

**AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF
CURRICULUM ADAPTATION TO SUPPORT LEARNERS
WITH DIVERSE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

BY

**SIMANGELE ROSEMARY MSOMI
STUDENT NUMBER: 9504348**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE**

OF


**MASTER OF EDUCATION – EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
IN THE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS**

SUPERVISOR: DIMAKATSO KORTJASS

FEBRUARY 2020

DECLARATION

I, Simangele Rosemary Msomi, declare that this study represents original work by the author and has not submitted in any form to any other institution. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Simangele R. Msomi

11/08/2020

Date

ABSTRACT

The study explored teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools, Sayidi district, KwaZulu-Natal. I sought to understand teachers' experiences on adapting the curriculum to support learners experiencing various learning difficulties when delivering the curriculum. The South African education system has adopted an inclusive education approach to ensure that different learners were provided with the necessary support to access subject content during curriculum delivery. The school curriculum needs to be modified to adapt to the new circumstances or priorities. The study was a qualitative inquiry, employing the interpretive paradigm. I used the constructivist theory to explore teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation and how they assisted learners with diverse learning needs at the two schools in Sayidi. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation during teaching. Four teachers from the two schools were selected. Two Grade 7 teachers from a primary school and two Grade 8 teachers from a high school participated in the study. Document analysis was also conducted to understand participants' lesson plans and assessment activities. The findings revealed that teachers have do possess some knowledge of curriculum adaptation. However, they experienced challenges in implementing the curriculum due to large classes. Teachers also faced difficulties in modifying lesson plans to provide a variety and change for the different needs of learners. The study found that the classroom's disruptive behaviour was a hindrance and felt they were not prepared enough to deal with it. My recommendation includes the need to address the challenges in schools and for stakeholders to work collaboratively to ensure that teachers are continuously equipped with the knowledge, skills to adapt curriculum and broadening different curriculum aspects. Teachers also need additional training on different curriculum strategies to support learners in various learning environments, especially in rural mainstream schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to give honour and glory to the mighty God for the grace he has bestowed upon me through all the obstacles I went through trying to complete my thesis. It has been by God's grace that I had the strength to keep on pushing for the completion of my thesis.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Ms Dimakatso Kortjass, for her patience, expert guidance, constant motivation and encouragement, immediate feedback and useful critiques and advices on proper research writing. I would also like to thank her for always making me to soldier on even when I felt like giving up, for her kind heart and wise words that unleashed my potential. Thank you so much for being such a blessing in my study life. I am praying to God to keep you and bless you abundantly.

My father, mother, mother in-law and my ex- Principal (mum Peggy) for always providing supporting and motivation to achieve my goals of furthering my studies because they too understood that one is never too old to learn. You have been a wonderful blessing in my life; I couldn't have done it without your valuable support.

To my sisters, Nozipho (Mygirl), Snobby, Zinhle, MaBongi, Balindile for the kind words and support during late nights attending and writing my thesis: you have been amazing and I will always cherish and love you. You have always reminded me that perseverance is the mother of success.

To all my friends especially my best friend Mr Hlophe, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude for the support, care, love and motivation that you provided to me by always reminding me that God could never give a person a wish without the power to achieve it.

To my dear daughter, my angel, my one and only Anathi who allowed me to neglect some of my parental duties because I was focusing on completing my degree. Thank you so much my angel for supporting my dreams, this is dedicated to you. I would always remember you when you encouraged me to write even if I felt so tired and always saying to me "I expect you to pass", these words were my source of motivation to strive for the best. To my sisters' son Andile thank you for the positive impact in my journey of completing my degree.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, my late two brothers, my late dear husband and father of my daughter, my principal and mother, my friend and colleague , my sister and my niece, lastly my daughter for motivating me to always persevere , providing love ,care and support throughout my journey of success. May the mighty God bless you abundantly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
CHAPTER 1.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the study.....	2
1.3 Rationale of the study.....	5
1.4 Problem statement.....	7
1.5 Aims of the study.....	8
1.6 Objectives of the study.....	8
1.7 Research questions.....	8
1.8 Significance of the study.....	8
1.9 Clarification of concepts.....	9
1.10 Outline of chapters.....	11
1.11 Conclusion.....	13
CHAPTER 2.....	14
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Experiences as impacting on teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation.....	14
2.2.1 The professional nature of teachers' knowledge (TPK).....	16
2.2.2 An overview of curriculum adaptation.....	19
2.3 Inclusivity in the South African education system.....	20
2.4 Rural mainstream schools.....	23

2.4.1 Curriculum, inclusion, and curriculum adaptation.....	25
2.4.2 The ideology of curriculum adaptation.....	25
2.4.3 Curriculum differentiation and curriculum adaptation for the support of learners with diverse learning difficulties.....	27
2.4.4 Curriculum adaptation for the inclusion of learners with diverse learning difficulties.....	30
2.5 Promoting curriculum adaptation.....	31
2.5.1 Access.....	33
2.5.2 Integration.....	34
2.6 Strategies of curriculum adaptation in classroom learning.....	35
2.6.1 Focus on the unique strengths of learners.....	36
2.6.2 Group learners based on their interests or abilities.....	36
2.6.3 Embrace learner diversity.....	37
2.6.4 Enrich learners' interest.....	37
2.7 An overview of theoretical framework.....	37
2.8 Conclusion.....	41
CHAPTER 3.....	42
3.1 Introduction.....	42
3.2 Research objectives.....	42
3.3 Research paradigm.....	42
3.4 The qualitative research approach.....	44
3.5 Research design.....	45
3.6 Population.....	45

3.7 Sampling.....	46
3.7.1 Sample.....	49
3.7.2 Profiling of the study setting.....	49
3.8 Data generation tools.....	54
3.8.1 Interviews (One-on-one)	54
3.8.2 Observation.....	56
3.8.3 Document analysis.....	57
3.9 Data analysis.....	58
3.10 Achieving credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research.....	60
3.11 Ethical considerations.....	61
3.12 Challenges and limitations of the study.....	61
3.13 Conclusions.....	61
CHAPTER 4.....	63
4.1 Introduction.....	63
4.2 Data analysis.....	63
4.3 Analysis and Findings.....	65
4.3.1 Teachers’ experiences and understanding of curriculum adaptation.....	65
4.4 Teachers classroom experiences and the knowledge of curriculum adaptation.....	83
4.4.1 The number of learners in a classroom.....	87
4.4.2 Challenges experienced by teachers when applying curriculum adaptation.....	87
4.4.3 Implementation of curriculum adaptation.....	89
4.5 Theme 3: Strategies to teach learners with learning difficulties (LD).....	92

4.5.1 Planning adapted lessons.....	94
4.5.2 Teaching styles.....	96
4.5.3 Assessment tasks.....	97
4.6 Theme 4: Provision of teacher development and training.....	99
4.7 Classroom observation.....	103
4.8 Conclusion.....	104
CHAPTER 5.....	105
5.1 Introduction.....	105
5.2 Summary of the research process.....	105
5.2.1 Aims, objectives and research questions.....	105
5.2.2 Research paradigm and design.....	106
5.2.3 Data collection and data analysis.....	106
5.3 Summary and discussion of findings.....	106
5.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers’ experiences and understanding of curriculum adaptation.....	106
5.3.2 Theme 2: The experiences of teachers with curriculum adaptation.....	109
5.3.3 Theme 3: Challenges experienced in the application of curriculum adaptation.....	111
5.3.4 Theme 4: Teacher training and development.....	114
5.4 Summary of recommendations for the teaching community.....	115
5.5 Recommendations for future research.....	116
5.6 Limitations of the stud study.....	117
5.7 Conclusion.....	117
References.....	119

Appendix A.....	131
Appendix B.....	132
Appendix C	133
Appendix D.....	135
Appendix E.....	136
Appendix F.....	138
Appendix G.....	141
Appendix H.....	142

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Profiling of participants.....	51
Table 4.1: Presentation of Theme.....	64
Table 5.1: Recommendations.....	115

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Didactical triangle illustrating the multidimensional relationship between teacher and learners	18
Figure 2.2: Illustration of an inclusive education system in balance.....	27

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
TK	Teacher Knowledge
TEK	Teacher Education Knowledge
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
TPI	Teacher Professional Identity
TPK	Teachers' Professional Knowledge
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
WHO	World Health Organisation
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
SPTD	Senior Primary Teachers Diploma
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
CMC	Circuit Management Centre
LD	Learning Difficulties

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The South African democratic government officially promotes curriculum differentiation as a key strategy to respond to diversity and to provide support to learners who experience learning difficulties. The past decade has seen rapid and various developments in inclusive education, mainstreaming, language across curriculum, test standardization, etc. regarding curriculum implementation. South African schools had been largely affected by the increase in learner diversity based on learner potential and capabilities (Donohue and Bornman, 2014, p.3). The latter required teachers to employ different methodologies of curriculum implementation, to support to learners having learning difficulties. cater

The school curriculum needs to be modified and improved to accommodate diverse circumstances of learning difficulties (UNESCO, 2013). Adaptation could be seen as modification of curriculum which could be done through minor adjustments and innovations that do not affect the structure of the current curriculum. Tomlinson (2008), Van Tassel-Baska (2002), Terwel (2005) had used various terms that refer to curriculum differentiation such as ‘curriculum adaptation’ and ‘curriculum modification’. The two terms could be slightly confused but they are different. The process that could be used by teachers in schools to assist learners having difficulties is that of curriculum adaptation. Mzizi (2014, p. 6) alludes that curriculum adaptation is the continuous dynamic process that modifies and adapts the program of study to meet the learning needs of learners with learning difficulties. For the purpose of this study, the term ‘curriculum adaptation’ will be used predominantly. Msipha (2013), Lee, Soukup, Little and Wehmeyer (2009, p. 41) warned that curriculum should not be implemented as a straightforward tool, disregarding the diversity of learners in the classroom. Teachers should use their experiences, knowledge and skills to implement curriculum adaptation with the aim of giving support to learners with diverse learning difficulties.

In the teaching and learning process, curriculum adaptation is imperative to provide strategies that will accommodate the needs of learners who experience learning difficulties. Msipha (2013) maintains that teachers need to gain knowledge to build on their experiences and increase their skills to reach all learners and, more specifically, to give support to those learners

who experience learning difficulties. Moreover, teachers' experiences prompted their knowledge of an adapted curriculum to be vital; in particular in South Africa where they need to enhance the support they are able to give those learners in rural mainstream schools that experience learning difficulties. UNESCO (2013) states that teachers can use the strategy of curriculum adaptation to provide meaningful learning experiences for *all* learners, regardless of the challenges they experience.

Curriculum adaptation practices in mainstream schools entail differentiating instructions and the way activities are presented. This is preceded by initially identifying all learners' strengths, needs and interests and adapting lessons to address diversity. A teacher is always considered a key person in the implementation of curriculum adaptation (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Therefore, with continuous support, training and development, teachers will be better equipped to face the challenges presented by their learners who experience learning difficulties head-on.

1.2 Background to the study

In 1997, the then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, announced the launch of Curriculum 2005 which heralded a breakaway from the apartheid curriculum to a curriculum that would reflect democratic and human rights principles. Curriculum 2005 placed emphasis on integration in all education and training spheres. According to Vrasmas (2014), any curriculum that impacts children with learning difficulties in schools should ensure both equal rights and equal opportunities. South Africa is a rapidly growing country whose economic development largely depends on the ability of its citizens to acquire skills and knowledge through competent teaching. In the era immediately after apartheid, South Africa was in pursuit of an education policy that would guide the implementation of curriculum adaptation. Curriculum 2005 thus attempted to rid the education system of dogmatism and outmoded teaching practices and to put in place values and the desire for democratic nation building (Bhana, 2002). As the curriculum is relatively broad, its implementation in schools – particularly rural mainstream schools – needs to be adapted by teachers based on their knowledge and skills so that it will cater for the needs of learners who experience diverse learning difficulties as well. Only through such adaptation will learners be capacitated to access and master learning content. Apart from the content, an adapted curriculum should also include information regarding the goals and processes of promoting the holistic development of learners and the structure of the learning programme (Mzizi, 2014). The process of adaptation stems from the fact that learners with learning challenges learn better when they are supported and guided in an appropriate manner.

Teachers' experience of curriculum adaptation needs to be thoroughly explored and practically implemented in order to deal with all the educational challenges they face. Unfortunately, it has been reported that many teachers have not been exposed to the necessary teacher training support to assist them in their task of teaching and guiding learners with diverse learning difficulties (Chisholm, 2004). The diverse needs of learners and the dynamics within a school environment require that teachers be equipped with skills and knowledge to adapt the curriculum in a way that provides support to learners with diverse learning difficulties.

White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001b) states that most learners with learning challenges leave school early due to the fact that the education system does not cater for their needs. As equitable education is the basic right of all learners, teachers should thus be equipped with appropriate knowledge to adapt the curriculum in order to assist learners who are encountering learning difficulties, particularly in rural mainstream schools that enroll learners from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Parker (1999), the current South Africa school curriculum, referred to as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), redefines teachers' professional identity in the classroom. Singh (2001) agrees with this view and postulates that the large body of policy ideas that needs to be implemented in South Africa is probably in conflict with teachers' beliefs. As such, this brings controversy into the teaching and learning process. The situation at schools therefore requires that all stakeholders within the education system be innovative in creating ways of dealing with the many challenges that impact the learning process. This is vital as learners encounter different learning difficulties during the process of teaching and learning which tend to affect their progress. The emphasis should be on the early identification of learning difficulties, sometimes referred to as barriers to learning, for the provision of the necessary support. This can be provided by adapting the curriculum to assist learners to deal with their learning difficulties and to successfully progress in their education.

Mzizi (2014) supports the notion that teachers have to adapt the curriculum to accommodate learners with learning difficulties in their classrooms. Curriculum adaptation should be centred on addressing the problem of learner diversity in any classroom where some learners experience learning difficulties. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002, p. 18), a curriculum is more than just the syllabus as it encompasses the goals and processes of promoting the holistic development of all learners.

Against the background that was sketched above, this study aimed to explore teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. Because South Africa has implemented the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) approach to enhance its ideology of inclusive education, the curriculum is broad and needs to be adapted to accommodate learners with and without learning difficulties in the same learning context. UNESCO (2004, p.13, as cited by Mzizi, 2014) concurs with Donald et al. (2002, p. 18) that curriculum is what is learned and what is taught (context), that it is about how teaching is delivered (teaching-learning methods), how it is assessed (assessment strategies), and what resources are used (such as text books) to support both teaching and learning.

The study was prompted by my observation that a large number of learners who encounter diverse learning difficulties and leave school prior to the completion of their schooling because of the nature of curriculum delivery that is not supportive for learners with learning difficulties. Learning difficulties may be prevalent as a result of physical, psychological or emotional challenges experienced by some learners (Bennet, 2003, p. 303) and these problems should be accommodated and addressed. However, in South Africa it is estimated that up to 70% of school going learners with learning difficulties are not in school (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). One reason for their non-attendance and early attrition may be that their needs are simply not addressed.

There are many ways in which teachers can use their experiences to adapt the curriculum so that is sensitive to the needs of learners with learning difficulties. A fundamental requirement is to capacitate teachers through continuous development to equip them with knowledge and skills to adapt the curriculum so that they may provide the necessary support to learners who experience challenges. This is particularly relevant to rural mainstream schools. The success of every educational system lies in its ability to accept the mandate to continuously develop teachers and enable them to adapt the curriculum so that it is supportive of the diverse needs of learners (Mzizi, 2014). Thus teachers need to be focused on supporting each learner and dealing with diverse learning difficulties in order to ensure that knowledge that is delivered through the curriculum is positively accessed by all learners so that they may produce quality results at the end of a learning phase.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Teaching in rural mainstream schools has been part of my teaching experience for the 20 years that I have been employed in the Department of Education (DoE), now the Department of Basic Education (DBE). During my years of teaching, I have had many experiences in teaching learners with diverse abilities. I have noticed that, as teachers, we are regarded as being at the forefront of implementing the curriculum in a way that produces positive results. As a teacher in mainstream schools I have always believed that my core duty is to lead the process of teaching and learning. I have observed that I am compelled to devise teaching strategies to enable my learners to understand the subject content that is delivered to them. I have been fortunate to be part of many changes taking place in South Africa, but these changes have had a profound impact on the education that is provided in schools. My personal interest in the transformation process that is required by education policies continues to focus on the lives of those learners who experience learning difficulties in their quest to access knowledge. I was thus driven by my passion for these learners to engage in a study that would seek to understand how they could be supported. I thus first engaged in an extensive literature review and became enthused by the proposal that upgrading teachers' experiences and knowledge of curriculum adaptation could be instrumental in achieving the goal of full learner integration in the classroom. All learners deserve to be adequately capacitated with knowledge and skills, and this is an undeniable mandate of the education system and the teachers in its employ who need to deliver the curriculum.

I decided to explore teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation and implementation in rural mainstream schools with specific focus on the strategies they use to bring about change and to offer support to their learners who experience learning difficulties. I was cognisant of the fact that the education system and curriculum implementation have been transformed over the years and that many challenges need to be addressed to achieve the educational goals of this country. Sadler, Sonnet, Coyle & Cook-Smith (2013) argues that the history of providing teacher education knowledge (TEK) in South Africa has been influenced by numerous historical and political factors. It is very important to understand the history of this country as only then will one understand current challenges in the education system. Welch (2001, p. 10) describes the post-apartheid teacher education and training system in South Africa using words such as "segregation", "fragmentation", "authoritarian and bureaucratic control of curriculum, institutions and governance", and "inefficiency and inequality". This scholar further argues that

not assisting learners who experienced learning difficulties has resulted in a decline in the quality of the results produced by schools.

I envisage that my research findings will shed more light on teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation and the way in which the curriculum is implemented for learners with diverse learning difficulties. I thus attempt to illuminate how the curriculum could be adapted to overcome shortcomings in the teaching and learning process. In particular, the subject content that is presented through the curriculum should be adapted to the level of all learners in a particular class or grade according to their abilities. In my experience, this is particularly true of rural mainstream schools. The use of curriculum adaptation for the support of learners with learning difficulties enhances inclusive education. Du Plessis (2013, p. 76) defines inclusive education in South African as "a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of their learning difficulties". This scholar also argues that, in the application of a system that is inclusive in nature, "no learner should be marginalized in terms of their educational needs and capabilities". Curriculum adaptation enhances inclusive education and provides teaching and learning strategies in a way that benefits all learners. The delivery of the curriculum should thus be flexible and suitable for the needs and abilities of learners who experience learning difficulties, thereby promoting inclusion. Mzizi (2014) maintains that the education system should be structured in a way that encourages opportunities for facilitating, integrating and including all aspects of the curriculum and to make it accessible to all learners. According to White Paper 6, the inclusion of learners with learning difficulties in all aspects of the learning process is a basic human right (DoE, 2001).

However, curriculum delivery, especially in rural mainstream schools, has often been executed in such a way that it has marginalised learners with learning difficulties. In my view, this is because many teachers assume that all their learners are able to read and conceptualise written and verbal information. Marishane, Marishane and Mahlo (2015) state that one critical way of ensuring that learners' right to an education is addressed is for teachers to be duty bearers and to guarantee that the curriculum is not only made accessible to a few learners, but to all. For learning to be successful, teachers should possess knowledge and skills in order to adapt the curriculum to meet the special educational needs of learners with learning difficulties (Mzizi, 2014). The application of curriculum adaptation means providing differentiated strategies that

will meet the needs of all learners, including those with learning difficulties. They will thus be assisted to progress and meet the required age-appropriate academic and educational standards. The objective of any education system is to provide quality education to all learners, regardless of their educational level. Learners therefore deserve nothing less than a quality education that will provide them with opportunities for lifelong learning. They need to access the world of work and participate meaningfully in society as productive citizens (Du Plessis, 2013, p. 76). The current education system that prescribes curriculum adaptation has evolved as a movement that aims to challenge exclusionary policies and practices in an attempt to address the learning needs of all learners. Against this background, it is noteworthy that the situation in rural mainstream schools is particularly sensitive as it is persistently characterised by various challenges.

I chose the study topic because of my personal observation that teachers are grappling with curriculum adaptation because teachers experience lack of knowledge and skills to implement it. This results in the fact that learners who experience learning difficulties are often not adequately supported. To be able to face this challenge, teachers need support and continuous professional development (Fomunyan, 2016). Curriculum adaptation therefore precludes the violation of human rights and unfair discrimination and seeks to ensure that social justice prevails in the education of all learners. Curriculum adaptation speaks to the extension of curriculum delivery in schools and aims to address the diverse needs of learners, especially those who encounter learning difficulties. This policy thus regards all learners as valued and important members of society in all respects. According to Stainback and Stainback (1999, p. 4), in an inclusive classroom all children are enriched by having the opportunity to learn from one another. Here they will grow to care for one another and gain attitudes, skills and values that are necessary for our communities to value and include all citizens.

1.4 Problem statement

It is evident that curriculum adaptation in general and in rural mainstream schools in particular has been a key issue since the inception of education transformation in South Africa. I embarked on this study for professional , personal reasons set out to explore teachers' experiences of adapting curriculum and the strategies they used to enhance in their classrooms to support learners with learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The perception exists that curriculum adaptation can be used to accommodate the needs of learners with diverse learning

difficulties as these challenges pose a barrier to their acquisition of knowledge. To achieve this, teachers' strategies need to be continuously improved so that they are able to adapt the curriculum and assist learners who encounter learning difficulties and improve their learning.

1.5 Aim of the study

The fundamental aim of the study was to explore teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation in the senior phase in order to determine if teachers were able to provide support to the learners with learning difficulties. Rural mainstream schools often encounter obstacles when it comes to education transformation. I therefore intended to use the study to explore the strategies of implementing curriculum adaptation in rural mainstream schools, determine if teachers in these schools have knowledge to cater for the needs of all learners regardless of their learning difficulties. Teachers' experiences would prompt them to acquire knowledge to assist them in dealing with negative experiences. In addition, I wanted to determine if teachers in rural mainstream schools of the selected rural area were able to implement adapted curriculum to support learners with learning difficulties. The study has the following research objectives and questions:

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- To explore teachers' strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.
- To examine how teachers implement strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.

1.7 Research questions

- What strategies do teachers use for curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties?
- How do teachers implement the strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties?

1.8 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study was that it was aimed to be used as a springboard for further research into the challenges faced by teachers lacking knowledge to adapt curriculum to support learners having learning difficulties. Fulfilling the aims of this study could provide a deeper

understanding of the teachers experiences and challenges teachers face in class when implementing adapted curriculum to support learners having learning difficulties. The completion of this study would benefit teachers I rural mainstream schools in developing their knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties. Teachers need to acquire and develop knowledge and skills of providing necessary to learners having diverse learning difficulties by implementing adapted curriculum. Teachers who did not possess sufficient knowledge or no knowledge of adapting curriculum would be equipped with various methods of adapting curriculum in teaching learners with learning difficulties. The study is also likely to encourage further research on the provision of teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation specifically for the aim of supporting learners having diverse learning difficulties.

Furthermore, the aim of pursuing this research was motivated by the limited amount of research done in this field of curriculum adaptation as a supporting for learners with learning difficulties. The researcher would then focus on contributing significantly to the existing body of research.

1.9 Clarification of concepts

This section delineates important concepts and terms that are used in this study report. These concepts may have been utilised differently in other situations; therefore, their relevant usage is clarified as key terms used in this study.

1.9.1 Curriculum adaptation

Curriculum adaptation is a concept that originated from the term 'curriculum'. Connelly (2008, p. 310) views curriculum as more than the words in formal documents that describe only what teachers must teach or how teachers should engage their learners. Curriculum adaptation refers to the modifications that are made in the way the content is presented and represented, or the way that learners respond to the curriculum. Addressing and overcoming learning difficulties thus require curriculum adaptation as a main approach to ensuring academic participation (UNESCO, 2009, p. 77). Curriculum adaptation is an educational strategy that recognises the diversity of learners in a particular classroom. Learners are diverse in terms of their cognitive levels and the learning difficulties they encounter during the learning process. Glat and Oliveira (2018) maintain that a curriculum without any form of adaptation that takes diversity into account can reinforce exclusive practices. Thus, if some of the learners' needs are not met, those learners may feel abandoned and neglected. Curriculum adaptation is a flexible method that teachers should employ to accommodate the learning needs of everyone in the classroom.

The educational goal of unifying diverse learners in the classroom is thus achieved through curriculum adaptation.

1.9.2 Inclusive education

In South Africa, an inclusive education approach aims to eradicate the imbalances of the past in the schooling system. Msipha (2013, p. 1) describes inclusive education as “a journey with a purpose” with the purpose being to eradicate discriminatory practices that may occur during the process of teaching and learning. It is difficult to have a thorough comprehension of inclusive education without explaining the origins of ‘inclusion’ as background. Karten (2005, p. 2) reveals that the Latin root word of inclusion is ‘include’, meaning to embrace, while the root word for exclusion is ‘exclude’, meaning to separate or shut out. Learners who have diverse learning difficulties are among those who have been traditionally shut out and separated from those who are seen not to have difficulties in their learning; therefore, the introduction of the concept of inclusion seeks to eradicate the element of exclusion. Inclusion or inclusive education is explained by Karten (2005, p. 3) as “the type of education which embraces and recognises the right to learn and be prepared for life”. To further clarify the term, inclusion is practised in an education system that is guided by policies and practices that uphold the right of learners who experience learning difficulties but who need to learn in mainstream schools irrespective of their challenges. Inclusive education also aims to uncover and reduce difficulties to learning, thus making quality education available and accessible to all learners. The intention of inclusive policies is to provide support to all learners, teachers and the system so that the full range of learning needs can be met. Furthermore, it requires a symbolic shift in the mind-set of all stakeholders who need to recognise that all learners have the potential to learn if given the necessary support and opportunities.

1.9.3 Adaptive teaching

Borich (2011, p. 41) defines adaptive teaching as “a method of applying different instructional strategies to different groups of learners so that natural diversity prevailing in the classroom does not prevent any learner from achieving success”. This method of teaching is an approach to enhance the goal of giving common instruction to learners who have individual differences such as cognitive levels or different learning styles. Adaptive teaching focuses on the whole class or group of learners in the same class who are different in many aspects. The teacher chooses to use instructional strategies or techniques that are most suited to the individual

learner. The use of individual instruction may take place in a group setting, but learners are not permanently placed in those groups. Learners are moved from one group to another as is needed to help them learn in the best way (Ikwumelu, Oyibe, & Oketa, 2015). Adaptive teaching entails a variety of instructional and assessment strategies that ensure that the curriculum is accessed by all learners. In adaptive teaching, learners are able to demonstrate what they can do rather than what they cannot do. Learners who experience success are more likely to be motivated to learn as it is discouraging and frustrating when the pace of work is too fast, or the work is too difficult (Walton, 2010). The aim of adaptive teaching is thus to uncover and minimise learning difficulties that hinder learners from having the benefit of quality education.

1.9.4 Learning difficulties

To describe learners who experience challenges, Nel and Nel (2016) refer to three terms that are used interchangeably internationally as well as locally, namely ‘learning disabilities’, ‘learning difficulties’ and ‘learning impairments’. According to Nel & Grosser (2016), the term ‘barriers to learning’ is used in South Africa to replace the terms ‘learners with learning difficulties’ and ‘learners with special needs’. For the purpose of this study, the term ‘learning difficulties’ is used. This term has been defined by various researchers who argue that there is no perfect learner out there, and therefore we need to embrace all learners as one. Learning difficulties could arise as a result of visual, hearing, motor, physical, intellectual and/or emotional challenges or environmental, cultural, or socio-economic circumstances (Nel & Nel, 2016 p. 23). Learning difficulties could also relate to problems of mental processes involving understanding or using of language both spoken or written. These may be revealed as a limited ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, think, or do mathematical operations. Learners with learning difficulties are highly prevalent in South African schools and therefore it is important to concentrate on the learning needs of these learners and to provide support that will mitigate these difficulties.

1.10 Outline of the chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Chapter one mainly provides an overview of the study. It presents the rationale and problem statement and lists the aim, objectives and research questions that gave impetus to the study.

The key terms that were used are also explained and defined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature that I found relevant to teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation that should be employed to offer support to learners who experience learning difficulties. The experiences of teachers tend to positively or negatively impacts on their knowledge. The literature supports the notion that teachers' **experiences** of curriculum adaptation needs to be continuously upgraded to enhance their support of learners with diverse disabilities. The focus of the study was on learners in rural mainstream schools, and thus conditions in rural schools are briefly discussed. The chapter also outlines current literature on inclusivity in the South African education system, what a curriculum entails, the concepts 'inclusion' and 'curriculum adaptation', the ideology of curriculum adaptation, promoting curriculum adaptation, strategies for curriculum adaptation in classroom learning, teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation, and strategies to support learners with learning difficulties. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the constructivist theory that was used to frame the study.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3 presents an in-depth discussion on the research design and methodology. The discourse entails all the methods I used to collect the data that contributed to the richness of the information and the findings. The study adopted a case study strategy as described by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p. 140). The strategy chosen is well suited to the qualitative investigation of a specific situation (in this case teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning disabilities) in its real-life context. Teachers would be prompted to gain knowledge through their experiences. The research in the study made use of mostly interviews and other data collection tools to collect required data. The chapter initially presents arguments in support of the overall research paradigm and the qualitative approach of data collection and analysis. Thus, the research philosophy, approach and purpose are outlined. The description of the research method and design includes the research strategy I employed, the research setting, and the sampling and data collection procedures I employed. The data analysis methodology is also described while the methods used to ensure trustworthiness are explained. The limitations of the study and the ethical considerations I adhered to are also discussed.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis

Chapter 4 presents the data that were collected using the qualitative research approach. The chapter commences with the rationale for the selected research design. This is followed by a discussion of the study population, sampling methodology, the research instruments and the data collection procedures. The data that were obtained are presented and interpreted thematically and viewed through the lens of the constructivist theory.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. The research process is highlighted and I summarise the main findings and their implications. The findings are discussed under the themes that emerged from the collected data. This chapter also offers recommendations on how teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation can be enhanced to support learners with learning difficulties, with particular reference to learners in rural mainstream schools.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the background to the study and discussed the focus, rationale and the research problem. The aim, objectives and the research questions that formed the basis of the study were also presented.

