy combination of factors, such as adequate resources, skilled teachers and differentiated curriculum for diverse needs.

2.3 Inclusive education: An international perspective

This section provides an international perspective on inclusive education. Kurth, Toews, Thompson, & Miller (2018) argue that the intention of adopting comprehensive tuition across the globe was to supply unbiased learning chances for all children. Different countries across the world have recommended and adopted inclusion as a technique to access equal treatment in tuition (Department of Education, 2001). The adoption of inclusion has called for the re-structuring of learning systems, which had a range of implications for education planning in many contexts (Ainscow, 2019). Inclusive education was first adopted in developed countries, with a strong belief that teachers must be provided with opportunities for building their capacities in teaching and learning environments (Strogilos, 2018). Ainscow (2018) argues that countries are at different levels of implementing inclusive education, depending on a range of contextual issues.

Broadly, inclusive education encourages differentiated instruction as a pedagogical mechanism for responding to multiple learning demands of learners (Strogilos, 2018). UNESCO, 1994) contends that the basic objective of inclusion guarantees desegregation and that all learners learn to the best of their potential. It insists that issues that make learning difficult are identified and addressed early (see, for instance, Department of Education, 2014). With this aspect, teachers must identify and intervene early on to support learners experiencing learning obstacles that limit their opportunities to succeed. This means that curriculum deliverance should incorporate diverse needs of learners, which may be achieved through flexible curricula, organizational structures, suitable teaching techniques, and inclusive learning methods that guarantees absolute utilization of adequate. However, for inclusive education to work, opportunities must be created for families and communities to participate in the education of children (see, for instance, UNESCO, 1994; Department of Education, 2001; Ainscow, 2018).

The Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), motivates for the appraisal of inclusion to incorporate autonomy, in which schools must support all learners, despite physiological, psychological, communal or lingual conditions, to learn successfully (UNESCO, 1994). This includes “gifted learners and those with impairments, homeless children, child-headed households, children from rural and politically criticized communities” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). Schools should “identify and respond to the different needs of their students, both involving different learning styles, and appropriate

curriculum, institutional structures, learning strategies, resources, must provide quality education for all through the use and association with their communities" (UNESCO, 1994, pp. 11-12).

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special needs, adopted by nations, stated that the claim to satisfy special learning demand for inclusion cannot be treated successfully in isolation; it must form part of national educational strategies (UNESCO, 1994). The application of inclusion, therefore, needs significant investment to effect changes in the entire education system (see, for instance, Ainscow, 2018). Schools must embrace new strategies for teaching, assessing and supporting learners in diverse classrooms (Dladla, 2021). In this regard, Montes (2016), an international researcher, conducted a study to scrutinize the attitudes of teachers with respect to inclusion policies, in which he found that a significant number of teachers portrayed a positive attitude. Mahlo (2016) contends that the United States of America are among the first countries to welcome inclusive education as a mechanism to prevent educational discrimination against learners.

The Salamanca Statement suggested that mainstream or regular classes should provide appropriate support to ensure that learners learn and succeed. This model of inclusion is also referred to as authentic inclusion (see, for instance, Thompson & Timmons, 2017). Authentic inclusion requires that all learners must be allowed equitable opportunities to learn within an inclusive learning environment and that their learning demands must be met by the school through appropriate support structures and programmes (Ainscow, 2018).

2.4 Inclusive Education: South African perspective

The definition of special needs strategies for accommodation of the differentiated needs of learning in South Africa is predicated on the logic that impediment to learning emanate from a series of factors (DoE, 2001). Accordingly, inclusive policy provides a framework that is guided by the following premises: methodically shifting from using isolation according to classification of disabilities as an arranging principle; focusing on the plan required to weakening effects of barriers experienced; emphasis on supporting learners through a range of school types in line with the country's support model; guidance for identification and support structures for interventions (Department of Education, 2001).

There have been challenges in realization of development pedagogy capable of serving individual learners, irrespective of their differences. For instance, in a study conducted by De Winnaar (2013), to comprehend

the view point of those in charge of operations, it was revealed that teachers and district officials believed that inclusion could succeed in South Africa, provided that changes are implemented. Discrepancies were found in how teachers and district officials understood inclusive education. This was although both teachers and district officials believed that inclusive education was a key for improvement.

Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016), argue that teachers often experienced challenges in providing assistance for learners encountering difficulties in learning due to parents' illiteracy and lack of involvement. In addition, teachers participating, reported that the administrative process in communication to the district support team seeking their help is extremely difficult due to the emphasis on support application documentation that needed to be completed.

The above finding by Tlale et al. (2016) highlights important challenges regarding inclusive policy in South Africa. The finding is a particularly significant instrumental administration duty for successful implementation of inclusion. However, this concern about the tiresome process of referrals could, on the contrary, point to the fact that SBST function well. According to the study, SBST's in some schools had a management role function for the process of referrals (Nel et al., 2016). This implies that, despite the challenges that teachers were facing in these schools, they were forging ahead towards implementation.

South Africa however, had difficulty implementing inclusive education policy. However, the struggles in the country's attempts to implement the policy could point to its unique political history, which has generated complexities in the country's efforts for practice (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). This has further been complicated by the ambiguities that reside within White Paper 6. For instance, Donohue and Bornman (2014) point to reference of WP6 to the cost-effectiveness of inclusion as one of the reasons for adopting the policy. This misses the point as significant transformations to the education system that was designed to serve the few cannot be turned around without substantial financial input (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Donohue and Bornman (2014, p. 8) argue that this ambiguity may have been intentional, given that some policies were "enacted for their political symbolism rather than practicality". For Donohue and Bornman (2014), the content of White Paper 6 lacks specificity and clarity, thereby making it difficult for the policy to be implemented successfully.

2.5 Legislative and policy framework for inclusive education in South Africa

2.5.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides for the Bill of Rights, for respect and upholding rights to persons (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Section 7(1) of the Constitution characterises the Bill of Rights as the stronghold of South Africa's democracy to embrace mortal nobility, equivalence and liberty (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Section 9 of the Constitution provides equivalence for citizens irrespective of their gender, age, and race before the eyes of law. Section 29 (1) of the Bill of Rights provides for the right to basic education for everyone. As a part of the commitment to fulfil the obligations of the Bill of Rights, the preamble to enjoin the nation, redress and rectify unevenness and destruction of the past.

2.5.2 South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), which replaced the Education Acts of the apartheid regime, underlines a need for all public schools to give high quality instructional education to all learners regardless of variances: "a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way" (Republic of South Africa, 1996b, pp. 2A-6).

The South African Schools Act 84 (1996), affirms that "every parent must cause every learner for whom she or he is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first" (Republic of South Africa, 1996b, p.6) thereby stipulating that the rights for learners to inclusion are protected. Section 5(6) of the South African Schools Act places responsibilities to ensure instruction for learners with special needs on the departmental heads and school principals to ensure protection of educational rights. Departmental heads and school principals should consider taking sound measures as an assurance that these learners can learn and succeed.

2.5.3 Education White Paper 6

White Paper 6, the country's inclusive policy, maps out and describes the objective of inclusive policy strategy towards its building (DoE, 2001). The policy also outlines the form that a new categorizing

principle will take, based on required standard of assistance instead of a form of disability (DoE, 2001). This ground-breaking policy paper which, as the Minister of Education pointed out, would cut the country's ties with its discriminatory past and recognize the important contribution made by people with disabilities (DoE, 2001).

As could be discerned from the above discussion, the main motive of inclusion is to shift the instructional structure to a new model, a model which leads to more awareness of the diversity of internal and external learning challenges (DoE, 2001). White Paper 6 regards the work of teachers as the foundation of inclusion. The confidence placed on teachers for implementation of policy, especially with regards to the quick recognition and mediation to ensure learners can learn and mitigate the factors, such as underperformance and drop outs (DoE, 2014). White Paper 6 is thus seen as a key policy intervention for the implementation of educational transformation country wide (DoE, 2014). Accordingly, White Paper 6 lays down a policy trajectory to build a firm foundation for an education system that can give expression to the constitutional promise of uninhibited access to basic instruction (DoE, 2001).

2.5.4 Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The DoE promulgated the SIAS Policy, which provides regulatory structure for procedures and support to all learners requiring extra assistance (DoE, 2014). The policy aims to ensure that all learners who encounter barriers to learning, be it being disrupted by family, language, community issues and out-of-school children who never enrolled due to disability or other barriers (DoE, 2014) are accommodated in schools. SIAS policy identifies several role-players ensuring success of inclusion and these include teachers, parents, learners, SBST, DBST and other specialists (DoE, 2014).

2.6 Roles and responsibilities concerning SIAS policy implementation

Mhlongo (2019) contends that teachers' beliefs, voices and experiences in teaching and learning should be taken into account as they influence learner performance. The teachers as the role players interact daily with their learners; they are the ones who are expected to carry out the first step of SIAS policy (DoE, 2014). Teachers conduct screening through a range of means, including observations during lessons. It can be also done during one on one discussions or group discussions. The teacher is expected to record her observation in specific forms in which the teacher must capture all areas of concern regarding the learner. In terms of the policy, a teacher consults the parent to source more information regarding the

learner and discusses the findings to chart the way forward. From the information gathered, the teacher then draws up a programme to support the learner. The learner profiles are kept by the teacher for any possible reference. The teacher is also expected to further request the intervention of SBST when support provided did bear fruit (DoE, 2014).

The Department of Basic Education maintains that teachers must collaborate with parents regarding the learner's educational and learning needs (DOE, 2014). The engagement can happen in the form of an interview with SBST. This permits the SBST to assist the teachers to find and explore ways of addressing the barriers that the learner is experiencing. Once this has happened, the SBST assists and guides the teacher in developing and implementing an appropriate intervention plan (DoE, 2014). Parents are contacted to furnish consent to give SBST permission to intervene. If SBST meets challenges and cannot provide learning support, the matter is transferred to DBST for intervention at their level. The DBST retrieves documents of the case referred by the SBST and programme of support that was provided to a learner. The information provided should be reliable as it must be usable by specialists for appropriate interventions (DoE, 2014). The DBST then decides in respect of referral for a learner (DoE, 2014).

Makoelle (2014), argues that the SBST's task is to pinpoint extra learning requirements and offers solutions to meet those demands. The SBST must develop teachers to accommodate challenges experienced by learners. Makoelle (2014) argues that SBST should liaise with teachers to address the barriers experienced by learners to ensure that they can learn and succeed. Another key function of the SBST is to determine whether the identified learner support needs identified by the teacher are possible within the school or to request additional support. The SBST is responsible for arranging meetings for the teacher and parent to discuss proposed support programmes. The SBST can further refer the learner to DBST for a higher level of intervention should the support programme not achieve the desired goals. (Department of Education, 2014).

The DBST has a significant responsibility in the execution of inclusive education (DoE, 2005). The DBST, working with provincial and national education departments, is responsible for the provision of appropriate staff programmes, including training and classroom support for teachers to strengthen and improve their capacity (Department of Basic Education, 2010). Therefore, the DBST must facilitate continuing staff professional development programmes for teaching and support staff to empower them to develop and implement appropriate intervention plans (DBE, 2010).

However, Maphumulo (2015), states that support teams that are expected to provide assistance lack appropriate skills. The teachers reported that training sessions were about terminology and rarely about assisting them with strategies to negotiate challenges (Maphumulo, 2015).

2.7 Factors affecting the implementation of SIAS policy

SIAS policy provides the mechanism and protocol in responding to learning needs for individual learners, (DBE, 2014). Minister for Basic Education, proclaims that effective application of the Policy will assist efforts for the country to meet its international obligations regarding inclusion (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Mkhuma, Maseko & Tlale (2014) analysed the factors affecting teachers' experiences in SIAS policy. According to research findings, teachers do run across issues while putting the inclusive policy into practice. Mkhuma et al. (2016), argue that number of factors including policy guidelines that are ambiguous and don't take into account the conditions that teachers work in, affect how well learners are identified when they face learning obstacles. Aside from the fact that SIAS policy involves too much administrative processes, it does not offer empirical guidance on how to address the underlying causes of learning difficulties.

