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**CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES: LEARNERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES
IN A SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL IN PIETERMARITZBURG**

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Signed:



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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Bankole Fadekemi Olamide declare that:

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Signed:



DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to GOD ALMIGHTY, my Abba Father, the preserver of my soul, without Him, it would have been impossible for me to achieve this feat, despite all odds. Take all the glory to yourself, my Lord, the unchangeable changer and my solid foundation.

I also dedicate this research work to all learners with special needs all over the world, particularly my former, present and future learners, know that you are unique in your own ways, you are not alone, God is with you. Believe in yourselves, and assert daily that, 'in my disability, lies great abilities'.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

IE	Inclusive Education
CWD	Children with Disabilities
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
TLO	Teacher Liaison Officer
UNDSPD	United States Division for Social Policy Development
ESS	Education Support Services
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
LD	Learning Difficulties
SMT	Senior Management Team
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
SNES	Special Needs Education Services
WHO	World Health Organization
APA	American Psychiatrist Association
IDEA	Individuals with Disability Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
DBE	Department of Basic Education
NCPDSA	National Council for People with Physical Disabilities in South Africa
INDS	Integrated National Disability Strategy
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

ABSTRACT

Literature reveals that many learners with special needs experience abuse, social isolation, discrimination, segregation, labelling, stigmatization, bullying and violence, from the very people that should be supporting them, and that this inadvertently culminates in these learners experiencing low self-esteem which further results in poor academic achievement. Transformation to a more inclusive education system was believed to combat prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes and practices for learners living with special needs. It is disheartening to find that learners with special needs continue to face various degrees of deprivation, segregation and discrimination in their home, school and social contexts.

Situated within a qualitative, interpretive methodological paradigm, this study investigates the lived experiences of eight learners with special needs in a special needs school in Pietermaritzburg and how they negotiate and navigate their day to day lives. Narrative inquiry with the use of visual prompt exercises and individual conversational interviews comprised the methods of data generation to elicit rich, authentic narratives from the participants. This commitment to foreground the authentic experiences and voices of the learners with special needs who comprised my research sample, was underpinned by the theoretical notions of Children's Geographies, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems and Inclusive Education.

The key findings reveal that Inclusive Education is indeed being practiced at the study site, in that educators are offering the necessary support needed to individual learners with special needs. Participants articulate that their educational needs are being met and therefore happy to remain at a special needs school. On a less positive note, the findings further reveal that learners with special needs are facing various levels of discrimination, segregation, abuse, prejudice, labelling and social injustice. Their lived experiences afford readers a glimpse into their world and experiences. It is hoped that society will undergo a paradigm shift in their attitudes towards and treatment of learners with special needs.

The research reveals a complex spectrum of experiences that learners with special needs consistently daily navigate, and reinforces the important roles that educators play in their overall learning, participation and development.

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CHAPTER ONE

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you” -Maya Angelou
“Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life.” – Emma Thompson

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The apartheid system had contributed negatively to the prevailing state and policies of South African education system. Engelbrecht (2006, p.254) states that “[t]he central feature which distinguishes South Africa from other countries in terms of education provision, is the extent to which racially entrenched attitudes and the institutionalisation of discriminatory practices led to extreme disparities in the delivery of education, a reflection of the fragmentation and inequality that characterised society as a whole”. In the course of apartheid, Bantu education had a pervasive impact on the majority of South Africans, and particularly the black population, for the duration of almost 60 years (Thobejane, 2013). The word “Bantu” means “people” in numerous indigenous languages including Zulu, a language vocalized by the mainstream of black people in South Africa. Ironically, the term therefore gave the impression to most of the black communities and to the world at large, that Bantu education was an indigenous form of education, and a democratic inclusion policy executed by the state (Thobejane, 2013). There was compulsory education made available for white learners, but same was not made available for learners from other ethnicities (Asmal and James, 2001). Disability further characterised segregation in schools, as schools attended by white learners with special needs were well-funded; whereas black learners with special needs in black schools received less or no support (Department of Education (DoE), 2001).

After the dismantling of the apartheid system, South African learners started enjoying compulsory education and segregated schooling practices were eradicated. The South African government saw the crucial need to focus on the equal rights to education of those learners that had previously witnessed all forms of segregation and discrimination during the apartheid regime, and this included learners with special needs. Consequently, the rights of people living with disabilities was explicitly written in the South Africa’s new Constitution. The Education White Paper 6 (WP 6) was the policy adopted in order to guide Inclusive Education practices in South Africa. In the WP 6, the Department of Education outlined the government’s new

policies for a single, undivided education system for all learners, including those with disabilities, with the aspiration that inclusive education provide "...a cornerstone of an integrated and caring society" (DoE, p.10).

The post-apartheid era has witnessed a deep yearning to institute a democracy that foregrounds human dignity, equality and freedom. As a result, the initiative to embrace Inclusive Education and Training significantly influenced educational growth and advancement in South Africa (Dreyer, 2017). Basic education in South Africa is a right, constitutionally supported and has been pronounced by the Constitutional Court as "immediately realisable", and by the Supreme Court of Appeal as, "a primary driver of transformation" (Hodgson and Khumalo, 2016, p. 4).

The national vision guiding Inclusive Education practices in South Africa is highlighted below: "The education and training system should encourage education for all and promote the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would stimulate all learners' active participation in the education process for them to cultivate and extend their potential and contribute as equal members of society" (DoE, 2001).

For Inclusive Education to be termed as successful, learners with special needs should be successfully absorbed into the system with the provision of the appropriate support. Against this background, this study tried to unearth the extent to which Inclusive Education aims are being realised in these learners' context. This study is a qualitative narrative study in nature which explored the geographies of learners with special needs and their rich previously untold stories of their lived experiences in a special school in Pietermaritzburg.