The chapter also provided a lengthy discussion on the significance of the study and concepts used in the report were explained. An outline of the chapters of the study was also presented.

In the next chapter I present a review of the literature that I found relevant to teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation and how they should support learners with diverse learning difficulties. The concept of curriculum adaptation, strategies for curriculum adaptation in classroom learning, curriculum adaptation in rural mainstream schools, and an overview of the constructivist theory are the main aspects that will be discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores other researchers' views and findings related to teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation and how they utilize knowledge gained to support learners with diverse learning difficulties. Reviewing the literature is an integral part of research studies and earlier findings that are relevant to the research topic were thus explored. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a literature review locates and summarises the findings of other studies that are relevant to the current research topic. In this chapter I thus discuss the findings of earlier studies and provide supplementary data to fill the gaps and compare the findings of related studies. In addition, an overview of the constructivist theory is presented to illuminate the following themes:

- Experiences as impacting on teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation.
- Inclusivity in the South African education system;
- Curriculum inclusion and curriculum adaptation;
- Promoting curriculum adaptation; and
- Strategies of curriculum adaptation in classroom learning.

2.2 Experiences as impacting on teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation

According to Fomunyam (2016b, p. 53):

“Knowledge is the only tool to emancipate even the mentality of the human being. Teachers' professional knowledge is central to [their] belief system that guides [their] actions and practices in and outside the school environment.”

Teachers are at the forefront of curriculum delivery, and therefore they should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach all learners – especially those with diverse learning difficulties. It should be noted that teachers work in schools which are part of the global context therefore the experiences of teachers are globally similar. The experiences of teachers on curriculum adaptation could negatively or positively impact on curriculum delivery. Fourie and Hooijer (2016) note that it is important for teachers to know which aspects of the curriculum

need to be adapted as it may be the content, the methods, the resources or the learning environment. Moreover, teachers should be continuously developed to teach according to the diversity of the learners in their classroom – they should thus not assume that all learners learn in the same way. Learners should be taught in such a way that they become competitive with learners from around the globe. An alternative way of reducing barriers that impact curriculum delivery is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to address different learning needs and styles (DoE, 2001). Teachers can do this by ensuring that all activities are interesting and engaging for their learners. The needs of learners may be diverse in nature, but this diversity could be addressed by applying different teaching methodologies and by means of curriculum adaptation.

According to Marishane, Marishane and Mahlo (2015), there is a great need of teachers who have expertise and who are equipped to meet the needs of all learners through the provisioning of inclusive education. This will afford learners equal opportunities to succeed in their learning. Exploring good practice in the curriculum adaptation process is essential, mainly as this will support all learners with learning difficulties to achieve in an education system that is inclusive and sensitive to their needs (Adewumi, Rembe, Shumba, & Akinyemi, 2017). Teachers should continuously develop fully to implement the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all learners with diverse learning difficulties. The importance of in-service training as an essential component to sustain and develop teachers' skills cannot be overemphasised. Darling-Hammond (2010) argues that, to offer quality education, teachers should receive continuous training in various teaching methodologies to upgrade their skills and knowledge. Teachers thus need to be continuously developed so that they may be capacitated to respond to the different levels at which learners operate in different contexts.

Day (2007) argues that teachers' knowledge exposes their professional identity as accountable and responsible educators who need to demonstrate compliance to policies that mandate high quality teaching which in turn, is measured by set quality performance indicators. The professional identity of teachers entails competence and production of results that are universally acceptable (Day, 2007). Teachers will thus use the knowledge they have about curriculum adaptation for the establishment of standards and processes that enhance learners' learning experiences.

Ali and Pooma (2012) maintain that teachers' experiences and professional identity are about knowing oneself as a professional, setting standard of professionalism, and performing one's duties using acceptable guiding principles. As such, experiences inform teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation and encompasses the execution of their duties, one of which is to adapt the curriculum so that it is sensitive to learners' capabilities and offers support to learners who have learning difficulties.

It is undeniable that teachers' experiences contribute to the extent of teachers' knowledge promoting professional identity (TPI). This identity is imperative for teachers who function in classrooms where learner diversity is the norm. Beijajaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) see teachers' professional identity as a complicated and ever-changing balancing act where professional self-image is scaled with the various roles teachers feel they have to play. Furthermore, Timostuk and Ugaste (2010) view teachers' professional identity as a continuous process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences. This corresponds to the idea that teachers' professional development never stops as they are on a journey of lifelong learning. Teachers thus communicate the message of individual identity during the course of their teaching and should experience it as a process of teaching that never stops. Teachers' professional identity (TPI) is composed of various identities that more or less harmonise. Therefore, the only way to ensure a successful teaching career is to acquire a professional identity that is not static but keeps on changing as the content of educational knowledge keeps changing due to changes in the curriculum and societal needs.

Professional identity differs from one person to the other and from context to context. However, a commonality is that it guides teachers' actions and practices within the school environment. What you think of yourself and what others think of you are transformed as the situation changes (Fomunyam, 2016). In essence, teachers' professional identity entails how others view them as members of a professional community, their understanding of complex educational practices, and their understanding of the self.

2.2.1 The professional nature of teachers' knowledge (TPK)

According to Shewille, Dembele and Schubert (2007, p. 16), "subject knowledge is of importance, as is teachers' competence in transmitting this knowledge to learners". Teachers' professional knowledge (TPK) is central to their beliefs that guide their actions and practices

in and outside the school environment. Sutherland, Howard and Markauskaite (2010) assert that teachers' professional knowledge is one facet of a multiple belonging to an individual, and this comes because of how one uses one's knowledge within a specific context and how one decides to develop that knowledge. Thus, teachers' professional knowledge is reconstructed and enhanced through the interaction that they have with diverse learners during the process of teaching. Teachers' professional knowledge is acquired on a continuum of continuous learning during which each teacher's professional experiences are reflected upon against a background of multiple classroom and interpersonal interactions (Naidu, 2016). Burns and Bell (2011, p35) maintain that teachers' professional knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in time and space, and therefore this knowledge is not static but changes with time, place and circumstances. The teacher is considered the constructor of his/her professional knowledge and is engaged in an ongoing response to a changing curriculum. Thus, teachers can "experience educational change to recreate themselves and embrace the new pleasurable and fulfilling ways of developing their professional knowledge".

The reality of teachers' experiences promotes knowledge which is also characterized by the relationships the teacher is involved in, whether willingly or unwillingly. The relationship in the classroom between teacher and learners involves more than just participants in the teaching and learning process; it is a complex process of making meaning for both teacher and learners (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). The relationship within the professional community of teachers also influences their understanding of complex practices and their application of individual knowledge during the process of teaching and learning. In this context, teachers are required to use their preconceived knowledge to gain a thorough understanding of the diversity of their learners and to implement their teaching strategies in line with this diversity.

Teachers make sense of themselves in their profession in relation to their constant interactions with fellow teachers, the school governing body, departmental officials and the surrounding community (Sternberg, 2010). Moreover, the relationship that teachers have with learners is multidimensional and entails the learning content presented to learners, learners studying and learning (didactical relation), and their application of theory which influences their practice (Fomunyan, 2016). The teacher's relation with his or her content includes the actual content of teaching and what transpires during the learning process in the classroom. The relationship between the teacher and his or her professional knowledge keeps changing because of the

constant changes in the teaching and learning environment that are determined by constant changes to the curriculum. It is therefore impossible to separate teachers' professional knowledge and their personal attributes.

The development of the relationship that the teacher forges with learners should be aimed at enhancing the assistance provided to learners, particularly those who have learning difficulties. The relationship between the teaching and learning process is a complicated one as it needs to relate to the curriculum. It is impossible to separate the elements of professional knowledge and the relationship with practical theory as these two aspects of pedagogy and practical theory create a link between the teacher, the learner, and the content delivered in the teaching process.

Figure 2.1 illustrates this relationship diagrammatically.

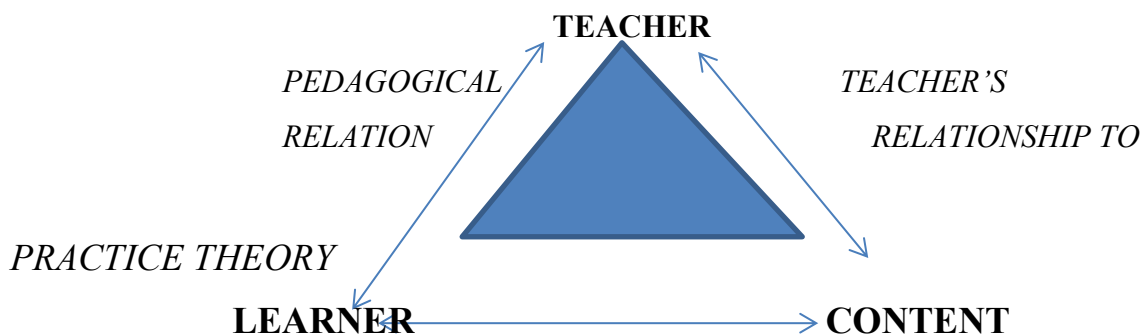


Figure 2.1: Didactical triangle illustrating the multidimensional relationship between teacher and learners (Adapted from Stenberg et. al. , 2014, p. 6).

Teachers' professional knowledge is therefore determined by situations and relationships that develop during practical teaching and learning activities, as a result of learning experiences, in terms of how teachers treat and react to learners in the class, and the quality of the ongoing training they receive. The relationship among the teacher, the lesson content and the learners also involve the manner in which the curriculum is delivered, the manifold settings in which teachers work, and the school environment. Kemp, Blake, Shaw and Preston (2009) allude that relating to curriculum content therefore embodies subject matter, instructions and classroom management, amongst others. The didactical relation refers to the teacher's relationship to the learners and how they relate to the content, or how teachers aid and assist learners' learning. Each teacher determines the approach or theory to be used depending on the situation because learners learn in diverse ways and at different paces.

2.2.2 An overview of curriculum adaptation

The end of apartheid heralded the transformation of the provision of services on an equitable basis for citizens of all races. The inception of democracy demanded the end of a segregated schooling system and introduction compulsory education for all. The introduction of educational equality called for the recognition of the values represented by different racial groups and learners' diverse abilities. Teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties has always been a significant requirement within the educational domain, which is evident in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution entrenches, among others, the following basic human right: "All citizens have a right to basic education".

In its endeavour to redress imbalances, the DoE implemented the policy document Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) which aims at building an inclusive education system to address all learners' needs. This policy mandates a comprehensive shift that will help all learners to attain the maximum benefit from their education. The focus lies on providing the necessary accommodation and recognition of learners who require support (Naidu, 2016). White Paper 6 is the foundation of the National Strategy on the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) of learners that was introduced in 2008 and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) of 2011. The SIAS strategy offers "early identification and support, [and] the determination of the nature and the level of support required by learners (Dalton, McKenzie, & Kahonde, 2012, p. 2). The CAPS document was developed as a practical guide to support teachers in meeting the needs of the big diversity of learners in their classrooms. CAPS thus need to be implemented in all classrooms to address the many challenges created by the previous system.

Curriculum adaptation is a strategy that reaffirms inclusive education as a policy that was outlined at the Salamanca Conference in Spain in 1994 (Mergler, Carrington, Kimber, & Bland, 2016). This policy statement provides illumination of special needs and the requirement to offer support to learners with diverse learning difficulties. Schools across the world have adopted inclusive education that centres on a curriculum that is adapted to support the needs of learners with learning difficulties. The main focus of the policy is to allow all learners, irrespective of their weaknesses and strengths, to be educated in a single educational setting, thereby allowing more interaction and improved attitudes and a holistic contribution to a peaceful, interactive

society (Dalton, Mckenzie, & Kabonde, 2012). The policy is against the isolation of one child from others; therefore it requires that all learners be treated as equals but in recognition of their diverse learning needs. UNESCO (1994b, p. vii) states that every learner has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Therefore, the system of education should be designed and programmes should be implemented to take into account the wide diversity of learners' characteristic and needs. The Salamanca Statement was influential in motivating the South African government to adopt inclusive policies and to reform the education system to accommodate a much greater range of learner diversity.

2.3 Inclusivity in the South African education system

In the past two decades, the implementation of inclusive education – or the absence of it – has become a matter of concern. A number of research studies that were conducted on this topic in South Africa propose that the education system needs to transform and be inclusive rather than exclusive. Muringi (2015) affirms that the Constitution grants everyone the right to basic education and that the Bill of Rights enshrines the rights of all South Africans' human dignity, equality and freedom. Learners with diverse learning difficulties need to receive education in the same context as those who seem to have no special needs or who do not experience difficulties in their learning. The Department of Education (1997b, p. 55) believes that the separate systems of education as they existed before (special and ordinary) had to be integrated to provide one system which will be able to recognise and respond to the diverse learning needs of the learner population. The belief is that learners' human right to quality education should not be based on whether they are experiencing difficulties or not, but should be acknowledged in a manner that does not discriminate and is inclusive in all aspects. As a result, the Department of Basic Education (2011c, p. 5) states that including learners experiencing difficulties to learning and development should be of special interest to the people working together in planning and teaching at each institution. Teachers should implement teaching strategies that enhance the accommodation of all learners in the classroom.

Including learners with diverse learning difficulties requires teachers to adapt the curriculum to cater for the diverse needs of their learners. Marishane and Marishane (2015) maintain the belief that one important way of guaranteeing children's right to education is for teachers as duty bearers to ensure that the curriculum is not only accessible, but also inclusive of all learners. The basic vision of the DBE is that all learners should be able to learn in an inclusive context

to close the divide between learners who have diverse learning difficulties and those who have minimal or no evident difficulties in their learning.

The DBE also maintains the view that all learners are able to learn and inclusivity therefore becomes a central part of organisation, planning and teaching at all schools in the country (DBE, 2010b; DoE, 2001b). South Africa currently faces many challenges, one of which is appreciating the right to basic education for all learners experiencing diverse learning difficulties, particularly in rural mainstream schools. To redress the past segregated system of education and in catering for the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties, the South African education system has developed and put in place policies that promote inclusion. The education system needs to prioritise the concept of inclusion, thereby catering for the needs of all learners irrespective of their colour, race or creed. Learners who encounter learning difficulties should feel included in the learning process. The objective of inclusion is to involve learners who were previously not able to attend rural mainstream schools due to impoverished households. Swart (2004, in Apollinaire, 2007, p. 149) describes inclusive education as “a practice of promoting the participation and competence of every learner regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language and class, disability and HIV status”. Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) proposes six broad methods of developing an inclusive education system. The suggestion is that schools convert into mainstream schools or full-service schools in order to be accessible to children who are of school going age and currently out of schools. All learners should be able to access education in all schools closer to their households without the fear of marginalisation because of the challenges they experience resulting from diverse learning difficulties.

Transforming the education system has been one of the top priorities of the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Bornman & Donohue (2014) argues that research found that education officials in South Africa were unsure regarding the goals of inclusive education, with some officials reporting that they were unclear about how ordinary and special schools could be transformed into schools more suitable for inclusive education. However, the goal is to challenge the discrimination of learners with diverse learning difficulties, and thus including all learners in a single setting promotes unity amongst them despite their differences (Naidu, 2016).

It is undeniable that an integrated system of education should make provision for a range of support services for all learners to enable them to benefit from the learning experience. The key people expected to make the integrated system of education a reality are the teachers who are the main implementers of the proposed system of education. The belief is that an integrated system of education will be achieved only when one has the ability to identify and provide support to all learners experiencing difficulties to learning; this requires that teachers have adequate to extensive knowledge of how to plan to address their learners' diverse learning needs. The most important challenge is to identify the barriers that learners experience and then to devise intervention strategies. All relevant structures at school as well as outside the school should assist in engaging with these strategies (Mzizi, 2014). In addition, methods to deal with learning difficulties need to be implemented in classroom teaching and curriculum adaptation can be one tool to accomplish this.

Acknowledging inclusion means that all learners, including those encountering learning difficulties, have a basic right to education and must therefore have the opportunity to maintain and achieve acceptable levels of learning. Inclusion is the effort to educate learners who were previously educated in special schools in regular schools that should provide the necessary support and ensure access to quality education (Adewumi, Rembe, Shumba, & Akinyemi, 2017). The South African education system has attempted to redress some educational inequalities and now includes learners with diverse learning difficulties as the cornerstone of an integrated and caring society. The key premise is that schools are about providing quality education for all children and the youth regardless of differences in respect of race, class, culture, language, gender, ethnicity, and ability/disability (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). The classroom should be a democratic and socially inclusive environment that welcomes all learners as important members of the school community. In South Africa, inclusive education requires the creation of a learning environment that accommodates and promotes diversity unconditionally and without discrimination of any kind. The system acknowledges, accepts and respects the idea that all learners can learn and that they are diverse and it therefore strives to maximise learner participation and potential (DoE, 2001). In this context, learners gain freedom to learn best in an environment that encourages them to be themselves and to engage in activities that are learner based.

2.4 Rural mainstream schools

The majority of rural mainstream schools in South Africa lack infrastructure and resources to cater for and support learners who experience learning difficulties. Rural schools cited in the literature (albeit often not by name) have been exposed to gross challenges in the implementation and sustainability of change in South Africa (Msila, 2010). Education in rural mainstream schools should ensure both equal rights and equal opportunities for all learners. As schools in South Africa, and specifically in the rural communities of Mpumalanga, strive to overcome many problems and withstand rural hardship in order to enhance the culture of learning, the issues of management and educational resilience have become increasingly important as challenges facing South Africa (Du Plessis, 2014). The situation in rural mainstream schools still greatly needs governmental intervention to resolve the many problems affecting teaching and learning. I therefore feel that resolving these problems will greatly enhance the teaching and learning process.

According to Wright (2007), rural schools have served a vital role in recreating communities in the highly mobile industrialised societies of South Africa. Schools in rural were adversely affected by many factors negatively influencing the delivery of quality education. Rural schools face severe challenges that are unique to their environment (Du Plessis and Mestry, 2019, p. 1). Poverty is rife in many South African communities and has had serious repercussions for the provision of quality education. The various factors that negatively affect quality education include lack of parental interest in children's education, insufficient funding from the government, lack of resources, multi-grading, etc. The rural mainstream schools also often struggle to provide quality education for the production of good, quality results. Many rural learners of school going age are therefore rapidly dropping out of school because, for one reason, curriculum implementation is not sensitive enough to cater for them and offer support. The belief is that the curriculum should be adapted to the level of learners in a particular class or grade in rural mainstream schools in accordance with their abilities.

Rural mainstream schools should be aligned to the inclusive practices that the DBE has outlined with the aim of catering for the diverse needs of learners. The need for educational growth in rural areas is paramount in this country. Msipha (2013) argues that limited resources and lack of support are additional problems that affect rural mainstream schools. It has been noted that their learning needs are marginalised or misinterpreted. In rural mainstream schools,

the ideology of inclusive education should be the main guiding factor towards proper curriculum implementation, as learners are individuals who have rights and who need to gain the necessary knowledge through a curriculum that is adapted to their learning abilities. Msila (2010) argues that rural mainstream schools have been exposed to gross challenges in times of curricular change, thus the curriculum in these schools needs to be adapted to adjust the way in which content is presented and how learners are required to respond and interact with the presented curriculum.

The need to change education policies to accommodate learners with learning difficulties has been a priority. It is important to thoroughly understand the term ‘learning difficulty’ and not to misdiagnose learners’ abilities in the context of learning. Diverse learning difficulties can easily be regarded as a disability by referring to an impairment that may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental or a mixture of these that may be either be recognised or not (Mzizi, 2014). According to WHO (2018), disability arises from the interaction between an impairment in a person’s body function or structure and the society in which that person lives. In addition, Du Plessis et al. (2014, in Mzizi, 2014) agree that learners with diverse learning difficulties are those that experience challenges with aspects of literacy, language, numeracy or a combination of these. Disability substantially affects a person’s activities and may be present from birth or start at some point a person’s lifetime. Disability is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions (World Health Organization, 2012). Learners experiencing learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools have the same health needs and educational needs as those who seem to be non-disabled or who encounter no learning difficulties. It is argued that rural mainstream schools should strive to provide quality education for all learners regardless of their disability status. Every learner has the right to quality education which is a basic human right.

The deprived nature of many rural mainstream schools can be transformed if they devise strategies to adapt the curriculum and ensure that knowledge and skills are accessible to all learners. In most cases, learners with learning difficulties are unable to meet the academic expectations of the rural school environment and they struggle to cope with their mainstream peers. Wentzel & Brophy (2014) argues that learners with learning difficulties perform poorly due to a lack of literacy and numeracy skills as well as socio-economic barriers. These learners

battle to achieve the expected outcomes and fail to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to qualify for promotion.

Rural schools have had many challenges to face since their transformation into full service or mainstream schools. For instance, they have been expected to admit all learners regardless of their abilities and the nature of their learning difficulties. However, almost two decades after the unveiling of White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), most learners with learning difficulties who attend school are still in separate or 'special' schools for learners with learning difficulties (Donohue & Bornman, 2014), or they do not attend school at all (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). When it comes to the issue of learning difficulties, there seems to be no agreement about what should be regarded and not regarded as learning difficulties within the South African context, which has caused many discrepancies.

Rural mainstream schools have been the hardest hit when it comes to challenges facing the education system. The challenges experienced by mainstream rural schools stem from a number of sources that exist within the school division structure, the community, and the school setting itself (Du Plessis, 2014). These schools are in remote areas that are generally characterised by poverty and inadequate services. Rural school parents are mostly poor and disadvantaged, and the areas lack basic infrastructure for sanitation, water, roads and other transport facilities, electricity, and information and communication technology. As a result, the socio-economic realities of rural areas place learners at a disadvantage in rural mainstream schools. Parents are mostly illiterate or have low levels of education which render them unable to interact with or understand what is going on in the educational setting. Many of these problems are linked to socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment and have a direct influence on the quality of education that is available to children. The role the principals should play to mitigate these circumstances is undeniable. However, in consideration of all these challenges, it is no wonder that, after so many years of democracy and educational transformation, rural mainstream schools have demonstrated very little improvement (Msila, 2010).

2.4.1 Curriculum, inclusion and curriculum adaptation

The issue of curriculum delivery cannot be divorced from the issue of inclusion because curriculum is the vehicle that drives inclusion. Implementation of the curriculum should not be a straightforward tool that disregards the diverse nature of learners in a particular classroom.

According to Bird, Alton and Mackinnon (2004, p. 141), curriculum adaptation involves making changes by eliminating or adapting parts of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning environment. This should enable learners to learn from a curriculum designed for their age group in an inclusive educational setting. Teachers need to possess the required knowledge that will enable them to properly use all the innovative strategies of implementing curriculum adaptation to offer support for learners with learning difficulties and it should thus be applied as an effective tool to pay attention to the learning needs of each learner. The aim of adapting the curriculum in a specific classroom setting is to afford each learner the opportunity to learn important knowledge and to acquire skills as effectively and efficiently as possible. In brief, efforts to modify the way in which subject content is presented and in which the learner engages with and responds to the curriculum are referred to as curriculum adaptation (Lee et al., 2006).

Teachers' experiences develops their knowledge of curriculum adaptation and is the most imperative part of inclusive education as they have to devise strategies to accommodate the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties and thus directly addresses the principles of diversity and inclusive education. Inclusive education in the South African context requires a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language (Du Plessis, 2013, p. 76).

The classroom should thus be structured in such a way that, irrespective of the learning context, opportunities for facilitating the integration and inclusion of all learners in all aspects of the curriculum are provided (Mzizi, 2014). Therefore, because teachers are responsible for ensuring that the classroom environment is conducive for teaching and learning, it is vital to commit all learners to the learning process and assist them to overcome their learning difficulties.

What prompted the current study was my observation that a large percentage of learners of school going age in rural areas were not at school. I could only surmise that the manner in which the curriculum was delivered to them failed to provide in their needs. This view is corroborated by Donohue and Bornman (2014), who state that up to 70% of South African children of school going age have some disability or another and therefore do not attend school. They also argue that rural mainstream schools have failed in delivering the curriculum to learners with disabilities in a manner that takes cognisance of their needs and supports them (Donohue &

Bornman, 2014). The information presented through curriculum would include all aspects of literacy and numeracy. Scholars have also noted that the knowledge that teachers have is inadequate to meet the special educational needs of learners who experience learning difficulties. One can therefore conclude that, although the South African education system has been transformed to adopt inclusive education in all schools, there is still much lacking in terms curriculum delivery. The curriculum thus remains accommodative to learners with diverse learning difficulties, which is why most of these children are not at school or drop out of school at an early age.

The relation between curriculum, inclusion and curriculum adaptation is like a three-legged pot: the legs support the vessel but are interdependent of each other. However, if one collapses the pot will be imbalanced and unstable; in fact, it will collapse as well. The education provided in rural mainstream schools should be as sturdy as such a pot if it is to achieve the goal of offering support to learners with learning difficulties. This can only happen when the balance between these three concepts and classroom practices is achieved and sustained. Figure 2.2 illustrates this concept:

The vessel:

The melting pot of teaching and learning within the education system ►

The supportive legs:

- Curriculum
- Inclusion
- Curriculum adaptation



Figure 2.2: Illustration of an inclusive education system in balance¹

¹ Source of Image: Hebei Bigking Cookware Co. Ltd., n.d. ¹

2.4.2 The ideology of curriculum adaptation

‘Curriculum adaptation’ is the ideology that is used in most countries, but in South Africa the most commonly used term is ‘curriculum differentiation’. Some people might think the two concepts are synonymous, but there is a difference. *Curriculum adaptation* is the effort to modify the way in which the content is presented or in which the student engages with and responds to the curriculum (Lee et al., 2006). Hence, when the curriculum is properly adapted, learners with diverse learning difficulties will experience minimal learning barriers when accessing learning content and demonstrating what they have learned. Curriculum adaptation is an important ideological tool that enables learners with diverse learning difficulties to obtain access to and progress in the general curriculum. Curriculum adaptation needs to be aimed at the promotion of inclusive education and learner involvement to address the needs of all learners in one classroom, which is *curriculum differentiation*.

According to Apollinaire (2007, p. 148), inclusive education means education that is nondiscriminatory on the grounds of disability, culture, gender, or any other aspect that impacts learning. It is necessary to understand that learners have the common goal of acquiring knowledge and skills for future career endeavours. Thus, irrespective of the learning context, opportunities for the integration and inclusion of all learners in all aspects of the curriculum should be created (Mzizi, 2014). It has often been stated that many learners with learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools find it difficult to learn. The Department of Basic Education (2011c, p. 5) states that including learners who experience difficulties or barriers to learning and development should be of special interest to the people who work together to plan and teach at each institution. The early detection of learners who experience learning difficulties may of course enhance the promotion of inclusive education to ensure that they are valued and that their individual needs are met.

It is imperative to understand that South Africa is part of the wider global community; therefore, whatever happens in South African schools has been influenced by the international community. Mzizi (2014) maintains that schools do not function in isolation but are influenced by economic, political and social development. The majority of countries in Europe as well as in the Americas and the East have begun special education initiatives to support learners with diverse learning difficulties through the concept of curriculum differentiation. Most teachers tend to be familiar with the concept of curriculum differentiation as a tool to accommodate

learners' various cognitive levels. In Germany, students from the age of 10 are selected into different school types or streams according to ability and career perspective (Terwel, 2005). However, this method used in Germany tends to support the exclusion of learners with diverse learning difficulties rather than being in support of inclusion. Countries like France, Norway and Sweden still have an ongoing debate about the common curriculum and individual differences, while streaming and ability grouping are common practices (Miedl & Miedl, 2011). In the United States, the idea of comprehensive education as an ideology is a widely accepted practice of curriculum differentiation and is present at all levels notwithstanding the overwhelming research message that tracks the effects of learning outcomes (Terwel, 2005). The ideology of curriculum adaptation for learners with diverse learning difficulties has also been adopted and implemented in countries like Botswana, Nigeria, and Lesotho and in some American states (Miedl & Miedl, 2011, p 10).

The Nigerian belief is that education should be a programme that is intended, planned and established as modified programmes that will fulfill the diverse needs of learners. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2015) states that education is the social instrument through which the culture of a people is perpetuated, implemented and refined. It further suggests that to fulfill this vital purpose it must cater for a variety of learners who are experiencing learning difficulties and those who do not. However, in Nigeria the implementation of transformation in the education system has not been successful for learners with diverse learning difficulties. In addition, the government has not been committed to or serious enough to monitor the implementation of this system. Oboegbulem and Eskay (2013) state that the administration of education is central to the realisation of educational goals and must provide for all and work towards the improvement of less privileged learners who experience learning difficulties. These learners should feel capacitated through accessing education, especially in rural mainstream schools. Nigeria implemented a National Policy of Education in 2004 to provide for a special education programme that was designed for children and adults who experience difficulty in learning. The programme includes learners who experience learning difficulties due to inadequacy in literacy and numeracy or blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, poor eyesight, social maladjustment, circumstances of birth inheritance, and mental and physical disability.

In essence, the belief exists both internationally and nationally that learners with diverse disabilities require an educational environment that is designed to specifically cater for their learning needs.

2.4.3 Curriculum differentiation and curriculum adaptation for the support of learners with diverse learning difficulties

Education has been listed as one of the main priorities in South Africa as this is a tool for transferring knowledge, skills, as well as customs and values from one generation to the other. The South African Constitution regards education as a vital instrument for the promotion of economic and social well-being. The Constitution (South Africa, 1996) states: “Every child has a right to basic education”. This implies that learners should be exposed to one curriculum for all, but with effective differentiation and support to make certain that all learners obtain meaningful learning that will lead them to a specific qualification and make them self-sufficient citizens of the country. All schools without exception are mandated to admit learners, even those who have a below average Intelligence Quotient (IQ) as part of mainstreaming that is now a policy (Du Preez & Summonds, 2014). CAPS applies to *all* learners in the vast majority of South African schools. One of the general aims of CAPS (2010a) is inclusivity, which necessitates differentiation in the curriculum (Wium & Louw, 2015). Currently, learners with diverse learning difficulties are admitted to mainstream or full-service schools in order to be in line with the DBE’s proposal of inclusion.