LSAs, are in charge of coordinating programs from teachers. They experience challenges in the execution of the process. According to the report, teachers are willing to work but lack the support and direction they need to recognize and meet their needs instructors in traditional classrooms (Mkhuma et al., 2014). SIAS policy mandates that learners be screened when entering the school for the first time (DBE, 2011). The results also showed that it very difficult in interviewing a child about outside influences because grade R learners might not comprehend any aspect that could be a learning obstacle but, at the same time, only specialists can spot indications and symptoms.

2.7.1 Inadequate skills and knowledge

Literature suggests that teachers are creative in adjusting to internal and external conditions to accommodate learners that encounter educational hurdles. Hence, teachers in both special and general education settings need to be skilled to meet various requirements of learners. Among other responsibilities, a teacher must be knowledgeable in redesigning and implementing the curriculum strategies of support. Mkhuma et al. (2014) contend that teachers must ensure that they are abreast with

the developments and changes in the curriculum. This is important if learners' demands are adequately and effectively embraced. (Westwood, 2018).

South African inclusive education policies have set an ambitious transformation agenda for schooling generally, and for inclusion specifically. However, the Department has also acknowledged the lack of skills among teachers, who have been identified in these policies as frontline workers in the system (Abongdia et al., 2016). This means that the capacity of teachers must be increased to achieve objectives of an inclusion framework (Abongdia et al., 2016). As a teacher who is in a mainstream school, I have also observed this lack of skills in dealing with the various aspects of inclusivity. Mkhuma et al. (2014) point out that that SIAS policy process often face enormous implementation challenges. The role expected from teachers is that they must be adequately knowledgeable and skilful to recognize special needs, use appropriate teaching strategies; differentiate the curriculum and address obstacles of behaviour within the learning environment (Abongdia et al., 2016).

Westwood (2018) stated that implementation of inclusive policy seems to be experiencing challenges. For instance, inadequate knowledge and skills among teachers to teach inclusively is a major implementation challenge. Westwood (2018) further argues that teachers often lack a lucid understanding of the policy resulting in challenges in accommodating the needs of learners. For instance, in Westwood's (2018) study, teachers reported that the Department organized workshops for teachers on the execution of White Paper 6, but often only one teacher was invited per school. In other instances, as reported by Makhalemele and Tlale (2021), workshops often lasted half a day, which they felt was too short to impart skills effectively.

The significant problem is teachers' required abilities to serve learners who need extra support. Mkhuma (2016), explains that teachers are often expected to be knowledge about specific types of special needs in full-service schools to support identified learners. However, teachers often do not possess the essential skills (Auditor-General, 2019), which hampers their ability to give quality assistance to learners who need extra support. Mkhuma et al. (2014) reported that when teachers endeavour to persuade the process of recognizing learning challenges, they obtain presumptions rather than genuine nature obstructions since they are not satisfactory prepared. Zwane and Matome (2018) supported Mkhuma et al. (2014) s proclamation that support is not well constructed due to inadequate skills.

Mkhuma et al., (2014), stated that teachers opted for the deficit model as a means of dealing with special needs. That is, teachers use approaches that focus on what learners cannot do, neglecting what they can

do. Mkhuma et al., (2014) contend that teachers often fall back on this method or approach because they lack expertise. In this regard, Often, the programs organized for teachers do not meet the teachers' training needs (Zwane & Matome, 2018). One should, therefore, question whether or not the trainers possess the required levels of expertise to address the training needs of teachers. If teachers struggle to provide extra support, they likely develop negative attitude towards inclusion, which will place many learners at risk of dropping out. Mkhuma et al., (2014) discovered that teachers do not comprehend expectations of inclusive education. Findings of their study revealed that comprehensive instruction might be better served in the event that workshop facilitators instructors better understood the constraints of teachers.

2.7.2 Inadequate resources

Wentzel, Russell & Baker (2015) assert that the lack of appropriate equipment and devices hinder the success of implementation. They argued that schools should be re-build and equipped. Some parents cannot afford to procure assistive devices such as reading glasses and hearing aids for their children, which makes it difficult for learners to receive a full basket of support (Zwane & Matome, 2018).

The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education (2017) acknowledged the shortage of resources during the briefing on challenges (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2017). Zwane and Matome (2018) contend that the inappropriate resources, inadequate devices and equipment undermine the implementation of SIAS in South African schools. A new policy might produce an anticipated outcome if appropriate resources are available. Zwane and Matome (2018) further state that, without these, it is difficult for teachers to differentiate their lessons and accommodate learners adequately. Schools, teachers and learners should be provided with the necessary materials, assistive devices and equipment for inclusive learning and teaching to become a reality.

2.7.3 Inadequate curriculum access

The curriculum can become a barrier to learning if it is not differentiated in a manner that makes it accessible to all learners (Makhalemele & Tlale, 2021). Makhalemele and Tlale (2021) have argued that teachers have been asked to modify learning programme themselves to assist learners who require a differentiated curriculum (Makhalemele & Tlale, 2021). This is a significant oversight given the fact that the notion of inclusive teaching is new and that teachers have not been trained to develop curricula. Many

attempts have been made to improve curriculum instruction but the desired outcomes had not been achieved.

2.7.4 Time constraints

The time factor has been reported as one of the challenges by Zwane & Matome (2018). These findings are similar to what Mkhuma (2012) and Zwane & Mtome (2018) presented, who argue that insufficient time to implement strategies for support remains a challenge. According to Zwane and Matome (2018), teachers who teach in diverse classrooms often find that time to provide individual support is insufficient. In addition, teachers report that they experience pressure to meet deadlines (Wentzel et al., 2015). Thus, they argue, that the implementation of SIAS policy is time-consuming and they fall behind with the implementation of annual teaching plans.

In addition, teachers report that, given the tight timeframes in which they must complete the annual teaching plans, there is often insufficient time to focus on individual learners (Wentzel et al., 2015). Teachers argue that inclusion comes with additional responsibilities to workload (Wentzel et al., 2015). Drawing up support programmes is time-consuming. In the study conducted by Mkhuma, et al., (2014), findings revealed that application of SIAS policy is perceived as additional workload, which hampered their daily teaching. These issues suggest that there is a need to pay attention to the issue of time constraints and workloads for inclusion to be successful.

2.7.5 Teacher-learner ratio

White Paper 6, stipulated that learners who require special needs support must receive it (DoE, 2001). Schuelka (2018) as well as Rodriguez and Elbaum (2014) contend that the teacher-learner ratio may cause challenges in the implementation of inclusion. For instance, Rodriguez and Elbaum (2014) reported that a significant number of disadvantaged schools have an average teacher-learner ratio of approximately 1:50.

2.7.6 Inadequate parental support

Parents should participate in the education of their children to achieve desired outcomes (Maluleke, 2014; Ceka & Murati, 2016). However, the literature reveals that parents do not pay full attention on their children's development (Mkhuma et al., 2014). As has been discussed above, in terms of inclusive policy,

parents are role players and have and have an important role to play (DoE, 2014). In addition, White Paper 5 strategy, regards parental involvement as core in early childhood development (Department of Education, 2001).

Mkhuma et al., (2014), identified inadequate cooperation between teachers and parents, which affects the quality of education provision (Mkhuma et al., 2014). Families of children experiencing special needs are often under stress and pressure, often resulting from the condition of their children (Kamaruddin & Mamat, 2015). This suggests that teachers are often left alone with the task of supporting learners without the crucial involvement of their parents. Communication is key to the successful implementation of inclusion. The absence of or inadequate parental support impacts negatively on the learners' performance and support by teachers.

2.8 Conceptual framework

This study seeks to investigate teachers' challenges in application of SIAS policy. In this regard, the study sought to provide teachers with a platform to voice their experiences. Therefore, in order to investigate and understand teachers' encounters, the research study employed concepts from different social justice theories and concepts. One of the most influential explorations of social justice theory has come from the ideas of Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin (2007) regarding the concept of oppression. The study also used Tatum's (2003) complexity of identity to understand how oppression operates through identities. For this study, oppression is understood as the system that promotes, increases and reinforces dominance and deprivation based on collective membership of a particular social group that may function either deliberately or unwittingly at institutional, individual and societal levels (Hardiman, Jackson & Griffin, 2007). These theories and concepts are discussed in the section below.

Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin (2007) contend that oppression promotes, conserves, sustains and perpetuates and advantage membership of a specific group. For instance, for this study, learners are taught without adequate skills to support them so that they can learn and succeed. Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin (2007) assert that oppression operates, both unintentionally and intentionally, at cultural and institutional stages (Hardiman, Jackson & Griffin, 2007). Oppression works with the understanding that teachers are agents who have access to power that can be either used to perpetuate the oppression or can work towards challenging the normative constructions of their teaching as exclusive and accessible to only a selection

of their learners. This suggests that oppression operates through the distortion of the notion of difference, which, for this study, may apply to a learner experiencing a barrier to learning. In the section below, I discuss and analyse these constructs, to establish a theoretical foundation through which discussions, arguments and conclusions of this study must be interpreted and understood.

Social norms and stereotypes exist to support dominant discourses used by agent groups to exclude and ostracise subordinate or target groups, for instance, lack of capacity may result in the perception that particular groups of learners require treatment or referral to special education settings to fix the causes of their inabilities or incapacities to learn and succeed (Muthukrishna, 2002). For teachers in mainstream or regular schools in South Africa, the fixing of a barrier to learning, from a perspective of a teacher who cannot teach inclusively, will be accomplished through the learner's dumping into a special school setting or segregated special class setting (Lalvani, 2013). This view will support the dominant institutional arrangements, in which the barrier is located within the learner, with no consideration of the contribution of the education system. When this happens, a learner experiencing a barrier to learning will be expected to change or leave the school or classroom in accordance with the dominant schooling patterns. Lalvani (2013) argues that when this happens, instead of effecting structural and pedagogical adaptations, teachers may recommend the further othering of such a learner, calling for the learner to be removed from their school and placed separated. This means that there will be no interrogation of the capacity of teachers to support such a learner.

From the above, it could be concluded that these learners may result in teachers perpetuating the marginalization, segregation and exclusion of learners, instead of challenging it. The marginalization, othering and segregation of individuals from target groups, were key building blocks of discrimination in schooling contexts during apartheid (Lalvani, 2013). However, it is important to point out that the embedded nature of excluding dominant discourses is still prevalent in many schooling contexts and many teachers have internalized these ideas, which has influenced their attitudes, thoughts, behaviours and practices (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). From this perspective, the notion of oppression can be conceptualized as an inequitable distribution of advantage to subordinate and disadvantage target individuals and social groups (Tatum, 2003).

Tatum (2003) asserts that individuals possess multiple social identities, based on their positioning and location and that this may cause them to experience disproportional advantage and disadvantage. When

teachers are unable to provide assistance, this may push learners deeper into disadvantage, marginalization and disempowerment. Lalvani (2013) pointed to this phenomenon when he reported that when teachers felt disempowered, without the capacity to support their learners, they instead transferred such disempowerment. In this study, for instance, this resulted in teachers leaving these learners behind, effectively pushing them out of their circle of teaching. When this happens, they are deprived of their constitutional right and locked in cycle of perpetual disadvantage. In this regard, teachers, become active accomplices in marginalization and contribute to the perpetuation of the excluding practices that reinforce the hierarchical disadvantage (Lalvani, 2013).