Learners with special needs are essential and vulnerable members of the society, who have very rich stories that have not been well researched to date. This study sought to unearth the narrative experiences of learners with special needs in their home, school and social contexts. It further attempted to examine how these learners negotiate and navigate their spaces at school, home and in their social contexts, and lastly, it investigated to what extent the aims of Inclusive Education are being realized in these learners' context.

The study engaged Children's Geographies, Inclusive Education and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems, as its theoretical framework so as to fully understand the lived experiences of these learners with special needs, and how they navigate the dynamics in various

contexts. The study helps to provide insights into the spaces and places occupied by these learners with special needs and how they negotiate these varied and complex spaces daily.

Children's Geographies researchers postulate that children are social actors that are capable of speaking for themselves about their experiences, and telling their own stories about their perceptions of the social settings in which they live and relate to (Hood, Kelley and Mayall, 1996; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). Barker and Weller (2003) opine that children are not passive objects that depend on adults, but are competent social actors that are capable of making sense of their environment, and actually contributing to it. Similarly, Holt (2011) stresses the notion of children and young people as competent and active social actors, as opposed to the traditional view of referring to children as passive and incompetent dependents. In light of these insights, this study deems children very important, and capable of relaying their own lived experiences and not using adults as a medium of communication for children.

Holloway, Hubbard, Jons and Pimlott-Wilson (2010) examine how an engagement with the literature on youth, children and families does develop a thoughtful and appreciation of the educational position of learners. The barriers to learning, participation and development into mainstream classrooms as far as possible and it is beneficial to the learners, so that they are taught alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms. Inclusive Education upholds the assumption that all children, irrespective of their circumstances and challenges, must enjoy the right to be educated in the same educational space (Schuelka, 2018).

Inclusive Education is also defined in the WP 6 as:

- a) Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support;
- b) Employing and setting up enabling education structures, system and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners;
- c) Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, religious orientation, sexual orientation, disability, HIV status or other infectious diseases;
- d) A system that is broader than formal schooling and acknowledges that learning also occurs in the home and community, within formal and informal settings and structures;
- e) Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and learning and teaching environments to meet the needs of all learners;

- f) Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001, p 16).

Inclusive Education is geared towards promoting fairness in access to education by all learners with special needs regardless of their challenges, differences and learning needs. It requires educators' understanding their learners and capacity to support them according to their varied needs. IE inculcates the spirit of tolerance, compassion and patience in learners for their peers as they learn together, assist themselves to advance academically, and learn to respect other peoples' strengths and weaknesses thus enhancing their emotional intelligence and promoting social cohesion.

This study aimed to bridge the gap in literature currently available or accessible on learners with special needs lived experiences. This chapter presents an introduction to this study, the background, rationale, objectives of the study and research questions used, in eliciting rich data from the respondents, clarification of terminologies and outlines the policies and rights of learners with special needs.

1.1. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

There have been insufficient research works done on learners with special education needs, although this is a growing field of research both locally and internationally. Any activity that promotes increasing social awareness about learners with special needs, should ordinarily be a matter of priority and attention to concerned stakeholders, and is expected to be recommended for learners with special needs to attend such activities, encourage them to contribute and make their voices heard (Van Kham, 2014). The experience of this researcher indicates that, when learners with special needs stories are listened to and harnessed, it is incredible how rich their untold stories can be. In light of this, Honeydale (2016), using deaf learners as an example, posits that we need to focus on deaf learner's potentials rather than their failures. Deaf learners can achieve better than our expectations of them, if their strengths are emphasized and harnessed. When learners' positive characters are emphasized, they develop positive self-esteem, which culminates in better behavior and academic performance (Henderson and

Rosetti, 2013). It is therefore understandable from this that identity formation and learning are intertwined and interrelated (Hegna, 2019).

There has been a wealth of research published on the experiences of educators in the special school setting (Alborn-Yilek, 2010; Bankole, 2013; Hutzler, Meier, Reuker and Zitomer, 2019; Mpya, 2007; Ndinisa, 2016; Pillay, 2013), school counsellors (Buckley and Mahdavi, 2018), parents of learners with special needs (Cavendish and Connor, 2017; Okeke and Mazibuko, 2014), but not much research has been conducted, which prioritizes the voice of learners with special needs themselves. This research endeavor's intention was to harness this overlooked area of research.

Reflecting on some of the accessible literature on learners with special needs, Mosia (2011) compares the education support services received by LSEN learners in Lesotho with international perspectives on Education Support Services (ESS). He found out that support given to LSEN learners in Lesotho falls far below international practices in both mainstream schools and special needs schools as there is insufficient human and financial resources to support the learning and development of LSEN learners effectively.

Henderson and Rosetti (2013) explains the lived experiences of adolescents with learning difficulties (LD) and realised that adolescents with LD have the ability to form a positive internalized identity related to LD. Chappell (2013) investigates how Zulu-speaking youth with physical and sensory impairments construct their sexual identities considering issues surrounding relationships, love, sex and HIV and AIDS. He discovered that youth with disabilities value their relationships with their peers with regards to issues of relationships, love, sex and HIV and AIDS, and they are also capable of constructing and re-constructing their social worlds.

Siwela (2017) investigates the experiences of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college learners with special needs, highlighting the dynamics that expedite or impede their access and success. Francis (2012) investigates the experiences of learners with special needs preparedness for adulthood, unearthing the fact that educators blame learners for not coping with the world of work and learners pointing accusing fingers at the school for not equipping them effectively for work and socialization.

As a departure from the findings in the studies highlighted in the foregoing, the current study sought to conduct a research into first-hand experiences of learners at a special needs school themselves, thereby generating rich raw data about their experiences, not from the perspective of others.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study was undertaken to provide a platform for learners with special needs to ‘voice’ their experiences that have been previously untold and/or unheard. The intention was essentially to promote self-representation of learners with special education needs, where they can tell their rich stories, and thereby contribute to the limited research done on the lived experiences of learners with special needs. In this way, this research work sought to considerably contribute to the current knowledge base and existing literature of how these learners experience and navigate their lives.