Differentiation is described as “a practice that is fundamentally more inclusive of much more human diversity as content [and] processes, and products are changed to meet individual needs” (Ferguson, 2008). Learners come to class with different kinds of readiness, interests and learning profiles and, to maximise their learning, teachers need to modify the curriculum, their teaching methods, teaching and learning resources, activities and assessment to be individually relevant (Tomlinson, Brighton, & Hertzberg et al., 2013). However, there are challenges associated with differentiation as it requires focus on designed instructions and assessment strategies according to individual differences. This focus may lead to fragmentation and works against the establishment of a collective identity of learners (Thompson, 1990). Of course, Thompson’s reference to a “collective identity” for learners needs to be seen in context, as learners are all unique and possess individual characteristics, needs and potential.

Many of the principles and guidelines of the Salamanca Statement that are incorporated into South African Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) stress the importance of experiencing academic success by learners. Differentiated learning enables learners to demonstrate what they can do rather than what they cannot do. “Learners who experience success are more likely to be motivated to learn as it is discouraging and frustrating when the pace of work is too fast, or the work is too difficult” (Walton, 2010, p. 32). As a result, the work presented to learners with diverse learning difficulties needs to be balanced to address learners’ diverse cognitive levels in one class.

Curriculum adaptation to accommodate learners with diverse learning difficulties is imperative in order to make sure that those learners are catered for. The purpose of teaching and learning is to provide a platform for all learners to acquire knowledge successfully despite their abilities. Curriculum adaptation and differentiation should thus embrace human diversity. Curriculum differentiation is important to acknowledge diversity in every classroom and teachers should be sensitive to individual learners’ needs by accommodating these needs. Differentiation enables learners to access the curriculum and is important to achieve the goal of inclusive education. Inclusion is described as a complex and multifaceted construct that is characterised by various emphases and different contexts. “However, many would agree that inclusive education implies that all learners are taught together in the general or mainstream classroom and that they should not be separated or excluded based on the need for additional support or enrichment” (Walton, 2012). If learners are made to engage in interesting and relevant activities, there will be no time to be disruptive, whereas if learners become bored and complete the activities quicker than their less able peers, then they will engage in disruptive behaviour. “Learning activities should be relevant to the life world of learners, be meaningful and at the appropriate level to prevent learners from displaying unacceptable classroom behaviours” (Prinsloo, 2005, p. 447). When the teacher develops teaching and learning methods for learners with diverse learning difficulties, the aim should be to teach at the level of all the learners in a mainstream classroom. Thus, teachers first need to establish what learners’ learning styles are in order to ensure that their teaching caters for the needs of each learner.

2.4.4 Curriculum adaptation for the inclusion of learners with diverse learning difficulties

Inclusion is an important concept in curriculum implementation and cannot be entirely separated from it. Curriculum adaptation should at all times be designed in such a way that it

recognises the range of diversity that exists in a particular classroom. Many studies on teaching learners with learning difficulties have been conducted to determine the importance of inclusion as it was a concept that was emphasised when the system of education was transformed (Motitwe & Mokhele, 2013; Ntombela, 2011; Swanson, 2013; Terwel, 2005). Inclusion is viewed as a process of educating learners who would otherwise be disadvantaged if they were taught in special schools away from their peers. Inclusive education pilot projects were undertaken by both national and provincial education departments and various school-based initiatives have since then engaged with inclusive education policy implementation (Muthukrishna & Ngcobo, 2011). The aim of inclusive education is to produce learners who, despite their diverse learning difficulties and contextual factors, are able to function well in a society where diversity is the norm.

The issue of inclusion is therefore regarded as an aspect of change that is much needed in the educational system because learners should not be discriminated against because education is a basic right of every child. The notion of inclusive education is viewed more comprehensively as a system of reform whose agenda is the delivery of quality education for all children (Engelbrecht, 2006; Miles & Singal, 2010). All schools should embrace their duty of providing quality education to all learners by using appropriate curriculum adaptation measures to help learners' access knowledge in a way that caters for their needs. The key premise is that schools are about providing quality education for all children and the youth regardless of differences in respect of race, class, culture, language, gender, ethnicity, and ability/disability (Muthukrishna & Ngcobo, 2011).

In South Africa, the concept of inclusive education is framed within the human rights discourse, as stated in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). Even though a conscious decision was taken to open the doors to admit children to the school of their choice, it has become evident that children with diverse learning difficulties are still faced with enormous challenges that cause them to exit the schooling system prior to completion. Curriculum adaptation as a key concept of inclusion has thus not been implemented in a way that is sensitive to the needs of learners with learning difficulties and, evidently, there is no indication of adapting or differentiating the curriculum in many schools, particularly rural mainstream schools (Mzizi, 2014). It has been argued that the well-designed process of curriculum reform with impressive goals has not been successful because too much attention has been focused on the desired educational change while the manner of curriculum implementation has been neglected (Bantwini, 2009, p. 169).

This suggests that the implementation of curriculum adaptation by knowledgeable teachers will enhance inclusion and ensure that teachers teach according to their learners' capabilities.

Inclusion aims to instill a positive attitude in all learners in a diverse classroom and allow them to succeed at their own pace. It acknowledges that each child is unique and has his or her own strengths and weaknesses. Inclusion should thus assist in the facilitation of learners' growth by assisting them to develop their skills and abilities. The best way of reducing barriers emanating from the curriculum is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to address the different learning needs and styles of learners (DoE, 2001).

However, for many teachers the curriculum has become a prescribed set of academic standards and instructional pacing has become a race against the clock to cover the standards, and the sole goal of teaching has been reduced to raising students' scores on a single test (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 7). But the curriculum is in essence the major tool to assist learners with diverse learning difficulties in addressing their learning needs. Adapting the curriculum should be directed towards the extension of curriculum delivery in schools so that it caters for the needs of learners who encounter learning difficulties. Teachers should thus have adequate knowledge and skills to support their learners and help them to succeed in their learning. The issue of curriculum adaptation cannot be divorced from the issue of inclusion. White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001, p. 17) states that inclusion is to be aware of learners' diverse needs and building on what is common amongst them. Learners should thus be afforded the opportunity to learn with their peers so that they empower one another.

2.5 Promoting curriculum adaptation

For an adapted curriculum to be successful, certain aspects need to be enhanced and promoted in a class of learners with diverse disabilities. Adapting the curriculum will allow many learners with learning disabilities to be successful in accessing knowledge, particularly in mainstream rural settings. Curriculum adaptation should thus focus on individual learners' specific needs and be informed by their strengths and weaknesses. It is therefore the duty of educators in rural mainstream schools to consider the following aspects when adapting the curriculum:

2.5.1 Access

A clear understanding of access to curriculum by all learners especially those with learning difficulties forms the crucial part of teachers, learners and administrators when aiming for successful implementation of curriculum in the classroom. Mohanty and Nanda (2017) argued

that in order to achieve success in making learners access curriculum, teachers need a very clear understanding of all education policies and practices that are especially sensitive to the needs of learners with learning difficulties. Accessing the curriculum is part of children's fundamental right to basic education and teachers are duty bound to guarantee this right (Marishane & Mahlo, 2015). Curriculum adaptation does not only deal with content but also has objectives and methods to enhance the holistic development of the individual learner and ensure a holistic structure of the learning programme. UNESCO (2004, p. 14) maintains that curriculum is what is learned, what is taught, how it is delivered (teaching and learning methods), how it is assessed (exams) and the resources used (e.g., the books used) to deliver and support teaching and learning. The basic belief is that learners with learning difficulties have the right to education and therefore need the opportunity to maintain and attain acceptable levels of learning. The current study maintains that every learner has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, and I thus sought to uncover successful strategies that will facilitate curriculum adaptation and inclusivity to address the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools.

Access to curriculum in education requires that every aspect of schooling, from policy to pedagogical elements, to leadership, to ethos and culture change to educate learners especially with learning difficulties within a common framework (Mosia and Phasha, 2017, p. 23). An access to curriculum by learners should be viewed as an effort to bridge the gap between what is known and unknown. Learners come to school with some of knowledge that they possess to acquire the unknown information or knowledge. When making learners access curriculum delivered to them, certain aspects of teaching should be considered which include adapting curriculum in a way is supportive to the needs of learners. The success to curriculum accessing could be hindered by many factors like community's attitudes towards disability, lack of adequate involvement of all stakeholders. Praveen and Qounsar (2018, p. 64) alluded to the fact that through curriculum access learners gain access to knowledge, skills and information that would prepare them to contribute to communities and workplaces in the new era. Accessing curriculum would involve a medium of communication that is appropriate and accessible for all learners to facilitate independent interaction with content.

2.5.2 Integration

An integrated system that involves all learners is proposed by White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). This means that there should no longer be ‘special’ and ‘ordinary’ schools but mainstream or full-service schools that accommodate learners of all abilities. The process involves, among others: using a curriculum that is more flexible and suitable for the needs and abilities of all learners. The development of district-based support teams (DBST’s) was to provide a systematic support for any teachers who need it; and strengthening the skills of teachers to cope with more diverse classes (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2010). The district-based support teams should be assisted by the screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) policy framework to assist with managing and supporting the teaching and learning process for learners with learning difficulties. However, various obstacles have hindered the implementation of curriculum adaptation for the benefit of learners with diverse learning difficulties. One of the main obstacles is the negative attitude that teachers have towards these learners. Another obstacle is the limited level of teachers’ knowledge to adapt the curriculum in order to provide support to learners with learning difficulties; hence integration does not occur. The introduction of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy grants a substantial number of school going age learners with learning difficulties (barriers) the right to basic education and access the needed support in their schools (Hess, 2020, p. 33). The main purpose was to provide a framework to help teachers in schools to enhance learners’ participation. The use of SIAS also serves as a standardization procedure to identify assesses and provides programmes for all learners needing additional support for maximum participation and inclusion at school. As a result, SIAS is policy that needed to be well integrated in education so that learners with learning difficulties could be best assisted.

2.6 Strategies of curriculum adaptation for learning in classroom learning

There are a number of strategies teachers can use to cater for the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties. Rural mainstream schools face many challenges such as a lack of resources, overcrowded classes, teachers’ attitudes to learning difficulties, and limited teacher development in terms of the issue of curriculum adaptation to assist learners who experience learning difficulties. The diverse nature of learners in a particular classroom has developed an urgent need to adapt the curriculum. The belief that the same lesson will be delivered in the same way to all learners in a classroom is no longer acceptable because of the diverse needs of learners. The inclusion of students with learning difficulties along with a more rigorous

curriculum has increased the need for teachers to embrace and understand students with learning difficulties (Myers, 2013). The use of an adapted curriculum can be a strategy to address the diverse needs of learners in a classroom while teaching the same content to all of them. Curriculum adaptation is a method of teaching that considers learners' diverse learning difficulties, readiness, background knowledge, language and learning style alternatives when preparing and implementing instructions. According Myers (2013), teachers must have an understanding of their students' strengths, weaknesses, levels of readiness, preferences, interests and learning styles to prepare instructions.

There are vital principles that one should consider and conceptualise prior to the implementation of strategies for curriculum adaptation in a classroom of learners with diverse learning difficulties, especially in rural mainstream schools. The vital principles focus on the school environment, the classroom, teaching strategies, and teaching and learning materials ('the how'). Teachers as the implementers of the curriculum are therefore responsible for planning, developing and reviewing the 'classroom curriculum'. This may require 'thinking outside the box' in daily practice. Teachers should strive to move away from doing things the ordinary way and being routine experts and become adaptive experts (Timperley, 2011). The curriculum planning that teachers should employ needed to be aimed at adapting curriculum in a way that supports the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties. Mohanasundaram (2018) argued that curriculum planning should be flexible to allow for individual differences and adaptation to individual needs and interests as outlined in the following principles.

The most important principles when planning the 'classroom curriculum' are the following:

2.6.1 Focus on the unique strengths of learners

Every child is unique and should be acknowledged as a gift from God. Every child has gifts (abilities) and characteristics that make him or her special and valuable to the world. Learners with diverse learning difficulties need the same treatment as those who are perceived to be learning without the effects of learning difficulties. Opportunities should be equally distributed to all learners and they should be allowed to work with one another regardless of their interests and abilities. The curriculum needs to be adapted so that it has exciting activities that involve all learners and allow them to play important roles based on their interests and knowledge. There should be acknowledgement of various learning styles so that education becomes meaningful and relevant to the learners' way of working and thinking.

2.6.2 Group learners based on their interests or abilities

The major complaint of learners with learning difficulties is that their social as well as educational needs are not addressed at school (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). The focus during learning is widely placed on those learners who are active, mentally gifted and who do not experience many learning difficulties in the learning process. However, each child has gifts, abilities and characteristics that make him or her unique, special and valuable to the world (Cohen, 2011). Providing opportunities for learning and socialising is often the key to accessing and enhancing individual strengths, talents and interests. Teachers should thus adapt the curriculum to nurture the affective, physical and intuitive as well as the cognitive capacities of each learner.

2.6.3 Embrace learner diversity

Teachers should always ensure that they do not ignore learner diversity based on their racial and ethnic differences or learning difficulties, particularly in rural mainstream schools. Learners should be given time to share information about themselves, their backgrounds, culture, strengths and weaknesses. Diversity requires the understanding that each human being is special and that everyone has his or her own individual differences.

2.6.4 Enrich learners' interests

In delivering the curriculum, teachers should diversify and adapt their approach to focus on the long-term interests of learners who experience learning difficulties. When teaching these learners, particularly in rural mainstream schools, learners should be encouraged to be passionately interested and fall in love with the topic of the lesson. Learners with learning difficulties should be trained to become producers of learned information rather consumers; this should be done through the appropriate pursuit of interests and investigations. It is the duty of the teacher to teach learners holistically. This means that the mental, emotional and social well-being of each learner should be a priority. Mamwenda (2004) states that learning involves a change in behaviour to address the way a person thinks (cognitive), acts (psychomotor) or feels (affective). The main idea is that learning is individually based; therefore, different intelligences and learning styles need to be considered in every classroom.

2.7 An overview of the theoretical framework

This study employed the constructivist theory to evaluate teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation in their efforts to support learners who encountered learning difficulties in mainstream schools. Theory is essential to provide guidance to practice especially in the teaching and learning context. However, practice builds on theory, and theory builds on evidence from practice (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2013). A theory is a definition that supports a particular aspect of life from a theoretical perspective. If teachers possess theoretical knowledge, they will be able to apply more varied remedial strategies and develop more diverse learner profiles. Thus frustrations can be overcome and learners can succeed (Gander & Strothman, 2005, p. 45). Teaching through curriculum adaptation should therefore be rooted in a particular theory to assist in properly addressing the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. Nel et al. (2013, p. 10) are of the opinion that learners are not empty vessels and differ in the way they learn, and it is therefore necessary that teachers should understand how learners learn and what factors enhance or impede their learning. They (teachers) should also gain knowledge about flexible curriculum planning.

Against this background, it was decided that the theory that could best be employed to underpin this research would be the constructivist theory, which is based on the belief of Vygotsky, a Russian philosopher, that knowledge and learning are not just passed from one individual (the teacher) to the other (the learner), but that learning is actively and continuously constructed by each individual through experiences and reflections (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010, p. 80). Learning is therefore a collaborative effort of two individuals in the learning environment, namely the teacher and the learner, and the learner and the learner.

The constructivist theory of Vygotsky is closely linked to other constructivists' theories like those of Bruner and Piaget and it is regarded as very important in the field of education (Donald et al., 2010). To understand the constructivist theory as a learning theory is to compare it with other traditional teaching approaches that perceives learners as 'tubular rasa', or empty vessels waiting to be filled with information by the teacher. Learners are individuals that come to school with some form of knowledge acquired through informal learning. The key belief entrenched in constructivism is that teachers should embrace the concept that all the activities planned for teaching should be learner centred and that come to school with some form of knowledge. Thus, in the context of the current study, the constructivist theory urges that learners with learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools should not be viewed as passive agents in the learning

process, but as active participants who are able to construct meaning collaboratively and in their own way. Learners with diverse learning difficulties were the central concern of the study, the choice of constructivism was appropriate because it underscores a learner centred approach and urges that the learner should be actively involved in the learning process. Moreover, the issue of curriculum adaptation in relation to the support of a learner centred approach is essential, especially in rural mainstream schools where these learners' educational needs are continuously neglected.

According to Nel et al. (2012), inclusive education which forms the basis of curriculum adaptation is essentially built on the constructivist theory of learning as well as on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Constructivism is a philosophical viewpoint about the nature of knowledge. It is a learning theory within the psychology framework that explains how people might acquire knowledge and learn, and thus it has direct application to education. According to constructivist theorists, learners construct knowledge from their own experiences. Constructivism describes how learning happens, regardless of whether learners are using their experiences to understand a lesson and the knowledge delivered through the curriculum.

Vygotsky was a Russian philosopher who first proposed the constructivist theory based on his studies of cognitive development. The belief is that constructivism explains learning and thus affects curriculum development and implementation because teachers plan according to a curriculum. It is this plan that will ultimately enhance learners' logical and conceptual growth. Teachers are familiar with Vygotsky's theory in numerous countries. The constructivist theory explains the core function of teachers which is teaching and learning. The theory provides the basic understanding on how learning happens. The teacher then serves as a mediator who enables learners to reach that level. Play is a vital driver of a child's learning development. In this regard, the constructivist theory, which is associated with pedagogic approaches to promote active learning or learning by doing, strongly underscores play as a developmental tool. The belief is thus that the curriculum should be adapted to suit learners' needs and give them freedom to construct their knowledge, often by playing. Learners are viewed as unique individuals with a cultural background, an individual disposition and prior knowledge that all influence their learning. Thus, according to constructivism, the learner as the knower constructs knowledge as an active organism seeking meaning. Learners are thus seen as having the ability to use the information they receive to make meaning, which enhances their learning.

Moreover, constructivist teaching is based on the belief that learners learn best when they gain knowledge through exploration and active learning, and teachers should be the driver of strategies that can be used when the curriculum is adapted to support learners with learning difficulties. When adapting the curriculum, the teacher should consider all the factors at play and assist learners in pursuing new knowledge by associating what they have learnt with the context of their own lives. The teacher should also assume the role of facilitator who assists learners to attain their own understanding of curriculum content. The teacher thus plays an active role in the learning process. Against the constructivist background, adapting the curriculum must be goal driven to address the needs of individual learners. This suggests that various strategies need to be used by knowledgeable teachers to adapt the curriculum and promote inclusivity in the classroom. Constructivism underscores the role of teachers as facilitators who assist learners in their formulation of knowledge, which is a concept that underpinned the aim of the current study. Curriculum adaptation also relates to this theory because it considers what needs to be taught and adapts it to how learners are given access to what they need to learn. The issue of curriculum adaptation is rooted in the constructivist theory because they have the following common tenets:

- Learning is a search for meaning in that it considers issues of learners being actively involved in constructing meaning.
- The understanding of meaning requires that the learner understands the parts of the context that make the whole.
- The purpose of learning is for an individual learner to construct his or her own meaning and not to memorise the right answers but to obtain quality learning.

The constructivist stance holds that learning occurs in three dimensions; i.e., collaborative learning, construction and situated learning (Jonassen & Land, 2002). The constructivist theory as employed in this study was thus complemented by social constructivism as the study explored the nature of social reality and learning from selected individuals' point of view. Social constructivists are of the view that learning and meaning making are social endeavours. Curriculum adaptation thus supports learners who have learning difficulties as they are taught in a way that is meaningful and according to what they are able to comprehend. Constructivism was more concerned with understanding the influence of social environments on the learning

process, leading to his version of the concept labeled “social constructivism”. According to Parker (1998), social constructivists view human experience as culturally and historically mediated through social practices that are constantly changing. The curriculum, particularly the ‘classroom curriculum’, should thus always be adapted in an integrated context where it is relevant to all individual learners by taking cognisance of their diverse abilities.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed existing literature that is relevant to teachers’ knowledge of curriculum adaptation in order to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. I focused on the background and purpose of the study which was to explore the level of teachers’ experiences of curriculum adaption and the knowledge used for integration to provide support for learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The aim of the study was again illuminated by citing various authors whose investigations were in the same field. The literature review was a way of utilising other studies to fill in the gaps between previous studies and the current study. The problem that prompted the study was based on a comment by the Department of Education (2001) that up to 70% of children of school going age with learning difficulties do not attend school in South Africa. The vision of using curriculum adaptation and integration to benefit learners with diverse learning difficulties will only be achieved when efforts are made to equip teachers with knowledge that will assist them in delivering a ‘classroom curriculum’ that is learner centred and accessible for all.

The next chapter will focus on the research methodology that was employed. The discussion will offer a detailed description of the research paradigm and design that provided a concrete framework for the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of literature pertaining to teachers' experiences as related to knowledge of curriculum adaptation and the principle of inclusion. These two principles guide teaching strategies as a means of providing support to learners who have learning difficulties. The inquiry was undertaken with rural mainstream schools in mind. This chapter presents the research design and methodology that were employed in the data generation and analysis processes in order to respond to the research questions. I first discuss the research paradigm that underpinned my study and I then address the research approach that framed it. This is followed by a discussion of the case study methodology that I used. Next, I focus on the data generation tools and I then illuminate the issues of credibility, trustworthiness and ethical issues that were considered when undertaking this study. Finally, I present a summary of the entire chapter.

3.2 Research objectives

The aim of this study was to assess teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The study was guided by the following primary research objectives:

- To explore teachers' strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.
- To examine how teachers implement strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.

3.3 Research paradigm

Taylor and Medina (2013) define a paradigm as a comprehensive belief system, a worldview, or a framework that guides research practice. In addition, Opie (2004, p. 18) postulates that a research paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guides action", and adds that two main paradigms have influenced or guided educational research, namely the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. Selecting a paradigm is an important aspect of a research project because it directs the research by presenting a set of belief systems and operational measures. The system selected and the measures adopted develop a holistic view of knowledge and how

we see ourselves in relation to that knowledge and our understanding of the methods we used to discover that knowledge (Guba, 1994). According to Rossman and Rallis (1998), a paradigm is a shared understanding of reality. The significance of research participants' experiences and their interpretations of their social events were thus explored.

The interpretive paradigm was used in this research, as the researcher sought to explore the experiences of teachers on curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The interpretivist philosophy is grounded in a social constructivist view of the world as proposed by the work of Vygotsky (Woodfolk, 2007). I thus found the interpretive paradigm appropriate to my study because I believed that various realities and truths could be explored through the lens of teachers' interpretations of their knowledge of curriculum adaptation in their efforts to support learners with diverse learning difficulties.

A basic understanding of curriculum adaptation is that learners with diverse learning difficulties need to understand the information that they are given by their teachers and that they have to transform this information into knowledge. To be able to do this, teachers have to adapt the curriculum. In addition, learners who experience learning difficulties require assistance from their teachers who need to implement the curriculum to successfully comprehend the subject content that is delivered to them. When learners understand the subject content, they have successfully acquired knowledge.

For the purpose of this study, the interpretive research paradigm was used to help me make decisions and conduct the research in a trustworthy manner. Guba (1990) states that a paradigm may be characterised through ontology (i.e., what is reality?), epistemology (how you do something) and methodology (how you go about finding out). Ontology in brief is the nature of reality and what there is to know about the world (Creswell, 2018). The research study thus investigated whether teachers possessed the knowledge to adapt the curriculum to help learners with learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools to access knowledge. The relevance of the interpretivist paradigm was that knowledge is believed to be produced through exploring and understanding the social world of the people being studied (Creswell, 2018). As a researcher I thus attempted to construct meaning and interpret data based on the narratives provided by the participants that I had purposively selected. The following section outlines the qualitative research approach and discusses the impact it had on shaping the study.

3.4 The qualitative research approach

I used a qualitative research approach which is concerned with a subjective evaluation of information, yet it has the ability to be influenced by the researcher's own experiences, knowledge, insights and impressions (Msomi, 2019). White (2013) explains that the qualitative research approach is concerned with understanding social phenomena from the perspective of research participants. By using the qualitative research approach, the researcher relies on data that are collected from participants who use narratives to describe their social experiences.

Qualitative research therefore focuses on people's subjective experiences, on how they 'construct' their social world by sharing meanings, and on how these experiences interact with or relate to one another (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Qualitative research techniques may focus on group interviews, questionnaires with open-ended questions, key informant interviews, and/or in-depth one-on-one or focus group interviews.

When selecting a qualitative research approach, I envisaged that it would allow me to study the phenomenon of interest in depth by identifying categories of information as they would emerge from the data that I would collect from my participants. White (2013, p. 6) alludes that qualitative research studies have an established set of procedures and steps that guide the researcher. Such studies can utilise an experimental or correctional design which could be used to reduce error, bias and the effect of extraneous variables. The researcher becomes part of the situation currently under study as well as the phenomenon being studied. However, qualitative research methods have limitations (Victoroff & Hogan, 2006), such as participant bias. This means that some participants may offer information that they believe would please the interviewer rather than reflect their actual experiences. This is because the majority of the data is presented in the form of words rather than as numbers, and the researcher must search for deeper understanding to arrive at the truth (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 23). Data presentation thus occurs mostly in the narrative form because it is the way in which data were collected from participants.

I utilised the qualitative data that I obtained to determine if teachers have the knowledge to adapt curriculum to support their learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The findings provided answers to the research questions and addressed the aim and objectives of the study.

3.5 Research design

The research design allows for vital decisions to be made, such as type of data that needed to be retrieved, the instruments to be used, appropriate selection of participants and the manner of analyzing research findings (Hnock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009). I chose to employ a case study as the research design because it is described by Nieuwenhuis (2016) as obtaining a set of data that is elicited from within a real world context. Yin (2003, p. 25) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined”. I thus employed a case study methodology because it would assist in the generation of new ideas that would seek to provide in depth understanding of the phenomena explored in this study. The use of the case study would further illuminate understanding of the complex issue of curriculum adaptation as it would extend on related experiences and add strength to existing scholarly knowledge of the phenomenon under study by referring to previous research findings. Moreover, by using a case study design I was able to use knowledge and time-honoured research techniques to deeply understand the research topic. In addition, I was able to diversify my perspectives and thereby eliminate the potential for bias.

Punch (2006) defined a research design as the basic plan for a piece of empirical research and it includes five main ideas: strategy, conceptual framework, who or what will be studied and the tools and procedures of data collection and analysis. In addition, Leedy (1999) asserts that research design entails planning, visualizing of data and the employment of this data in the research project.

3.6 Population

Babbie (2011) explains that the population of a study is a group of people from whom a researcher wants to draw certain conclusions about a phenomenon of interest. The population from which the sample was selected may be defined as teachers located in rural mainstream schools that were believed to have an increasing number of learners with diverse learning difficulties in their classrooms. I thus recruited teachers from the senior phase (Grade 7 -9) as this is the last phase of compulsory education in South Africa. The target group from which I drew the sample was thus teachers in the senior phase of rural mainstream schools in the Ugu district in KwaZulu-Natal. I also selected two rural schools where my sample could be located.

3.7 Sampling

According to Maree (2009), sampling refers to the decision the researcher makes about which people, setting, events or behaviours to include in the study. The sampling decision is also influenced by the research questions that the researcher has formulated. The aim of the researcher should be to select a sample that is representative of the population from which the researcher aims to draw conclusions. Durkheim (2014) concurs and further postulates that sampling is the selection of research participants from the entire population. This involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and/or social processes to observe. In addition, De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011, p. 223) describe a sample as “comprising elements or a subset which is selected from the population and used for actual study”.

When selecting the participants to be used in my study, it was important that they possessed the correct characteristics and knowledge needed to elicit in-depth findings. In addition, the targeted participants would be able to freely share their experiences of curriculum adaptation as they were teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) state that members of a sample are chosen with the purpose of representing a phenomenon, group, incident, location or type in relation to a key criterion. Hence the participants had to possess information that had to be relevant to the study and to the research questions that drove the study. The researcher should sample participants with the aim of collecting rich information to address issues embedded in the phenomenon to be studied. Selecting a particular sample should also enable the researcher to enhance the study by allowing for the transferability of the findings. Babbie (2004, p. 116, cited by Mzizi, 2014, p.14) maintains that selecting a sample requires one to be very specific. The researcher should thus consider ethical preconditions such as vulnerability and obtaining the informed consent of all participants. Moreover, involvement in a study should at all times be voluntary and concurring. Niewenhuis (2016, p. 85) states that sampling should be feasible in terms of money and time, and practical issues such as accessibility also have to be considered.

There are two main types of sampling: purposive (or random) sampling and non-probability sampling (Cohen et al., 2011). The probability or random sampling technique draws from the wider population and all the members of this population have an equal chance of appearing in the study. This method of sampling affords the researcher the opportunity to make

generalisations and produce results that are representative of the wider population (Cohen et al., 2011). The non-probability sampling technique is a sampling technique whereby participants or a particular group of participants are chosen by the researcher with full knowledge that they or the group do not/does not represent the entire population. In this instance members of the wider population do not have an equal chance of being selected.

When using purposive sampling as I did, the researcher picks out individuals who he or she thinks possess the characteristics that are required based on personal judgment. Teddie and Yu (2007) argue that purposive sampling in research is used to produce representativeness, to make comparisons, to focus on unique and/or specific cases or issues, and to generate theory through the continuous accumulation of data from different sources. It further provides greater depth to the study than other methods do, because more often than not researchers use the method to access people who have in-depth knowledge about the research issue due to their role, access to a network, and power or experiences. Purposive sampling is a very important aspect of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011). I therefore used purposive sampling as it was an appropriate method for the qualitative approach that I had adopted to execute the research project.