The theory of oppression comprises the notion of internalized oppression, which means that oppression operates as patriarchy (Hardiman, et, al., 2007; Mulally, 2002; Young, 1990), comprises mutually reinforcing mechanisms for generating and reproducing hierarchies of disadvantage (Young, 1990). For instance, for this study, teachers and officials may not take seriously the need for teachers to acquire skills and knowledge for inclusive instruction. Teachers and officials may contribute to further disadvantaging learners with hardship, encourage, reproduce and reinforce discrimination for these learners. This may form part of what Young (1990) calls structural oppression, which is constitutive of injustice directed at oppressed or target social groups. Young (1990) asserts that the sources and causes of inequities and injustices “are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences for following those rules” (p. 41). This means that the injustices and inequities directed to oppressed individuals and social groups are reinforced by how individuals and social groups involved respond, both consciously and unconsciously, to the sanctions and incentives from their context, what Young (1990, p. 41) calls the “normal processes of everyday life” to maintain the status quo. For instance, if the culture of a school is not to challenge discrimination of learners with challenges, teachers may integrate these cultural aspects into their attitudes towards such learners. This may manifest in teachers accepting and doing nothing to empower themselves to ensure that such learners benefit from their teaching.

Differential and unequal treatment tend to be institutionalized and systemic (Hardiman et al., 2007). In this regard, oppressive practices and behaviours “often do not require the conscious thought or effort of individual members of oppressor group but are a part of normalized practices, policies and beliefs that become embedded in social structures” (ibid, p.37). When this happens, it suggests that oppression has

become embedded within the social and political structures of the functioning of, for instance, schools, and has become an integral component of the way of life for these schools. For instance, in such a schooling context, teachers may not see the need for finding ways of ensuring that learners with learning difficulties benefit from teaching; they will internalize the idea that these learners were not made for it. In such an instance, the marginalization and exclusion of such learners would have become normalised and naturalised in such a schooling context. As time goes on, no-one will question the fact that some learners are not learning and these learners will subsequently be pushed into obscurity.

Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin (2007) contend that oppression operates on multiple levels (. namely, individual or personal level; structural or institutional level; and cultural or societal level. These are discussed in the section below.

The individualized oppression represents unconscious and conscious thinking, beliefs and behaviours of people, which perpetuate and collude, with oppression (Hardiman et al., 2007). For instance, teachers may hold beliefs that learners who require extra assistance, were not design for education: and that they are thus not deserving of education. At an individual level, this will disable teachers' willingness to take action to ensure that they can support these learners. However, Hardiman et al., (2007) contend that for the personal or individual level to operate effectively and produce disadvantaged for the subordinated social groups and individuals, it must be supported by the institution or culturally.

Hardiman et al., (2007) assert levels of oppression as constituted by patterns of thought, explicit and implicit values, beliefs, norms, viewpoints and discourses that perpetuate and reinforce oppressive practices. For instance, dominant discourses regarding barriers to learning may transmit and reinforce beliefs that struggling learners are not deserving to be in mainstream classrooms; they belong in special schools and classrooms. Often, dominant cultural norms justify such operationalization. For instance, the discrimination of learners with barriers are supported by the belief that they are not capable because they are unteachable. When this happens, it would mean that experiencing a barrier to learning may be regarded as an anomaly, incurable in mainstream or regular classroom and school settings (Sullivan, 1991).

Hardiman et al., (2007) contend that the structural or institutional oppression is informed by rules, laws and instructions, which reinforce oppression. The institutional oppression orders and legitimizes oppression through formal societal arrangements and structures (Hardiman, Jackson & Griffin, 2007). For instance, a policy of education that allows for the referral of learners in special school settings may result

in tendencies of referring learners to get rid of them so that they could be in schools that have the capacity and resources to support them to learn and succeed. When this happens, it may fortify the beliefs that learners experiencing barriers must be gotten rid of in mainstream or regular schools and classrooms as their place is in special school settings. This will signal that, at this level, educational exclusion has become engraved and institutionalized in the workings of the school.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the international and local trends on inclusion. Lastly, the conceptual framework on the theory of oppression was presented and discussed allowing me to scrutinise data generated and to arrive at meaningful conclusions in terms of the questions posed by the research study.

In the next chapter I discuss the research design and methodology adopted by the research study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the research design and methodology as used for the study. It presents the research paradigm and the outline of the epistemological structure in which the research is located. The methodological approach for the study is also presented and discussed. Data collection procedures and methods are also presented, followed by a discussion on the trustworthiness and credibility as well as ethical considerations for the study. The rationale for the decisions made regarding the methodological and design considerations is provided and explained. In conclusion, the data analysis approach adopted for the study is presented and discussed.

The primary research questions serve as the foundation for the study:

- What are teachers' experiences with the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?

The subsidiary research questions that were used to investigate the topic of the study were as follows:

- What is the teachers' understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
- What are the factors that enable or impede the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
- How do teachers navigate the factors that influence the successful implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support to enable effective teaching and learning?

3.2 Research paradigm

Hesse-Biber (2010, p.456) contends that “there is no view from ‘nowhere’”, but always “a view from somewhere”. Therefore, the decision to conduct this research is based on my background as a researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), as well as my logical presumptions and inclinations toward particular rational positions. A researcher's philosophical perspective through which understandings are created and which shapes how researchers perceive the world could be described as a research paradigm (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith, 2000; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). So, a researcher model discusses essential questions,

notions and conclusions about the investigator's perspectives on the essence of truth (ontology), the association between apprehender and apprehended. To carry out the study, assumptions about methodology and ethical considerations (axiology) must be made in addition to how we trust a particular reality or truth (epistemology) in preparation for execution of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Maree, 2007; Richards, 2003).

Basically, the paradigm works as an imaginary and logical optic escort to the study operations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and by which truth is established, analysed and acknowledged within a distinct investigation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

This research was located within the interpretive model. The interpretivist model seeks to understand the instinctive sphere of human encounter and makes an effort to obtain a view of the social world of individuals to understand it. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, the objectives for investigation is to comprehend participants' interpretations and understandings of their experiences of the inclusive policy (Cohen et al., 2011). Consequently, from the angle of this investigation, the aim was to understand the participants' experiences, interpretations and understandings in their schooling contexts (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For this study, this view was premised on the acceptance that the participants' experiences, interpretations and understandings were socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The adoption of the interpretivist paradigm in this study assumed a subjectivist epistemology, which means that the researcher made meaning and sense of the data generated based on their interactions with the research participants. This implies that the researchers socially constructed knowledge based on their personal experiences and the fact or assumption that the investigator and participants were engaged in a reciprocal procedure in which they dialogued, questioned, interrogated and made sense of their experiences (Punch, 2005). Therefore, this study assumed the following: the realities of the participants are multiple and socially constructed; there was an inevitable interaction between the participants and researcher; and contextual factors affecting the experiences of the participants had to be considered in attempting to understand the participants' experiences on SIAS policy implementation within mainstream school setting.

3.3 Research approach

The inquiry utilizes a subjective case study strategy, as it potentially provided an opportunity for the deep analysis of teachers' experiences, which the investigation seeks to establish. This approach was employed for its potential to provide an opportunity to capture the voices of teachers of their experiences of SIAS policy application (Bhat, 2019). The subjective action research design assisted me to obtain a glimpse of the participants' stories about their experiences. I selected a case study as it has the potential to provide a reasonably complete view of the world of real human beings in a real setting (Ngubane, 2018).

The subjective research design enabled me to investigate the experiences of the participants within a specific setting, namely, a mainstream schooling setting. Qualitative method was suitable for apprehending teachers' voices. It allowed them to tell their stories within a relatively free and flexible context (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach was also chosen for its potential to focus a lens on phenomenon under investigation to try not to see a single, but various dimensions of their experiences (Merriam, 1988). Moreover, the qualitative approach was chosen because it has the ability to produce the "most meaningful data" from participants who had personal experiences of inclusion. It provided me with an opportunity to obtain a sensible "holistic view of what is being studied" (Leedy, 1993:144).

3.4 Research design

For this study, the account inquest was assimilated for its possibilities to bring means of allowing participants a space to share their experiences, feelings and understandings through story regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Furthermore, the decision to adopt and use the narrative enquiry was to try to get to the core of the participants' experiences of inclusive policy execution. Therefore, from the position of this research study, narrative accounts, which were constructed through discussions and explanations by the participants, provided a comprehensive and affluent account of the participants' experiences (Hennink et al., 2011).

3.5 Description of the research site

The research sites were located at three primary schools situated within the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The communities in this area comprise people who are illiterate and subject to high rates of

unemployment, making it difficult for them to meet the demands of daily living, including the basic learning needs of their children. The sites were purposefully chosen for their location within socio-economically deprived community schools, their large learner enrolment and inadequate access to the minimum learning and teaching resources. The schools were Quintile 3 schools and were participating in the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). Given the possible complexities within such a context, it was crucial to understand the participants' encounters of the policy, which the Department has provided as a mechanism for intervention. Thus, the schools were chosen because they were expected to implement SIAS policy.

3.6 Sample and sampling techniques

The sample is chosen according to goal of research (Kumar, 2011). The teachers were purposively selected from the rural, large enrolment primary schools that were implementing SIAS policy, 3 teachers selected from at least Junior, Intermediate and Senior Phases, which means that three teachers were selected in each of the three schools. The teachers were selected based on their teaching experience at their schools. That is, teachers with the longest teaching experience at the schools were selected in each phase.

I used convenience sampling to select the schools. Ndinisa (2016) describes convenience sampling as sampling that targets a sample for its reasonably easy accessibility. Therefore, the schools were chosen because they were within the same Circuit Management Centre. Secondly, the schools were in the same neighbourhood as mine; therefore, they were easily accessible. This helped me to save on travelling costs and allowed me to meet with them outside of learning and teaching times.

3.7 Data collection

In-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis, discussed in section below, were used to collect data.

3.7.1 In-depth semi-structured interviews

I engaged individual teachers. The rationale for interviewing these teachers was to explore their understanding of SIAS policy, allowed space for reflecting on what had emerged from each interview, interviewed the participants on different days, which means that ten (10) were set aside for the interviews.

In each instance, I allocated approximately 45 to 60 minutes for each interview session. To ensure, as far as possible, that language did not interfere with the participants' freedom to express themselves, I allowed the participants to respond in their preferred language. Discussions were documented then translated verbatim.

The reason for adopting a semi-structure interview lay in the assumption that the discussion permitted space for the follow-up between myself and participants (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews allowed me to dig more responses where this was necessary. However, the disadvantage of adopting the semi-structured interview lay in the fact that the very space for participants to freely express themselves was constrained by the fact that interviews also allowed the researcher semi-control of the interview process (Henning, 2004). Therefore, although the participants had some control over the process, such ownership depended on how much I was willing to give away. Therefore, to moderate the effect of this possible power imbalance, I ensured that the questions asked during the interviews were open-ended, which afforded the participants an opportunity to express themselves on their terms.

3.7.2 Focus group interviews

Focus groups involve a deliberate utilization of group interaction to explore phenomena under investigation that are difficult to access without group context (Morgan, 1988). Focus group interviews are a form of group interview whose discussions are focused on a specific topic or theme related to key research questions (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 120). Focus groups are typically relatively homogenous groups of participants, which allows negotiation and discussion among the participants and allows them to express their perceptions, views and insights on a theme in the presence of other members of the group (Patton, 1987). The interview context provided an opportunity for a productive discussion as the participants could hear each other's responses, make additional points or dispute what was said (Patton, 1987).

The literature supports a sample of approximately six to ten participants as manageable for each focus group interview session (see, for instance, Denscombe, 2007). For this study, the researcher decided to hold sessions with nine (10) participants. As indicated before, each school was represented by at least three (3) teachers. However, one of the participants could not attend the session because of other commitments. For the participants to express themselves freely, the focus group session was held in the venue chosen by the participants. The focus group interview was held at one of the participating schools.