This study sought to authenticate the genuine participation of learners with special educational needs (SEN). Oliver (1992) posits that research has failed learners with special needs on at least two counts. Firstly, it has often failed to capture personal experiences of disability from the perspectives of learners living with special needs. Secondly, it has failed to go beyond the socio-medical perspective of disability, but has become a political subject. Invariably, he established the fact that learners with special needs have been sadly used as objects of research instead of seen and treated as active participants in the research process and data generation. Similarly, Singh (2010) alludes to the fact that persons living with special needs are visualised as objects of sociological investigations. Contrary to these viewpoints, this study sought to utilize SEN learners as active participants in the research process and not as passive objects of research. Participants will be viewed and esteemed as ‘expert-knowers’ in their social realities (Marr and Malone, 2007, p.4).

Personally, I am a life-long learner, and this can be evidenced in my daily aspiration of striving to be a better person than I was yesterday. It has been my long-standing desire to acquire a PhD in my chosen field of study. I have always longed to seek knowledge and pursue it despite my very busy daily schedules, and I have set this as a goal to be achieved through the process of this research. Furthermore, I have the interests of learners with special needs close to my heart. It is my wish to use any avenue within my power to help create a better life for them, and in

the process, alleviate or at best totally eradicate the challenges these valuable treasures experience or navigate daily. I am hoping that this study will be a potent tool to bring their experiences to light for policy makers and education stakeholders in order to effect appropriate actions.

From a professional perspective, being an LSEN school educator for the past 12 years, I have been spurred to conduct this study by informal narratives and constant statements uttered by learners with special needs that they are inconsequential in the society which often plays out in their misbehavior, low self-esteem and worse still, suicide. This study gives assurance to learners in this LSEN (Learners with Special Education Needs) school (study site) and learners with special needs generally that they are significant and important members of the society whose voices are noteworthy and valued.

In the same vein, as the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) of the school for 11 consecutive years, I have listened to and dealt with many issues ranging from the effects of poor socio economic status (poverty) on these learners with special needs, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, physical bullying, emotional bullying and labelling such as ‘slow learners’, (domoroza, duku-duku, hlanya, which all means crazy), ‘sick learners’, ‘dumb learners’, ‘underperformers’, ‘underachievers’, ‘vulnerable learners’ etc. All of these negativities often have consequences on these learners’ actions. Learners change their school uniforms while going home; they are unwilling to represent their school; they avoid disclosing verbally the school they attend to their friends and even on social media, all in the attempt to avoid being negatively labelled. Many special needs learners have been taken advantage of by their siblings that are in mainstream schools; they have been repeatedly referred to as dumb learners while referring to themselves as the ‘clever’ ones; been bullied or oppressed by mainstream students while travelling in the same transport; and sadly, some have been repeatedly raped by those they should trust. They have been forced to keep silent because nobody is ready to listen to them because of their disabilities, and they continue to suffer in silence. These amongst others are recurring stories I have heard over the years. These personal observations and more, triggered and urged me to undertake this research journey. The lives of the learners with special needs are intricately enveloped in very rich stories which undoubtedly need to be explored.

Robinson and Maines (2006) posit that a child while developing, grows up with various ideas about himself, his attributes, abilities and appearance. These are developed and influenced by

his perceptions of his social acceptance and how he/she is valued by the adults that cares for him. This self-image resonates with him on a daily basis, and influences his perceptions and behaviour. The environment we create for a child must not strengthen his/her sentiment of rejection, failure, and reminders of personal insufficiencies and inadequacies. The environment has a crucial part to play in the growth of an individual. Similarly, Urie Bronfenbrenner highlighted in the ecological systems theory five environmental factors that affect lifespan development – these include the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Each of these complex layers have an effect on individual's development.

The adults around children exude a positive or negative impact on how the child sees himself or herself. This self-image is further re-enforced by the environment created for the child which must promote positive attributes of the child, instead of the negatives, and these help in fostering the child's positive self – image. In the same vein, when children grow up in a hostile environment, where nobody cares about how they feel, they get extremely hurt which ultimately affects them for the rest of their lives (Winkler, Modise and Dawber, 1998). Vitaly important is the exploration of the lived experiences of these special needs learners in and out of the classroom, in order to understand how they navigate and negotiate their daily activities. From these experiences highlighted in the immediate foregoing and more, it is pertinent to explore the very rich stories of learners with special needs which invariably benefit the learners, policy makers, all education stakeholders and families of these learners with special needs, as it serves as a social support and advocacy structure. Singal and Muthukrishna (2014) contends that, empowering the families and the structure of social support surrounding learners living with special needs through advocacy and other forms support, is a crucial dimension of the notion of human rights in the global South.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study proposed to highlight the lived experiences of learners in a special needs school in Pietermaritzburg. To ensure learners with special needs see themselves as a piece of the puzzle in the society which must not be lost, everyone, including education stakeholders and the society in general, must ensure these future generations (learners with special needs) are supported and encouraged. This study played a role in trying to achieve this.

This study sought:

1. To explore the narrative experiences of learners with special needs in their home, school and social contexts;
2. To understand how these learners negotiate their spaces at school, home and in their social contexts;
3. To explore to what extent the aims of Inclusive Education are being realized in these learners' contexts.

1.4 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by these key research questions, which the study sought to generate relevant data about:

1. What stories do learners with special needs tell about their schooling, home and social experiences?
2. How do these learners negotiate their spaces at school, home and in their social contexts?
3. How is Inclusive Education being realised in these learners' contexts?

In order to generate rich and relevant data, so as to respond to these key research questions, the study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry approach using open ended questions, to elicit rich narrative data from participants. Narrative inquiry is one of the oldest forms of eliciting responses from people in research (Hendry, 2010). It entails the study of the experiences of people in the form of their own authentic story telling (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Narrative research has the ability to give participants a voice and validate their experiences (Moriarty, 2011). Telling their stories enables participants reflect on and be introspective about their experiences in relation to the spaces and social contexts they inhabit.