It should always be understood that data cannot be collected from everyone in a sample area or community. Therefore, it was feasible that I should collect data from a sample or a subset of the population. The goal of this study as a qualitative research project was to give detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under study, and I therefore targeted a specific group (teachers), type of individual (teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation), and event/process (the extent to which an adapted curriculum can benefit learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools). I thus used purposeful sampling which is a method of purposefully choosing participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. This type of sampling is relatively subjective and I thus decided on the qualifying criteria each participant should meet. For instance, I selected teachers who had been challenged by learners with diverse learning difficulties as barriers to their learning. I also assumed that the participants would have knowledge regarding the national curriculum as a straightforward tool of knowledge transfer as well as the necessary skills to devise a 'classroom curriculum' that would cater for the needs of all their learners.

In light of the above, sampling for this study conformed to the qualitative research practice of purposive sampling. This means I selected participants based on my goal to collect data that would provide answers to the research questions. The participants had to possess characteristics that would relate to the phenomenon under study, as mentioned by Curtis et al. (2000, cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 85). I thus adhered to sampling requirements as my sample:

- related to the conceptual framework;
- possessed rich data that would address the research questions;
- allowed for the transferability of the findings to provide enhancement of the data collected from the selected sample; and
- complied with credible definitions on participant involvement that are true to real life (Ibid.).

I thus focused on selecting a sample of teachers to check whether teachers do possess some sort of knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in a rural mainstream school. They were selected from the senior phase (Grade 7 and 8), and they were likely to provide relevant information that would assist the researcher in achieving the aims and objectives of the study.

Ethical issues should be considered and adhered to in order to enhance the feasibility of a study. I thus used purposive sampling to select participants from two rural mainstream schools as I wanted to explore their first-hand, authentic knowledge of curriculum adaptation in supporting learners with diverse learning difficulties in such schools.

The following steps were followed to purposively select the sample:

- An application to conduct the research at the identified schools was prepared and submitted to the DBE and the principal of the schools.
- Participants were identified based on my pre-set criteria e.g. age- above 21, not vulnerable, health status, part of the target population and also to select teachers from Grade 7 and Grade 8 with a reasonable number of years in teaching experience.
- I identified teachers of specific subjects, namely Mathematics, Natural Science, Life Orientation and Technology.
- The participants selected sought to demonstrate passion in their teaching profession because teaching was their first career choice and in the teaching of their respective subjects (subjects they specialised with).

- Contact was made with the teachers who were identified to recruit them and obtain their voluntary permission to interview them and to make observations about the physical features of their classrooms.
- The classrooms where teaching and learning was taking place sought to have some teaching and learning resources demonstrated on the walls though the number of learners was still a major challenge.

The sample of teachers was selected from the schools that I had identified as they would fit the study criteria.

3.7.1 Sample

The research participants were conveniently located in the two local schools i.e. primary and secondary school in the rural area of Oshabeni location. They were selected for participants because they were teaching in rural mainstream schools particularly grade 7 and 8 where the majority of learners have learning difficulties. The teachers were more likely to provide relevant information that would assist the researcher in achieving the aims and objectives of the study. The participants had more than five years of teaching experience and one participant in particular was highly experienced, with more than twenty years of teaching experience. All participants have taught the similar number of years in the senior phase, teaching various subjects and they were judged to have experience to enable them to give useful, relevant responses to the interview questions. The participants sought to have been passionate about their teaching career and wished to see learners becoming successful in their schooling. The sample consisted of two females and two males who were professionally qualified.

3.7.2 Profiling of the study setting

3.7.2.1 The learners

The study involved teachers from two grades in two rural mainstream schools. The selected grades were Grade 7 and Grade 8 as these grades are both accommodated in the senior phase but Grade 7 is accommodated in the primary school whereas Grade 8 is accommodated in the high school. In my experience, the accommodation of these two grades in two different school settings makes it difficult for teachers to engage in collaborative planning of the work to be taught. Thus, learners and teachers view these grades as segregated rather than as two consecutive grades in the same phase.

The majority of the learners in the two schools were IsiZulu speaking whereas a few learners spoke IsiXhosa. However, the latter group was the minority but was taught by the same teachers in the same classrooms as their IsiZulu peers. All the subjects were taught in English as the medium of instruction, except the Home Language which was taught in IsiZulu. This means that the IsiXhosa learners were never exposed to their home language in these classrooms, as English was taught as the First Additional Language.

3.7.2.2 The teacher participants

The study explored teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties. I selected four teachers from the two grades in two different schools, namely two Grade 7 teachers from the primary school and two Grade 8 teachers from the high school. The participants that were selected were well experienced teachers who had been teaching for a number of years. All the participants have been teaching for more than four years in rural mainstream schools. The sample of participants consisted of two males and two females who were well qualified teachers and were currently teaching in the senior phase. The researcher had chosen the sample size based on the aims and the nature of my research study. For ethical considerations pseudonyms are used to refer to the teachers. The pseudo-names and surnames have been used for the participants. The following table illustrates the profiles of the research participants.

In the following section I present the profile of the participants involved in this study. Two participants were males and two were females. The intention is to describe their experiences in the teaching profession.

Table 3.1: Profile of the participants

Participant	Name of participant (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Qualification	Experience in Teaching	Grades Taught	Subjects
1.	Mandla	40	Male	Bachelor of Education	9 years	6 & 7	Mathematics; Natural Sciences
2.	Phumzile	49	Female	SPTD & B.Ed. (Hons.)	25 years	8 & 9	Natural Sciences; Life Orientation
3.	Zodwa	34	Female	Diploma in Accounting PGCE	6 years	6 & 7	Mathematics; Economic and Management Sciences
4.	Bongani	39	Male	Bachelor of Ed., ACE in Comp. Integrated Ed.	7 years	8 & 9	Mathematics; Economic and Management Sciences; Technology

Senior phase teacher 1 in the primary school (Mandla)

Mandla has been employed as a teacher in this primary school for three years. He is qualified to teach Mathematics in the intermediate and senior phases. He holds a Bachelor of Education qualification from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He taught Grade 7 learners. There were 50 learners in the two Grade 7 classes that he taught. After his recruitment, we met in his classroom at school during his free period for the interview. This was convenient for him because he did not live close to the school. Mandla said:

The greatest joy of teaching is when you see learners demonstrating an eagerness to learn by continually trying to achieve the best in their schooling and obtaining the best results towards the realisation of a brighter future.

Senior phase teacher 2 in the secondary school (Phumzile)

Phumzile has been teaching in the secondary school for more than twenty years. She is a qualified teacher and taught Life Orientation and Natural Sciences in the intermediate and senior phases. She is currently teaching Grade 8 Life Orientation and Natural Sciences. She taught five sections with a learner enrolment of 55 to 65 in one class.

Her initial qualification is a Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma (SPTD), but she also obtained a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree from UNISA. She has a passion for teaching and enjoys working with learners. The meeting with Phumzile took place at school during her free period. She also agreed to have a meeting with me after school so that we would have time to interact without any disturbance. She is involved with a committee that collaborated with the Department of Education subject advisor to organise learner workshops on the subject and career selection. Phumzile alluded to her passion for teaching Life Orientation and Natural Sciences by saying:

Doing the best to educate a child and providing quality education is a duty of an educator who needs to make sure that all learners succeed in their schooling for the mere benefit of making them self-sufficient individuals who will uplift the standards of their families and the entire community. As a teacher, you get to meet learners of diverse backgrounds and interact with them through learning to change their lives.

Senior phase teacher 3 in the primary school (Zodwa)

Zodwa is in her early thirties. She is a qualified teacher who has been teaching for 6 years and at this school. She holds a diploma in Accounting but decided to do a PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) as a second career of choice. She described teaching as an honourable job, stating that teachers need to conduct themselves in a way that is acceptable to the community and be a good example to the learners.

I believe the success of every school in educating learners lies in the type of teachers that the school has and the motivation that teachers have in ensuring that learners are able

to access the knowledge delivered to them. Teachers need to learn to walk the talk and practise what they preach.

Senior phase teacher 4 in the secondary school (Bongani)

Bongani is a qualified teacher who teaches Grade 8 at the secondary school. Bongani holds a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree from UKZN, Edgewood Campus. Bongani has been teaching for seven years. He applied for a transfer to this school because it was nearer to where he lived. He majored in mathematics, science and technology. He also has an Advanced Certificate Education (ACE) in Computer Integrated Education from UNISA. He stated that teaching learners required passion because if you did your work with love, you tended to enjoy it despite any obstacles. He said:

People must never underestimate the power to make someone's life better. My work is mainly to make impact knowledge to someone's life, young and old.

3.7.2.3 The schools under study

Rural mainstream schools in South Africa have been widely described as settings that are faced with challenges when it comes to fully incorporating learners with diverse learning difficulties and the way that teachers implement the curriculum in their classrooms (Mzizi, 2014).

Both the rural primary and secondary mainstream schools under investigation are situated in the Ugu district and were rated quintile 1 schools at the time of the study because of the low socio-economic dynamics of their surrounding communities. This means that these schools also ranked low in physical infrastructure and resources. Both schools had high enrolment numbers with limited physical facilities which is reflected in the large class sizes of the teachers. The secondary school was the only school that accommodated learners in Grade 8 and Grade 9 in the area. Other schools accommodating these grades were more than 10 kilometres away. Neither of the schools had adequate resources but teachers mostly improvised in an attempt to provide quality teaching and learning.

3.8 Data generation tools

3.8.1 Interviews (One-on-one)

McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 314) describe various data generation tools that may be utilised in qualitative research as the researcher has the liberty of using multiple tools to generate data to facilitate credible study findings. Methods such as face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and observations are universal. An important criterion is to use data generation tools (or a tool) that will elicit data that will address the research questions. For this reason, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants.

The data were generated over two months (July to August 2019). Before the commencement of the study, ethical clearance was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix B), and the DBE granted permission to conduct the study as the main gatekeeper (Appendix C). The principals of the two schools also agreed that I could access their schools and interview their teachers.

I conducted one-on-one interviews using an interview schedule (Appendix F). I recorded the responses with the permission of the participants during the interviews. Cohen et al. (2011) describe a one-on-one interview as a situation where an individual asks questions that another individual (which was a teacher in this case) responds to. The individual posing the questions is usually the researcher who assumes the role of the interviewer, while the person answering the questions is the interviewee. Interviews are mainly used when the researcher wants to fully understand someone's impressions or experiences. Probing questions may also be asked if the interviewer requires a more in-depth response (Cohen et al., 2011). Interviews thus result in the generation of data from direct verbal interaction between the researcher and a participant. According to Khanare (2012), a well-designed and appropriately conducted interview produces in-depth data or information about the phenomenon being investigated. The use of an interview allows the participant to provide narrated data that illuminate an individual's understanding and beliefs about the concept under investigation.

The interview schedule was divided into two sections; the first section was used to obtain biographic and demographic data and the second section was aimed at gathering information about the teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation for the support of learners with diverse learning difficulties in the rural mainstream schools under study.

Interviews are described as a data collection technique that involves oral questioning of participants (Chaleuvong, 2009, p. 7). The researcher who uses the qualitative research method will employ this technique to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, experiences and behaviours of participants. I thus used this method to elicit information and understand the world through the eyes of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and the responses were recorded for later transcriptions. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016, p. 93), one on one semi-structured interviews define the line of enquiry, and I thus remained within the guidelines of the interview schedule with the freedom to probe for deeper insights when necessary. Questions to seek clarification were only asked based on the nature of the information the participant provided. The interview schedule was planned and prepared in advance to obtain data that would respond to the research questions and that directly related to the aim and research objectives.

The questions that I posed were intended to illuminate the experiences and opinions of the participants in a narrative way and pertained to the issue under study. The questions probed information regarding the participants' experiences, behaviours, feelings and knowledge of curriculum adaptation for learners with learning difficulties (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The questions were open-ended and allowed the participants to give a descriptive account of their experiences of adapted curriculum implementation and working with learners who had diverse learning difficulties in the rural mainstream schools where they taught. In addition, they were required to reflect on their knowledge of curriculum adaptation and comment on whether they felt that it would assist learners with learning difficulties. The order in which the questions were posed did not deviate but followed the same sequence for each participant. The questions started with general personal questions and shifted to more specific questions about the phenomenon being studied. According to Cohen et al. (2011), the researcher directs the conversation and asks questions that lead towards the information he or she is seeking from the participants.

The interviews were the most essential data collection tool because they sought to unravel the ideas, beliefs, thoughts and experiences of the teachers about teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties in their schools. I also noted non-verbal clues such as facial expressions to ascertain if the participants believed what they were saying or were uncomfortable with the line of questioning.

The interviews were mainly conducted at school but at different times that had been agreed upon by the participants. One interview was conducted outside working hours as requested. The interviews were mostly conducted in English with the alternative use of IsiZulu in order to provide a thorough explanation of an answer. These parts were translated in the transcriptions into English. I allowed verification of the transcribed information by referring the transcript back to the relevant participant.

The interviews focused on the following:

- Biographic and demographic information of the participants;
- Information regarding the curriculum;
- Information regarding teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation;
- Experiences of teachers when teaching learners with learning difficulties;
- Techniques used to adapt the curriculum; and
- Challenges experienced efforts to adapt the curriculum.

The participants were also given an opportunity to raise other matters related to the topic under study should they so desire.

3.8.2 Observations

Observation is a method of placing yourself in a particular location of the study and observing matters in a systematic way without interfering with the participants or asking them any questions. Smith & Onwuegbuzie (2018) stated that observation refers to the researcher's act of going to the site of the study and observing the actual activities that are taking place. The researcher then makes notes of these observations. This method of data collection allows the researcher to collect first-hand information and to report what he or she observed while they were occurring. Creswell (2018) indicates that observations provide trustworthy data because the researcher reports or writes about something he or she is seeing. I used this method of data collection in a structured manner because I would visit the classrooms knowing exactly what I aimed to observe. In particular, I wanted to observe if the teachers demonstrated knowledge of implementing an adapted curriculum. Furthermore, I would observe whether the teachers acknowledged the diverse nature of the learners in their classrooms and whether they adapted the curriculum to address the learning needs of all the learners who had apparent learning difficulties without neglecting their more able counterparts.

I used this method of data collection to obtain information to enrich my study and studying the participants' way of implementing curriculum in a diverse classroom where some learners were experiencing learning difficulties during the learning process. The observation I employed in this study was to generate answers to the research which was to determine the intervention strategies that teachers could use teaching learners with learning difficulties. When I used this method, I sat in the classroom and observed first-hand on what transpires a huge amount data was obtained and positively contributed to the study. The observation method made to be observant in listening, viewing and recorded in the observation schedule. The two of the four participants who were interviewed had their lessons observed. I did observation in the most natural way possible and avoided any form of interference to the learners or the teaching and the learning process. I observed using my observation schedule the approaches that the participants used in implementing curriculum and whether it does provide support to learners with learning difficulties. I noted my observation on the observation schedule that I had designed (appendix F). The researcher observed different settings i.e. physical as well as the interaction of the teacher with the learners during the lesson.

3.8.3 Document analysis

I also perused relevant written documents that provided insight into the phenomenon being investigated. I perused these documents with the permission of the Principal and the teachers. The documents were learners' personal profiles, policies on curriculum, annual teaching plans, lesson plans, the assessment programme, subject policies, and learner performance reports. The documents were used with the necessary caution as they contained useful information in certain aspects but some also contained personal and sensitive information about the participants and the learners. Documents can greatly assist in providing circumstantial data that can provide a lot of information about the research topic as they reflect the personal experiences and behaviours of participants. Cohen et al. (2011) argues that documents must be studied in their context in order to understand their meaning at the time. The document analysis enabled me as the researcher to obtain data pertaining to policies on curriculum implementation, activities in the ATP, informal/ formal activities and learners' marks. The documents provided data as evidence of whether learners having learning difficulties were able to access curriculum delivered to them by teachers lack knowledge of adapting curriculum. The documents further provided information in terms of what the teachers' experiences were and the strategies they used when presenting curriculum to learners having learning difficulties. The latter information

would be relieved in the form of teachers' comments and in tracking their curriculum coverage. The perusal of documents was imperative to triangulate the data collected from various sources, thereby producing useful and trustworthy findings that will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of study.

3.9 Data analysis

Data analysis is “a systematic process of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanations about the single phenomenon of interest” (Holiday, 2012). Data analysis in qualitative research focuses on how participants “make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon” (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2008). The data from this qualitative study was produced from three data collection tools i.e. interviews, observation and document analysis was transcribed and recorded. For the purpose of verification, transcripts were given to participants (teachers) to read and confirm that the information was true. I utilised thematic analysis to analyse the data that I had collected. According to Aronson (1995), thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of lived behaviour.

The documents mentioned above were also perused to gain a deeper understanding of the policy framework that impacts curriculum delivery and adaptation. The primary data that I had collected were also analysed in depth using qualitative data analysis techniques. Nieuwenhuis (2010) holds the view that qualitative data assist in establishing how participants make meaning of specific knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon under study.

The data were analysed inductively to evaluate the participants' level of knowledge about curriculum adaptation and how this practice enhanced their teaching and learning in the rural mainstream schools under study. I thus established themes and developed patterns to confront the research questions. This assisted me in the interpretation and description of the collected data as I was able to develop patterns and commonalities and determine differences and similarities (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). I analysed the data based on what I had seen, heard and read and presented my findings narratively under the emerging themes. Engaging in this process

enhanced my understanding and interpretation of the data as guided by the research questions. This process was followed in six steps as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Step 1: Becoming familiar with the data

In the process of data collection, I familiarised myself with the data that I had collected by means of interviews, observation notes and documents by listening to the transcripts and reading the notes repeatedly. The researcher would synthesize and make meaning from all the data collected. I thus engaged with data on the audio recordings and ensured that all the information was meticulously transcribed and properly translated into English. I then reviewed the notes to check for similarities. Braun and Clarke (2006) allude that the researcher begins by identifying possible recurring concepts that could be used to create thematic codes. This is when data collection starts to become interpretive in nature rather than being a simple recording of responses (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). I then deeply engaged with the data and continued to familiarise myself with the content. It is imperative for the researcher to engage deeply with the data although this process may be time consuming (Bird, 2005). The latter process is done to improve the quality of the transcribed data and to ensure that the data have not been tempered with.

Step 2: Generate initial codes

In this step the researcher is required to identify relevant elements in the data to code them in relation to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.18) explain the term coding as follows:

“[It is] an imperative process of assigning meaning to raw data with the aim of classifying, identifying or organizing data into meaningful groups and as the building blocks of analysis.

Some codes are described using the participants’ own language while others are described using the researchers’ conceptual framework. The researcher carefully identifies elements within the collected data that resonate with the research questions, to appropriately code them.”

Step 3: Searching for themes

In this step I examined the codes emerging from the data in order to identify potential themes. The examination of the connection between the themes and codes was utilised to begin the thematic map. I then organised the codes into meaningful themes for the purpose of analysis.

Step 4: Review potential themes

The viability of each coded theme had to be reviewed and assessed. I thus evaluated potential themes against the data set to check whether they fitted with the overall narrative of the data and whether they addressed the research questions. I then refined the themes and split them into multiple themes combined into a single theme or, in some instances; I entirely rejected a theme as it did not address the questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coherence was checked against the overall data set and refined in terms of the following guidelines:

- Nature of the theme;
- Quality of the theme;
- Boundaries of the theme;
- Diversity and wide ranging scope of the theme.

Step 5: Defining themes

I proceeded by defining the core themes and sub-themes to assess whether there were sufficient data in each theme and to ascertain whether the themes addressed different aspects of the topic. I ensured that the themes and sub-themes I had identified related to one another and clearly connected to the research questions in a logical and meaningful way.

Step 6: Writing up/producing the report

In the final step, I devised analytical narratives by using the themes and verbatim data extracts. When the themes and sub-themes had been carefully established, I conducted a thorough analysis and recorded the findings in writing. I endeavoured to present the themes in a coherent manner and to connect the data logically and meaningfully, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). I was cognisant of the fact that I had to present the data in words, phrases, themes and patterns that would enhance understanding and interpretation.

3.10 Achieving credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research

Achieving trustworthiness in a qualitative research project is imperative as it measures the extent to which the data and data analysis process could be rated as believable and valid. In this process the researcher should employ particular methods to ensure that trustworthiness is established. It is important to note that qualitative research rely on thick descriptions that provide detail and depth. In support of this statement, Thomas (2011) states that it is also important that the researcher does not generalize. Gay et al. (2009, p. 113) mention that

trustworthiness of the data may be achieved by using multiple data sources to answer each of the research questions. I thus used multiple tools of data collection to collect both primary and secondary data and thus to ensure the trustworthiness of my study. Moreover, to ensure that the primary data had been recorded and transcribed correctly, the transcriptions were checked by the participants to ensure that what was recorded was what they had said. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe taking of scripts to participants as “member checks”. When conducting the interviews with the participants I used digital recordings in each session and the participant was well aware of the fact that the interview was recorded. This enhanced the credibility of the data as I ensured that I had accurately captured the interviews and had not missed out any important information. The issues of trustworthiness require the researcher to convince the reader of the research study that they can rely on the data collected.

3.11 Ethical considerations

It is the duty of every researcher to understand and adhere to ethical requirements and legal responsibilities when conducting a research project, particularly in education research that involves human beings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Ethics are principles that guide the researcher in conducting a study and which should never be taken for granted. When adhering to the principles of ethics, the quality of the study is improved and its trustworthiness is enhanced (Cohen, 2011).

Ethical approval to conduct the study was granted by the research office of KwaZulu-Natal University (Appendix G). All the participants voluntarily entered the study by signing a letter of consent. Prior to the written approval, the nature and purpose of the study were thoroughly explained to each participant and its envisaged contribution to scholarly discourse was clearly outlined (Appendix C). Every precaution was taken to hide the identity of the participants and the names of the schools and I made sure that none would be harmed or victimised due to their involvement in the study. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, personal information and identities are obscured and pseudonyms are used when their narratives are presented.

3.12 Challenges and the limitations of the study

It is the duty of the researcher to be aware that every research study is bound to encounter limitations and certain challenges. For instance, it was a challenge initially to find participants as most teachers whom I had approached tended to decline being interviewed and observed. As

a researcher I had to assure them that their participation would be a valuable contribution to the study and that the research would not focus on individuals but on the topic being studied. I also made them aware that the data contributed by them will assist in answering the research questions and be a positive contribution to the existing body of knowledge. In terms of collecting data through observations, my presence in the classroom seemed to be a threat at first but I made sure that I visited their classrooms more than once so that the participants would feel at ease with my presence. Therefore, although I was an ‘intruder’ (Creswell, 2018) in their classrooms, I was allowed to observe their practice and even perused some private information that individuals normally might not like to be seen by a stranger. In addition, I assured the classes that my presence would be non-threatening and explained the purpose for my study.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter established the foundation of my study because it provided a thorough description of the research design and the methodology that I employed. The selection of a qualitative approach embedded the study in a naturalistic setting where interaction occurred that allowed me to observe and explore how the participants behaved in their classroom settings. The selected research method also allowed me to collect data that assisted me in engaging in an indepth exploration of the experiences and views of teachers who taught learners with learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. I could thus determine first-hand how they used an adapted curriculum to provide support to their learners’ diverse learning needs. I chose to use a qualitative research approach because I was able to obtain in-depth and detailed information. I was also able to provide relevant profiles of each participant. The data collection methods and techniques will inform the presentation and analysis of the data and the research findings, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided information regarding the research design and methodology that guided this study which aimed to explore teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The data were generated by means of semi-structured interviews using pre-devised questions as well as classroom observations and document analysis. The data are presented and analysed in this chapter using thematic analysis and the findings are interpreted using the constructivist theory. Nieuwenhuis (2016) states that the goal of analysing data is to summarise what the researcher saw or heard in common words, phrases, themes or patterns that will aid understanding and the interpretation of the data. Four main themes emerged from the data. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), such themes should be brought into context with existing theory to reveal corroboration with existing knowledge or to demonstrate how the findings brought new understanding to the existing body of knowledge.

4.2 Data analysis

Thomas (2003) argues that data analysis is determined by the research questions, the research objectives (deductive) and various readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive reasoning). Data analysis may employ a combination of a range of approaches, processes and procedures that assist the researcher in offering explanations, understanding and interpretations with reference to the collected qualitative data (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Inductive data analysis is regarded as a useful approach to analysing qualitative data. However, the deductive data analysis approach is the one that is mostly used by qualitative researchers. There were several ways of analysing all the collected data for this study which explored teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties. Coding of the data was done to assist me in thematic data analysis. By using the inductive approach, I initially started by looking for topics or categories in the data and coding these (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). I then looked at the relationship between categories and for patterns in the data. This process allowed me to comprehend the complicated relations between different aspects of the participants' situations, mental processes, beliefs and actions. The qualitative data analysis process was complex but enjoyable as it elicited meaningful patterns and themes that led to

relevant conclusions (Patton & Cochran, 2002). I followed important guidelines as proposed by (Creswell, 2018) when I engaged with the data analysis process:

1. Recording data: I made use of a digital voice recorder to record the conversations between myself and the participants.
2. Note taking: I made notes during the discussion sessions and recorded what I observed.
3. Transcribing: The recorded interviews were transcribed on paper. Where appropriate, comments in IsiZulu were translated into English.
4. Getting to know the data: I familiarised myself with the data by listening to the recordings and reading and re-reading the transcriptions.
5. Coding of the data: I read carefully through the transcribed data and divided it into meaningful analytical units (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).
6. Thematic data analysis: I identified major themes and sub-themes as they emerged from the data.

Table 4.1: Themes that emerged from the data

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Teachers' experiences and understanding of curriculum adaptation.	<p>A. Teachers as learning specialists in the process of curriculum delivery</p> <p>B. Aspects of teacher training on curriculum adaptation</p> <p>C. Characteristics of an expert teacher in curriculum adaptation</p> <p>D. Knowledge of teaching and learning</p> <p>E. Teachers' understanding of the concept of learning difficulty (LD)</p> <p>F. Language of teaching and learning as a barrier to learning</p>
2. The experiences of teachers with curriculum adaptation	<p>A. Planning lessons for adaptation</p> <p>B. Learners' learning styles</p> <p>C. Assessment</p>
3. Challenges that teachers face	<p>A. Challenges with curriculum adaptation</p> <p>B. Challenges with large classes</p>
4. Provision for continuous teacher development	<p>A. Teachers in search of curriculum adaptation</p> <p>B. Teachers' willingness to learn</p>

4.3 Analysis and Findings

4.3.1 Teachers' experiences and understanding of curriculum adaptation

To address the first research question, I endeavoured to evaluate teachers' experiences and determine whether the teacher participants have knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation. Teachers in rural mainstream schools are confronted with many challenges because of the complexities of their teaching profession. I thus tried to understand whether the teachers were familiar with the concept of curriculum adaptation and how it could enhance their teaching, particularly in terms of their approach to learners with learning difficulties. The constructivist theory proposes that teachers should possess adequate knowledge and skills to make plans regarding the curriculum to enhance their learners' logical and conceptual growth. Teachers should therefore be able to provide different learning opportunities to assist learners to achieve optimal levels of learning. The theory of constructivism suggests that teachers should use their understanding and knowledge of curriculum adaptation to create and manage a supportive environment for all learners to access knowledge.

Two of the participants seemed to have corresponding views when asked about their knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation.

Mr Mandla: *Generally, I think curriculum adaptation has to do with delivering the subject content in a way that is sensitive to the learning problems of different learners. Learners in a particular class are not the same in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.*

Bongani: *Not necessarily, but I think curriculum adaptation has to do with teaching different learners in a way that they can easily understand the content of the subject. One cannot expect to find learners who are the same in a classroom. Learners like any other human beings are unique.*

These responses demonstrated that the participants had a good idea what the concept of curriculum adaptation means. Lee et al. (2006) emphasise that curriculum adaptation refers to efforts to modify the way in which learning content is presented and the way in which learners engage with and respond to the curriculum. The reason why teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation were explored was because of the disturbing fact that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and the necessary expertise to adapt the curriculum to enhance their teaching. The

success of every teacher is measured by the way his or her ability to teach learners produces good results.

Participant 1 thus responded with a thoughtful perception of what he thought curriculum adaptation was and he could verbalise why it was important in the educational context:

Phumzile: *To tell the truth, I am not quite clear about the concept of curriculum adaptation. I have only heard about curriculum differentiation when we attended a workshop on curriculum which meant to present curriculum content according to the cognitive levels of learners in a particular class. Therefore, I think curriculum adaptation is a similar concept to curriculum differentiation but different terminology.*

Zodwa shared the sentiments expressed by participant 1, but added that teachers have not been taught or given knowledge to understand the concept.

Zodwa: *I first heard about the concept when I was reading one of the articles for an assignment, but I truly could not understand what curriculum adaptation means and what its impact is on teaching. I therefore do not have knowledge of the concept but I think it has to with teaching of learners or rather a variation in the implementation of the curriculum.*

Two of the participants seemed to have a general understanding of curriculum adaptation. Mzizi (2014) argues that teachers need to be asked about their exploration of the meaning of curriculum adaptation so that they can be familiarised with the concept as this strategy will help researchers and facilitators to identify what teachers already know. Teachers' knowledge is very important when it comes to teaching learners who have diverse attributes and cognitive levels. This knowledge that teachers need involves cognitive knowledge for the creation of an effective teaching and learning environment. Constructivism is a theory that examines the nature of knowledge and how people might acquire knowledge. Teachers need to be continuously equipped with knowledge to be competent in the dynamic teaching environment. The success of effective teaching and learning is thus determined by learners' ability to access the subject knowledge delivered to them. In addition, learners are able to progress in their learning and can be motivated to learn beyond their difficulties.