Permission to audiotape discussions was obtained prior to the interview session. To supplement the recording and capture those parts which were impossible to capture by recording, I also took detailed notes. The session took approximately two (2) hours. For the most part, discussions were conducted in isiZulu, which was the preferred language for the participants, although English concepts were used where the participants felt comfortable doing so.

3.7.3 Document analysis

For this study, a careful review and analysis of relevant institutional and organizational documents was conducted. The examples of the documents that were reviewed and analysed included the following: White Paper 6; Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for inclusion for District-Based Support Teams; Guidelines for responding to learner diversity; Guidelines for special schools and various international instruments. These documents were reviewed to obtain a reasonable understanding of the context and strategic focus.

3.8 Data analysis

Data Analysis began immediately after the interviews, which comprised the processing of the participants' responses from focus group interviews as well as individual interviews. Prior analysis, a record for transcribed responses of the participants was given to them for review and verification purposes. The analysis of the data involved multiple readings of the transcriptions and notes. All unnecessary information and duplicate data were eliminated. The coding of transcripts was conducted to identify emerging themes and relationships from the data. Case study analysis involves categorizing, tabulating the collected data to gain greater meaning and to reach sound conclusions about the experiences of the participants (Bhat, 2019). Subjective data analysis was used as a process of inductive rational thinking and theorizing.

3.8.1 Data coding and analysis

I employed data coding to categorize data samples. These codes were used to identify the themes and patterns for qualitative analysis, namely, thematic analysis (Jansen, 2020).

3.8.2 Identifying themes

Among the two main approaches of coding, namely, deductive and inductive coding, I employed inductive coding because it allowed me to establish a set of codes focused on the data itself. Inductive coding was suitable for this study as I was investigating teachers' experiences of SIAS policy execution. (Jansen 2020). The following approach was used during the analysis of the data:

- Step 1: Familiarizing myself with the data: I kept reading the interview transcripts
- Step 2: Generating initial codes: Codes assisted me as the researcher to arrange and manage the tons of data generated and identify what was important to respond to questions.
- Step 3: Searching for themes: For this step, I captured what was important, specifically data which assisted me to respond to questions and understand the experiences of the participants.
- Step 4: Reviewing the themes: I reviewed, modified and developed preliminary themes.
- Step 5: Defining the themes: Themes were defined for final development after which I concentrated on what each theme revealed. I used Ladbroke's (2009) Guidance to identify the relationships among themes.
- Step 6: Writing-up: This final step involved the writing up of the research report or dissertation.

3.9 Ethical considerations

As good research requires, I followed guidelines on ethical issues and considerations before embarking on and during the study. I requested and was granted permission by the UKZN ethics committee to conduct the research. I also obtained permission from the KZN DoE to interview the educators. The participants were treated with dignity and I ensured that their rights were protected. I retained full responsibility to maintain the best interest of the participants during the research.

The participants who agreed to participate in the study had to sign agreement letters (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Prior to that, I informed participants of what was expected before they could start engaging themselves (Kumar, 2011). After providing verbal consent for participation, the participants were engaged in signing consent forms as a permission to participate. I re-assured the participants that their participation in discussion was not compulsory and that they had the right to withdraw their participation should they feel to so.

Prior to the commencement of interviews, I requested permission for the recordings of interviews. I had to replay clips until all words were clear for transcription. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Anonymity was ensured through the use of pseudonyms (Hess, 2020).

In addition, I respected the participants' opinions throughout the process of interaction. Since this was a case study, the participants' opinions and responses were critical. I also ensured avoidance of any behaviour that might be dangerous and unfavourable to the participants or degrade their dignity (Dlungwane, Voce, Searle & Wasserman, 2017). I ensured that I did not make the participants uncomfortable by imposing my views on them; instead, I allowed them the freedom to express their views without my interference.

3.10 Credibility and trustworthiness

I developed mechanisms for ensuring trustworthiness, focusing on reliability transferability and conformability, as discussed below.

Confirmability focused on the acknowledgement that the study which was being conducted could never be completely objective. The honesty in reporting the findings depended on the data collected. As a researcher, I had to be accurate and careful when gathering and analysing the data. The data collected was verified and confirmed by the participants. Confirmability thus prevented unfairness and internalization of the information by me as a data collector.

Credibility was ensured by providing enough time for discussions. Credibility portrayed in the study with participants concurring with my constructions and interpretations of their responses, this means that what was described in the case regarding their experiences was in the best interest and understanding of the participants (Hess, 2020).

Dependability was ensured in this study through responses from teachers of three (3) schools on the execution of SIAS policy within a mainstream school setting.

Transferability was ensured through the rigorous and detailed descriptions of the methodological, design and analysis for the study. It was hoped that the level of detail provided in each instance would serve as a transparent template for how the study was conducted.

3.11 Limitations

Limitations that I experienced during the conduct of the study revolved around the outbreak of the pandemic disease. Restrictions to prevent the increase of the disease were limited to face to face interactions. In this regard, communication without face to face interaction became the only available medium for data collection for the study. Secondly, anxiety was noticed among participants. However, fortunately, I could assure the participants that I was going to do everything possible required to ensure their safety. Therefore, we observed strictly all the protocols required to prevent the spread of the virus during all our interactions.

Lastly, the study was subjected to restrictions of time, as the qualification had to be completed within a specific period. This may have not fully accommodated the complexities that required more time for adequately investigating and understanding the experiences of the participants. As such, the report may not provide a full account of the experiences of the participants. However, it must be said that the intention of the study was not to obtain a full account but to obtain as much understanding as possible of the experiences of the participants.

3.12 Conclusion

Chapter 3 presented the description and discussion of the research paradigm, research approach, design, description of the research site, sampling procedures and techniques, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, credibility and trustworthiness, and the limitations of the study. This description and discussion forms the basis of the interpretation of the participant's experiences of SAIS policy implementation which is presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the analyses and interpretation of collected data that answer the study's central questions. The chapter presents the data as per the themes that emerged during the data analyses and are presented and discussed in this chapter. The main study question was:

- What are teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?

Subsidiary research questions that investigate the main question were:

- What are teachers' understandings of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
- What are the factors that enable or impede the implementation of Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
- How do teachers navigate the factors that influence the successful implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support to enable effective teaching and learning?

4.2 Organisation of themes

Westwood (2018) states that the objective of data analysis is to sum up and compile what the researcher observed or heard in repeated explanations, themes or samples that will assist in comprehending and interpreting the data. The data presentation will be categorized into themes and sub-themes. The table below serves as a display of data collected during interviews and focus group conversations. The data presented is substantiated by the views of the participants through the actual instruments used during interviews and discussions. Themes and sub-themes are presented below:

4.2.1 Themes and sub-themes

4.2.1.1 Teachers' understanding of the notion of inclusive education

- Teachers' understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

- Factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Knowledge, capacity and clarity of the policy
- Availability of a clear and relevant policy implementation plan
- National curriculum statement
- Support from structures and stakeholders

4.2.1.2 Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

- Support from the school management team
- Support from the District-Based Support Team
- Support from parents
- Support from the School Governing Body
- Support from stakeholders

4.3 Profiles of the participants

Table 4.2 below presents the demographic profiles of the participants.

| PARTICIPANT | SCHOOL | GENDER | EXPERIENCE | PHASE | QUALIFICATION | LEVEL |
|-------------|--------|--------|------------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| 1. (Nokwe) | A | Female | 30 | Senior P. | B.Ed. Honours | Level 3 |
| 2. (Zandy) | A | Female | 13 | Junior P. | Junior Degree | Level 2 |
| 3. (Zakhe) | A | Male | 15 | Interm. P | B.Ed. Honours | Level 2 |
| 4. (Fana) A | A | Male | 35 | Senior P. | B.Ed. Honours | Level 4 |
| 5. (Thola) | B | Female | 12 | Junior P. | Junior Degree | Level 1 |
| 6. (Neli) B | B | Female | 18 | Interm P. | Junior Degree | Level 1 |
| 7. (Thandi) | B | Female | 14 | Senior P. | Junior Degree | Level 1 |
| 8. (Thoko) | C | Female | 10 | Interm p. | Junior Degree | Level 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|----------|---|---------|----|-----------|-----------------------|
| 9. | (Ntombi) | C | Female3 | 15 | Senior P | Junior Degree Level 1 |
| 10. | (Lihle) | C | Female3 | 16 | Junior P. | B.Ed. Honours Level 2 |

Table 4.2: Participants' demographic profiles

4.4 Theme 1: Teachers' understanding on notion of inclusive education

Haug (2017) asserts teachers' understanding as factor for success in inclusion as it influences how they practice it. For this study, the participants were asked about what the notion of inclusive education meant for them. In this regard, participant's responses to the question:

What I understand is that inclusive learning happens when you accommodate learners with challenges in one mainstream institution. Mainstream school should not be selective when admitting learners but instead accommodate all learners with relevant support..... Participant 1

What I know is that struggling learners are within one class with other normal learners. The educator is expected to provide dynamic skills for intervention. Participant 2

*Is when you accommodate learners with learning barriers. Before White Paper 6 came, struggling learners were taught by teachers who are trained and in a conducive learning environment.*Participant 5

4.4.1 Discussion

The responses of the participants above suggest that they were aware of the transition from special to inclusive instruction. For instance, Participant 5 pointed out the difference before and after the promulgation of White Paper 6, which intended to transform education of South African children: "*Before White Paper 6 came, struggling learners were taught by teachers who are trained*". This suggests that Participant 5 understood that inclusive teaching and education is now the responsibility of all teachers, including those in mainstream or regular schools, not only those that are in special school settings. Participant 2's definition of inclusive education differentiates it from special education, which segregated learners based on disability or barrier to learning: "*What I know is that struggling learners are within one class with other normal learners*". This suggests an understanding that learners encountering challenges in learning will be in the same classroom as other learners, rather than in separate special classes and

schools. In line with Participants 2 and 5, Participant 1 describes their understanding of inclusive education by providing an example of what the shift towards inclusive education means for learner admission in the mainstream. For Participant 1, *“The mainstream school should not be selective when admitting the learners but instead it is expected to provide relevant support to the learners with learning challenges”*. This means that the mainstream school must admit all the learners.

However, there are some challenges in the participants’ comprehension of the notion of embrative instruction, when combined with reconfiguration support within the framework of comprehensive learning. For instance, White Paper 6 differentiates among different models of schools, namely, ordinary; full-service; and special needs schools (DoE, 2001). White Paper 6 configures support provisioning in line with the categorization of the schools. In this regard, it states that:

“... learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools and those requiring moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools” (p.15)

Although the definitions or understandings in the participants’ responses could be regarded as positive in the sense that they suggest a welcoming disposition towards allowing all learners to attend ordinary schools, this is not neatly in line with what is proposed in the policy. As could be discerned from the above, inclusive policy acknowledges the fact that school capacity is a critical consideration in the provisioning of support. In other words, schools will be responsible for the provision of different levels of intervention, depending on level of support the learner requires to learn and succeed. However, having said that, the participants’ understanding could assist in breaking away from segregated provisioning of support and lead to a situation where learners can attend schools in their neighbourhood. However, this will require serious work in building the capacity of schools to provide support regardless of barriers across the three levels of support.