Narrative inquiry research can make use of varied and interesting ways to gather, analyse and interpret stories other than simply expecting participants to talk about their experiences. A multiplicity of ways to generate the information exists, and can include photo-voice, diaries and letters, drawings, collage, etc (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

I engaged the use of purposive sampling for choosing the participants. Purposive sampling means that participants are chosen based on possessing certain essential criteria or attributes that are crucial or vital for the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Eight learners have been purposively chosen for this study, representative of both genders. In order to journey into the worlds of the participants, multiple techniques have been engaged. I used a combination of creative and visual methods as prompts towards the generation of narrative data, in the form of:

- a) Use of Objects
- b) Use of photographs (Photo voice)
- c) Conversational interviews.

The combination of these methods has assisted me in garnering rich data for this study. My research design promotes openness and flexibility in the research process.

In order to ensure trustworthiness in this qualitative study, the triangulation method has been utilized. Triangulation helps the researcher bring out ‘similarity, consistency or congruence of results and sought one set of data enriching, expanding upon, clarifying or illustrating the other’ (Greene and McClintock, 1985, p.524). Similarly, Golafshani (2003) supports the utilization of triangulation to improve research validity, reliability and evaluation of findings. Triangulation has witnessed optimum patronage in qualitative studies in a bid to minimize bias and establish validity.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is geared towards contributing to the body of knowledge in the field of Inclusive Education, specifically in understanding the realistic formulation, implementation and intervention strategies of Inclusive Education. It will further serve as an invaluable tool of information to the Department of Education - Special Needs Education Services (SNES) and all education stakeholders and policymakers to take heed of the experiences of special needs learners (which will be explored from a broader view, that is school, home and social contexts) and to prioritize their issues, towards facilitating the unlocking of their vast potential. Hopefully, it will help boost learners with special needs’ self-esteem and belief in the society they thought was alienating and hostile towards them. This study has the potential to ultimately act as a catalyst of social justice, inclusion and the human rights and dignity of learners living with special needs.

This study is an avenue for raising awareness and re-orientation of the entire populace towards being socially accommodating of learners with special education needs – facilitating the development and propagation of positive, equitable and inclusive principles on disability which consequently changes the lens with which they view and relate to learners with special needs. “An inclusive orientation to schooling and education was believed to be the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming societies, building an inclusive society and achieving quality education for all” (D’amant, 2010, p.11).

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS / TERMINOLOGY

It is pertinent for the researcher and readers of this study to fully understand the key concepts/terminology that have been used throughout this study. These concepts are hereby highlighted below:

1.6.1 (DIS) ABILITY

The learners who are participants in this research are officially referred to as learners with intellectual disability or learners with special education needs (LSEN). Disabilities are highly diverse and not homogenous. This study pays particular attention to learners with special needs in the mild to moderate category as these are the learners used as participants in this study.

Disability is defined as a limitation in a functional area that results from the interaction between a person’s intrinsic capacity, environmental and personal factors (UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development, 2018). Disability is mostly understood and viewed in terms of incapacity (World Report on Disability, 2011).

Just as the word ‘ability’ is part of the word ‘disability’, so too do people with disabilities, have abilities and should not therefore be defined only in terms of their disabilities. Similarly, Burden (2000, p. 29) opines that when referring to people with disabilities, people must make reference to the person first then the disability. For example, ‘a person with a disability’ instead of ‘a disabled person’. Disability should not be viewed as the single characteristic that defines

the individual but one of the several important parts of the self-identity of the individual (Smith and Smith, 2006).

The Department of Social Development (DSD) White Paper on the Right for People with Disabilities (2016, p.11) alludes to the fact that “persons with disabilities include those who have perceived and or actual physical, psychosocial, intellectual, neurological and/or sensory impairments which, as a result of various attitudinal, communicational, physical and information barriers, are hindered in participating fully and effectively in society on an equal basis with others”. Disability is an impairment that can be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, intellectual, and developmental, or a combination of all these which constrain an individual in his or her ability to participate and contribute in their everyday society (Stough and Mayhorn, 2013). The Department of Education (2002, p.141) explicates “that with disabilities, learners’ impairments are defined as differences in body structures (physical) for instance visual and hearing impairments, and in body function (psychological) such as chronic health conditions, which are manifested as a significant variation from established statistical norms.”

Shakespeare (2017) postulates that impairment is different from disability. Similarly, Swartz (2010, p. 27-28) expounds that people may live with various impairments, but their political and social environments do disable them, only the impairment ‘is not sufficient for disablement to occur. What disables people – what makes people disabled – is how society responds to the impairments’. Furthermore, Rule and Modipa (2011) explain that disability is a social oppression which is evident in attitudinal barriers like prejudices or stereotypes, environmental and organisational barriers like recreational facilities, employment opportunities and transport networks - barriers which actually do disable and exclude some people from enjoying equal opportunities in the society.

This study sought to foreground the experiences of learners with special needs as they explained how they navigate their social realities. This helps equip readers with adequate information of these learners’ daily experiences, both positive and negative.

1.6.1.1 TYPES OF DISABILITY

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (2013) disability is measured in categories or levels which are a) mild b) moderate c) severe and d) profound. In some cases, the disability is not visual or physical e.g. intellectual disabilities (in the case of most learners at the study site) in other cases the disability is visual e.g. physical disabilities, for example; partially or totally blind, deaf, dumb etc. A person can also have multiple disabilities, for example, one person can be blind, deaf and dumb etc.

More comprehensively, Fasset (2008, p. 36-37) itemized types of disability as “blind, visual impairment, congenital disability, deaf, hard-of-hearing and epilepsy which is a disorder marked by electrical disturbances of the central nervous system and typically manifested by seizures or involuntary muscular contractions. Others are mental illness/mental disability, physiological or psychological disorder, or a chemical disorder of the brain, mental retardation/cognitive disability, motor disability which includes Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Muscular Lystrophy, Lou Gerhig’s disease (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and Cerebral Palsy, trauma or stroke; paraplegia, quadriplegia and speech impairment”.