The responses above demonstrated that even though the first two participants had an idea of what an adapted curriculum entails, the other two participants seemed to lack adequate knowledge of what an adapted curriculum is. Teachers need to be reflective practitioners who are flexible, responsive and aware of learners' needs (Mzizi, 2014). It is important that teachers maintain their status as lifelong learners so that they keep abreast of transitions in the educational sector. Teachers who possess a proper conceptual knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation will be able to implement it in a way that benefits their learners in the learning process.

The participants shared the notion that learners in a particular class are diverse in terms of their capabilities and cognitive levels. They further seemed to share the view that the diversity in their classes demand that they diversify the way they present subject content. The only way teachers can succeed in dealing with the challenges presented by diverse classes is to have knowledge and understanding of an adapted curriculum. The responses of two of the teachers were in line with Naidu's (2016) argument that teachers will be able to accommodate diversity when they make use of various techniques to ensure that their learners access subject knowledge. Thus, due to the nature of today's classroom, teachers need to have knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation to create an environment that facilitates the learning process for all their learners. Conversely, a lack of understanding and knowledge of curriculum adaptation will render teachers incapable of providing the necessary support and creating the required learning space to enhance the learning of learners with learning difficulties. The latter comment relates to Vygotsky's theory that guided this study, namely that knowledge is actively constructed and reconstructed as a person advances to higher levels of understanding (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Naidu (2016) argues that constructivism maintains the belief that teachers have the responsibility to create a learning environment that facilitates the learning process.

Teachers who have used their experiences to acquire knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation will be able to provide the necessary support to assist learners with diverse learning difficulties to succeed in their quest for knowledge. Teachers are a key element in the implementation of curriculum adaptation, and therefore it could be argued that a lack of knowledge of curriculum adaptation is a result of a lack of dissemination of information and training. This suggests that teachers, who are expected to implement an adapted curriculum to

alleviate challenges at school, should be adequately and appropriately trained initially and during service. According to Vygotsky's theory of constructivism, the belief is that people who are located within a particular social environment contribute towards the learning process (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Teachers should thus know how to apply an adapted curriculum in classrooms with diverse learners in order to support their learners who experience learning difficulties.

In terms of the actual implementation of adapted curriculum, teachers sought to use their knowledge in grouping learners during teaching and learning. Learners were grouped in terms of their capabilities and activities were distributed to the learner groups though learners were expected to do same activities. The documents analysed on curriculum e.g ATP, policy document sought lack information regarding strategies of adapting curriculum but rather provided topics to be covered.

4.3.1.1 Sub-Theme 1: Teachers as learning specialists in the process of curriculum delivery

Teachers are the most vital agents in the educational system where learning occurs according to a process of curriculum delivery. Learning is described as the process of going from not knowing to knowing, and in this process experience and practice result in a lasting change in knowledge and behaviour (Raymond, 2008). Curriculum is the content but when contextualised in the learning process, it comes alive for learners. It is important that teachers understand their role as facilitators in the learning process and that they assist learners to progress from the unknown to the known. Setoromo & Hadebe-Ndlovu (2020) argues that teachers should ensure that there is a link between and progression in their lessons because that engenders systematic learning which enables learners to comprehend content more easily. Teachers are the key role players in any educational institution as they have the capacity to inculcate concepts and promote teaching and learning to the maximum.

For the purpose of this research study, it was important to consider teachers' views in light of their role as learning specialist when the curriculum is delivered to learners. The views of teachers were highly valuable to the research because without it their voices would not have been heard. Generally, the participants had a clear concept of the role of the teacher as a learning specialist during the process of curriculum delivery. Learning should be understood as something that does not happen once but as a lifetime occurrence. Nel and Nel (2016) maintain

that learning happens from the moment of birth and throughout one's life. Learning occurs continuously through all kinds of formal and informal experiences. The role of teachers in curriculum delivery is therefore to ensure that the curriculum content is accessed and therefore that learning will take place.

Mandla provided an elaborate explanation of what he understood about the role of the teacher as a learning specialist.

Mandla: *Teaching is a very noble profession. It is a job that requires a person to have love for the job and to be a person who possesses certain qualities and knowledge of how to present the curriculum in a proper manner. Teaching is a profession for people who are patient, have good communication skills, good at listening, able to explain things, empathic and above all who have passion for the job. I believe that as a teacher I should always be willing to learn new things, understand learners' uniqueness and possess different abilities of presenting the curriculum in an interesting way.*

Phumzile stated the following in response to the question:

I certainly do agree with the notion of viewing teachers as learning specialists in the process of curriculum delivery. Teachers' primary role is to acquire knowledge and skills to educate learners and making them access curriculum content. [I] understand that learning for a teacher does not start and finish at the institution of higher learning when one is being trained to become a teacher but also continues during the process of teaching and learning. As teachers we should not view ourselves as bearers of all required information but as partners in the learning process.

Zodwa provided reasons why she believed that teachers should employ various strategies to shape them into specialists in learning:

I think as teachers the number of years we receive as a period of training to become teachers is mainly aimed at moulding us as teachers to become specialist in both teaching and learning. I believe teachers should possess knowledge and skills to properly teach learners and make learners learn what is delivered to them through the curriculum. Learning for both teachers and learners is a continuous activity because the interaction

between the learner and the teacher involves a process of learning. Being a specialist in learning means that the teacher is fully trained to equip learners with the knowledge and skills that each learner is expected to acquire in the learning process.

Bongani provided the following explanation in response to the question and expressed his view as follows:

I guess one advantage that I have as a teacher is that I lead, manage and control the learning process. The position of being a teacher provides me with the advantage of being a learning specialist and being confident to properly deliver the curriculum. It is always important that the teacher should have the correct qualification and be a leader in the learning process. Teachers should never underestimate their role of providing learners with knowledge and skills to access knowledge delivered to them during the learning process.

All the participants seemed to share the understanding that the teacher is a learning specialist. Teaching was generally viewed as a knowledge rich profession where teachers are regarded as learning specialists and experts in curriculum delivery. People who graduate as teachers are expected to be professionals in their field and they are expected to process and evaluate new knowledge that is relevant to their core professional practices. They are also expected to continuously upgrade their knowledge base in order to improve their teaching practice. They should also be able to meet any new teaching demand. Regarding teachers as learning specialists is a concept that should motivate them to strive for personal development and improved teacher quality. Shulman (1987) and Darling-Hammond (2000) assert that effective teachers are able to combine subject matter understanding and pedagogical skill flexibly. They are thus able to organise, assess, adapt and appropriately convey learning material and effectively use different learning approaches according to individual learners' needs.

There was generally a sound understanding among the participants of the role of the teacher as a learning specialist. They agreed that, for a teacher to be effective in his/her profession, continuous development and training are important. The teacher is responsible for the creation of an environment that facilitates the learning process (Ntombela, 2011), so without understanding the role of the teacher within this knowledge-rich profession, the teacher will not be able to create the required learning space, and this will hamper the learning process.

According to Vygotsky, each learner is a unique individual with a cultural background, individual disposition and prior knowledge that all influence his or her learning. Mamwenda (2004, as cited by Nel & Nel, 2016) maintains that learning is revealed in the way a person thinks (cognitive skill), acts (psychomotor skill) or feels (affective skill). Teachers need to continuously undergo professional development so that they may improve their role as learning specialists.

Teachers need to set a good example for their learners based on how they behave as professionals and the kind of knowledge they impart to their learners. The quality of the teacher as an individual is an important factor in determining the knowledge the learners gain and the quality of their achievement. It was therefore crucial to comprehend what teacher professionalism involves in order to improve the quality of the teacher. The role of the teacher as a learning specialist enables and empowers the teacher to gain knowledge and skills to make him/her perform his/her role of teaching learners with confidence, authority and enthusiastic vigour. Gredler and Shields (2008, p. 243) state that Vygotsky determines that new information is linked to a person's prior knowledge which plays a role in the formulation of new knowledge.

Learning is seen as active, contextualised and constructed based on personal experiences in an environment. Moreover, learners should never be viewed as empty vessels that require filling. Teachers develop their knowledge base by teaching learners who come to school with a certain amount of pre-conceived knowledge. In order to deliver any subject, teachers need to know what must be learnt, how that content is to be taught, and how the content is to be organised for teaching (Horsley & Matsumoto, 2010). Teachers who lack the necessary knowledge of their role as learning specialists compromise the intended benefits of teaching as laid out in Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). However, teachers will become specialists in their profession only when policy designers provide support to improve their practice.

4.3.1.2 Sub-Theme 2: Aspects of teacher training on curriculum adaptation

Teacher training is an important aspect that determines the quality of teachers that are tasked with the duty of educating learners. In order to ensure that the education millennium goals were achieved, teachers should be properly trained and developed to be quality teachers. As a researcher I maintain the belief that teachers should be on top of their game when it comes to

executing their duties in the teaching and learning process. The constructivist theory suggests that teachers should use their knowledge and understanding to create and manage an effective learning environment. The respondents' view on teacher training was that it should be improved and continuously provided to help teachers cope with the ever-changing dynamics of the educational environment.

Zodwa saw a great need for teachers to be provided with quality training because teachers need to be well informed about educational issues and how to cope with the challenges, they experience in their teaching profession. This participant felt that teachers were expected to produce quality results without the provision of continuous training to help them teach in a way that produces such results. She stated:

My view is that teacher training needs to be thoroughly looked at in order to ensure that the teachers we produce are able to effectively implement the policies of the department in the way that is intended. The Department of Education has spent so much money drawing up excellent policies which are either not implemented or not properly communicated to teachers who are expected to implement them, for example curriculum adaptation. I strongly feel that a lack of communication or proper training of teachers on policies tends to affect the proper execution of how policies need to be implemented.

Bongani supported participant 3 on the issue of teacher training and the need to provide proper and thorough training to teachers in terms of policies that guide their teaching practice. The participant further referred to the strategies that the department uses in providing training to teachers. He said:

To tell the truth, as an educator who is passionate about providing education to the growing generation, I feel that the department should invest a lot of money and time in ensuring that teachers are properly trained to provide effective teaching. Mentoring should also be provided thoroughly trained individuals to enable the work of teachers to be up to the expected standard. I feel that the department is certainly trying but I certainly do not feel that officials who are employed to provide training to teachers are doing justice to this because sometimes they come to training workshops not prepared at all. Sometimes they expect teachers to implement policies on which they have not been trained.

Mandla also elaborated on the quality of the training provided at teacher training institutions which tend to slightly differ from what teachers come across in class.

As a matter of fact, I think the training provided at institutions of teacher training needs to be carefully restructured because it tends to have gaps in providing training to teachers. First of all, the issue of the duration allocated for developmental workshops is not enough to provide teachers with concrete the knowledge they need to use during their teaching. Due to the amount of insufficient training that is provided by the department, some of the teachers take it upon themselves to further their studies so that they can be innovative in their profession.

This participant felt that a lack of professional training and development left teachers with no choice but to take alternative measures to improve and develop themselves in order to be productive teachers. The respondents also made a call to the department to monitor teachers to ensure that they perform the duties that they were employed to do effectively. Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, et al. (2004) in Naidu (2016) mention that on-going in-depth training is an answer to improving teachers' competence and confidence within the classroom. Professional training is key to teachers' development and has a direct impact on enhancing their performance as teachers. Performance of teachers needed to address the challenges in curriculum implementation, making curriculum to adapt to the needs of learners having diverse learning difficulties.

The views of the participants seem to suggest that teacher training is of the upmost importance and it should be a priority for the Department of Basic Education. Training assists teachers to excel in their profession and to understand policies that form the foundation of their teaching practice. In addition, teachers learn from their experiences by reflecting on what they have experienced during the teaching process. Teacher training should highlight strategies that can be used to adapt their teaching style and to select suitable resources that promote learners' interest in the lesson (Shange, 2015). Teachers should be concerned with the use of teaching tools as well as teaching methods when delivering their lessons. The importance of teachers' experiences and knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties is needed and could be acquired through training. This suggests that teachers must

be trained to gain knowledge of curriculum adaptation and be exposed to in-service training in order to meet the needs of the changing world (Berkvens et al., 2014).

4.3.1.3 Sub-Theme 3: Characteristics of an expert teacher for curriculum adaptation

Research studies have for a very long time tried to seek the most relevant definition of an individual that can be described as an expert teacher. There are many definitions that may be befitting to describe an expert teacher but, to put it simply; it is a teacher who is able to enhance deep learning and adapt curriculum in a way that supports learners having learning difficulties. Expert teachers may be further described as people who are aware of what they were doing; they monitor and adjust their teaching behaviours with the aim of bringing out the best in their learners. Expert teachers do not view learners as empty vessels, but they see them as people who are partners in the teaching and learning process. Loughran (2011) argues that one of the problems with expert teachers is that they make teaching look easy, yet nothing could be further from the truth. The truth of the matter is that expert teachers make a conscious effort to make sure that their teaching has good intentions and is relevant to the learning expectations prescribed for learners in a particular grade. However, the participants had no clearly defined understanding of the kind of teacher that fits the description of an expert teacher.

Mandla said:

I think it all depends on how the teacher carries his /her professional duties of teaching learners thereby making them to access knowledge that is presented to them. Sometimes teachers are experiencing many challenges in their execution of duties like teaching learners in terms of their capabilities. I think apart from the challenges that teachers face during teaching and learning, the issue of an individual understanding of his/her role as a teacher and how it should be played out also does affect how the teacher is viewed. Teachers who are trained should know what they are supposed to do in order to produce positive results in their teaching.

Zodwa stated:

Teachers should make sure that all learners participate in the learning process and they should adapt the curriculum. As a teacher I should know that learners are not the same

therefore they cannot perform in the same way. In a classroom of say 50 and above learners - which is the number of learners we normally face in our classrooms - a good teacher should have the skill of making even the lazy learners participate in the learning process. I am a teacher who likes to concentrate on those learners who seem not to raise their hands when I ask a question. I always hold the belief that the fact that the learner is not raising his/her hand to respond to the question does not mean that the learner does have anything to say. All learners should be given attention so that they can feel that they are part of the learning process and their contribution is valuable.

Bongani offered the following comment:

Well, as much as I enjoy what I am doing I sometimes feel that, as a teacher, you should always be willing to go an extra mile so that you produce quality results at the end of your teaching. I strongly believe that in teaching one should look beyond the challenges and seek answers about what to do in challenging situations in order to fulfill the main goal of providing quality education to all learners. I am a teacher who is never tired of learning new things, I therefore strongly believe in developing myself by furthering my studies and attending workshops to always sharpen my teaching skills.

These responses suggest that expert teachers do encounter challenges in their profession but they seek ways and methods of dealing with those challenging issues and adapt, adjust and construct their practice to enhance their expertise.

Another factor that needed to be considered in characterising teachers as experts was working conditions. The issue of working conditions has a great influence on teachers' performance and exerts a powerful influence on the development of expertise. The respondents felt that teachers should be able to motivate all learners to learn and that they were part of the learning process. The participants also alluded to the issue of seeking alternative methods to further their studies to enhance themselves in their teaching profession. The belief exists that learners who have good teachers learn better than learners who have underperforming teachers (Marruli, 2014). Good teaching, which relates to effective teaching practices, forms the foundation of the development of an expert teacher. The quality of the teacher should reflect in his/her performance in the classroom and the quality of the results produced by the learners.

Maruli (2014) maintains that learners actually acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at acceptable and reasonable levels when they are actively engaged in the classroom. Hence, successful teaching is regarded as teaching that is learner centred and promotes and produces the desired outcomes.

4.3.1.4 Sub-Theme 4: Knowledge of teaching and learning practices

Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge and skills to understand the dynamics of teaching and learning so that they use this knowledge to diversify their teaching strategies according to the diversity of the learners in a particular classroom. Florian (2008) argues that teachers need to be equipped with knowledge to assist learners with various learning difficulties by utilising appropriate instructional methods. The constructivist theory suggests that teachers should provide assistance to learners so that they may perform at their best. The participants' responses regarding teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning were insightful.

Mandla saw the need for teachers to be trained in order to effectively manage the processes of teaching and learning. He also saw education in South Africa as one of the top priorities of the country. This participant suggested that teachers are duty bound to teach learners and to make learners learn as it is the Constitutional right of every child to receive quality education.

The participant expressed his views as follows:

I strongly believe that teachers should be thoroughly trained, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to teach in a diverse classroom. I further maintain that knowledge on the teaching and learning processes should be in such a way that teachers cater for the diverse needs of all learners. Classrooms are a dynamic platform; therefore, as a teacher, I should be flexible in my teaching.

Phumzile focused on the need to extend the practical training that teachers undergo. The feeling was that more needed to be done to improve these teaching practicals by extending the time and thoroughly monitoring this process.

As a matter of fact, when I first went for my one week teaching observation after my first year of study I was not given proper guidance - or rather the opportunity - to observe the processes of teaching and learning so that I would be able to apply what I have learned in real-life situations. The teacher that was supposed to mentor me just expected me to

teach without giving me opportunities to observe her while she was teaching. It was like being thrown into the deep end without exactly being taught how to swim. I would have preferred to observe maybe the first two lessons and then teach in the presence of a mentor who would then provide feedback and guidance in terms of my teaching.

Zodwa shared her thought-provoking insight that the success of teaching and learning relies heavily on the perceptions and attitudes of individual teachers. The participant held the belief that there is a difference between a teacher who is called to teach and the teacher who chose teaching because he or she had no other alternative. The perceptions and attitudes of teachers could have a positive or negative effect on their teaching which directly affects the learning process. My understanding is that you have to be passionate about teaching and have a love for children if you want to be a good teacher. In fact, people should be passionate about the careers they choose.

Teachers are expected to be equipped with knowledge that will capacitate them during the execution of their duties, particularly when they have to teach diverse learners in mainstream classrooms. Constructivism indicates that educators use their understanding and knowledge to create, facilitate, manage and develop conducive learning environments.

In this study, three participants revealed their understanding and knowledge of teaching and learning as follows:

Phumzile: *Teaching and learning is whereby the teacher imparts subject knowledge to the learners with the aim of giving them skills they will use in the future.*

Zodwa: *Teaching is whereby the teacher provides knowledge to learners who in turn access knowledge delivered to them. The process of teaching and learning is an interaction between the teacher and the learner.*

Bongani: *Teaching and learning is a two-way process whereby the teacher provides information to the learners and in turn the learners provide some form of knowledge to the teacher. I strongly believe that it is wrong to think that learners come to school with empty minds that need to be filled with information by the teacher. The fact of the matter*

is that learners come to school with some form of information acquired through informal education.

The above responses demonstrate that the participants had a conceptual understanding of the process of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning should be the core function of each and every teacher and they should thus be thoroughly trained in all aspects of teaching and learning. If teachers do not possess the required knowledge of teaching and learning, their classroom efforts will be fruitless as education policies will be ignored. Pedagogical knowledge of teaching and learning allows teachers to identify learning difficulties and address them during the learning process. Constructivism believes that the identification of learning difficulties and the manner in which these are addressed enhance positive engagement among learners in the classroom which, in turn, enhances cognitive development. The process of learning to teach and teaching itself is a very complex one, especially because teaching has been constantly changing (Olsen, 2010). Teachers should keep abreast of the demands that changes in the teaching environment place on them.

The knowledge of teaching and learning should go beyond teaching particular subject content, but should assist teachers in supporting those learners who struggle during their learning. The relationship between the teacher and the learners is more than just a mere engagement in the teaching and learning process, as it is a complex process of making meaning. Fomunyam (2016) states that what transpires in the classroom are more than just an exchange of knowledge; it is a reproduction of the self by both parties and a rubbing off of that self. The knowledge that the teacher has greatly influences how he/she reacts or treats learners in the class and also determines the quality of his or her teaching. The development of teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning is largely enhanced by the knowledge that is gained through experiences during the process of teaching and learning. Khalid and Azeem (2012) postulate that constructivism sees the teaching and learning process as an active, contextualised procedure of creating knowledge rather than acquiring it.

When teachers are continuously equipped with knowledge about teaching and learning, they gain the capacity to promote their teaching and learners' learning to the expected level.

Teachers' role during the process of teaching and learning is fundamental to success in the classroom, and this success largely relies on the possession of knowledge which may also be

indicative of the teacher's professional development. Such knowledge is elicited by experiences during interactions between the teacher and the learner within the educational environment. Knowledge of teaching and learning is not only about teaching but also requires the ability to assume other roles. The first role is that of the individual itself, which places a great demand on the teacher. The individual teacher should fully understand him- or herself as the leader in the learning process. The teacher therefore ensures that the teaching and learning process is effectively implemented. There are certain responsibilities that should be carried out by the individual teacher and thus his/her knowledge of teaching and learning should allow him/her to thoroughly prepare for the process. One of the participants mentioned that the responsibility of the teacher is to drive the learning process. The participant further stated that a teacher should develop lesson plans and teaching aids. He regarded teaching as the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner. The participant articulated his views as follows:

Mandla: *Knowledge of what is taught is one thing but a learner understanding what is taught is another thing. Teaching is about transmitting what you have learned in a way that is understood by your learners in the manner that you want them to understand.*

This comment suggests that it is the duty of the teacher to ensure that good and proper communication is maintained between the teacher and the learner. Rodgers and Scott (2008) mention that communication in the classroom between teacher and learners involves more than just participating in the teaching and learning process: it is about making meaning for both of them. Teachers are required to have an understanding of how learners learn and they should also possess a critical understanding of their subject and how to present it to the learners in ways that will enhance their understanding of the content.

4.3.1.5 Sub-Theme 5: Teachers' understanding of the concept of learning difficulty (LD)

Learning difficulty is defined as "something that stands in the way of a learner from succeeding in education" (Ibad, 2018, p. 13). Teachers should understand that there are many factors that give rise to learning difficulties and that many learners are affected by diverse learning challenges that prevent them from accessing and acquiring knowledge. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) claim that a learning difficulty is impacted by factors that pose as hindrances to learners' learning process. Thus, teachers should acquire knowledge and be familiar with

diverse learning difficulties. The participants' understanding of learning difficulties is reflected in the comments below:

Mandla: *To answer the question, I think the concept of learning difficulty refers to the aspects that disturb the learner during the learning process. These aspects make the learner find it difficult to successfully perform at his or her best in accordance with the work given to the learner when the learner is in class. Learning difficulties make the learner unable to concentrate and access knowledge and acquire skills necessary for progression. There are many reasons that cause learning difficulties, some of which result from things that happened at home, or in life, or at school.*

Phumzile: *Well, though I can only give testimony to what I observe when I am teaching my subject which is Life Orientation where learners have a lot of difficulty when it comes to doing physical education. Sometimes learners are regarded as being lazy when it comes to physical education participation, but I sometimes notice that some learners fail to do the exercises because they are fat and lack fitness to sustain the activities.*

Zodwa: *I think a learning difficulty is something that negatively affects a learner's performance in class, making the learner fails to demonstrate his or her best effort.*

Bongani: *My understanding of a learning difficulty is when the learner fails to master the work that is prescribed for that particular grade. Most of the times you find learners unable to read and write at the expected level of that grade. Sometimes certain learners even fail to understand written or spoken instructions in a particular language.*

The responses revealed that the concept of learning difficulties was familiar to these participants as they perceived that such difficulties impacted the learning of learners negatively. The participants mentioned certain issues that stand in the way of a successful learning process such as an adverse home environment and trouble at school. Walton, Nel, Hugo and Muller (2009, p. 76) describe learning difficulties as “educational barriers which might arise from a number of sources, and could be intrinsic or extrinsic to learners”. However, these factors that prevent a learner from successfully benefitting from the learning process should be identified in order to provide learners with access to knowledge to reach their full potential.

Teachers should be equipped with knowledge to understand, identify and address the learning difficulties that prevent the learning process from succeeding in a way that recognises individual differences in the classroom. According to the constructivist theory, the construction of knowledge is an active process and never passive (Major & Mangope, 2012). Teachers should assume the role of active participants in and leaders of the learning process. The theory places a massive responsibility on teachers' shoulders as it requires that they become knowledgeable and creative for the establishment of a learning environment that offers maximum benefit to all learners. Nel et al. (2013) reinforce this by arguing that learners who encounter learning difficulties in class should be assisted by teachers who understand and accommodate their needs.

4.3.1.6 The language of learning and teaching as a learning difficulty

In most schools in South Africa the LoLT in the senior phase is the learners' First Additional Language (English) and not their home language, especially in rural mainstream schools. The majority of learners in the South African context thus face a language barrier in the classroom (Owen-Smith, 2010). When learners have no freedom to converse in their home language, their understanding becomes poor, which leads to underperformance and this in turn undermines learners' self-confidence. The LoLT as a learning difficulty tends to result in limited vocabulary, experiences of frequent breakdowns in communication, and the ultimate exclusion of learners from engaging in the learning process. Teachers should thus possess expert knowledge to teach in multiple languages (code switching) for the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion. Language as a common barrier to learning was highlighted by the participants.

Phumzile alluded to the challenge of language that she often faced when teaching her learners.

It is very difficult to teach these learners because most of them cannot understand the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Most of them cannot read, write or construct a simple sentence. I was never taught to teach the basic rules of writing but only the content of my subject of specialisation. I am sometimes forced to switch to their mother tongue to make them understand, but the problem is that when they do assessments [in English] the problem will prevail.

Zodwa emphasised the importance of being responsive to learners' diverse learning needs and stressed that the reality is that all the tasks are supposed to be in the language of learning and teaching. She further claimed that the LoLT should be introduced at a younger age when it is still easy to understand that language.

I know that my learners are diverse in terms of language to such an extent that when you explain something using a particular home language such as IsiZulu, some learners will be confused by certain terms, especially the IsiXhosa speaking learners. Sometimes learners struggle to understand the mathematical operations because of the language used.

It was obvious that the teachers felt that the LoLT in their schools negatively affected communication of important concepts in most subjects. **Mandla** demonstrated the challenge of language as a learning difficulty by providing the following response:

I know that some of my learners have the ability but the problem is the language that is used. When you communicate with them in their home language, they feel free to talk, but when they have to use the language of learning and teaching, they feel shy and embarrassed to make mistakes. Most learners even struggle to complete tasks simply because they could not understand instructions for the tasks.

The participants' concerns relating to language as a barrier to learning and teaching are underscored by the constructivist theory. Constructivism is based on the belief and evidence that learners actively construct knowledge in collaboration with others in their attempt to make sense of their own world (Thorne, 2013). Language plays a critical role in the construction of knowledge. The constructivist approach therefore aims to instil knowledge that is not only kept in the minds of learners but that is also actively shaped. Teachers need to be taught to teach learners in their home language which will enhance the promotion of equality and diversity. To be able to do this, teachers require training in languages to assist them in overcoming language as a learning difficulty.

Bongani explicitly stated the following:

My greatest challenge is teaching learners who seem to know the answers but fail to express themselves in the appropriate language of learning and teaching.

The above participant demonstrated that the language used for teaching and learning was a great challenge during his teaching career. When learners are not able to express themselves freely, they do not understand instructions and, as a result, their academic performance is at risk. When learners are taught in a language that is different from their home language it is a barrier that inhibits the potential to achieve success, especially for those learners who experience learning difficulties (McKay, 2014).

4.4 Teachers' classroom experiences and the knowledge of curriculum adaptation

To address the aim and objectives of the study, I sought to understand the classroom experiences of teachers and whether teachers in rural mainstream schools had identified learners with diverse learning difficulties to provide support to them using adapted curriculum. The constructivist theory suggests that teachers should use understanding and the knowledge that they have gained through experience to create and manage the learning environment. The teachers' understanding and knowledge were interpreted with reference to their definitions of curriculum adaptation. The teachers referred to their experiences of learners with learning difficulties to further elaborate on the need to adapt the curriculum.

Two of the participants had some idea of what curriculum adaptation is although they were not sure whether it applied to South African rural mainstream schools.

Mandla: *I think it is some form of teaching that tries to deal with the issue of discrimination of learners within the learning context. It's always proper for teachers to understand that learners are unique individuals with diverse capabilities. Teachers teaching in schools should always accommodate the differences in terms of learners' capabilities.*

Phumzile: *Learners in a single classroom have differences in what they know or do not know. Teachers are expected to present the curriculum in a way that directly addresses the individual needs of learners.*

The responses above revealed that two participants had some conceptual understanding of teachers' experiences and the concept curriculum adaptation. The finding echoed Ikwumelu, Oyibe and Oketa (2015) who state that curriculum adaptation is an approach aimed at achieving a common instructional goal with learners who have individual differences, such as prior achievement, aptitude, or learning styles. By applying curriculum adaptation, teachers present the learning content in different ways so that the natural diversity prevailing in the classroom does not prevent any learner from achieving success. The important premise of the constructivist theory is that a teacher needs to know that learner centred and activity based teaching is key. Curriculum adaptation is specifically aimed at addressing the needs of learners who experience diverse learning needs. A lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of curriculum adaptation will thus cause its unsuccessful implementation. Teachers without the required knowledge will hinder curriculum adaptation from bearing fruit as required by policy.

Zodwa offered a thoughtful and nuanced perception of what she thought curriculum adaptation refers to. She suggested that it was another program of transforming the schooling system to embrace the principle of human rights. The participant stated that, although the concept was unfamiliar to her, it was probably directed at the teacher during interactions with learners in the process of teaching and learning. She said:

I am going to honestly say the concept of curriculum adaptation is not a familiar term for me as an experienced teacher. To put it clearly, I have no knowledge of the concept. I therefore think it has to do with how teachers teach different learners in one classroom.

Bongani: *Honestly speaking, some of the programs and concepts that are introduced in education tend to be so comprehensive and rapidly introduced that when you try to understand one concept or term, you will find out it has been replaced with another terminology. As a matter of fact, curriculum adaptation is a new term in my teaching context. To demonstrate whether I understand the term or not I would say I certainly don't but I think it has to do with curriculum implementation. Not understanding the term*

makes it difficult to implement especially things that have been developed with the aim of transforming education for the better.