However, as could be discerned in the excerpts from the participants’ responses below, these understandings could point to a specific understanding of the notion of a barrier to learning, as opposed to a disability, regarding embrative instruction:

It is a concept based on teaching learners who have got learning barriers together with normal learners. Inclusive learning was introduced to embrace diversity in learning. Inclusive learning limit discrimination practices... Participant 3

*Inclusive learning is dealing with learners having learning problems. It is the policy that is called White Paper 6 that was introduced to instruct mainstream schools to admit also learners who experience learning difficulties. These learners must be given equal support as any other learner. Their learning challenges must be well understood so that they receive relevant support, and then the SIAS policy was put in place. ...*Participant 4

*Inclusive learning is when you accommodate diverse learners and teach them in one class. All learners in the same class must receive relevant support that is equal to their needs. This is a special task that needs special skills instilled in the teacher. ...*Participant 6

*Inclusive learning! It is when you differentiate or accommodate all learners in the classroom with or without barriers in the same classroom and teach them fairly to improve their learning performance...*Participant 7

*It allows active engagement in the process of learning without any discrimination amongst struggling learners and high achievers. ...*Participant 8

*It is allowing all sorts of learners to learn together without any discrimination of their abilities or disabilities. ...*Participant 9

*We accommodate all learners together in the same class. We are expected to help them equally so that all their needs are met. This task requires us as teachers to be trained so that provide relevantly. We understand what Inclusive education means although it is difficult to provide correct implementation due to a lack of skills. ...*Participant 10

For the participants above, inclusive policy requires that learners experiencing challenges learn in same classes as other learners. However, the participants' responses suggest awareness of the importance of ensuring that learners with difficulties are not assimilated into these classes, but that teaching is differentiated in ways that make the curriculum and lessons accessible to these learners: "*It is when you differentiate or accommodate all learners*". This suggests that the participants are aware of the need to

make structural adaptations for all learners to be included and access the curriculum: “*We are expected to help them equally ...*” Therefore, for the participants, all learners must be included and supported to participate and benefit from their teaching, regardless of the barriers that they may be experiencing. However, participants, such as Participant 10, suggest an understanding that learners who experience barriers in the class should also benefit from teaching delivered. “*This task requires us as teachers to be trained ...*”. In other words, they understand that willingness and being welcoming to these learners and teaching them and ensuring that they benefit from their teaching are dependent on training. Thus, the capacity of teachers, according to Participant 10, is a critical aspect of ensuring inclusive teaching that benefits all learners.

4.5 Theme 2: Teachers’ understanding of SIAS policy

The policy provides mechanism for recognition and intervention to ensure that learners do not accumulate learning deficits and risk being excluded from education (DoE, 2014). Ntseto (2019), explored ways of improving application of inclusive policy and identified range of challenges, including knowledge and understanding of policy by teachers. Participants’ responses in this regard were as follows:

It is when you use a vulnerability form to screen all the learners to identify those with learning barriers so that they will be provided with support. SNA form must be used to record the findings of screening for further support and referrals at a later stage. ...Participant 1

It is a screening of learners at the beginning of the year, identifying those with learning barriers, assisting them and giving support that they require. Screening is not a requirement for admission. According to the SIAS policy, they should be no learners to be rejected based on the outcome of screening. ...Participant 2

SIAS policy provides the process of identifying the learning barriers of learners so that they will be assisted according to their learning needs within the diverse environment. ...Participant 3

In my own understanding, I think SIAS policy is the execution of SIAS policy process where learners are supported within a normal learning environment of a mainstream school....Participant 4

Identification of a learner to understand his learning challenges to give support. ...Participant 9

The responses from the three participants above suggest that they understood the meaning and purpose of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. For instance, the participants understood that the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support involved: “... *screening of learners ...identifying those with learning barriers ... assisting them and give support that they require*”; “*screen all the learners with the aim of identifying those with learning barriers so that they will be provided with support*”; and “*so that they will be assisted according to their learning needs within the diverse environment*”. In addition, the participants’ responses suggest an understanding of the purpose of inclusion and intervention to obstacles. The purpose of the Policy, according to the participants’ responses, is not referral only. For this study, the participants understood the technical and administrative aspects, for instance, “*SNA form must be used to record the findings of screening for and referrals*” of the Policy, but were also aware that it required teachers to support learners experiencing barriers and ensure that they learn: “*identifying those with learning barriers so that they will be provided with support*”. This finding refutes the arguments that teachers are struggling with understanding the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (see, for instance, Ntseto, 2019; Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022).

4.6 Theme 3: Factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The literature review has reported a range of challenges in the application of policy where teachers recognize and intervene on learning challenges (see, for instance, Ndinisa, 2016; Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022). However, some studies have reported that certain factors enable success of inclusive policy (see, for instance, Hess, 2020). For this study, the participants were engaged to discuss elements that influence the execution of inclusive policy in mainstream schools. The section below presents and discusses the participants’ responses regarding the challenges and enablers of execution of inclusive policy in schools.

4.6.1. Knowledge, capacity and clarity of the policy

The understanding and knowledge of the policy are regarded as critical aspects for successful implementation (Hudson, Hunter & Peckham, 2019). For this study, the participants were asked about their views, based on their experiences, about what the enablers for the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support were. The participants had the following to say:

The policy must be clearly defined to the implementers. We are the implementers; we need deep knowledge of inclusive learning. We need specific skills to handle diverse classrooms. ...Participant 1

As teachers, we understand that we are required to work positively towards diverse learning as inclusion's objective. For us to implement it, we need to be provided with vast training. ...Participant 2

We as teachers are supposed to do individual remedial work to meet everyday challenges. Therefore, we need to understand specific learning challenges. ...Participant 3

SIAS policy stages should be explained in detail to the teachers during training with an understanding that they are in possession of ordinary teaching qualifications. This will assist the school to implement the inclusive policy correctly. ...Participant 6

The participants' responses above underline the importance of the knowledge and clarity of the policy to ensure effective implementation: "The policy must be clearly defined to the implementers. *"We are the implementers; we need deep knowledge on inclusive learning"*. Hudson et al. (2019) contend that policies do not fail or succeed on their own merits; policy success and failure depend on the policy application procedure. In this study, the participants identified knowledge as key to a success of SIAS policy of intervention. Participants also pointed to the importance of building the capacity of teachers to ensure effective implementation. For them, they felt that the *"need to be provided with a vast training"* (Participant 2) and *"specific skills to handle the diverse classroom"* (Participant 1). Therefore, for them, clarity and knowledge in the application of the policy, were important enablers for the effective implementation of the SAIS. Makhalemele and Tlale (2021) assert that teachers tend to be more positive and supportive of learners if they have a clear understanding of the barrier and the interventions that are required to ensure that the learners learn.

4.6.2. Availability of a clear and relevant policy implementation plan

Pinterič (2014) argues that policy implementation is a complex process, which may not always lead neatly to intended outcomes. Among the four principal constituents for effective policy implementation that Elmore (1978) identifies, is the necessity of a clear and reliable plan to support all partakers in terms their responsibilities for correct implementation and better performance. This means that at an institutional level, there must be clear processes to guide the practices of societal institutions, such as schools in the context of this study, to ensure that policy implementation does not perpetuate and reinforce disadvantage

and oppression (Hardiman, Jackson & Griffin, 2007). Given the importance of a clear policy implementation path, the participants were asked about their views on planning for successful application with clear goals for support to meet learner's demands:

I cannot say that the plan in place is the correct one, but we have a procedure that we follow. We follow that pattern although it is not documented. We decided to write something to show district monitors, although they don't read it, they just put a tick on their monitoring tool. ...Participant 1

Yes, the school does have a plan although it is not communicated. Therefore, I cannot say what we are doing is the correct implementation. ...Participant 2

The plan is in place even though it is not regularly communicated with educators. Not all teachers are conversant with this plan. This plan had not been reviewed for the past five. Therefore, it could not be effective since there is no proper follow on its implementation. ...Participant 3

No, my school does not have any SIAS implementation plan. What we are doing as teachers regarding SIAS policy implementation are just attempts we are not certain since we are not trained. ...Participant 4

My school doesn't have this type of plan. We would love to know how we go about drawing up this plan. We understand the concept but lack skills in implementation ... Participant 5

The above excerpts from the participants' responses suggest that, at an institutional level, there was no mechanism or framework to support the implementation of SIAS Policy. This suggests that what the teachers in some schools in this study may have been doing happened at an individual level, with no communicated management or implementation plan: "*What we are doing as teachers regarding SIAS policy implementation are just attempts we are not certain*". However, it is important to point out that some participants, such as Participants 2 and 3, reported that their schools had plans for the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. However, although they had the plan, they were concerned that not everyone was conversant with it: "*The plan is in place even though it is not regularly communicated with educators. Not all teachers are conversant with this plan*". This suggests the importance of building capacity for policy implementation at an institutional level to ensure that vulnerable learners, such as those encountering obstacles to learning, are not disadvantaged when policy is present for protection and support.

This means that, at an institutional level, the participants had not been provided with clear guidelines on what steps they must follow to effectively implement the policy, which placed at risk the sector's efforts to ensure that learners experiencing barriers can learn and succeed, as indicated by Participant 2: *"I cannot say what we are doing is a correct plan ..."*. One of the participants reported that their school developed the plan according to their understanding since they were sometimes monitored to check if they had a plan. The participants' responses suggest that they believed that the implementation of the policy would be more effective with the availability of a clear and relevant policy implementation plan. What the participants are saying speaks to the contextual institutional considerations as Brynard (2005) contends, policy implementation does not happen in a protected space; it happens within a network of institutional conditions and is thus impacted upon by a range of institutional, social and political dynamics. Therefore, as argued by Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin (2007), these institutional dynamics may exacerbate disadvantage by promoting, increasing and reinforcing the dominance subordinating forces.

4.6.3 National curriculum policy statement

White Paper 6 argues "the curriculum and the education system as a whole have generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population" and that it is, therefore, important to develop accommodative learning programme to ensure access to fair education for all learners" (DoE, 2001, p. 5). In this regard, the participants for this study were asked about their experiences of the national curriculum statement regarding the application of inclusive policy as part of comprehensive intervention strategy to learners who experience learning challenges, to which they responded as follows:

*No, the curriculum structure is still the same. Same curriculum different learning needs. ...*Participant 1

*No, even the assessment structure is not modified to suite all learners. ...*Participant 2

*No. change in curriculum, no change in assessment strategy, and no change in teachers' skills. ...*Participant 3

*The ATP does not accommodate diverse barriers to learning but there is room for improvement. ...*Participant 4

Not as far as I am concerned. We ought to be doing DCAP but there is no curriculum. ... Participant 5

*Curriculum differentiation is not implemented. ...*Participant 6

The curriculum is not reviewed to suite all learners. They are also those who should be granted concessions, but due to lack of knowledge, we don't understand how to facilitate application to assist learners with problems. ...Participant 7

No only teachers help the learners who have problems. We use our time to deal with children who have problems....Participant 8

According to the participants, the national curriculum did not accommodate all the learners with different learning needs, as it had not been differentiated. The participants reported that the “... curriculum structure is still the same. Same curriculum for different learning needs” (Participant 1); “curriculum is not yet fully accommodating inclusive learning” (); “assessment structure is not modified to suite all learners.” (Participant 2); “ATP does not accommodate diverse barriers to learning” (Participant 4); and “curriculum is not yet fully accommodating inclusive learning” (Participant 9). If the participants did not believe that the curriculum was appropriate for their learners who encounter challenges in the class, it is unlikely that they were doing anything to support their learners. However, as will be shown below, there are important issues that must be considered to better understand what the participants are saying.

It is important to understand that the background of teachers that participated in the research come from public ordinary or mainstream schools. These are the schools that offer the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Grades R-12 (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In this regard, the Department of Basic Education has published Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The purpose of these procedures is to “provide teachers, principals, subject advisors, administrators, school governors and other personnel, parameters and strategies on how to respond to learner diversity in the classrooms through the curriculum” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 2). There are a few reasons why the participants may be saying what they are saying above: they may not have been trained on the guidelines; they may not be using the CAPS documents together with these guidelines; they may be thinking that having the curriculum statements is sufficient; or they may just be shifting the blame. Whatever the reason, it puts the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning at risk of not enjoying their constitutional right to basic education. What Participant 6 is saying, that “*Curriculum differentiation is not implemented*” There may be various reasons for why this may be

happening, but it requires urgent attention if learners who are currently excluded from the lessons of these teachers are to enjoy their human right to basic education.