In the same vein, Shakespeare (2013) explicates disability according to the following disorder, disease disorder or damage, restriction or lack of ability in expected human activity, loss or abnormality of psychological or physiological or anatomical function due to a disease disorder or damage, disadvantage that limits or prevents fulfilment of expected social roles and social structure, attitudes, and resources due to disease disorder.

Similarly, Lipkin and Okamoto (2015) highlight examples of children or teenagers who may qualify for special health and/or behavioural accommodations and support in a school setting:

- “Child with intellectual or developmental disability, including the following:
 - autism spectrum disorder
 - cerebral palsy
- Child with learning disabilities
 - Oral expression
 - Listening comprehension
 - Written expression
 - Basic reading skills

- Reading fluency skills
- Reading comprehension
- Mathematics calculation
- Mathematics problem solving
- Child with condition affecting behaviour in school, including those with a mental health condition, including the following:
 - A teen who is suicidal
 - A child aggressive to others
 - A child shortly after injury, with residual issues, including the following:
 - A child post-concussion and other traumatic brain injury
 - After automobile or other injury
- “Child with chronic condition affecting performance, including those with episodic or occasional issues, including the following:
 - A child with asthma or diabetes
 - A child with seizure disorder
 - A child with allergy to food
 - A child with physical disabilities such as juvenile arthritis and muscular dystrophy/ neuromuscular disorders
 - Child with chronic infection, either on treatment or noncompliant, including the following:
 - A child with HIV/AIDS
 - A child with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis
 - Child requiring technological supports, such as:
 - Tube feeding or special modified diet (i.e., textured or pureed foods or low salt) ventilator or oxygen” (Lipkin and Okamoto, 2015, p.1653).

Likewise, Eskay, Onu, Igbo, Obiyo, and Ugwuanyi, (2012, p.482) explain types of disabilities under the following categories:

- a) “A cognitive impairment, comprising mental retardation and learning disabilities;

- b) A kinetic impairment, whereby an individual is unable to utilize one or more of their body parts—manifesting in the use of artificial aid, such as crutches, wheelchair and other equipment;
- c) A speech impairment ranging from inability to articulating one’s voice;
- d) A hearing impairment from hearing loss or complete deafness;
- e) A visual impairment that includes inability to see images, and or loss of complete vision”.

Makoelle (2020) expounded that for the implementation of any educational programme like inclusive education to be successful, it is expedient to establish the correct social framework necessary for an environment conducive to change. Moreover, education modifications geared towards achieving inclusive education necessitate various "systemic, structural changes, in theory, principles, and practices," and schools' reorganisation (Makoelle, 2020, p. 3).

However, with all these types of disabilities highlighted, learners with special needs must be properly diagnosed so that adequate support can be given to each learner by the educators and all stakeholders in order to optimize each individual learner’s potential. Educators must also be adequately capacitated to effectively support all categories of disabilities in their classroom. Consistent professional development of members of staff must be prioritized to meet the needs of learners so that all learners with special needs can reach their full potential.

In whatever category of disability a learner belongs to, it is sacrosanct that every learner is human and should be treated in a humane and dignified manner thus enjoying quality, equitable treatment and equal access to education.

1.6.2 INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

The learners at the study site range from mild to moderate category of intellectual disability. American Psychiatric Association (APA) 2013, explains the various levels of intellectual disability as:

Mild intellectual disability:

- Support is needed in one or more areas to meet age-related expectations.
- Few barriers to social inclusion.

Moderate intellectual disability:

- Ongoing and generalised assistance is required on a daily basis to complete conceptual tasks of daily life.
- Caregivers assist person with life decisions.

Severe intellectual disability:

- Caregivers provide extensive support with all activities of daily living and problem solving throughout life.
- Individual requires supervision at all times.

Profound intellectual disability:

- Individual is dependent on others for all aspects of daily physical care, but might be able to participate in some of these activities.
- Co-occurring physical and sensory difficulties are frequent barriers to participation and social inclusion.

The learners at the study site are learners with special needs diagnosed to be in the mild to moderate category of intellectual disability. Though support is needed in mostly cognitive aspects of learning, these learners are capable of acquiring skills which equip and prepare them for employment later in life, as well as possessing the ability to complete daily tasks.

1.6.3 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Barriers to learning are challenges that arise within the learner, education system or learning site that prevents a learner's needs being met (Department of Education, 2005). The Department of Education (2005, p.13-14), (Directorate of Inclusive Education) extrapolates further the definition of 'barriers to learning' which talks to all the factors which hamper teaching and learning. These factors include:

- Factors relating to specific individuals, namely to learners (their specific learning needs and styles) and educators (personal factors as well as teaching approaches and attitudes).
- Different aspects of the curriculum, such as content, language of learning and teaching, organisation and management in the classroom, teaching and assessment methods.
- Unavailability of resources such as learning materials, equipment and time.

- The physical and psychosocial environment within which teaching and learning occurs. This refers to physical structures like buildings as well as management styles.
- Conditions relating to the learner's home environment including issues such as family dynamics and cultural and socio-economic background.
- Community and social dynamics which either support or hamper the teaching and learning process.

1.6.4 SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS

Special needs schools are meant to cater for children with high levels of support and needs; many of these special needs schools existed prior to the government embracing an inclusive education policy. According to the government's policy, most of them would be turned into resource centers to provide support and expertise to full-service schools (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

The study site in this research study caters for mild to moderate categories of disability in learners (refer to page 16). The school equips learners with vocational skills which makes them employable at the end of their 4 - year study in the school in compliance with the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994): Schools should support learners with special education needs to become economically active and make available to them the skills needed in everyday life, training them in skills that respond to the social and communication demands, also to equip them with potentials and expectations of adult life.