Some of the participants tried to define their understanding of curriculum adaptation although they declared that they did not have a clear comprehension of exactly what it entailed. Muringi (2015) emphasises the importance of a correct understanding of curriculum adaptation in the educational context, and further states that the basic challenge within the context of curriculum adaptation is the inconsistency in its definition worldwide. However, some participants' understanding of curriculum adaptation was aligned with the definition by Lee et al. (2009, p. 41), who state that it is curriculum modification to the way in which curriculum is presented, represented or the way the learners respond to the curriculum. Curriculum adaptation is an approach that addresses collaborative teaching and learning based on the idea that all learners can learn together and that participation in learning requires a response to individual differences that exist among learners who are challenged. Constructivism holds the view that learning happens through collaboration with 'more knowledgeable others'. Thus learning should never be individually based but should be an effort of collaboration with more knowledgeable others.

A lack of understanding of curriculum adaptation will disallow teachers to create the required learning space and this will negatively impact the learning process. This point aligns with the constructivist theory of Vygotsky which states that learners' environment contributes to and facilitates the learning process. According to Diaz (2017), constructivism involves a process of knowledge construction that is related to curriculum adaptation. Teachers thus require proper experiential understanding of curriculum adaptation to support diverse learners during the learning process. Teachers have the responsibility to strive for the creation of an environment that facilitates the delivery of an adapted curriculum. A lack of experiential knowledge may thus be liable for the unsuccessful implementation of an adapted 'classroom curriculum'. Teachers are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge of national policies and put them into practice. Connelly (2008, p. 310) views curriculum adaptation as more than just words in a formal document prescribing what teachers should do. In fact, there are numerous ways of understanding and properly implementing curriculum adaptation. When such novel and appropriate measures have been devised and implemented, the teaching process will enhance teachers' professional practice and result in the academic participation of all the learners and the teacher in a classroom.

4.4.1 The number of learners in a classroom

Overcrowded classrooms continue to pose a major problem that affects teaching and learning as it causes the inability to adapt the way the curriculum is implemented by teachers in rural mainstream schools. The number of learners in a particular class has a tremendous effect on how the process of teaching and learning proceeds. The maximum recommended learner/educator ratio for South African primary schools is 40:1 and for secondary schools is 35:1 (Motsekga, 2012). Two participants had quite a number of years of teaching experience in rural mainstream schools. These two participants had corroborating views when responding to the question based on their most difficult or challenging situation in terms of curriculum delivery.

The responses were as follows:

Mandla taught in the primary rural mainstream school. He was teaching Grade 7 Mathematics and was qualified to teach in the intermediate and senior phases. He responded by saying:

I think it is the issue of overcrowding in classroom and the time allocated for teaching particular subject content. It is mostly difficult to teach mathematics in a class that has many learners who are diverse in different ways, especially in a subject that is mostly complex and difficult like mathematics.

Phumzile said:

Truly, speaking when one is teaching one should be able to give attention to all learners in the class. This tends to be impossible in a class where there is a large number of learners.

The challenge that is presented by a large number of learners that exceeds the prescribed ratio by far in one class is that it becomes difficult to pay attention to all the learners and to be able to adapt the curriculum based on their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers tend to be constrained when they teach classes of large numbers of learners as this negatively impacts teaching and learning. Although education is the right of every South African child, over admitting learners tends to be a great challenge for teachers who are expected to accommodate

diverse learner needs in their classrooms. It further becomes difficult to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. The larger the number of learners in a classroom the bigger the challenge is for teachers who are expected to ensure that effective teaching and learning is provided to all the learners who have diverse needs. Legotlo (2014) found that slow learners were not attended to and there was a lack of feedback provided to learners in the large classes under investigation. In the latter study, the large number of learners in one class did not allow the teachers to adapt their teaching and curriculum according to the capabilities of the learners.

The many roles teachers have to play have become extremely challenging. For instance, they have to try various ways of providing assistance to learners who have learning difficulties – but this process is negatively affected by a large number of learners in one class. For teachers to be of great assistance to their learners, they need to be supported and assisted (Weeks & Erradu, 2013), but overcrowded classrooms negatively affect the teaching and learning process. A large number of learners in one class also become a great challenge when it comes to teachers using their knowledge to conceptualise the learning needs of all the learners. The constructivist ideology that proposes the zone of proximal development requires teachers to give support to *all* learners so that they can perform at their best, but the successful performance of teachers is largely influenced by various factors such as the knowledge that teachers possess and the large numbers of learners they have to teach and understand. However, knowledgeable teachers can change their attitude towards large classes and devise innovative ways of providing individual attention to avoid disadvantaging learners who need special attention. It was this aspect that I particularly wanted to explore in the schools under study.

4.4.2 Challenges experienced by teachers when applying curriculum adaptation

Curriculum adaptation refers to the shaping or planning of the curriculum in a way that addresses different learners' needs (Bottge et al., 2017). Teachers have to consider the needs of all learners when they implement the curriculum, but it needs to be properly adapted. When teachers are planning to adapt the curriculum the main consideration should be the needs of individual learners in the classroom. If teachers fail to understand that the curriculum needs to be adapted, some learners will feel excluded from participating in the process of learning.

Zodwa focused on the challenge that teachers experience when applying the adapted curriculum for the purpose of effective teaching and learning and how learning difficulties affect this process. She stated:

My perception about curriculum adaptation in the senior phase of rural mainstream schools is that there is not much that is being done because we as teachers are still experiencing challenges with learners that are largely affected by diverse learning difficulties during the learning process. This in turn makes us as teachers unable to do our job as well as we want to. So, application of curriculum adaptation in my opinion is not well communicated to the people who are expected to implement it in such a way that it bears good results.

Bongani uttered comments about how teachers view their profession in relation to curriculum development and changes and also how teachers view the changes within the educational sector. She argued as follows:

It is largely difficult to teach learners when you the educator have not been trained on how to deal with difficulties exhibited by learners in the classroom. You find that most of them in Grade 7, 8 and 9 having no idea of how to read fluently and with understanding. I was really not trained to teach learners how to read but only how to understand the content of my subject. Our profession as teachers is rapidly becoming more and more complex in terms of the changes that are continuously introduced.

Zodwa emphasised that not much was happening because of the challenges that impacted the learning difficulties experienced by learners. Mahlo (2011) observes that teachers who are not fully ready to teach learners who have learning difficulties find their profession strenuous and time consuming. A learning difficulty could be anything that prevents the learner from successfully accessing the knowledge delivered through the curriculum. Major and Mangope (2012) argue that the constructivist theory regards the construction of knowledge as an active process and not a passive one. The learner is thus viewed as someone who actively participates in the formulation of his/her knowledge and is not a 'tubular rasa' (empty vessel) waiting to be filled with information. The theory thus places a great responsibility on teachers to be equipped with knowledge that will create a learning environment that offers maximum benefit to all learners. Furthermore, teachers need to be well informed about any changes that occur in order

to address learners' needs. Curriculum changes should thus be well communicated and teachers should be well trained to perform their duties effectively.

Certain factors tend to prevent teachers from reaching their goal of teaching learners in a way that results in successful learning (Ibad, 2018). Teachers often struggle to apply an adapted curriculum in the initial stages of planning for diverse groups of learners in the classroom. The diversity could vary according to the factors that are intrinsic or extrinsic to learners. Learners may encounter problems with numeracy and literacy such as writing, reading, counting or making sense of mathematical operations. The inability to cater equally for all the learners in a particular class is a barrier that most teachers face, thus understanding actual learning difficulties is of great importance when the curriculum is adapted. Once a teacher is able to identify the type of learning difficulty a learner experiences, she/he will be able to identify the learner's needs and provide the necessary support by adapting the curriculum.

4.4.3 Implementation of curriculum adaptation

There are various reasons why education in South Africa is classified as one of the main priorities of the state. When all is said and done, the main concern is quality education. Therefore, when the curriculum is adapted, this process does not only require that learners with learning difficulties are physically present in class, but also that the necessary values, attitudes, policies and practices are present to ensure that all learners are fully able to participate in classroom activities. The participants demonstrated a lack of conceptual understanding of what curriculum adaptation is and what it requires.

Mandla explained curriculum adaptation in terms of negatives such as referring to it as being problematic, time consuming, and a challenge as teachers are often not able to cover all the work that is prescribed for a year. He said:

Yeah, in terms of time consumption it definitely seems like a method that wastes a lot of time because when you have learners in a class, you then have to try and understand their individual strengths and weaknesses so that you can get to fully understand their learning difficulties. When it comes to lesson planning you then have to plan for more than one teaching strategy so that each group of learners is taught in a way that is sensitive or addresses their learning difficulties.

Phumzile offered the following sentiment:

As a matter of fact, I guess the concept of curriculum adaptation requires teachers to initially concentrate on the individual learning needs where sometimes you will be needed to repeat the same concept over and over again until the learner is able to understand. This might end up disadvantaging the other learners who will not be able to proceed with learning because of those who are slow to understand. The process will also be a challenging for teachers who do not have much patience.

A lack of appropriate teaching strategies could be attributed to a number of causes that contradict the principle of curriculum adaptation.

Zodwa focused on the actual teaching of learners who have learning difficulties. According to this participant, a lack of implementation of appropriate strategies may be attributed primarily to policy and training issues. She was not familiar with the actual policy that guides curriculum adaptation and was not sure what it was, what its goals were, how it should be implemented, and for what purpose. She stated the following:

As a teacher I have tried to use many teaching strategies in my teaching for the purpose of making learners able to easily access the knowledge presented to them. But sometimes as a teacher you can see that no matter how you diversify your teaching strategies you fail to get through to some learners. I think the policies guiding how curriculum should be implemented are not communicated in such a way that is adequate to address challenges that teachers experience during their teaching. I further think policies on curriculum adaptation should identify learning difficulties and how teachers are expected to teach those learners so that they succeed in their learning.

Bongani focused on training as a primary barrier to the implementation of an adapted curriculum. He presented this view as follows:

Personally, I think we have not been trained on the concept of curriculum adaptation, or dealing with learners who encounter learning difficulties and how they should be taught in a way that addresses their learning difficulties. I think it is stressful to be expected to properly implement something that you were not trained to do. For me the introduction

of policy alone is insufficient; it should be followed by adequate training of teachers who are expected to implement policy.

The participants demonstrated insight into teaching strategies, the policy framework and the impact of a lack of training as factors affecting the implementation of curriculum adaptation. However, curriculum adaptation refers to the way subject content is presented, represented or the way in which learners respond to the curriculum (Lee et al., 2009, p. 41). Curriculum adaptation should be aimed at affording all learners equal opportunities for lifelong education. Teachers should be capacitated to play a major role in the implementation of curriculum adaptation. Successful implementation of curriculum adaptation should not only rely on teachers' efforts to simply change instructional methods and strategies, but it should be goal driven and informed by sufficient training and a well communicated policy. When teachers plan lessons that are aimed at curriculum adaptation, they should accommodate relevant strategies that will enable them to teach learners with diverse difficulties. Understanding diverse learning difficulties is vital as the inability to cater for all learners equally is a challenge that affects many classrooms. If adequate training is provided, teachers will be equipped with the skill to understand policies on curriculum adaptation, learning difficulties, and how to plan appropriate teaching strategies. Once teachers have been trained and understand the learning difficulties experienced by the learners in their classrooms, then the necessary support and interventions to ensure that successful learning takes place can be offered by adapting the curriculum.

The responses of the participants suggest that planning for curriculum adaptation should never be a one-size-fits-all approach as this does not serve all learners equally. Lesson planning should be informed by knowledge of the learning difficulties experienced by learners in the classroom and involve creative ways of ensuring that all learners are equally engaged in understanding what is taught. However, the main challenges are attributed to time constraints and a lack of training. Gold and Vaughn (2000) argue that lesson planning is key to the provisioning of accessible education for all, and that lessons should be planned to accommodate the full range of needs that learners bring to class. The constructivist theory holds that the curriculum should be adapted to suit learners' needs and to give them the freedom to construct their own knowledge. Mahlo (2011) reiterates that teachers who are not fully prepared to teach learners with learning difficulties will struggle to do so. When faced with learning difficulties in the learning environment, many teachers ignore them instead of dealing with them by

creating platforms to elicit assistance such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Shelile and Hlalele (2014) contends that if ineffective support is provided to teachers, it results in challenges in the identification of barriers and the planning of suitable remedies. As a result, teachers often fail to properly implement well designed policies aimed at improving education.

4.5 Theme 3: Strategies to teach learners with learning difficulties

This theme focuses on the strategies that can be employed to teach learners with learning difficulties. Teachers are mandated to manage various learning activities and to address any barriers that influence effective learning in the classroom. It was against this background that I sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of the different techniques that can be adopted to manage and assist learners who have learning difficulties. Teaching in simple terms refers to lesson delivery. It further entails teaching methods, strategies, skills and resources used by the teacher in the teaching and learning process. The teaching and learning process is largely affected by the diverse learning difficulties that impact learners in their quest for knowledge. It is thus imperative that each teacher selects the teaching methods or strategies that he/she wants to use to deliver a lesson. Deciding on appropriate teaching resources to involve learners with learning difficulties is also important. When posed with this part of my investigation, the participants offered the following statements related to this theme:

***Phumzile:** In delivering my lessons I tend to be very cautious of the differences that exist in my class; therefore, I do not stick to one method of teaching but I would use group work which I regard as exciting and illuminating at the same time. I always observe learners as they interact with one another in their groups as they capacitate one another with various forms of knowledge and they eventually reach an agreement. I always learn a lot from the group work of my learners and I use a particular strategy when grouping them. I normally feel that group work is a good method of helping learners with learning difficulties to learn.*

The above response demonstrates that group work may be used as an effective method to teach learners with learning difficulties, which is reiterated by Pike and Kuh (2005). Using group work makes the teacher a facilitator and this teaching method encourages learners to be active participants in the process of constructing knowledge. Group work is thus an effective strategy that eases understanding for learners as they get to listen not only to their teacher, but also to

their friends. Strydom and Mentz (2010) concur with the argument that quality teaching should involve learners' contributions in the knowledge construction process and should not be exclusive to dominant partners or receptors of knowledge from the all-knowing teacher. When using this teaching method, teachers should be skilled in the allocation of learners to different groups. One strategy is to select groups based on similar learner difficulties, but a less able learner may be grouped with very able learners as is proposed by Vygotsky's theory. Group work as a teaching method allows learners to be actively involved in the construction of knowledge. Nel et al. (2016, p. 40) argue that constructivist theorists believe that knowledge should be actively constructed during the teaching and learning process.

Another participant maintained that, when teaching learners with learning difficulties, the approach that worked best was to use diverse methods coupled with a lot of repetition. She stated the following:

***Zodwa:** Planning and delivering my lessons is a very complicated part of my teaching practice because I am always aware that learners are diverse largely because of the learning difficulties that they experience. Learners are quite diverse and I have to use quite a number of teaching methods to help learners understand the lesson. In some lessons, I use storytelling and questioning while in others I use demonstration and discussions. I also have to incorporate a lot of repetition when teaching most of my lessons to ensure that all the learners follow the lesson and understand what is taught. The method of repetition is very tedious but it does produce good results when learners are assessed.*

The belief that using a variety of teaching methods facilitates understanding in the teaching and learning process is supported by Stohlman (2009). However, it is important that teachers utilise a variety of teaching methods to ensure that every learner in the classroom acquires the expected level of understanding and receives support. Furthermore, the use of various teaching methods ensures that teaching does not become monotonous but remains interesting and captures the interest of the learners. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that it is important to use a variety of teaching methods in the classroom to cater for the different types of learners and their learning needs. The practice of using a variety of teaching methods enables learners to be fully involved and for teachers to develop professionally. Khalid and Azeem (2012) postulate that

constructivism views learning and development as active, contextualised processes of knowledge creation based on experiences, rather than merely acquiring it.

The curriculum is therefore seen as of the utmost importance as far as the teaching and learning process is concerned. The participants understood that the syllabus and teaching methods equip the teacher with the skills that are required to grow in the teaching profession. The way in which the teacher presents the curriculum to learners who have diverse learning difficulties should occur in such a way that the learners benefit from the learning process. The success teachers achieve should therefore be built on their ability to utilise various teaching methods for the benefit of their learners, as they will then adequately facilitate the learning process.

The following sub-themes emerged from the data:

4.5.1 Planning adapted lessons

The diverse classroom is characterised by the presence of both able learners and those who are encountering learning difficulties. The onus is thus on the teacher to plan lessons that can be adapted to accommodate the various learning difficulties that impact learners in their quest for knowledge. Gould and Vaughn (2000) hold firm to the idea that teachers who devise lesson plans and various methods of instruction will ensure that diversity is addressed and that maximum learning occurs in the classroom. However, teaching learners with learning difficulties in a mainstream classroom impacts the planning of lessons, as was argued by the participant below.

***Mandla:** Definitely, how the teacher plans for a lesson is largely influenced by the learning difficulties observed to be affecting learners in the classroom. Sometimes even if the teacher has made sure that he or she plans properly for the lesson, the lesson gets disrupted by learners who tend to demonstrate their learning difficulties by interrupting the learning process. This disruptive behaviour might be problematic in such a way that the teacher loses his or her temper which might end up placing the other learners at a disadvantage [as teaching time is lost].*

The above response demonstrates that although teachers may take time to properly plan their lessons, sometimes things crop up to disrupt accurately planned lessons. Conversely, Moradi

(2019) mentions that if lessons are planned efficiently, it will hold learners' attention and encourage them to be actively engaged in the learning process. This will leave them no time to display disruptive behaviour. The emphasis is then on teachers to lift their standards and be much more efficient in their design of lessons that will include the active participation of learners with learning difficulties. If they actively participate in the lessons there will be no room for disruptive behaviour. However, teachers will be able to effectively teach learners with learning difficulties only if they have identified the learning difficulty that impacts each learner. Spencer (2011) proposes that the plan for a lesson should seek to accommodate and be made accessible to all learners in the classroom.

The participants' views supported those of Gould and Vaughn (2000, p. 368-370) who state that the lesson plan should include the lesson overview, degrees of learning, instructional methods, range of activities, evaluation, and reflection. Once teachers have constructed lessons that accommodate all learners, academic achievement will be initiated.

Phumzile: *When I am teaching I will always set aside the time to engage learners in some sort of revision exercises to assess whether they have understood what I have been teaching them. The revision process varies from class discussions, group discussions to question and answer sessions that are normally individually based. When there is evidence that learners did not understand I do re-teaching.*

Zodwa: *Whenever the teacher is planning, learners should be taken into account. For example, planning can take various forms which may be to design separate worksheets or separate instructions so that when you teach you are able to reach their level. When planning for assessment purposes, the teacher should accommodate all cognitive levels.*

Bongani: *Sometimes as the teacher I am compelled to be extremely creative in making learners identify with the lesson content and I use examples that they can identify with and not something that is farfetched. My level of teaching should go down so that even the weakest child is able to understand the content of the lesson.*

The above responses underscore the necessity that each learner needs to be considered during the planning of a lesson and that diversity needs to be acknowledged by providing separate instructions and resources for learners experiencing learner difficulties. An important aspect of

lesson planning is that all learners should be accommodated in the lesson plans and that adjustments should be made to ensure maximum learning as well as the social well-being of each learner (Gould & Vaughn, 2000, p. 366). Teachers need to be creative when planning their lessons and should ensure that the learners actually understand what is being taught. When teachers plan their lessons, they should be informed by the principle of catering for the diverse needs that learners bring to class. Constructivism believes that learners make meaning from their learning experiences. Lesson plans should thus accommodate all learners to enable them to construct knowledge and allow the learning process to proceed.

4.5.2 Teaching styles

Addressing various teaching styles requires that teachers accommodate learners in a single environment that allows various teaching styles to be appropriately used for the specific learner audience they are intended to reach. Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge of different learning difficulties and appropriate instructional methods to address them (Florian, 2008).

These views were echoed in the following responses:

Phumzile: *I have to teach the learners in a way that they have become used to and that will make them access knowledge using the voice that is audible enough. The teaching style is normally informed by the uniqueness of individual learners in my class.*

Zodwa: *My teaching style has to change because I always assume that learners come to school with a certain level of prior knowledge so I view teaching as an exchange of information where I as the teacher extend on the basic knowledge that learners possess.*

Teachers need to adapt to the most applicable style of teaching that will best suit the kind of learners they are teaching. The responses above underscore what Motiswe and Mokhele (2013) advocate, which is that learners are unique and so is their style of learning. Therefore, teachers are required to make use of mixed instructional strategies to cater for a variety of needs. They need to move away from the basic misconception that learners have no basic knowledge when they arrive at school and they need to extend this basic knowledge when teaching them by moving from the known and proceeding to the more complex aspects (or the unknown). Vayrynen (2003, p. 10) argues that learners' experience with new information should be based on related concepts or skills that the learner already knows. The teaching style chosen by the teacher should allow the learner to play an active role and become responsible for the

acquisition of knowledge (Stefanich, 2001). In addition, the constructivist theory postulates that even though the learning process should allow learners to be active, support should come from the teacher so that they will discover new knowledge.

UNESCO (2004) advocates a multilevel instruction and teaching style in a classroom of learners who have diverse learning difficulties. The utilisation of many teaching styles to transfer knowledge in the classroom is considered to benefit the educational experience of all learners. Teachers are considered to be effective if they link learning to learners' backgrounds and utilise appropriate teaching styles (Singh, 2004). It is imperative for teachers to diversify learning and teaching styles to meet the transforming nature of learners in the classroom.

4.5.3 Assessment Tasks

Assessment tasks are a key to any educational setting as they form the benchmark for determining learners' progression to the next grade or retention in the same grade. The success of education is largely determined by a high percentage of learners who qualify for progression to either the next grade or out of the schooling system. The Department of Basic Education defines assessment as "a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about learners' progress" (DBE, 2012, p. 3). The importance of assessments during a learner's school career is emphasised in policy documents. However, the diverse classroom faces numerous challenges in the quest to accommodate all learners with learning difficulties. The participants voiced their concern regarding this in the following responses:

Mandla: *The failure of learners to submit the given assessment tasks on time or finding that the work was not done is an indication that either the information was not properly accessed or learners fail to understand its importance.*

Learners' tardiness or lack of understanding tends to hinder assessment processes and reasons such as absenteeism or failure to timeously submit a task negatively impact their assessment. Assessing is a complex process as it tests the knowledge and insight of a learner (Marshall & Drummon, 2006, p. 136). Assessment tasks may vary in complexity but should accommodate all learners' abilities and needs. It has always been important that assessment is done *with* and *for* learners and not *to* learners. Lombard (2010, p. 34) argues that the learner should be the beneficiary of assessment. In this context, learners should be able to determine their learning

difficulties and their learning needs. Thus, assessment should not be a once-off but a continuous process. The results of assessment tasks determine whether learners understood what was taught or not.

Phunzile: *The issue or the processes of assessment has been watered down greatly. I would design assessment in such a way that it accommodates all cognitive levels because learners are diverse in terms of their mental capabilities. The assessment tasks will have a variety of questions which are easy questions, medium questions and high order questions. The learners should also be familiarised with the style of questioning which is accommodative of all learners in the class.*

Bongani: *I strongly believe that learners have different levels of understanding and learning needs. It is important that learners are assessed in various forms of assessment that meet the way in which they were taught. I sometimes give them assessment tasks which will be done in groups or practical assessment activities suitable for their learning styles. Learning difficulties evident in the classroom do impact on how learners are taught and assessed.*

The responses above demonstrate the teachers' realisation that learners are diverse in terms of mental capabilities, understanding of learning content and how they experience learning difficulties. Furthermore, assessment should be supportive of learners who experience learning difficulties that affect their acquisition of knowledge and impact how they progress in their learning. Teachers have the capacity to simplify assessment activities for the benefit of learners who experience learning difficulties (Naidu, 2016). Assessment tasks could be presented as informal and formal tasks. These two forms of assessment are vital because informal assessment prepares learners for the formal assessment tasks that are mandatory regarding promotion. Formal assessment tasks are various types of projects, oral presentations, demonstrations, performances and written tests or examinations (DBE, 2012, p. 4). Teachers have the ability to simplify internally set assessment tasks according to the way the learning process was conducted in a single educational institution. Cross and Hynes (1997) and KerznerLipsky (2003) advocate that the onus is on teachers to design assessment tasks that suit learners while meeting high standards of assurance for the success of each learner. Teachers set assessment tasks to determine whether their learners understood what has been taught.

The use of assessment cannot be abolished because it serves the vital purpose of understanding learners better. There are many factors that affect learner performance in assessment tasks or activities. For instance, a learner may be affected by a dysfunctional or child headed households. Other contributing factors are a lack of parental support, funds, time, and the responsibility of managing a household (Van Breda, 2010). As a result of additional duties bestowed upon them, learners can hardly focus their attention on school work and they neglect the completion of their homework, do not study for tests, and fail to submit assessment tasks. Constructivism assumes that educational experiences can break the vicious cycle of poverty as children learn and construct meaning from their experiences and make sense of their own situations.

4.6 Theme 4: Provision of teacher development and training

According to Florian (2008), the lack of teachers' knowledge because of inadequate teacher development and training may be considered as one of the difficulties that teachers face. When teachers lack knowledge and limited development and training, they experience barriers in the execution of their core function which is to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Sternberg (2010, p. 38) defines teacher development and training as "the process of expanding and increasing the knowledge of teachers to enhance their teaching". Furthermore, by extending and enriching their knowledge, teachers are capacitated to make advanced decisions pertaining to the teaching and learning process. Knowledge empowers teachers and makes them recognise how, why and when they are supposed to teach the way they do. Thus, lack of knowledge limits insight and causes teachers to be controlled by unexamined ideas, beliefs, cultural myths and fear. Teachers require ongoing training and development to enhance their professionalism and to extend their teaching skills so that they are enabled to deal decisively and effectively with learners who experience learning difficulties while at the same time extending and empowering those learners who are termed 'high flyers'.

4.6.1 Training to become a teacher

The aim of teacher education is to produce teachers through training and development. These courses in education have an important practical component so that student teachers may experience the role of being a teacher while undergoing training. During practical teaching experiences, students learn how to execute various duties in the classroom, how to take leadership in the learning process, and how to perform their duties associated with classroom practices. Meijer, Graaf and Meirink (2011) argue that teachers in training are required to use

every resource at their disposal such as portfolios, mentor reports and feedback, lesson plans, and reflections on reports to monitor and enhance their development. Training should be thorough and comprehensive and thus cover all the imperative aspects that are critical to teachers' tasks when they actually perform their professional duties. One of these duties is to teach learners of diverse abilities in an integrated manner in the mainstream classroom. The participants offered the following insights:

***Mandla:** Once I stepped into the classroom, I didn't want learners to doubt my capability and see me as a person who does not know to teach after so many years of training. I use all the skills I gained through training to make sure that I teach in a way that all learners learn.*

***Phumzile:** I strongly believe that initial training is important for every teacher so that he or she will have the necessary skills to teach learners in a way that they conceptualise what was taught to them. As a matter of fact, training enhances performance and increases knowledge about the responsibilities and the processes involved in teaching and learning.*

The above responses reinforce the idea that teacher training and everything about it are aimed at assisting teachers to become professional in their field of expertise. When teachers enter a school to assume the responsibility of being educators, they should have the drive to properly execute their duties and to be efficient. Gameda, Fiorucci and Catarci (2013) maintain that teachers require constant motivation to put into practice what they have learned. The reason is that motivation is the primary force that encourages teachers to excel in their duties.

When teachers are motivated to do what they have been trained to do, they will go the extra mile to ensure that their teaching is excellent for the benefit of their learners. Lack of motivation results in poor teaching and learning and contributes to the public perception that teaching is the least paid profession where too many challenges produce poor results (Naidu, 2016). When teachers possess the required level of motivation, they will go to any length to ensure that appropriate learning takes place. In this context, the constructivist theory postulates that the construction of knowledge is an active process and not a passive one, which suggests that teachers should devise active learning activities that involve all their learners at an appropriate level. Furthermore, teachers' willingness and preparedness to be active participants during the

teaching and learning process will result in the creation of a learning environment that will offer maximum benefits to the learners.

Lack of information affects the proper execution of what needs to be done. According to Motiswe and Mokhele (2013), lack of knowledge gives rise to confusion, uncertainty and a lack of confidence to do what needs to be done. When teachers have not been exposed to proper training and development, they will not be able to implement any policies effectively and confidently.

4.6.2 Teachers' need for continuous professional development

Professional development is defined as “the process of expanding and increasing self-knowledge” (Stenberg, et.al., 2014, 10). Teachers need to be continuously developed to render their practices relevant to the dynamic educational environment. The more teachers increase their self-knowledge, the more relevant will be their decisions as the driver of the teaching and learning process. Self-knowledge gained through professional development empowers teachers to recognise how, why and when they teach the way they do. Teachers need to be developed on a continuous basis through various platforms so that they can execute their duties in a professional and effective manner. Teachers need to have a firm understanding of their profession and they need to possess the ability to implement supportive measures to assist learners who have learning difficulties. Professional development is important for educational transformation and school improvement. Three of the participants agreed that teacher development is paramount.

Mandla: *I strongly believe and feel that teacher development is most important and forms a strong foundation for quality teaching and learning. The basic training that teachers receive is important but to keep it relevant at all times, teachers need to be given continuous professional development to fully and properly implement the dynamic educational programmes.*

Phumzile: *In a way yes, the issue of continuous professional development is imperative but the challenge is that officials of the department tend not to prioritise the aspect of teacher development as a tool to improve the quality of education. The Department of Basic Education needs to invest a lot of funds in continuous professional development for teachers. Professional development should also be provided by people who are capable*

of training teachers so that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance the process of teaching and learning.