What Participant 5 is saying, that “*We ought to be doing DCAP but there is no curriculum*”, demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the education support model as proposed in Education White Paper 6 unless Participant 5’s school has enrolled learners with severe intellectual disability. The DCAP to which participant 5 is referring here, is to CAPS for learners with serious disability, which is currently being piloted in special schools. If there are learners with severe intellectual disability in school, then it means the District teams must ensure that the school receives appropriate support to provide for the learners or that learners are correctly placed in terms of White Paper 6. However, the troubling dimension of what Participant 5’s statement may imply will be that just because learners are struggling with learning, then Participant 5 has classified them as having a severe intellectual disability, to write them off as candidates for CAPS. Again, whatever, the reason, the learners referred to by Participant 5 may not be learning and, thus, are not benefiting from their presence in this school due to the failure to correctly identify barriers to learning.

4.6.4 Support from key structures and stakeholders

Inclusive education success requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders (DoE, 2001). In this regard, White Paper 6 points to a range of key stakeholders whose involvement and participation are required for the effective implementation of inclusive education, including the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. For this study, the participants were asked about the support that they received from various stakeholders and structures. This section discusses the structures and stakeholders that the participants believed contributed to the effective implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

For this study, the participants were asked if they believed that their school management team understood their role in supporting them in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. The participants responded as follows:

Yes, the SMT gives support to the teachers by identifying those learners and making time to plan a meeting to communicate with parents of children who meet barriers in the class. ...Participant 1

Yes, the SMT gives the teacher full support. ...Participant 2

They do understand the role because I have a learner right who experiences some difficulties, I consulted the HOD, and principal with the hope that they will provide some strategies as an intervention to the learning challenge. ...Participant 3

Yes, workshops (internal) are conducted to support the staff. Departmental heads assist in designing the industrial support plan. ...Participant 5

Yes, they give support when compiling learner profiles using the SNA form. ...Participant 6

SMT doesn't understand their role since they don't have good skills in identification of learner barriers. ...Participant 8

The SMT does understand the role of giving teacher support yet their skills are limited. ...Participant 9

Yes, they support us very much. They gave us everything we need. They gave our school materials; they check our work and learners' books. ...Participant 10

The majority of the participants appreciated the effort of support from the SMT. However, a few participants complained that these teams were not supportive in implementation of the policy, owing to their lack of knowledge about it: “*SMT doesn't understand their role since they don't have good skills on the identification of learner barriers*”. Participant 8. The participants who reported that their school management teams were supportive, mentioned several ways in which they were supported, including: “*they give support when compiling learners profile using SNA form*” (Participant 6); “*Departmental heads assist in designing the industrial support plan*” (Participant 5); “*... the SMT gives support to the teachers by identifying those learners and make time planning a meeting to communicate with the parent of those learners who have barriers in learning*” (Participant 1). Some participants in this study, concurred with what Mkhuma et al. (2014) have argued that teachers often do not receive adequate support in the implementation of inclusive policy, as important enablers.

4.6.5 Support from the Institutional-Level Support Team

In terms of White Paper 6, the districts must establish functional SBST's to support teachers addressing the needs of learners (DoE, 2001). Participants for this study were asked about the Institutional-Level Support Teams in their schools, which they had the following to say:

Yes, I understand the kind of support but they do not have sufficient tools. ...Participant 1

Yes, even though their work is not effective due to a lack of required skills. ...Participant 3

The committee recommends what the teacher must do after reporting the learning barrier. The SBST can either refer a child to the DBST or recommends an ISP, but sometimes they forget to do it in time because of other commitments. ...Participant 4

Yes, they give us a workshop and support on how to handle learners with learning challenges. We have an eye screening. ..Participant 5

Yes, they assist in developing ISP. They assist in conduction support workshops or inviting people officials from the district to assist teachers with inclusive education. Novice teachers are orientated on SIAS and ISP. ...Participant 6

Yes, as an educator I understand the responsibility of the committee and they strive to provide support like referrals. ...Participant 7

No. The teachers and SMT are performing their duties to support learners with learning barriers. ...Participant 8

When a child with barriers is brought to the attention they are advised accordingly. They do as they are divided into three portfolios namely: whole school development, learner support and educator support. ...Participant 9

No, I do not understand the kind of support given by the SBST. ...Participant 10

The excerpts above suggest that they had functional Institutional-Level Support Teams in their schools although there were some challenges in their effective functioning due to a range of factors, including that “sometimes they forget to do it in time because of other commitments” (Participant 4); “their work is not effective due to lack of required skills” (Participant 3); and “they do not have sufficient tools” (Participant 1). It could be argued, based on the participants’ responses, that where an Institutional-Level Support Teams had been established and supported, it served as an enabler for the teachers in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. However, in a few instances, the participants reported that the Institutional-Level Support Team was either non-existent or not functional and was thus not supporting them: “I do not understand the kind of support given by the SBST” (Participant 10). In some instances, such as that of Participant 8, “The teachers and SMT are performing

their duties to support learners with learning barriers”. Although this does not tally with the requirements of White Paper 6, it may assist when the school management team takes over the functions of a non-existent or dysfunctional Institutional-Level Support Team. This concurs with what Naicker (2019) and Alberts (2016) say, that school management teams have a critical task to play in the effective implementation of inclusive education.

4.6.6 Support from the District-Based Support Team

The Department of Education (2005, p. 1) asserts that “the key to reducing barriers to learning within all education and training lies in a strengthened education support service”. This suggests that a stronger, functional District-Based Support Team is critical for the effective implementation of inclusive education in schools. To this end, the participants for this study were asked about their experiences of support by their District-Based Support Team, to which they had the following to say:

Yes, DBST provides support by paying a visit and monitoring schools, although it is not done frequently due to their tight schedules. Follow-ups are not often done. ...Participant 1

They workshop us on SIAS, although they don't have any knowledge of what teachers' experiences with SIAS policy implementation. The workshop teaches curriculum differentiation and assists in the assessment and placement of learners with barriers. ...Participant 2

Yes, they organize workshops for the teachers. ...Participant 3

They support us to deal with learners and how to fill out an SNA form to support children with barriers. They are trying to support us and sometimes assist in screening learners with different barriers in the school although they are not also trained. ...Participant 4

They support the school with the documents. ...Participant 5

They do visit us for support although the team sometimes sent members who are not well-trained. They don't support us fully due to a lack of skills. ... Participant 6

Yes, they organize workshops at the district level. ...Participant 7

Yes, they organized SMT workshops about SIAS and also provide the documents. ...Participant 8

The LSE, school counsellor, as well as deputy chief education specialist from the SNEs component, visit the school for assistance. ...Participant 9

According to the Education White Paper (6), one of the key tasks of the District-Based Support Team is to ensure that curriculum implementation processes are supported to meet the specific learning needs of learners, especially those experiencing barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). The Department of Education (2005) has committed itself to establish District-Based Support Teams as part of its efforts of build-up strong support services in South Africa. From the above excerpts of the participants' responses, it could be argued that the Department of Education has fulfilled its promise of establishing District-Based Support Teams, which are trying their best to play their role in the strengthening of district-based support to schools. For instance, the participants mention a range of ways in which their District-Based Support Team supports them, including “[organizing] SMT workshops about SIAS” (Participant 8); “[supporting] the school with the documents” (Participant 5); “[assisting] in screening learners with different barriers” (Participant 4); and “[workshopping] teachers on curriculum differentiation assist in the assessment and placement of learners with barriers”. For the participants, this served as an enabler for the effective implementation of inclusive education, especially the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

However, the participants also pointed to the challenges that their District-Based Support Team was experiencing, which undermined the quality of support they should have received from it if this was not the case. For instance, the participants pointed to the fact that their District-Based Support Team would have done well if the following issues were resolved: “lack of skills” (Participant 6); “they are not also trained” (Participant 4); “they don’t have any knowledge of what teachers’ experiences on SIAS policy implementation” (Participant 2); and “it [monitoring and support] is not done frequently due to their tight schedules” (Participant 1). Based on the guidance of Education White Paper 6, these could be understood as barriers to the implementation of inclusive education, which, given the location and functions of the District-Based Support Team, will impact the capacity of schools and teachers to support learners, especially those experiencing barriers to learning. This suggests that the teacher may not have been fully supported in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. If the findings of this study are anything to go by, this matter requires a serious intervention to ensure the effective implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

4.6.7 Support from parents

Afolabi (2014) argues that the involvement of parents is critical for the education of children, especially those who are experiencing barriers to learning. To this end, the participants for this research, requested to share their experiences with parents in respect of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, to which they responded as follows:

Parents give support by coming to the meetings. They buy the stationary if it is finished, although many of them do not have money. Some of them assist with homework. ... Participant 2

Yes, but others don't support their learners. ...Participant 3

The problem is that in rural places the majority of parents are illiterate. Therefore, they don't supervise their children doing their homework. Sometimes they don't attend parents' meetings. They lack interest because of illiteracy. They cannot read what is presented during parent meetings. ...Participant 4

Most learners are not staying with their biological mothers. They get very little support from their guardians. As these parents don't give full support it becomes very difficult for the educator to get a real history of the birth of the child for any possible intervention. ...Participant 5

The participants' responses suggest a mixture of success and challenge, limited, good and sometimes no support from the parents and guardians of their learners. The participants believe that because the parents are illiterate, they find it difficult to support their children's education. The participants report that some parents do not attend school meetings. However, the participants mention ways in which parents contribute positively to their children's education: "*They buy the stationary if it is finished, although many of them do not have money*" (Participant 1). Shourbagi (2017), revealed that parents do play a significant role in the education of their children, especially those with disabilities, as they provided critical support, which could only come from them. However, some of the participants were aware of the cause of the lack of involvement from the parents, including the fact that "*Most learners are not staying with their biological mothers*". Mkhuma et al. (2014) argue in the findings on their study that parents are not fully committed to construct a holistic picture of their children's learning and development). As stated in the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, the findings of the study suggest that parents must be empowered to understand how their children can be optimally developed (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

4.6.8 Support from the School Governing Body

The successful implementation of inclusive education requires strong school leadership and governance, given the fact that ensuring that all children are included in education is a significant challenge facing educational systems across the globe (Ainscow & Sandill, 2008). To this end, this study interrogated the participants on School Governing Body support in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. In this regard, the participants had the following to say:

SGB support the school by providing the required resources. They make it certain that there is no discrimination in inclusive learning. ...Participant 1

The SGB encourages parents during meetings to cooperate. They request parents to be committed to children's schoolwork to discuss barriers in learning. ...Participant 2

SGB gives support by funding trips to the workshops for teachers to acquire more skills on inclusive learning. They provide money for the relevant learning material. ...Participant 3

They fund learning activities and extramural activities to encourage those learners who are not fully gifted in the class to demonstrate other potential. ...Participant 4

They approve items that are purchased by the school to make learning better. ...Participant 5

As can be discerned from the above excerpts, the participants from the three schools reported that their School Governing Bodies supported them in the implementation of inclusive education in line with their responsibilities in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). For instance, participants reported that School Governing Body “... [supported] the school by providing required resources” (Participant 1); “[funding] learning activities and extramural activities to encourage those learners who are not fully gifted in the class to demonstrate other potentials” (Participant 4); “[providing] money for the relevant learning material” (Participant 3); and “[ensuring] that there is no discrimination in the school as far as inclusive learning is concerned” (Participant 1). This is important given the fact that the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support requires a collaborative effort among different members of the basic education sector community (DoE, 2014). Therefore, in respect of this finding, this is according to section 20 of South African Schools Act

84 of 1996, which stipulates that School Governing Body “support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions” (Republic of South Africa, 1996b, p. 16).

4.6.9 Support from other stakeholders

Participants for this study shared their views on stakeholder support regarding the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. Some of the participants’ responses are provided below.