1.6.5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The adoption of Education White Paper 6 in 2001 was to address barriers to learning in the South Africa education system. Inclusive Education is enveloped in the spirit of Ubuntu. The values of Ubuntu are embedded in the roles and responsibilities of the role-players executing Inclusive Education in South Africa to ensure all learners with or without disabilities pursue their learning potential to the optimum (Nel, 2018). Furthermore, Walton (2018) expounds that Ubuntu could generate positive results for any country that embraces Inclusive Education irrespective of any disability. The spirit of Ubuntu reinforces oneness and the ability to share resources in the education system for the benefit of all learners irrespective of their

challenges and in order to reduce disparities. South African education policies and practices must foster principles of no exclusion and discrimination against children based on age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV/AIDS or other infectious diseases (Nel,2018). The school management team should adopt inclusive education as a social justice paradigm, they must remove all forms of learning barriers, decreasing fear, rejection and prejudice thus encouraging tolerance among individuals (Yilmaz and Yeganeh, 2021).

The World Declaration on Education for All adopted in Jomtien, Thailand (1990) endorsed the vision on universalizing equal access to Education for All in order to promote social justice and equity (Mugambi, 2017). Consequently, from 7-10 June, 1994, in Salamanca, Spain, more than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations met to deliberate on the objective of Education for All by considering the fundamental policy shifts needed to promote the course of Inclusive Education in all schools as well as those schools serving learners with special needs. The Conference adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action, a document hinged on promoting Inclusive Education, celebrating differences, supporting learning and responding to individual learning needs, as every child has a fundamental right to education (UNESCO,1994).

Furthermore, The World Education Forum held at Dakar, Senegal, from 26-28 April 2000 adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, Education For All: Meeting our Collective Commitments where its participants reaffirmed the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All which was adopted at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. It was resolved that states should strengthen or develop national plans by 2002 to achieve EFA goals and targets no later than 2015 (UNESCO,2000). Similarly, governments of the ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) region gathered in Incheon, Republic of Korea from 29 October to 2 November, 2012 to deliberate on the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2013 to 2022. In attendance were representatives of civil society organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, development co-operation agencies and United nations systems. The Incheon Strategy will assist the Asian and Pacific region to track progress on improving the quality of lives and the fulfilment of the rights of the region's 650 million persons with disabilities, most

of them living in poverty. The ESCAP secretariat was mandated to report on progress of the implementation of the Incheon Strategy every three years till the end of the decade in 2022.

Inclusive Education is widely accepted as an appropriate and suitable means of achieving education for all. The Department of Education (2002) explicates that Inclusive Education helps to respect and identify learners' differences, enhance their similarities, give support to all learners, teachers and educational institutions so as to meet individual learner's learning needs. This involves the teachers developing various methods of teaching which help them meet the learners' diverse learning needs which concentrates on doing away with barriers in the system that hinder the achievement of learner's goals and reaching their full potential. Similarly, Murungi (2015) explicates that historically, some groups such as, indigenous children or girls and learners with disabilities have been directly or indirectly excluded from the existing system of education. It is for this reason that Inclusive Education has embraced a broad framework in education delivery that equally accommodates the circumstances and needs of every learner.

The Guidelines for Full-service schools defines Inclusive Education as a process of addressing the various needs of all learners by attempting to minimise or eradicate barriers to learning, participation and development which occur within the learning environment (Department of Education, 2009). Inclusive Education embraces diversities and equality among learners, and the fact that all learners can learn if given the required and appropriate support. D'amant (2010, p.15) extrapolates further that "inclusion is opposed to simply ensuring the smooth assimilation or integration of other groups into the dominant mainstream culture, but instead, focuses attention on changing the educational organisation of an institution; changing the curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, thus minimising barriers to learning, development and participation."

1.7 STATISTICS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

It was documented that 7.5 percent of the total South African population, that is almost 2.9 million people live with one or more form/s of disability. Figure 1.1 shows that Kwazulu-Natal

province (where the study site is located) is ranked fifth out of 9 provinces in the country with high prevalence of disability (South African Census, 2011).

The South African Census (2011) further shows that there are more blacks with disabilities than other races in South Africa (Graham, Moodley, Ismail, Munsaka, Ross and Schneider, 2014) (as shown in Table 1.2). This is also indicative of the population group at the study site. There are more blacks than other races in the school, which correlates with the results of the last census undertaken. This shows the poor health status of blacks which should be investigated, and solutions proffered. The South African Census (2011) also indicates that females have more prevalence towards disabilities than males (as shown in Figure 1.3). This is in contrast to the reality at the study site as male learners are more than female learners.

Table 1 - Disability Prevalence according to Provinces in SA

Province	Number of disabled persons	%
Western Cape	222 333	5.4
Eastern Cape	472 106	9.6
Northern Cape	92 731	11.0
Free State	234 738	11.1
Kwazulu –Natal	620 481	8.4
North West	254 333	10.0
Gauteng	485 331	5.3
Mpumalanga	205 280	7.0
Limpopo	282 797	6.9
Total	2 870 130	7.5

Source: South Africa Census (2011, p.57)

Table 2 Number and percentage distribution of persons aged 5 years and older with disabilities by population group.

Population Group	Persons with disabilities	%
	N	
Black African	2 381 668	7.8
Coloured	207 244	6.2
Indian	60 614	6.2
White	211 502	6.5
Other	9 102	5.6
Total	2 870 130	7.5

Source: South Africa Census (2011, p.6)

Table 3 Number and percentage distribution of persons aged 5 years and older with disabilities by gender.

Sex	With disabilities	%
	N	
Male	1 188 059	6.5
Female	1 682 071	8.5
Total	2 870 130	7.5

Source: South Africa Census (2011, p.59)

1.8 RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Globally, the UN instrument that has been used at the forefront of the global campaign for improvement of people living with disabilities is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Article 22 which states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” The declaration guards against every form of discrimination and fosters equal opportunities and rights for people living with disabilities (cited in Swaziland Deputy Prime Minister’s Office, 2013, p. 3).