Bongani: *The importance of continuous professional development is that it provides new knowledge to teachers working in a rapidly changing school environment. Teachers need to be always capacitated to meet the growing demands of the rapidly changing society. Teachers I believe are drivers of any new educational programme therefore the success of any new educational programme lies on the quality of professional development provided to teachers.*

Teachers' continuous professional development should initially be intensive when teachers are trained to become professional teachers. Professional development should encompass knowledge and expertise that are required by teachers at all levels. Teachers, like any other professionals, should keep abreast of newly developing knowledge and use it to refine their skills. Gameda, Fiorucci and Catarci (2013) maintain that professional development is a result of all learning experiences. They further argue that structured and organised activities that will benefit learners either directly or indirectly need to be devised to enhance the quality of the education they provide. As teacher students develop professionally to become qualified teachers, they also need to acquire a variety of teaching skills. Professional development is necessary for teachers at all levels as they need to stay abreast of developments to succeed in the classroom. Using the constructivism lens makes it possible to study how teachers learn and how they build their understanding and knowledge of the classroom through their experiences. In the learning process, teachers rely on their training and development to assume the role of facilitators effectively. Constructivism postulates that teachers do not become mere evaluators but facilitators of the learning process.

Consistent training of teachers to enhance their professional development ensures that the educational programmes they deliver are fully implemented. This requires mentoring, monitoring, support and forecasting to see that tasks are executed (Naidu, 2016). Moreover, mentoring, monitoring, support and forecasting involve, among other things, the pairing of an experienced and highly successful teacher with a less experienced learner. The constructivist theory is a useful vehicle that guides teachers towards better classroom practices. Against this background, it must be stated that professional development is not just required for individuals' improvement, but it is also vital for capacity building of the school as an organisation. Many

schools have begun to take the initiative to include programmes of professional development in their yearly programmes. In some schools these programmes are effectively implemented to develop teachers as well as parents as partners in the learning process of their children. However, in my experience such initiatives are still limited in rural schools which suggest that urgent attention should be focused in this area.

4.7 Classroom observation

The method of classroom observation was briefly used to collect more data based on the actual interaction between teachers and learners who were faced with diverse learning difficulties attending rural mainstream schools. Apart from the fact that teachers lacked knowledge of curriculum adaptation to provide support to those learners experiencing diverse learning difficulties. The schools appeared to have other challenges as per my observation which included number of learners in a classroom and lack of training and support to teachers. I as the researcher was able to observe teaching and learning as conducted by the participants but the major challenge was my presence in the classroom which made learners and the teacher to behave in an unusual manner.

The participant was able to teach in the diverse classroom but some of the learners sought to have challenges with certain aspects of the lesson. The way the classroom was laid out did not seem to be conducive for the application of adapted curriculum. Most of the times learners were not arranged in groups based on their capabilities and abilities. The latter demonstrated that teachers had no knowledge of how to arrange their classrooms in such a way that was conducive for them to adapt curriculum as it was presented.

The teacher participants in the two classrooms I observed sought to use demonstrative teaching strategy and individual teaching. They sometimes made use of visual aids and concrete objects. The majority of visual aid used was pictures from charts and textbooks. The teachers also repeated certain information and some code switching to illustrate certain concepts. The most apparent thing was that learners were given similar tasks which were believed to be balanced in terms of cognitive levels. The participant (teacher) was observing and assisting those learners who were brave enough to seek help.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of the data that had been collected by means of the research production techniques. The data provided insights into the experiences of the participating teachers who all taught learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The teachers' experiences and views were interpreted and analysed through the lens of the constructivist theory. The teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation was interpreted using transcriptions and thematic analysis and four main themes emerged from these data. The findings were also presented through the lens of Vygotsky's constructivist theory.

The results indicated that the teachers in the two rural mainstream schools understood the general meaning of curriculum adaptation but did not quite understand the specifics. They were unfamiliar with the concept of curriculum adaptation and the policies pertaining to classroom integration practices and they were uncertain how to implement it and use it to support learners with learning difficulties. Nevertheless, the teachers revealed that they employed various strategies of their own in their endeavours to ensure that the curriculum was implemented to serve its core function in rural mainstream schools. The conditions in which they were expected to implement curriculum adaptation were difficult, as the two schools were under-resourced (in terms of training, time, space and educational support materials) and under supported (by school management, parents, and the DBE). These factors of necessity negatively impacted curriculum adaptation. The results demonstrated that teachers in rural mainstream schools still need ongoing training, support and development to enhance their encounters with learners who have learning difficulties.

The next chapter will present and evaluate the findings and I shall offer recommendations for future studies. The limitations are also discussed and this study report will be concluded with a few pertinent remarks.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings with reference to teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. My perusal of policy documents such as White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) and CAPS revealed that policy requires that learners with learning difficulties should be included in rather than being excluded from mainstream schools. However, the implementation of these educational policies has been challenging, particularly in rural schools. The study therefore focused on exploring teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation with specific reference to their experiences of learners with learning difficulties who need to be integrated in rural mainstream schools. Adapting the curriculum is viewed as a strategy to provide support to learners who experience learning difficulties, and thus this strategy should entail diversified classroom practices. A summary of the study and the research findings will be presented and the chapter is concluded with recommendations for further research, a brief discussion of the limitations that impacted the study, and a final conclusion.

5.2 Summary of the research process

5.2.1 Aims, objectives and research questions

The fundamental aim of this study was to qualitatively evaluate teachers' experiences of curriculum adaptation to provide support to learners with diverse learning difficulties in two rural mainstream schools. The use of the qualitative research design granted me the right to interpret meanings from the qualitative data (Phothongsunan, 2010). The study utilised data generation methods that were in line with qualitative research requirements, namely interviews, observations and document analysis. The primary objectives of the study were therefore to:

- To explore teachers' strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.
- To examine how teachers implement strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.

In conjunction to the objectives, the following research questions guided the study:

- What strategies do teachers use for curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties?
- How do teachers implement the strategies for curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties?

5.2.2 Research paradigm and design

To address the aim of the study, the interpretive research philosophy was used to elicit and explore the research participants' perspectives through the lens of Vygotsky's constructivist theory. A qualitative research approach was adopted as the investigative tool and was useful in addressing the research questions. I utilised purposive sampling to recruit participants who were experienced teachers with relevant background histories. All four these teachers had first-hand experience of teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. My quest was to determine if they were familiar with and utilised the policy of curriculum adaptation in their classroom practices. The study was conducted in two schools; i.e., a primary and a secondary school located in Oshabeni in the Ugu district under the Lushaba tribal authority, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

5.2.3 Data collection and data analysis

I used three instruments to collect qualitative data from the participants, namely semi-structured face-to-face interviews (using an interview schedule), observations (using an observation schedule) and document analysis. I adhered to correct procedures for data collection as discussed in section 3.8. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder after I had obtained the permission of the participants. Their responses were thoroughly and carefully transcribed. The transcriptions were subjected to thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method. The results are summarised in the next section.

5.3 Summary and discussion of findings

5.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers' experiences and understanding of curriculum adaptation

Some of the challenges and difficulties that the teachers faced in their efforts to teach learners with diverse abilities were a lack of knowledge and limited understanding of the adapted curriculum concept. The findings from the literature and document analysis affirm that adapting the curriculum to deliver subject content is very important in assisting teachers to succeed in their efforts to teach learners with learning difficulties and to manage the learning environment.

The participants surmised that curriculum adaptation was an approach aimed at reaching common instructional goals involving learners who experience challenges. Arentsen (2008) maintains that knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation share close ties with the implementation of the 'classroom curriculum', as without one functionality is limited. Proper implementation requires that teachers should possess adequate knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation. It is important that teachers should have knowledge of curriculum adaptation as only then will they be able to provide relevant support to drive successful academic outcomes for all their learners.

The participant teachers' knowledge stemmed from workshops as well as from the tertiary training they had received. The knowledge that teachers gain will allow them to present the curriculum in a way that encourages all learners in the classroom to successfully access knowledge that is delivered through the curriculum. Programmes for the development of teachers' knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation should be made available to assist them in fulfilling their roles (Mathibe, 2007). Lack of knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation will result in its unsuccessful implementation. Teachers who lack the required knowledge will negatively affect curriculum adaptation from bearing fruits which were laid down in the policy.

Some of the participants in this study admitted that they understood more or less what curriculum adaptation means, but they had limited knowledge on how to implement this approach. Teachers have the responsibility to use the knowledge and understanding they have acquired about curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties during the teaching and learning process. The main requirement is that teachers should put learned knowledge and acquired understanding into practice when implementing policies. When teachers implement policies pertaining to the curriculum or curriculum adaptation (also curriculum differentiation), they face numerous challenges that tend to be difficult to address. The challenges experienced by the participating teachers included the following:

- Planning adapted lessons
- Number of learners in each class
- Planning for assessment tasks.

White Paper 6 (DoE, 2011) states that the norms and standards for teachers' training should be revised to ensure that teachers have skills to identify and address learning difficulties and

diverse learning needs in the classroom context. Addressing diverse learning needs should be prioritised and dealt with as a matter of urgency. A common theme is that the correct implementation of curriculum adaptation will establish a common instructional ground for learners who have learning difficulties.

5.3.1.1 Planning adapted lessons

The actual task of planning lessons to be delivered could be daunting and a major challenge because of the diverse nature of today's classroom. The challenge is exacerbated when teachers have to use adapted lesson plans to support learners who experience diverse learning difficulties. When adapting the curriculum to deliver their lessons, teachers should make sure that they create a learning space that accommodates all their learners. The key strategy is therefore to plan lessons that can be easily adapted to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties (Gould & Vaughn, 2000). Furthermore, adapted lessons should accommodate the diverse needs of all learners to ensure that they access the content of the lesson.

The flow of a properly planned lesson is usually interrupted by learners who experience diverse learning difficulties as a focus on the more able learners excludes them from the teaching and learning process. Teachers who lack the skill to properly plan adapted lessons often blame this lack of support on inadequate training and guidance. The participating teachers referred to the importance of planning their lessons and to incorporate learners with learning difficulties by means of various intervention strategies. The teachers also noted the importance of providing separate resources and instructions as another strategy they could adopt to address the diverse needs of their learners. The efficient planning of lessons and adapted lessons will encourage learners to effectively pay attention and participate fully in the learning process.

One teacher stated that she used the technique of separating the lesson in order to accommodate learners by reinforcing or recapping the work done as a strategy to meet the diverse needs of her learners. In addition, the participating teachers noted the importance of providing separate resources and instructions as another intervention strategy that they adopted to address the diverse needs of their learners.

5.3.1.2 Number of learners in each class

The teacher participants stated that the number of learners in their classrooms posed a great challenge as overcrowding largely affected the way they delivered the curriculum. A large

number of learners in one class also impacts curriculum adaptation. Moreover, diversity in volumes poses a challenge to teachers (Fazal, 2012), and they thus need to plan and adjust their lessons to address diversity in their classrooms (Konza, 2008). The teachers admitted that they were constrained by the large number of learners in each class. The school enrolment numbers and the number of learners who attended these Grade 7 and Grade 8 classrooms far exceeded the prescribed ratio. In addition, the teachers felt negatively affected by the huge burden and thus overcrowding was an obstacle to the successful implementation of curriculum adaptation. Teachers need to continuously prepare for such a challenge as it impacts negatively on their core functions as educators.

Overcrowded classrooms minimise the successful implementation of an adapted curriculum (Marais, 2016) and thus teachers fail to attend to the individual needs of learners. Chataika, Mckenzie, Swart and Lyner-Cleophas (2012) argue that the prescripts of curriculum adaptation cannot be adapted for children in large classes. When the number of learners exceeds the prescribed enrolment rate, support from external stakeholders is required. For instance, building contractors may be harnessed to add extra classrooms and involving private sector and other organisations to offer classroom donations. The participating teachers admitted that they felt constrained by the large number of learners in each class and that this also negatively impacted their teaching processes. However, it is my contention that if teachers possess adequate knowledge, they are capacitated to assist in transforming their approach to teaching large classes.

5.3.2 Theme 2: The experiences of teachers with curriculum adaptation

The findings of the study indicated that the implementation of the policies on inclusive education and how curriculum should be implemented was important for the participants, as their roles had expanded (Ntombela, 2011). Ntombela (2011) observes that teachers are agents of change within the inclusive policy framework that strongly encourages an adapted curriculum. It is therefore imperative that teachers gain experience, knowledge and a thorough understanding of their role as learning specialists who are expected to support learners during curriculum delivery. Vayrynen (2003) concurs that an important role of teachers is to identify and address any learning difficulties that learners may experience and then to develop appropriate methods of support. It is therefore vital that teachers have adequate training and experiences that will help them to understand curriculum adaptation. The findings indicated

that all the participants understood their role as experienced teachers and that learning occurs from birth right up to formal education and beyond.

The participants' prior knowledge and experiences that were required for their role as learning specialists were obtained during their training and because of their participation in other structures of capacity building that they had been exposed to. However, none of those training opportunities and capacity building structures equipped them with knowledge that directly addresses issues of curriculum adaptation. The role of teachers as learning specialists should be enhanced by the provision of proper training that should equip teachers with knowledge to effectively address the challenges, they experience in the education system. Teachers should be provided with knowledge of curriculum adaptation to be able to confidently view themselves as learning specialists that belonging to a knowledge rich profession. If this is achieved, teachers will be equipped to manage the demands of adapting the curriculum in order to support learners with learning difficulties. It is therefore essential to train teachers for their role as learning specialists and to introduce programmes that will enable them to create and manage learning spaces and to develop knowledge and skills in their learners.

Viewing teachers as learning specialists was an initiative to motivate teachers to do their best and to strive for personal development so that they may improve the quality of their teaching. They are expected to possess the necessary knowledge for their professional practices and to continuously develop this knowledge in order to improve their teaching and to meet the demands of the teaching profession. Teachers should be supported by exposing them to broader educational training structures to develop relevant skills that are fitting for their role as learning specialists (Msomi, 2019). Continuous training and development is the key remedy to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance their role as learning specialists.

The participants argued that the role of teachers as facilitators in the learning process is important because they make sure that learners acquire appropriate knowledge. Teachers should therefore devise links between lessons to enhance comprehension of content. The participants' views revealed that they had a clear and concise understanding of their role in the learning environment. Teaching is viewed as a knowledge rich profession in which teachers are required to be learning specialists. When teachers have a clear concept of their roles as teaching professionals, they will set a good example for their learners and present knowledge in an

appropriate manner. It was also clear that the teachers required support from broader education structures that need to equip them with practical and relevant knowledge and skills through continuous training and development initiatives.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Challenges experienced in the application of curriculum adaptation

The participating teachers admitted to facing some challenges and difficulties in their efforts to implement curriculum adaptation with the intention of giving support to learners with learning difficulties. Walton et al. (2009) argue that barriers to learning may arise from a number of sources and might be intrinsic or extrinsic to learners. It is also suggested that when teachers plan for curriculum adaptation, the main consideration should be the learners who are affected by learning difficulties. Thus, if teachers fail to understand the need for the curriculum to be adapted, learners who experience learning difficulties will be excluded from the processes of teaching and learning.

Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) states that the principles, norms and standards for teacher training should be revised to ensure that teachers have the skills to identify and support learners who experience difficulties. Teacher training should be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure that novice teachers who enter the profession are well trained to deal with learners who have learning challenges. Teachers will then be able to identify the nature of the learning difficulty individual learners experience so that they can initiate the necessary support.

5.3.3.1 Implementation of curriculum adaptation

Curriculum presentation and delivery have always been a challenge for most teachers. When teachers implement curriculum adaptation involving learners who are affected by learning difficulties, learners should not only be present physically but they should fully participate in the activities of the class. Teachers need to be trained to manage curriculum adaptation effectively as the lack of adequate training has been identified as a barrier to learning (Florian, 2008). In this process the policy on curriculum adaptation should be well communicated to all teachers so that they fully conceptualize what the purpose of this approach is. The findings of the current study revealed that although the teachers agreed that learners needed to be treated as individuals, it was difficult for them to address individual needs due to overcrowded classrooms. Although these teachers admitted that they tried to meet the learning needs of the learners who experienced learning difficulties and that they thus tried to adapt their approach

during lessons, the indication was strong that they still needed training to sharpen their practice and to help them acquire practical strategies to be efficient and productive in the classroom.

Curriculum adaptation should never be utilised as a discriminatory measure but as a form of uniting learners with diverse abilities with their peers in the classroom. The main aim is to assist all learners to access equal opportunities for lifelong education. Motitswe and Mokhele (2013) foreground the fact that all learners are unique, and so is their way of learning. Their recommendation is that teachers should plan and adjust their lessons extremely carefully, creatively and efficiently to accommodate learners with diverse backgrounds and learning difficulties. Teachers should also understand how diverse learning difficulties affect learning in their class so that they can plan lessons appropriately. Once proper planning has been done, the necessary support through interventions should be implemented.

The participants suggested that when teachers plan to address the curriculum, they should not degrade to a one-size-fits-all attitude. Instead, teachers need to consider the uniqueness of each learner. When teachers plan their lessons, they should be informed by their knowledge of the learning difficulties that learners may experience in their classrooms. Teachers should therefore use creative ways to ensure that all learners are equally enabled to access knowledge. Bottge et al. (2018) explain the curriculum adaptation approach (differentiation) as the curriculum that is planned and presented differently for different learners. Other than training and training workshops on best practice, teachers also require additional resources to present content in a way that caters for multiple learning styles and to provide learners with multiple paths of knowledge. Thus, learners should be guided to engage with subject content according to their personal learning needs.

Learners who have learning difficulties could be easily accommodated when teachers are eager to transform their teaching methods. It is therefore imperative that teachers should gain relevant knowledge through proper training and development on how to embrace an adaptive approach to lesson planning and delivery in a way that is sustainable for all learners. Teachers further require the provision of resources to communicate concepts and content in multiple ways that cater for diverse educational needs and learning styles.

5.3.3.2 Methods of teaching learners who experience learning difficulties

A theme that emerged strongly from the data is that teachers should obtain a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of various techniques to address learning challenges and to manage and help learners who experience difficulties. The process of teaching and learning is largely impacted by learning practices, and this has prompted some teachers to devise teaching methods and strategies that focus specifically on lesson plans and relevant resources. Such methods help teachers to support learners with learning difficulties.

One teaching strategy that was deemed highly effective in teaching learners with learning difficulties was group work. In such situations learners work collaboratively and they thus support and capacitate one another. Learners who learn in groups with their peers are afforded opportunities to share information which is an important component of learning. Teachers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to appropriately divide learners into groups to ensure that they engage actively in the construction of their own knowledge. However, this study discovered that the teachers in the rural mainstream school under study admittedly lacked knowledge about curriculum adaptation and lessons planning to accommodate the diversity of learners in their classrooms. They blamed this flaw on a lack of support, training and guidance. They also indicated the importance of planning lessons to accommodate learners with learning difficulties and were cognisant of the need to implement various intervention strategies. Unfortunately, they experienced some barriers that hindered them from complying with these requirements.

The use of a variety of teaching strategies ensures that learners access content knowledge to the expected level of understanding. Moreover, the use of various teaching methods motivates learners to be interested in the lesson. Variety (or differentiation) also helps to avoid monotony and boredom and it caters for diverse learning needs. Florian (2018) argues that teachers should familiarise themselves with different learning difficulties in order to devise suitable methods of teaching. Thus, teachers' teaching style should be adapted to accommodate diversity. The participants argued that beginning with the basics in a lesson and then moving on to more complex and demanding content is a strategy that addresses the diversity of learners in the classroom. In this context re-teaching is important as the high flyers may move on to the next level whereas the teacher seeks opportunities to 're-teach' those who find it difficult to access knowledge at the drop of a hat.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Teacher training and development

The findings suggest that a lack of knowledge largely contributes to a lack of teacher development and training. This undeniably causes barriers in the execution of teachers' core function, which is *effective* teaching and learning. Policy is developed to guide practice, specifically in the context of education. Teachers are expected to be agents of change in the process of implementing policies pertaining to inclusive education. Thus, it needs to be reiterated that teachers need an adequate understanding and sufficient knowledge of curriculum adaptation for the successful implementation of this policy. However, the findings indicated that the participants had a very basic understanding of the concept of curriculum adaptation but not enough knowledge of specific practices that could be used to implement this approach in inclusive rural mainstream schools.

The provision of teacher training and development is necessary to enhance the process of expanding and increasing the knowledge teachers possess. This will promote sound teaching strategies to the benefit of all learners and empower teachers to make good decisions about the process of teaching and learning. As a result, teachers will understand why, how, and when they need to employ the required strategies. The participants' existing knowledge was based on the training they had received at tertiary institutions while preparing to be qualified as teachers. They also attended a variety of capacity building workshops throughout their careers. However, none of these sources of knowledge directly addressed the issue of an adapted curriculum or how to create support for learners who have learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. A consequence of inadequate training and development is that teachers fail to manage the challenges that their diverse learners pose. Furthermore, this results in confusion, overwhelming experiences, fatigue, and a negative attitude due to the demands of their job that they have to face. Teachers are expected to be leaders in the learning process and to perform their duties efficiently. Training should motivate teachers so that they will go the extra mile to do what they have been trained to do and what is expected of them. When teachers are prepared to be active participants in the teaching and learning process, they will be the drivers of sound and effective learning.

Improved teacher training and development programmes have led to the professional development of teachers and allowed them to make appropriate decisions regarding the teaching and learning process. The teacher participants of the current study agreed that development is important and that policies that need to be implemented should be scrutinised;

if not, they will not be armed with the necessary skills to support effective teaching. Moreover, the continuous development of teachers will improve their expertise and increase their ability to devise programmes in which mentoring, supporting and forecasting are the focus. The study discovered that professional development does not merely require individual improvement, but also involves the capacity building of the school as an organisation in order to solve problems and bring about renewal. In this context, the data revealed that many schools in the district had begun to take the initiative of launching programmes that run throughout the year and that focus on professional development. These programmes are intended to develop teachers as well as parents as partners in the learning process.

5.4 Summary of recommendations for the reaching community

The recommendations emanating from this study for the teaching community are presented in six main categories:

1. Knowledge and understanding of curriculum adaptation and learning difficulties;
2. Adequate training and development of teachers;
3. Continuous professional development for teachers;
4. Teachers' views on curriculum adaptation and learning difficulties;
5. Intervention strategies to enhance curriculum adaptation; and
6. The need for engagement of all stakeholders (policy makers, dept. officials, teachers and parents).

Table 5.1: Recommendations for equipping teachers with knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
Adequate training and development of teachers	Train teachers to do a thorough assessment of learners to determine what their learning difficulties are;
	Determine whether teachers are equipped with sufficient and relevant knowledge for the implementation of curriculum adaptation so that they will be able to support learners with learning difficulties.
	The funding for teacher training must be revised from the beginning to help teachers obtain skills to identify and address learning difficulties and to accommodate learners with diverse learner needs.

	It is vital that teachers are trained to understand the concept of curriculum adaptation and how to plan adapted lessons to ensure that content delivery is sustainable for all learners.
Need for continuous professional development	The teaching profession is not static but dynamic; therefore, it is important to ensure that the professionalism of teachers is continuously improved in line with the transformations that occur in the education system. Provision of continuous professional development will assist teachers to address the daily challenges that they encounter during teaching and learning.
Knowledge to identify diverse learning difficulties	Teachers must be equipped with knowledge so that they know how to identify and address the various learning difficulties that they may encounter in the classroom. This knowledge will assist teachers in engaging in proper lesson planning to ensure inclusivity.
Limit the number of learners in a class	The success of curriculum adaptation can be negatively or positively affected by the number of learners in a classroom. Overcrowding is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. Thus class sizes must be limited to remain within the norm so that the stress of overcrowding can be avoided and the 'classroom curriculum' effectively implemented.
Support from stakeholders	All stakeholders need to work collaboratively to make sure that teachers are supported and obtain the necessary knowledge and skills for the successful implementation of curriculum adaptation.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Although the objectives of the study were achieved, its scope was relatively limited and the findings may not be generalised. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted on the experiences of teachers regarding the implementation of curriculum adaptation in rural mainstream schools in South Africa. In particular, research should focus on rural mainstream schools that are characterised by the enrolment of learners who have diverse learning difficulties. It will also necessitate an investigation into the role of other stakeholders who can assist teachers with the ever-growing challenges they experience should they implement curriculum adaptation. The support given to teachers by the Department of Basic Education, the school and parents needs to be further explored as they are all partners in the education context.

The sample size was limited to four participants from two schools. There is thus a great need to extend the sample in future studies to assist in the accuracy and generalisability of the data that was generated. The use of a larger sample and a much broader research setting will generate data that will be generalizable.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of this study was the small sample of four teachers from one primary and one secondary school located in the rural area of Oshabeni Location in Ugu District, South Africa. The sample was thus limited to teachers who taught in the senior phase.

The findings cannot be generalised to the wider population as the data was generated from a limited sample and were very specific in terms of the teachers' social, political, economic and cultural contexts.

5.7 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to engage in a qualitative exploration of teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation as a measure to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. The findings of this study highlight the need to provide teachers with training beyond their tertiary education as well as continuous professional development so that they will be better skilled and appropriately equipped to successfully implement curriculum adaptation as a supportive measure to assist learners who experience learning difficulties. In addition, teachers need to be provided with basic teaching resources and specific teaching materials that will help them address learning difficulties. Moreover, large class sizes should be avoided, the language barrier should be recognised and addressed, and various teaching styles should be employed. The successful implementation of curriculum adaptation to support struggling learners will assist in closing the gaps that hinder the teaching and learning process in rural mainstream classrooms.

Each part of the education system has the responsibility to fulfill its role in order to improve the entire education system of the country. The only way in which teachers can be fully empowered is if they know how to implement an adapted curriculum to support their learners who fail to access lesson content due to their learning difficulties. The participants in this study acknowledged that the acquisition of the necessary knowledge will assist them in the proper use of curriculum adaptation as a supportive tool to help learners who are challenged by

learning difficulties. Teachers' limited knowledge of curriculum adaptation and their consequent lack of support for learners who struggle overwhelm and overburden them and they are thus unable to fulfill their roles and responsibilities successfully.

When teachers are well supported through appropriate knowledge and skills training, professional development, and the provisioning of the necessary basic resources for effective teaching, their attitude will improve and so will their efficacy and motivation. In turn, the overall quality of teaching and learning in the classroom will improve and this will have a beneficial effect on learners' sense of self-worth and thus their academic performance. Schools also need to seek help from outside sources to provide assistance to teachers that will enable them to address the challenges that learners encounter during the teaching and learning process.

However, teachers need more than knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support their learners who have learning difficulties as they also need motivation. If teachers are motivated, they view any challenge that arises during their execution of their duties as a test to be passed in order to fulfil their role as educators. Teachers thus require more knowledge, skills, time, teaching resources, space and support to properly teach their learners regardless of their learning difficulties. The study demonstrated that teachers often go far beyond the call of duty in order to provide quality education for all their learners, particularly those who experience difficulties in learning. Clearly, teachers' limited knowledge of the management and teaching of learners with learning difficulties calls for collaborative efforts by all stakeholders in the interest of providing quality and equal education for all learners without discrimination on the basis of diversity. Teachers also need to be ready to seek relevant and extended knowledge to sharpen their teaching skills and to face the challenges of the ever-transforming education system. Many programmes have been developed to improve the knowledge of teachers on different aspects of education. It is time now for the DBE, the school administrative system and the community at large to step up and demonstrate that they too prioritise the education system and care about successful outcomes for all South African learners.

REFERENCES

- Adewumi, T. M., Rembe, S., Shumba, J. & Akinyemi, A. (2017). Adaptation of the curriculum. For the inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected primary schools in the Beaufort District. *African Journal of Disability*, 6(0), 1-5.
- Alton, S., Bird, G., & MacKinnon. (2004). Accessing Curriculum –Strategies for differentiation for Pupils with Down syndrome. *The Down Syndrome Educational Trust* 6(1), 141-143. Retrieved from <http://www.downsyndrome.net>.
- Apollinaire, G. (2007). *Inclusive Education*. In Nieuwenhuis, J. (ed) *Growin Human Rights and Values in Education*. Pretoria: Van Shaik.
- Arentsen, P. (2008). *Personal interview*. 9 April, Benoni: Ladbrook, M.W.
- Babbie, E. (2011). *Introduction to social research*. (5th edition) Belmont, CA: Pearson.
- Bantwini, B.D. (2009). How teachers perceive the new curriculum reform: Lessons from a school district in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30(1), 83-90.
- Bennet, R. E. (2003). The Changing Nature of Educational Assessment. *Review of Research in Education*, 39(1), 370-407.
- Betram, C. & Christiansen, I. (2014). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Beijajaard, D., Meijer P. C, & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 107-128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2003.07.001>.
- Bertram, C., & Christiansen, I. (2015). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Bhana, D., Morrell, R., Epstein, D., & Moletsane, R. (2006). The hidden work of caring teachers and the maturing AIDS epidemic in diverse secondary schools in Durban. *Journal of Education*, 38: 5-23.
- Bird, C. M. (2005). How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(2), 226-248.
- Bottge, B. A., Cohen, A. S., & Choi, H. J. (2018). Comparisons of mathematics intervention effects in resource and inclusive classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, 84(2), 197-212.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Burns, E., Bell, S. (2011). Narrative construction of professional teacher identity of teachers

- with dyslexia. *Teaching and Teacher Education Journal*, 27(5), 952-960.
- Clark, V., & Braun, V. (2006). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Sciences*, 26(2): 120-123.
- Cleophas, M. (2012). Access to Education in Africa: Responding to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *Disability and Society*, 27(3), 385-398.
- Cohen, J. (2006). Social, emotional, ethical, and academic education: Creating a climate for learning participation in democracy, and well-being. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76: 201-237.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge /Falmer.
- Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Cresswell, J.W.(2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dalton, F.M., McKenzie, J.A., & Kabonde, C., (2012). The implementation of Inclusive Education South Africa: Reflections arising from a workshop for teachers and therapists to introduce Universal Design for Learning', *African Journal of Disability* 1(1, Art. #13, 7 pages. [http://dx. doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v1i1.13](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v1i1.13).
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Teacher Education and the American Future. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 35-47.
- Day, C. (2007). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(8) 677-692.
- De Boer, A., Pijl, S.J., & Minnaert, A. (2011). Regular primary school teachers' attitudes Towards inclusive education: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(3).331-353.
- Delport, C.S.L, & Fouche', C.B. (2011). *Research at Grassroots- for the Social Sciences and Human Science Professionals*. (4th edition) Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, L.S. (2003). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. (2nd edition). London: Sage.
- Department of Basic Education (2011). *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Mathematics: Further Education and Training Phase Grades 10-12*, Pretoria: Government Printing Works.