We as a school write to local business people like doctors to donate eyeglasses. We invite coordinators from love life to come to school to encourage learners to navigate through all challenges during learning.
...Participant 1

Department of health visits the school to assess the health condition of learners and provide advice. This department works closely with the school. They sometimes make arrangements with the local nearest clinic to attend to learners with health problems. ...Participant 2

Department of health works jointly with the department of education. It provides free medication to sick learners and sometimes hearing aid. ...Participant 3

The nearest clinic is playing a vital role in supporting the school through awareness. They encourage learners in the assembly not to hide their social problems. ...Participant 4

From the participants’ responses, it may be concluded that their schools are supported by a range of stakeholders, including the business community and government departments. What is noticeable though is that the schools take the initiative to reach out to the stakeholders to request them to support their work: “*We as a school write to local business people like doctors to donate with eyeglasses*” (Participant 1).

The Department of Health is one of the stakeholders that supports the schools in different ways in support of inclusive learning and teaching in the schools. For instance, the participants reported that they donate spectacles to the learners who struggle with eyesight; they “*visit the school to assess the health condition of learners and provide advice*”; “*provide free medication to sick learners and sometimes hearing aid*” This may suggest that the stakeholders understand the type of the community they are working in, for instance, that they are working within a socioeconomically deprived community. The understanding of

inclusive education is a communal phenomenon, whose success requires the involvement of a range of players (Fodo, 2020).

4.7 Theme 4: Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

In a study which sought to explore experiences of teachers using SIAS Policy on learners identified with characteristics of dyslexia, Karimupfumbi and Dwarika (2022) stated that teachers' success in application of inclusive policy is limited and requires professional development to fortify their capacity. For this study, the participants were asked about their experiences with SIAS policy; participants had the following to say:

Parents are secretive about the social problems of their children and their illnesses. They also reject any discoveries of challenges by the school. ...Participant 1

As an educator, I fail to identify and support learners with barriers because I was not trained. ...Participant 2

Regardless of the shortage of skills, as mainstream schools, we experience the following: too much workload; overcrowded classes - ratio 1:50; difficulty to finish annual teaching plans; and inadequate resources. ...Participant 3

As the school, we fail to identify the real challenge of the learners. When specialists do their own diagnosis, they come up with something different from what we observe as educators due to a lack of skills. ...Participant 4

In my school, we don't implement SIAS policy. My colleagues resisted because they don't have the skills. The school is also not provided with adequate resources. ...Participant 5

We failed recently to identify learners for a certain period of the inductive learners. We are not trained to do this job and the curriculum that we are furnished with is not modified to suit an inclusive environment. ...Participant 6

Resistance from some of the staff members and no support from other stakeholders. Too much workload and a lot of paperwork. ...Participant 7

On admission parents become very secretive about their psychosocial situation. ...Participant 8

The above excerpts from the participants' responses suggest that all of them experience difficulties in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. The participants responses suggest some challenges in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support including the fact that *"parents become very secretive about their psychosocial situation"* (Participant 8); *"We are not trained to do this job and the curriculum that we are furnished with is not modified to suit inclusive environment"* (Participant 6); *"Resistance from some of the staff members ... Too much workload and a lot of paper work"* (Participant 7); *"When specialists do their own diagnose, they come up with something different from what we observe as educators due to lack of skills"* (Participant 4); and *"My colleagues resisted because they don't have skills. The school is also not provided with adequate resources"* (Participant 5). These responses point to a debilitating mix of challenges across different levels in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, which requires immediate attention to meet demands of learners encountering barriers in learning

These findings are in line with what Wentzel et al. (2015) have argued that teachers often experience pressures and challenges that militate against the implementation of inclusive education. Mkhuma et al. (2014), findings stated that teachers often perceived the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support as having implications for their teaching workloads, which hampered their attempts to make it certain that learners experiencing obstacles to learning are properly supported. Participant 7 referred to the issue of workload as a challenge in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support: *"Too much workload and a lot of paperwork"*. This suggests that the Department of Education must assess the impact of the teaching workload on the inclusion of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. The reports of resistance by some of the teachers in the schools in which the participants taught, point to the significance of addressing the issues presented as challenges and strengthening advocacy and communication mechanisms regarding the introduction and necessity of inclusive education as a mechanism for ensuring education for all.

4.8. Theme 5: Teachers' negotiation of the challenges in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

Given that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is premised on the founding provisions of human dignity, achievement of equality and advancement of human rights and freedoms, teachers and officials in the basic education sector must ensure that all learners enjoy uninhibited access to the right to basic education (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). To this end, the participants were asked about how they negotiated the challenges they experienced in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, to which they responded as follows:

Maybe for the long term, I myself. I think it is wise because as a teacher I can't go through this process successfully without the involvement of a parent. ...Participant 1

If I see that the parent is someone who can afford it financially, I rope her in to assist in meeting the need of her child. Maybe the child was screened and the advice was that the learner will exit at grade 9 to a vocational school or skill centre. ...Participant 2

If that parent is willing and affords to take a child to go to a private vocational school and skill Centre, I just encourage her to do it because the process by the department of education takes a long and a child could be a dropout. I just encourage the parent, if you can afford let us look for the private skills school centre. ...Participant 4

If I can see the learner with a learning barrier is a sociable person, I just grab someone and say just go and sit with her. Let us assist her then you see that, day by day she is willing to do better because of the buddy I put next to her. Another strategy, I try is to re-design the ISP just for her. To avoid discrimination, we first learn together using the normal learning programme for normal learners. Then when I get time, I call that particular learner to come to me for special treatment. I give her special homework. I appreciate her a lot to boost her self-esteem. Participant 6

The above excerpts from the participants' responses suggest that some teachers were doing something about the challenges they were experiencing regarding the support for learners experiencing barriers to learning. However, given context of school located in the community, as discussed in section 3.5 of this dissertation, it is concerning that the issue of supporting learners became a class issue, for those who can afford it and those who cannot afford it. This suggests a need for government intervention, at an

institutional level, to ensure that learners are not disenfranchised and disadvantaged based on their background. As this will perpetuate the marginalization, segregation and exclusion of the learners, instead of challenging it. When this happens, it will deprive the learners constitutional right to basic education and lock them in a cycle of perpetual disadvantage.

Teachers in their space do acknowledge that each individual learner is unique and has got his own learning challenge but cannot be neglected. Their approach is positive and they try to improvise in the absence of training.

The above responses, although minor, hold promise for the successful implementation of inclusive education as a mechanism for ensuring inclusive education. I recommend that the Department of Education must take advantage of these small steps that teachers are already making to fulfil its promise of building an inclusive education and training system as envisaged in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). This will not only give expression to the promises made in the White Paper; it will also contribute to the fulfilment of the constitutional promise in respect of section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, that “everyone has the right to a basic education” (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, p. 14).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed data generated to answer the key questions of the investigation. The chapter presented and discussed findings in respect of the teachers’ experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. The key points discussed in this chapter included teachers’ understanding for notion of inclusive education, teachers’ understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support; factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support; teachers experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support; and teachers’ negotiation of the challenges experienced in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. The findings identify that the Department of Education must take advantage of the small steps that teachers are making and address the challenges that they are experiencing in the implementation of inclusive education, especially the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support to give

expression to the constitutional promise that “everyone has the right to a basic education” (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, p. 14).

The next chapter present conclusions and recommendations in respect of the findings of the study as analysed in this section.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study and provides a summary of the key issues and considerations that emerged from the study. The research questions are used as a basis for drawing conclusions based on the key findings of the study. Relationships between the findings and literature are drawn upon to highlight the key issues that emerged in this study. Finally, recommendations are provided based on the findings of the study.

5.2 Key research questions and objectives of the research study

The study was guided by the following main research question:

- What are teachers' experiences with the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?

The subsidiary research questions that were used in the study are as follows:

- What is the teachers' understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
- What are the factors that influence the implementation of Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
- How do teachers navigate the factors that influence the successful implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support to enable effective teaching and learning?

To address the key research questions, the purpose of the study sought to explore teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support within a mainstream school setting, which was further guided by the following objectives: which were to explore:

- the teachers' understanding of the notion of inclusive education;
- the teachers' understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support;
- factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support;

- the teachers’ experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support; and
- how teachers negotiated the challenges they experienced in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

5.3 Summary of the key findings

5.3.1 Teachers’ understanding of the notion of inclusive education

The responses of the participants suggested that they were aware of the shift from special education to inclusive education. The participants demonstrated an understanding of the difference in approach before and after the promulgation of Education White Paper 6: *“Before White Paper 6 came, struggling learners were taught by teachers who are trained”*. This suggests that the participants understood that inclusive teaching and education is now the responsibility of all teachers.

5.3.2 Teachers’ understanding of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The responses suggest that the participants understood the meaning and purpose of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. For instance, the participants understood that the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support involved early identification and intervention. That is, the purpose of the Policy, according to the participants’ responses, was not referral only, but also the provision of support to the learners experiencing barriers to learning.

5.3.3 Factors that influence the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The participants mentioned a range of issues which affected the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support in their schools, including issues relating to knowledge, capacity and clarity of the policy; availability of clear and relevant policy implementation plans; national curriculum statement; support from structures and stakeholders, including the school management team, Institutional-Level Support Team, District-Based Support team, parents, School Governing Body and other stakeholders.

5.3.4 Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The participants' responses suggested that all of them experienced difficulties in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. The participants' responses pointed to a range of challenges including parents who were not willing to share information required to build support for the learners; an inflexible curriculum that did not consider the diverse learning needs of their learners; absence or inadequate training to develop their capacity to support their learners; the resistance from their colleagues to implement the Policy; heavy teaching workloads and excessive administrative responsibilities; unavailability of district officials due to competing responsibilities; inconsistencies between their observations and findings of specialists; and shortage of resources.

5.3.5 Teachers' negotiation of the challenges in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

The participants' responses suggested that the teachers were doing something about the challenges they were experiencing regarding the support for learners experiencing barriers to learning. However, given the socioeconomically deprived context of the communities where their schools served are situated, issues such as class combined with other issues produce a debilitating mixture of challenges, which their work difficult. This pointed to the need for government intervention, at an institutional level, to ensure that learners are not disenfranchised and disadvantaged based on the families' socioeconomic status.

5.4 Purpose and significance of the study findings

The findings of this study potentially contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of teachers in the screening, identification, assessment and support of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning within a mainstream school. The findings point to the issues operating at an individual, societal and institutional level, which made the teachers' work difficult and potentially disenfranchised and disadvantaged the learners experiencing barriers to learning. In addition, the study provides a glimpse into how the teachers who participated in this study positioned themselves as agents of change regarding the support for their learners who were experiencing barriers to learning. This means that, despite the challenges that they experienced, the teachers strive to ensure that inclusive teaching and learning happen. This points to islands of effectiveness that the Department of Education can take advantage of in its efforts

to build an inclusive education and training system. Lastly, the study also provided a relatively safe space for the teachers to share their thoughts, apprehensions and good stories regarding their experiences of the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

5.5 Reflections on methodological and design issues

Using a qualitative research approach provided me with an opportunity to listen to the teachers' voices as they articulated and shared their experiences regarding the teaching of the learners experiencing barriers to learning. The qualitative research approach, coupled with the research methods used in this study, provided a relatively unconstrained space for the participants to share their experiences according to their terms.

5.6 Implications of the study

Firstly, the findings of the study pointed to the need for a rigorous advocacy and communication programme to increase awareness of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and officials regarding the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support as a mechanism for supporting learners who are experiencing barriers to learning within a mainstream schooling context. The findings point to the importance of carefully considering the policy implementation processes to increase the chances of success.

Secondly, the findings of the study revealed that there is a need to consider an appropriate resourcing model for an inclusive education and training system. From the findings, it is clear that the transformation of the education system to inclusion education system will require a significant injection of resources, in the form of human and physical resources to meet the new demands.