At regional levels in the African continent, some instruments have also been put in place to promote the general well-being of people living with disabilities. These have been contextualized in Southern Africa under the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the form of legislation and protocols, for example the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, 1990 and also the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities, 1992 (Swaziland Deputy Prime Minister’s Office, 2013).

At national levels, many African countries such as Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa have drawn national legislations that attempt to protect and promote the general interests of people living with disabilities (Kabue, Mambo, Galgala and Peter, 2011). Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Angola and Mauritania adhere to the United Nations Act of equality of all persons with disability before and under the law – that they must be entitled to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without any discrimination (UN Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008).

Locally, the South African government has made known its commitment to defending and realising the rights of people living with disabilities through the endorsement of international treaties, for example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Children with Disabilities in South Africa, 2012).

Furthermore, for over two decades, efforts have been made at the international, national and regional levels to identify the rights of people with disabilities in the mainstream agenda. Many countries have started to restructure their laws to empower people with disabilities in their functionality as full members of society which promote equality, restore dignity, independence and improve their general well-being. South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its optional protocol which is geared towards

removing all probable barriers by investing adequate funds and expertise in order to discover and facilitate the full potential of people living with disabilities (Statistics SA, 2014).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (UNCRPD) was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. As the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century, it addresses change in attitudes and approaches to people with disabilities. It propagates the movement from viewing people with disabilities as objects of charity, social protection and medical treatment to subjects that have rights and are capable of claiming their rights and making decisions regarding their lives having solicited their free and informed consent thus being active members of the society in which they live. The Convention encourages full inclusion which promotes the best interests of people living with disabilities and professes that all people with disabilities must enjoy fundamental freedom and human rights. It further defines persons with disabilities as those that have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers to learning, participation and development, limits their full and effective participation in society on an equal relation with others (UNCRPD, 2006).

The principles of the Convention include:

- (a) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
- (b) Non-discrimination;
- (c) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- (d) Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- (e) Equality of opportunity;
- (f) Accessibility;
- (g) Equality between men and women;
- (h) Respect for evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities (UNCRPD, 2006, p. 5).

This study utilizes a social justice lens which allows a reflexive and transgressive stance towards inequalities, exclusion and oppression (Bell, 2016). Bell further explicates the goal of

social justice education as enabling people to develop critical analysis tools which are important to comprehend the structural features of oppression and their socialisation within a system that is oppressive (Bell, 2016). Social justice education helps to build an awareness, knowledge and competences in people to scrutinize issues of social justice in their communities, institutions, society and personal spaces generally, and it helps people build agency that change these oppressive and exclusionary behaviours across various personal, institutional, societal and cultural levels (Bell, 2016; Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht, 2018).

1.9 IDEA - INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITY EDUCATION ACT

IDEA was firstly enacted by the United States Congress in 1975 and has since undergone various reauthorizations in order to extend services and rights to children living with disabilities (Dragoo, 2017; Lipkin and Okamoto, 2015). IDEA was then called Education for all Handicapped Children Act, P.L.94-142 (Lipkin and Okamoto, 2015) when it was found out that more than half of children with disabilities did not benefit from appropriate educational services. Many children in regular schools were prevented from excelling because their disabilities were undiagnosed (Dragoo, 2017).

There were three other factors which predetermined the enactment of P.L 94-142:

- Judicial decisions that found constitutional requirements for the education of children with disabilities,
- The inability of states and localities to fund education for children with disabilities, and
- Potential long-term benefits of educating children with disabilities (Dragoo, 2017, p.1).

IDEA uses a definite definition of a child with a disability, stipulating an eligible child as one with intellectual disability (mental retardation used in its original text), hearing impairments (including deafness), emotional disturbance, visual impairments (including blindness), orthopaedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, speech or language impairments, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities. It also allows for the category of developmental delay for children between the ages of 3 to 9 years (Lipkin and Okamoto, 2015).

Three of the main purposes of IDEA are:

(a) to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living;

(b) to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected;

(c) to assist states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities (Cited in Dragoo, 2017).

IDEA provides essential support for children with special education needs for them to learn, contribute meaningfully and be incorporated as crucial members of their societies (Lipkin and Okamoto, 2015).

1.10 HOW SPECIAL IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Special Education research has contributed immensely not just to practice and knowledge relating to learners living with disabilities but also to knowledge and practice for those without disabilities (Vaughn and Swanson, 2015).

Special education is an instruction that is specifically designed to satisfy the unique needs of children with disabilities. The specially designed instruction means adapting the curriculum by engaging the appropriate content and methodology and delivery of instruction in meeting the unique needs of a child's disability (Department of Education White Paper 6, 2001; Pullen and Hallahan, 2015).

The Department of Education WP6 (2001) is highly committed to and illustrates a solid focus on special needs education in order to address special needs practitioners and parents' concerns. The government has committed to reinforcing rather than abolishing special schools for children that need more support, and also, accommodating learners with severe disabilities in improved special needs schools as part of an inclusive system.

In order to deliver specially designed instructions for learners living with special needs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) stipulates that learners with special needs must be provided with individualized educational programs (IEP) which is the basis of special

education instruction. The heart or cornerstone of special needs education is individualization of instruction (Pullen and Hallahan, 2015).

Pullen and Hallahan (2015) further explicate the concepts of special education in no particular order as well-paced, explicit, goal-directed, relentless, interactive, direct, systematic, intense, low pupil-teacher ratio, frequent assessment and monitoring of performance, scaffolding, distributed and cumulative practice, careful sequencing, guided practice, and carefully designed curricula. They also unearth the critical components of special education instruction as, explicit and systematic instruction, intensive instruction, pacing, group size, duration and frequency, corrective feedback and reinforcement. These are some of the elements that distinguish and make special education special. Learners with impaired intellectual development will need curriculum adaptation instead of major structural adjustments or classy equipment (Department of Education, White Paper 6, 2001).