- Department of Basic Education (2010). *White Paper 6: Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning*. Pretoria: Government Press.
- Department of Education (1997). *Quality Education for All. Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development. Report of the National Commission Special Needs in education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS)*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Department of Education (2001). *White Paper 6: Special Needs Education- Building an Inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Government Press.
- De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B., & Delport, C.S.L. (2011). *Research at Grass-roots : for the Social Sciences and Human Science Professions*. (4th edition) Pretoria: Van Schaik, 3-26.
- Diaz, L. (2017). The teaching and learning process of mathematics in the primary education stage : A constructivist proposal within the framework of key competencies. *International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education*, 12(3), 709-713.
- Domegan, C. T & Fleming, A. (2007). *Qualitative research methods*. America: Sage.
- Donald, D., Lazarus, S. & Lolwana, P. (2002). *Educational Psychology in Social Sciences Issues and Special Needs in Southern Africa* (2nd Ed.). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Donohue, D. & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realizing inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), 1-14.
- Durrheim, K., Desmond, P., & Terre-Blanche, M.J (2014). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd.
- Du Plessis, P., Conley, L. & Du Plessis, E. (2007). *Teaching and learning in South African schools*. Pretoria: Van Shaik.
- Du Plessis, P. & Mestry, R. (2011). Teachers for Rural Schools- A Challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39 (1), 1-9
- Du-Plessis, P. (2013). Legislation and policies: Progress towards the right to inclusive education. *De Jure Law Journal*, 46(1) : 76-92. 76 Republic of South African Act 108 of 1996.
- Du-Preez, P. & Simmonds, S. (2014). Curriculum , curriculum development, curriculum Studies ? Problematising theoretical ambiguities in doctoral thesis in the education field. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2):1-13.
- Engelbrecht, P. (2006). The Implementation of inclusive education in South Africa 10 years after Democracy. *European Journal of Psychology*, XXI (3), 253-264.
- Fazal, R. (2012). Readiness for inclusion in Pakistani schools: Perceptions of School

- Administrators. *International Journal of Social Science and Education*, 2(4), 825-832.
- Fischer, D. & Frey, N. (2001). *Curriculum and Modification*. New York: Longman.
- Flick, V. (2006). *An introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Florian, L. (2008). Inclusion: Special or inclusive education: Future trends. *British Journal of Special Education*, 35: 202-208.
- Ford, J. (2013). Educating students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. *Electronic Journal for inclusive Education*, 3(1), 3-5.
- Fomunyan, K.G. (2016). Theorizing student constructions of quality education in South African University. *Southern African Review of Education*, 22(1), 46-63
- Fourie, J., & Hooijer, E. (2016). Baadplaas training programme moving inclusive education forward : Curriculum differentiation, University of Johannesburg.
- Ibad, F. (2018). Personality and ability traits of teachers: Student perceptions. *Journal of Educational Development*, 5(2):162-175.
- Gander, M., & Strothman, S. (2005). *Teaching writing to students with learning disabilities*. Putney: Landmark.
- Gay, L.R., & Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational research*, New Jersey: Upper Saddle River.
- Gay, L.R., Mills, G.E., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (9th edition). Upper Saddle River, Pearson.
- Gemeda, F., Fiorucci, M., & Catarci, M. (2013). Teachers' professional development in schools: rhetoric versus reality. *Professional Development in Education*, 40(1):71-88.
- Gould, A., & Vaughn, S. (2000). Planning for the inclusive classroom: Meeting the needs of diverse learners. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 3(3), 363-374.
- Gredler, M.E., & Shields, C.C. (2008). *Vygotsky's Legacy: A Foundation for Research and Practise*. New York: Guilford.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1990). *Competing paradigms in qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hadebe- Ndlovu, B.N. & Setoromo, M. (2020). An exploration of in-service teachers' Understanding of teaching mathematics in Grade R classrooms: A case study of Grade R in Lesotho University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *South Africa Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1): 14-23.
- Holiday, A. (2014). *Doing and writing qualitative research* (2nd Ed.), Los Angeles; Sage.

- Hoover, J.J. (2005). *Curriculum Adaptation for students with learning and Behaviour problems : Differentiating instruction to meet diverse needs*. (3rd edition) Austin: ProEd.
- Horsley, S.L., Matsumoto, C. (2010). Research on professional development for teachers of mathematics and science: *The state of scene. School Sciences and Mathematics*, 99 (5): 258-271.
- Ikwumelu, S.N., Oyibe, O.A., & Oketa, E.C. (2015). Adaptive Teaching: An Invaluable Pedagogic Practice in Social Studies Education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (3), 140-144.
- John, V., & Rule, P. (2011). Educational research for social change, 2(1): 133-135.
- Jonassen, D., & Land, S. (2012). *Theoretical foundations of learning environments* (2nd), London : Routledge.
- Karten, T. J. (2005). *Inclusion strategies that work! Research based methods for the classroom* . Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Kemp, A. T., Blake, B., Shaw, C. C., & Preston, J. (2009). A conversation about content versus pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 1(2): 103-119.
- Khalid, A., & Azeem, M. (2012). Constructivist vs traditional: Effective instructional Approach in Teacher Education. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(5), 1-9.
- Khanare, F. P. (2012). Schoolchildren affected by HIV in rural South Africa. Schools as Environments that enable or limit coping. *African Journal of AIDS Research*, 11(3), 251-259.
- Khoaeane, T.J. & Naong, M.N. (2012). How to overcome challenges for meaningful implementation of inclusive Education in Lesotho. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 42(3): 289-297.
- Konza, D. (2008). Inclusion of students with disabilities in new times: responding to the challenge. In P. Kell, W. Vialle, Konza D., Vogl, G. (Eds.), *Learning and the learner . Exploring learning for new times*. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.
- Lapadat, J., & Lindsay, A. (1999). Transcriptions in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(1), 6486.
- Lapan, S.D., Quartaroli, M.T. & Riemer, F.J. (2012). *Qualitative research : An introduction to methods and designs*. San Francisco, CA: Jasley-Bass.
- Lee, S., Amos, B.A., Gragoudas, S., et.al (2006). *Curriculum augmentation and adaptation Strategies to promote access to the general curriculum for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities*. Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 41(3):199-212.
- Legotlo, M.W. (2014). *Challenges and Issues facing the education system in South Africa*.

Johannesburg: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Lombard, J. J. (2010). *Outcomes-based education in South Africa: a brief overview*. Cape Town : Van Schaik.

Loughran, J. (2011). On becoming a teacher educator. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 37 (3), 279-291.

Mamwenda, T.S. (2004). *Educational psychology: An African Perspective*. Sandton, South Africa: Heinemann.

Mangope, B., Kuyini, A.B., & Major, T.E. (2012). Assessment of learners with special needs for inclusive education in Botswana: Issues and challenges for schools. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 5(2), 38-50.

Marais, P. (2016). “We can’t believe what we see “: Overcrowded classrooms through the eyes of student teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(6):1-9.

Maree, K. (2009). *First steps in research*. (14th edition) Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Marishane, M.A, Marishane, R.N. & Mahlo, F.D. (2015). Teacher capacity for curriculum differentiation in teaching foundation phase mathematics. *International Journal of Science Education*, 11(3), 253-262.

Markauskaite, L., et.al. (2010). Professional identity creation: Examining the development of beginning preservice teachers’ understanding of their work as teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 455-465.

Marshall, B. & Drummond, M.J. (2006). How teachers engage with assessment for learning lessons from the classroom. *Research Papers in Education*, 21:133-149.

Marshall, K. (2016). Rethinking differentiation- Using teachers’ time most effectively. *The professional Journal for educators* 98 (1): 8-13. Retrieved from <https://dx.doi.org/1177/0031721716666046>.

Maruli, S. (2014). Quality in Teaching: A renew of literature. *International Journal of Educational and Research*, 2(12), 193-195.

Mathibe, J. (2007). The professional development of school principals. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(3), 523-540.

McKay, J. (2014). Young people’s voices: disciplining young peoples’ participation in decision-making in special educational needs. *Journal of Education Policy*, 29(6), 760-773.

McMillan, H.L. & Schumacher, M. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*. (5th edition). New York: Longman.

- McLeod, S. (2018). Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, 5(2): 1-9 Available at <https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget>
- Mentz, M. (2010). Enhancing success in South Africa's higher education: *Measuring student engagement in South Africa*, 42(1), 259-278.
- Mergler, A., Carrington, S., Kimber, M., & Bland, D. (2016). Inclusive values: Exploring the perspectives of pre-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(4) <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41v4.2>.
- Meidl, T., & Meidl, C. (2011). Curriculum integration and Adaptation: Individualizing Pedagogy for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students. *Current Issues in Education*, 14(1), 3-24.
- Miles, S. & Singal, N. (2010). The education for all and inclusive education debate: Conflict, contradiction or opportunity? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14 (1), 1-15 doi: 10.1080/1360311802265125. Ministry of Education and Training – Lesotho (2005).
- Mohanasundaram, K. (2018). Curriculum Design and Development. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research*, 3(1): 54-56
- Mohanty, S. P., & Nanda, N. (2017). Inclusive practices in elementary education. What do The heads of schools perceive? *i-managers: Journal on School Educational Technology*, 12(4), 15-23.
- Moradi, M. (2019). Teacher's attitudes towards the effects of lesson plan on classroom Management : A case study of Sufi Sahab Zakur high school. *American International Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 4(2):373-380.
- Motitswe, J. & Mokhele, M. (2013). Teaching and Learning in the inclusive classroom: foundation phase teachers do? *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(6), 545 -551.
- Motsekga, A. (2012). English home language (first language) Grades 10-12 policy document (CAPS), Pretoria: Government Press.
- Mouton, J. (2001). *How to Succeed in your Masters and Doctoral Studies*. (7th edition). Pretoria : Van Shaik.
- Msipha, Z. (2013). *A Responsive Curriculum Adaptation for Foundation Phase Learners With A Mild Intellectual Disability in a Disadvantaged Village in Mpumalanga Province*. Master's thesis, University of South Africa. Retrieved from <http://uir.unisa.ac.za>.
- Msomi, N. P. P. (2019). *Exploring inclusive practices in the intermediate phase mathematics classroom at Umlazi District* (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood.

- Muringi, L. N. (2015). Inclusive basic education in South Africa: Issues in its conceptualization and implementation. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/ Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad (PER/PER)*, 18(1), 3160-3195.
- Muthkrishna, N., & Schoeman, M. (2010). "From special needs to quality education for all. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(4), 315-335.
- Mthukrishna, N. & Schoeman, M. (2010). From "Special Needs" to Quality Education for All", a participatory problem-centred approach to development in South Africa. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 4(4):315-335.
- Myers, M. (2013). Rural and black families may support their child's education in ways that differs from middle class norms. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 90(3): 437-458.
- Mzizi, N. A. (2014). *Curriculum adaptation for learners with impairments in the foundation phase in Thabo Mofutsanyane education district, Free State Province* (Unpublished Masters' thesis). University of Free State, Bloemfontein.
- Naidu, S. (2016). *Investigating educators' experiences of teaching learners who have barriers to learning at a public secondary school in Newlands West* (Unpublished Masters' Thesis). University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood.
- Nel, M., & Grosser, M. M. (2016). An appreciation of learning disabilities in the South African context, learning disabilities: *A Contemporary Journal*, 14(1), 79-92.
- Nel, N., Nel, M. & Hugo, A. (2012). *Learner support in diverse classroom*. (2nd edition) Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Ngcobo, J. & Muthukrishna, N. (2011). The geographies of students with disabilities in an ordinary school. *South African Journal of Education*, 31(1), 357-368.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2010). *Introducing qualitative research*. In K. Maree (Ed.). *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Ntombela, S. (2011). The progress of inclusive education in South Africa: Teachers' Experiences in a selected district, KwaZulu-Natal. *Improving Schools*, 14(1), 5-14.
- Oboegbulem, A., & Eskay, M. (2013). *Learners with disabilities in an inclusive education setting in Nigeria: Implications for administrators*. *US-China Education Review*, 3(5), 313-318.
- Olsen, B. (2010). *Teaching for success: Developing your teacher identity in today's classroom*. London. Boulder.
- Opie, C. (2004). *What is educational research?* In Opie, C. (Ed.). *Doing educational research*. London. Sage.
- Owen-Smith, M. (2010). The language challenge in the classroom. *Focus: Journal of the*

Helen Suzman Foundation, 56: 31-37.

- Parker, A. (1999). A study of variables that predict dropout from distance education. *International Journal of Educational Technology*, 1(2), 1-10.
- Patton, J. (2002). *Qualitative research and valuation methods*. (3rd edition). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Phothongsunan, S. (2010). *Interpretive paradigm in educational research* 2(1): 1-4. Galaxy. Retrieved from [http://www. Aulibrary.au.edu/multim1/ABAC_Pub/ ... /v2-nl-l-oct-10.pdf](http://www.Aulibrary.au.edu/multim1/ABAC_Pub/.../v2-nl-l-oct-10.pdf).
- Pike, G., & Kuh, G.D. (2005). First and second generation college students: A comparison of their Engagement and intellectual development. *The Journal of Education and Research*, 2(12), 193-195.
- Praveen , A. & Qounsar, T. (2018). Inclusive education and the challenges. *National Journal of Mult-disciplinary Researc and Development*, 3(2), 64-68.
- Prinsloo, E. (2005). Working towards Inclusive Education in South African classrooms. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4), 344-348.
- Punch, K.F. (2006). *Introduction to Social Research- Quantitative & Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage.
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage.
- Rodgers, C.R., & Scott, K.H. (2008). *The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach*. New York: Routledge.
- Rule, P. & John, V. (2011). *Your guide to case study research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Saddler, P.M., Sonnet, G., Coyle, H.P., & Cook-Smith, N. (2013). The influence of teachers' knowledge on student learning in middle school physical science classrooms. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(2), 1020-1049.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2007). *Research methods for business students* (4th edition). London: Pearson Education.
- Shelile, L.I, & Hlalele, D. (2017). Challenges of continuing professional teacher development in inclusive Lesotho Schools. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(3):673-686. doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2014.11890230.
- Singh, A. (2001). *Classroom management: A reflective perspective*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.
- Smith, J. & Arendse, A. (2016). South African curriculum reform. *Education For Active Citizenship*, 14(1), 65-68.

- Smith, B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2013). Observations in Qualitative Inquiry: When What You See Is Not What You See. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), 1-3.
- Spencer, S. (2011). Universal Design for Learning: Assistance for Teachers in Today's Inclusive Classrooms. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1), 10-22.
- Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1999). Inclusive Education: From Isolation to Inclusion. *Remedial and Special Education*, 1(1), 11-18.
- Stefanich, G. (2001). *Teaching in inclusive classrooms, theory and foundations*. Washington, DC : National Science Foundation (NSF).
- Sternberg, R.J. (2010). Creative Thinking in the classroom. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. 43(3), 325-338.
- Sternberg, K. , Karlsson.,L., Pitkanieemi,H., & Maaranaen,K. (2014). Beginning students teachers' teacher identities based on their practical theories. *Teaching and Teacher education*, 37 (2), 204-219.
- Swanson, H.L. (2013). *Handbook of Learning Disabilities*. (2nd edition). United Kingdom: Guilford Press.
- Terwel, J. (2005). Curriculum differentiation: Multiple perspective and developments in education . *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(6), 653-670.
- Thomas, G. (2011). *How to do your case study: A guide for students and researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Thorne, J.A. (2013). Biblical online education: Contributions from constructivism. *Christian Educational Journal*, 10(1), 99-109.
- Timperley, H. (2011). Building Professional Capability in Schooling Improvement (Faculty of Education) University of Auckland.
- Timostuk, I., & Ugaste, A. (2010). Student teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26:1563-1570.
- Tomlinson, C.A. (2013). *The Differentiated Classroom. Responding to the needs of learners* (2nd edition). USA: ASCD.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2003). *Overcoming exclusions through inclusive approaches in education: A challenge and a vision , conceptual paper*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organizations (2004). *Changing teaching practices: Using curriculum differentiation to respond to students' diversity*. Paris: UNESCO .
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (2007). *Conventions*

- on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its protocol [A/RES/61/106] . Available at <http://.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=99>. Accessed 3 March 2014.
- United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organizations Report (2013). Teaching and learning. *Achieving quality for all (1-6)*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Van Breda, A.D. (2010). The phenomenon and concerns of child-headed households in Africa . In M. Liebel & R. Lutz (Eds.), *Sozialarbeit des Sudens, Band III: Kindeheiten and Kinderrechte* (pp. 259-280). Oldenburg: Paolo Frere Verlag.
- Varynen, S. (2003). Observations from South African classrooms: some inclusive strategies. South African-Finnish Co-operation Programme in the Education Sector (SCOPE). *Research Collaboration Project, 5(2)*, 6-9.
- Victoroff, K. Z., & Hogan, S. (2006). Students' perceptions of effective learning Experiences in dental school. A qualitative study using a critical incident technique. *Journal of Dental Education, 70(2)*, 124-132.
- Vosloo, J. J. (2014). Research design and methodology. Available at: displace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/12269/vosloo_JJ_Chapter_5.pdf, 1-3.
- Vrasmas, T. (2014). Curriculum for Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Education. *A Literature Review, 127*: 336-341.
- Walton, E., Nel, N., Hugo, A., & Muller, H. (2009). The extent and practice of inclusion in independent schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education, 29*: 105-126.
- Weeks, F.H. & Erradu, J. (2013). The intellectually impaired foundation-phase learner: How Can the teacher support these learners? *South African Journal of Education, 10(1)*, 1-16.
- Welch, A, R. (2001). Globalisation , post-modernity and the state: *Comparative education facing the third millennium comparative education, 37(4)*, 475-492.
- Welch, T., & Gutting, J. (2002). *Teacher Education: Looking in the mirror to plan the future* (10th Anniversary Edition). Johannesburg: SAIDE.
- Wentzel, V. D., & Brophy, J.E. (2014). *Motivating students to learn*. London: Routledge.
- White, C. J. (2013). Higher education emotions: A scale development exercise. *Higher Education Research & Development, 32(2)*, 287-299.
- Wium, A., & Louw, B. (2015). The South African national school curriculum: Implications for collaboration between teachers and speech –language therapists working in schools. *South African Journal of Childhood Education, 5(1)*, 19-41.
- Wright, T. (2007). Higher education for sustainability: Developing a comprehensive research agenda. *Journal of Education for Sustainable, 1(1)*, 101-106 .
doi : Org/1011771097340820700100117.

Woodfolk, A. (2007). *Educational psychology*. (10 th edition). Boston: Pearson Education.

Yamin- Ali, J., Pooma, D. (2012). *Decolonising qualitative approaches for and by the Carribbean* .South Africa: Amazon.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:2/4/8/1526

Ms S.R Msomi

P.O Box 45179 Port

Shepstone

4240

Dear Ms Msomi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN D_oE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS’ KNOWLEDGE OF CURRICULUM ADAPTATION TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN RURAL MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS”**, 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 23 May 2018 to 09 July 2020.
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 below
9. Upon completion of the research, a 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 institution of the department of Education

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 23 May 2018

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel.: +27 33 392 1063 • Fax.: +27 033 392 1203 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za
Facebook: KZNDOE... Twitter: @DBE_KZN... Instagram: kzn_education... Youtube: kzndoe

...Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

APPENDIX B: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



23 May 2019

Ms Smangele R Msomi 9504348
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Msomi

Protocol reference number: HSS/2142/018M

Project title: An exploration of teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties.

Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Application

With regards to your response received 29 March 2019 to our letter of 20 March 2019, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dimakatso Korkjas

cc Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay

cc School Administrator: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

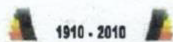
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: simbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymam@ukzn.ac.za / mohun@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

College of Humanities, Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Edgewood Campus,

Dear Participant

My name is Ms Simangele Rosemary Msomi, I am a master's in educational psychology candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.

I am interested in studying the level of teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. My study is based in rural mainstream school where I have experienced teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties. I have selected your school as my location of the study, to gather the information. I am interested in asking you some questions. I also kindly request you to participate in the presentation of the lesson and discussion.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at developing ways in which curriculum can be adapted to cater for the needs of learners living with diverse disabilities in order to be successful in their schooling.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: 9504348@stu.ukzn.ac.za or rosemarysmangele@gmail.com

Cell: 083 724 2393 or 064 507 2615

My supervisor is Ms Makie Kortjass who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: Kortjassm@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 031 260 3669 You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

PARTICIPATION INFORMED CONSENT REPLY SLIP

DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant)

hereby

Confirm that I understand the contents of this document and nature of the research project, and

I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

APPENDIX D

DECLARATION OF CONSENT PROJECT TITLE: An

exploration of teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools.

RESEARCHER

Full Name: Simangele R. Msomi

School: Education

College: University of KwaZulu Natal

Campus: Edgewood

Proposed Qualification: M. Ed (Psych)

Contact: 0837242393 or

0727460444

Email: rosemarysmangele@gmail.com

HSSREC RESEARCH OFFICE

Full Name: Prem Mohun

HSS Research Office

Govan Bheki Building

Westville Campus

Contact: 0312604557

Email: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

SUPERVISOR

Full Name of Supervisor: Makie Kortjass

School: Education

College: University of KwaZulu Natal

Campus: Edgewood

Position: Lecturer

Contact: 0312603669

Email: Kortjassm@ukzn.ac.za

I, **Simangele R. Msomi** Student no. **9504348**, I am a **master's in educational psychology student**, at the School of Education, in the University of KwaZulu Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: **An exploration of teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools**. The aim of the study is to determine how curriculum that is implemented can be adapted to cater for the support of learners who are experiencing diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools.

Through your participation, I hope to explore your understanding and knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties. The study will further explore challenges faced by teachers during the process of teaching and learning as well as how curriculum can be adapted to cater for the needs of learners with diverse learning difficulties in rural mainstream schools. I give guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate in the study. Please sign on the dotted line to show that you have read and understood the contents of this letter. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Questionnaire

Section A: Biographic and Demographic data

1. Gender: Please indicate whether you are male or female.

Male	Female

2. What is your age range?

Between 12-15	16-20yrs	21-30yrs	30-40yrs	40-50yrs	Above 50yrs

3. What is your experience in teaching?

Less than 5yrs	5-10yrs	11-15yrs	16-20yrs	More than 20yrs

4. Do you have a teaching qualification that includes curriculum adaptation?

Yes	No

5. Did you receive any continuous developmental training on curriculum adaptation?

Yes	No

6. Did you learn or trained on screening, identifying, teaching, assessing and supporting learners living with diverse learning difficulties during your teacher training, CAPS training or at any developmental workshop?

Yes	No

7. Please indicate the grade that you are currently teaching.

Grade 7	Grade 8

8. What is the total number of learners in your class?

30-35	35-40	40-45	45-50	50-60	More than 60

9. Do you it is important to support learners with learning difficulties during curriculum implementation?

Yes	No
-----	----

--	--

10. Do you think teachers are provided with enough training or development on curriculum adaptation as a tool to support learners with learning difficulties?

Yes	No

Section B: Issues of curriculum adaptation, strategies of implementation and learners learning difficulties data.

10. What do you understand by the term curriculum adaptation (differentiation)?
11. What is your understanding of a learning disability or barrier?
12. Please explain how CAPS promote curriculum adaptation to support learners with learning difficulties.
13. Do you think curriculum adaptation is extra work for teachers? Why?
14. Why do you think that curriculum adaptation is important in teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties?
15. What are some of the learning difficulties that learners encounter? Mention any two.
16. What can be done to promote curriculum adaptation to support learners encountering learning difficulties?
17. What is the most difficult situation you have had in terms of curriculum delivery and supporting learners with learning difficulties?
18. What are the weaknesses of the present curriculum that is delivered?
19. As a specialist in your subject what should be done to ensure that learners with learning difficulties are able to access knowledge?
20. Are there any other issues about curriculum adaptation or teaching learners with diverse learning difficulties you would like to mention?

APPENDIX F: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Name of educator : _____
Date : _____
Subject Period : _____ **Lesson**
Topic : _____

The teachers use of the language of instruction and learners level of understanding

This section is intended to capture the level of the teachers' use of the language of instruction and the level to which learners understand what is spoken to them.

Focus	Lesson activity	Comments
English use for curriculum implementation	The use of English by the educator as a language of teaching and learning, communicating information to the learners. Learners showed varying levels of understanding the knowledge presented to them. Educator makes use of simple terminology and code switching to make learners understand knowledge presented to them. Levels of active participation to the lesson using relent language and demonstrating some degree of understanding.	
Use of English for instruction	Educator frequently make use of English in giving instructions to the learners. Educator assesses the learners' level of understanding in the given instructions. Educator often code switch with learners' home language to enhance learners understanding of instructions. Educator encourages learners to use English during the learning process. Struggling learners are encouraged to actively participate.	

Instructional Strategies

This section is intended to evaluate the level of teacher's ability in implementing instructional strategies in the classroom

Effective response to deal or to address problems arising from difficult questions or tasks	Educator uses different strategies to assist learners who encounter difficult problems. Educator uses questions that are of different cognitive levels to accommodate all learners. Educator uses clear instructions for learners to understand what is required of each question. Educator provide varying tasks to learners of diverse abilities. Educator assists in addressing problems that arise.	
Adjusting lesson With learners' individual level or Needs	Educator applies lesson using various strategies to accommodate learners of diverse disabilities. The educator plans and execute lessons in a way that in sensitive to the needs of all learners. Learners are encouraged to learn at their own pace in a method that accommodate their needs.	
Providing alternative	Alternative explanations are provided to the learners to enhance their understanding.	

explanation and examples	Educator allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge by providing their own explanations.	
Provide learners with strategies to deal with barriers to learning.	Educator demonstrate different ways of dealing with barriers to learning.	
	Educator encourages collaborative learning and to capacitate one another in the learning process.	
	Educator recognizes the uniqueness of all learners and identifies barriers to their learning developing strategies to deal with them.	

Classroom Management

This schedule focuses on getting the information on teachers' ability in managing the class to help create positive classroom atmosphere.

Controlling disruptive behaviours.	Educator significantly manages discipline in the class. The use of proper measures to deal with disruptive behavior without discriminating or excluding learners.	
Establishing classroom rules to keep activities run smoothly	Classroom activities provided by the educator are suitable for the diverse nature of learners in the classroom.	
	Setting of classroom rules for the promotion of positive atmosphere for learners to learn.	

Students Engagement

Promoting learners active engagement	Educator uses the lesson topic to actively engages all learners in the classroom.	
	Educator promotes active participation of all learners and learners mostly find interest in the lesson.	
Sustaining learners' engagement	Educators' use of various techniques to maintain learner engagement levels in activities and lessons.	
	Engaging learners for the whole lesson through applying various strategies of adapting curriculum content.	

Curriculum Implementation

Stimulating inquiry among learners.	Educator create lessons that actively encourages learner participation.	
	Educator encourages inquiry among learners and assist them to initiate themselves in solving the problems.	
Promoting interaction among learners.	Educator encourages learners to actively engage with one another in the learning process.	
	Educator assist learners to collaboratively learn and supplement each other's weaknesses, learn towards achieving of a common goal to success.	

Teachers knowledge of adapting curriculum to support learners with learning difficulties

Strategies and knowledge of adapting curriculum to assist learners with difficulties.	The educator is presenting subject content through the use of curriculum that is adapted to meet the learning needs of individual learners in the classroom and assist them with learning difficulties to ensure the successful learning of all learners.	



Research Skills Development Services CC

SARS Income Tax No. 9249355208; CC Founding Statement No. CK94/16841/23 SARS; Tax Clearance Certificate No. 1994/016841/23
SACE REGISTRATION NUMBER: N.D. COERTZE – 1082433 (2003)

DECLARATION OF PROOF-READING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Nicolina D. Coertze, declare that I meticulously perused the manuscript referred to below for language editing purposes. I identified and corrected linguistic and stylistic inaccuracies to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Using the Word Tracking system, I kept track of any changes that I made for review by the author. I also offered annotations as recommendations to the author for additional review of areas that I considered to be flawed. I

declare that I adhered to the general principles that guide the work of a language editor and that I remained within my brief as had been agreed with the author of the manuscript.

Details

TITLE	An exploration of teachers' knowledge of curriculum adaptation to support learners with diverse learning difficulties
--------------	--

SURNAME	Msomi
FULL NAMES	Smangele Rosemary
PROPOSED QUALIFICATION	Masters in Educational Psychology
DEPARTMENT	Education (Edgewood Campus)
TERTIARY INSTITUTION	University of KwaZulu-Natal
NAME OF SUPERVISOR	D Kortjass
REFERENCING STYLE	As required by UKZN

Respectfully submitted on: 10 May 2020



**(MRS) N.D. COERTZE
LANGUAGE EDITOR**

APPENDIX H: TURNITIN REPORT

Document Viewer

Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 06-May-2020 8:51 AM CAT
ID: 1317335340
Word Count: 47275
Submitted: 1

Similarity Index	Similarity by Source
13%	Internet Sources: 7% Publications: 2% Student Papers: 13%

An Exploration of Teachers' Knowledge of Curr... By
Rosemary Msomi

[exclude quoted](#) [exclude bibliography](#) [excluding matches < 1%](#) mode: [Change mode](#) [print](#) [refresh](#)
[download](#)

5% match (student papers from 05-Feb-2019) Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal on 2019-02-05	✖
3% match (student papers from 31-Oct-2016) Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal on 2016-10-31	✖
3% match (Internet from 12-Jan-2018) http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za	✖
1% match (Internet from 17-Dec-2018) http://ir.cut.ac.za	✖
1% match (student papers from 21-Dec-2016) Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal on 2016-12-21	✖
1% match (Internet from 25-May-2016) http://uir.unisa.ac.za	✖