Lastly, the findings revealed that teachers are not provided with adequate professional and moral support. Often, the expectations for them to deliver on policy promises are higher than they can do so. In most instances, the assumed capacity is not consistent with the actual capacity, which results in all sorts of challenges, including resistance by some teachers. The takeaway is that, despite these challenges, teachers continue to put personal effort to ensure that their learners' needs are met. This may mean that, although teachers are seen in classrooms doing these things, they are not emotionally fine; they are emotionally drained and the Department of Education must respond before it is too late.

5.7 Recommendations for further study

The following recommendations for further research are made:

- Since the study was conducted in primary schools, a further study investigating the same phenomenon may need to be undertaken in secondary schools.
- The study of the same phenomenon can be extended to involve support teams, namely, Institutional-level Support Teams and District-Based Support Teams, as participants, given their responsibilities in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.
- The involvement of parents in further study is recommended. Parents' views shed more light regarding their participation and involvement as envisaged in the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.
- Given the fact that the study was conducted in rural schools, it is recommended that urban schools be considered in further study.

5.8 Limitations of the study

Data collection did not happen as per my original plan due to a range of circumstances. The first limitation was the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. To contain and prevent the spread of the virus, the country locked down, which required the following protocols, which changed the face of human interaction, including how research had to be conducted. In addition, to this, people were also in a state of constant fear for their lives and their loved ones, as they continued to witness significant numbers of deaths that this country and the world had never experienced before. For this study, the interviews that I had planned to take place through the Zoom meeting could not happen because some teachers in rural areas experienced challenges with connectivity, while others were still learning to operate within the virtual space. Therefore, I ended up conducting the interviews within an environment governed by strict COVID-19 protocols, which may have undermined the quality of human interaction and the responses I obtained from the participants.

The second limitation of the study was having to conduct the research in neighbouring schools, where my status as the school principal was well-known. Out of the 10 participants, three (3) were SMT members

and the rest were Post Level 1 teachers. The Post Level 1 teachers may have been intimidated by my position and provided me with the responses that they believed a school principal would be looking for in respect of the implementation of the policy by teachers. To mitigate against this risk, I explained to them that the motive for the interviews was for me to satisfy the requirements of my qualifications and not to monitor how they were implementing the policy.

5.9 Concluding thoughts

The effective implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support is at the core of the efforts of the basic education sector to build an inclusive education and training system. From a social rights perspective, inclusive education presents a mechanism to redress past imbalances, enfranchise the disenfranchised and ensure equitable access to education for all. The findings of this study revealed that while teachers are experiencing challenges in the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, they are making small steps towards ensuring that the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning are included. The challenges that the teachers reported in this study were operating at systemic, institutional and personal levels. The study revealed that the Department of Education, as the custodian of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, must ensure that there is adequate support for teachers, officials and schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questions for semi-structured interviews

1. According to your understanding, how can you explain the inclusive learning concept?
2. What do you understand about the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
3. Does your school have the implementation plan for the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
4. What challenges have you encountered since the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support in your school
5. Do you see the SMT in your school understanding their role in giving teachers full support?
6. Do you understand the kind of support to be given by the SBST committee? If yes, do they perform their duties according to the designed plan in the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support? Explain.
7. Is curriculum structure also accommodating inclusive learning? Explain
8. What kind of support does the school receive full support from the DBST for effective implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
9. What Inclusive learning material is your school provided with for effective implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
10. Do your learners experience any barriers to learning? Explain. If yes, provide the list of barriers to learning that your learners experience
11. Can you talk about the grouping of learners and seating arrangement in your class? Do learners with learning barriers fully supported through this arrangement?
12. Is the assessment structure in accordance with the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support?
13. Are concessions considered to benefit those learners with learning barriers?
14. Can you briefly explain learners' profiles on SNA?
15. Do parents have any contribution to supporting learners with learning barriers?
16. What is the role of the SGB in promoting Inclusive learning in your school?

17. What support is provided by other stakeholders?

Appendix B: Focus group interview questions

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| |
| In-depth interviews and focus group |
| 1. What is your understanding of inclusive education as a concept? |
| 2. Can you briefly discuss inclusive policies that you know? e.g. White paper6, SIAS policy etc |
| 3. Were these policies well defined to you? |
| 4. Can you comment on resources to implement inclusive education? Is a School-based support team in place and functional? |
| 5. What are the factors that can enable the implementation of Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support? Comment on skills and knowledge, resources, curriculum, personnel, extra support, conducive environment |
| 6. What are the factors that impede the implementation of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support in your school? Comment on the relevancy of skills, Teachers' knowledge of screening, Teachers' knowledge of identification, Teacher's knowledge of assessment and support Modification of curriculum including assessment Load and class enrolment |
| Follow up questions |
| 7. Are all the processes of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support followed? |
| 8. What difficulties do you experience in providing Support in a congested classroom? |
| 9. Is learning pace a challenge in an overcrowding classroom? |
| 10. Are teachers provided with intensive training? |

| |
|---|
| 11. Is the information delivered relevant to the situation? |
| 12. Is the curriculum re-designed to allow inclusive learning? |
| 13. Does curriculum address all the challenges faced by teachers? |
| 14. Does the curriculum consolidate assessment methods and allow inclusivity? |
| 15. Assistive teaching devices to provide relevant support with learning barriers |
| 16. What are the support structures in place? Comment on SMT, SBST, DBST, Parents etc. |
| 17. Are these support structures effective? Support your answer. |
| 18. Do you think community attitudes and beliefs contribute to this challenge of learning barriers? |
| 19. Does your school receive support from the circuit managers and what are your expectations? |
| 20. Do regional-based teams visit the support school? What are your expectations? |
| 21. Are workshops on Inclusive learning provided and effective? |
| 22. Can teachers handle different types of inclusive learning resources to support learners? |
| 23. Do you meet the deadline for your work? If not why? |
| 24. Does your school have enough space for inclusive learning? |
| 25. Any comment on the teacher-learner ratio in the classrooms? |
| 26. Are assessment guidelines in place and in line with inclusive learning? |
| 27. Does learner individual support require extra class? Explain. |
| 28. Is the syllabus always completed? Share your experiences |
| 29. Is remedial work done effectively? |
| How do you negotiate these challenges |
| 30. Comment on your intervention. |
| 31. Do you do home visits to communicate barriers to learning? |
| 32. Do parents cooperate in their children's learning affairs? Comment on that |
| 33. Do you seek professional support for referrals |
| 34. Do you do consultations with other structures for support |

| |
|--|
| 35. Comment on any other intervention to negotiate these challenges |
| 36. Do you report your challenges to the correct structures for possible intervention |
| 37. Can you comment on the involvement of other stakeholders in the area for support? e.g. doctors |
| 38. Do you liaise with other departments for possible intervention e.g. Dept of Health, Welfare, etc |

Appendix C: Letter to the school



The School of Education
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Private Bag X01
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg

To the Principal

Dear Madam /SIR

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Nombulelo Mhlongo and I am a student registered for the Masters in Education degree, in Social Justice with University of KwaZulu-Natal.

This letter serves as a request to conduct my research in your school by involving teachers to state their views on Teachers' experiences in Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support of learners with barriers to learning in the mainstream schools. Participating teachers will be used to gather information for this study. Your school has been chosen as a relevant site to generate data on the objective of my study.

The data will be gathered using different kinds of collecting methods such as questionnaires, voice recorder, interviews, observation and documents viewing. Participants will be organized as individuals, pairs and focus groups. I will ensure that this process of data collection does not disturb their daily school activities. All participants will receive necessary induction on the whole process of data collection for better understanding and transparency. They will be made aware of their rights through their consent forms that they are not forced to participate and are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of the process.

Please note the following for the safety and security of the participants and the school;

- Participants real names will not be revealed to guarantee confidentiality
- Any gathered data cannot be utilized to harm participants or the school reputation
- The process of data collection will not deviate from the core study stated in this letter.
- Data will be kept in a secured place to be utilized for academic purpose only.

Thank you for your participation to this study.

MN Mhlongo [REDACTED] 18/02/2021

Email: Margmhlongo@gmail.com

Cell: 073 961 9904

Supervisor's Email: SaderS@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix D: Permission to conduct research: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/1733

Mrs MN Mhlongo
4 Starling Avenue
Yellowwood Park
DURBAN
4001

Dear Mrs Mhlongo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT (SIAS) OF LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 26 April 2021 to 31 August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

ZULULAND DISTRICT



Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 28 April 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix E: Letter to the participants



The School of Education
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Private Bag X01
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg

Dear participant

Request to participate in a research study

My name is Nombulelo Mhlongo I am a student in University of Zululand doing Master's degree. This letter serves as a request for your participation in my study. My research investigates teachers experiences in Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support of Learners with Learning Barriers in the Mainstream Schools.

Please take note of the following information as it forms part of this consent

- Your participation has no financial benefits, it is only for academic use
- Data collected cannot be used to harm you, and your real names will not be disclosed.
- Confidentiality of data gathered is guaranteed
- Participation is voluntary and there is no anticipation of any risk
- You are free to withdraw at any stage of the process and you will not be penalized.
- Data from individuals and from focus groups will be kept in a safe place
- Data collection methods like interviews, questionnaires, voice recording, observation and documents viewing will be used.

I hope your participation will contribute a lot in improving education by providing relevant learning support all learners.

Thank you

MN Mhlongo; Signature

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of MN Mhlongo.

Date... 18/02/2021

Email: margmhlongo@gmail.com

Cell: 073 961 9904

My supervisors are available on these Emails: SaderS@ukzn.ac.za

The office can be contacted on 033 260 5856

Appendix F: Ethical Clearance



21 August 2021

Mrs Margaret Nombulelo Mhlongo (219095502)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Mhlongo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002804/2021

Project title: An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support of Learners who Experience Barriers to Learning in a Mainstream School

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received 05 May 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 21 August 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix G: Certificate from Language Editor

30 June 2023

To whom it may concern

Editing of dissertation for Ms. Nombulelo Mhlongo

I hereby confirm that I have edited the dissertation titled **An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support of Learners with Learning Barriers in a Mainstream School.**

Corrections were made in respect of grammar, tenses, spelling and language usage using track changes in MS Word 2016. **Once corrections have been attended to the dissertation the dissertation should be correct.**

Yours Sincerely



.....

Mahomed Yusuf Sader

Please note:

Should the student not attend to the suggested changes by the editor and made additions to the dissertation after editing has been completed, the editor cannot guarantee the language, grammar and tenses are correct.

Annexure H: Originality report

An Investigating of teachers experiences on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support of learners with learning barriers in mainstream schools

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10

%

SIMILARITY INDEX

9%

INTERNET SOURCES

6%

PUBLICATIONS

6%

STUDENT PAPERS



Digital Receipt

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Submission title: An Investigating of teachers experiences on Screening, Ident...
File name: ort_of_learners_with_learning_barriers_in_mainstream_scho...
File size: 151.18K
Page count: 105
Word count: 22,900
Character count: 129,693
Submission date: 21-Apr-2023 05:55AM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 2055653871

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY...

1.1 Introduction

This section gives layout for research. In South Africa, inclusive education, like all other countries, has become a focal point in the efforts of supplying equitable admittance to education (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). Learners experiencing learning barriers are now allowed within a diverse learning environment in a mainstream school (Strogilos, 2018). In South Africa, inclusive learning and support of learners with diversity of tuition demands was introduced in 2001 along White Paper 6, supported by the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (DBE, 2014; DoE, 2001).

In this opening chapter, I begin by providing South Africa's background on mainstream schooling within inclusion context, with a particular emphasis on where instructors are expected to implement the Policy of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support SIAS policy regarding pupils' experiencing schooling impediment. I then state purpose, focus and the rationale of the research. I then outline the key study inquiry to be replied through this investigation, including the intention for the study. I then provide description and discussion for basic notion utilized on this ponder. Lastly, I give a summary of sections that inform dissertation.

1.2 Background