Kauffman and Lloyd (2017) posit that educators constantly measure students' progress towards the realisation of special education goals which leads to adjustment of instruction due to the measured students' progress.

Special needs schools also provide skills training which prepare learners with special needs for the workplace while equipping them with skills so as to be useful and productive in their society. "Improved quality of special schools will also include the provision of comprehensive education programmes that provide life-skills training and programme-to-work linkages" (Department of Education, 2001, p. 21). The study site which this research study was conducted is one of these special needs schools as it trains and equips learners with vocational skills.

According to the Department of Education WP6 (2001, p. 21), the place and roles of special needs schools are highlighted as follows:

- a) While special needs schools provide critical education services to learners who require intense levels of support, they also accommodate learners who require much less support and should ideally be in mainstream schools.
- b) When implementing our policy on inclusion we will pay particular attention to raising the overall quality of education services that special needs schools provide.
- c) We will also ensure that learners who require intense levels of support receive these services since mainstream schools will be unable to provide them.
- d) In addition to these roles, special needs schools will have a very important role to play in an inclusive system. The new roles for these schools will include providing particular

expertise and support, especially professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction, as part of the district support team to neighbourhood schools, especially ‘full-service’ schools. This role also includes providing appropriate and quality educational provision for those learners who are already in these settings or who may require accommodation in settings requiring secure care or specialised programmes with high levels of support.

- e) Improved quality of special needs schools will also include the provision of comprehensive education programmes that provide life-skills training and programme-to-work linkages.

As special schools were created to cater for learners with high to low levels of support, the overall quality of education and financing, in terms of infrastructure and consistent training of special school educators needs to be prioritized by the Department of Education so that the policies promulgated and the genuine intentions for establishing special schools will not be jeopardized.

1.11 SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

Chapter One - Introduction to the study

This chapter expounded on the introduction of the phenomenon under study, the purpose of the study and the motivation for embarking on this research endeavour. This was followed by the research questions guiding the study. This chapter also highlighted the organisational outline of the study and clarification of the key concepts.

Chapter Two – Theoretical Framework

This chapter of the study outlined the theoretical framework within which the study is conducted, presenting the framework, and its relevance to the topic under research. The theoretical framework comprises Children’s Geographies, Inclusive Education and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems.

Chapter Three – Literature Review

This chapter presented a review of related literature which provides a vivid picture of earlier studies that had been conducted and identified the positioning of this study in relation to the

existing literature (which includes literature on the challenges people with disabilities face, stigmas around disabilities, experiences of learners with special education needs and Inclusive Education).

Chapter Four – Research Design and Methodology

This chapter identified and clarified the research design and methodology which is employed in exploring the lived experiences of special needs learners. Being a qualitative research endeavour, the methods of data collection is explained and the validity of the methods ascertained.

Chapter Five – Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This chapter comprised the presentation and discussion of data, where I present the analysis of the data generated from the study site, in relation to the key research questions guiding this study.

Chapter Six – Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presented the summary of the study findings and provided conclusive remarks in relation to the literature and theoretical framework utilized in this study. It made suggestions for future research on related areas of interest, and provided recommendations considered useful to policy makers and the education sector.

1.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher explored the background of the study, and what propelled my interest to undertake this research. The chapter also presented the objectives and key research questions, the significance of the findings of this research, the clarification of key terminology and types of disability. I explored the significance of some policies such as IDEA - Individual with Disability Education Act and looked at what the ‘special’ in special needs education refers to and outlined the rights of children with disabilities. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework employed to guide this study.

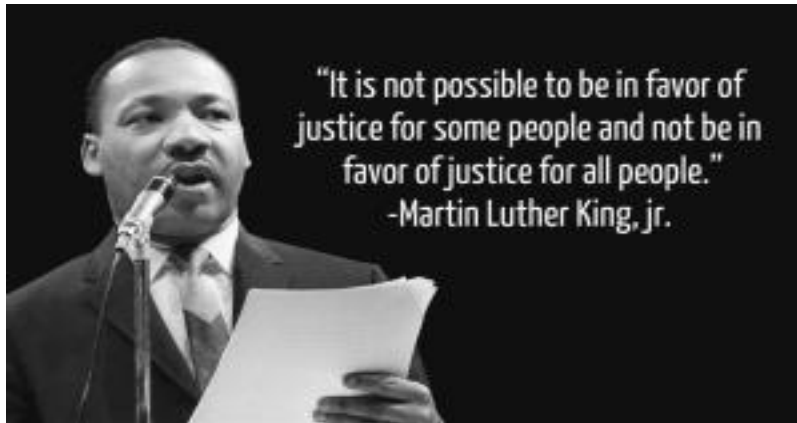


Fig: 1- Quote by Martin Luther King, Jr

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“I don’t have a dis-ability; I have a different-ability.” – **Robert M. Hensel**

“The message I’ll share...is that inclusion is extremely important for kids with and without disabilities.”— **Clay Aiken**

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Theories are engaged to explain phenomena meaningfully and logically, often employing narrative structures, in this way, “theories are stories” (Goodson, 2010, p.11). Merriam (2009) articulates that all research has a theoretical framework that is either explicit or implicit. She further asserts that every part of a research process is informed by a theoretical framework and describes the relationship between the framework and the research problem as a set of interlocking and interconnected frames.

Anfara and Mertz (2015) explicate the importance of theoretical frameworks in qualitative research as more effective and valuable than methodology alone, and their role in guiding the choices of many researchers cannot be over-emphasized in conducting the qualitative study. Use of theoretical frameworks afford researchers the opportunities to discover their own voices and standpoint, utilizing the intellectual resources to construct theories that discourages control but endorses emancipation (Georges, 2005). Collins and Stockton (2018) posit that a theoretical framework in a study utilizes theory (or theories) which expresses the values of the researcher that are imperative in providing signposts or lenses that are expressed evidently on the manner new knowledge will be processed.

Tamene (2016) expounds that a conceptual framework can be regarded as an end result of bringing together a number of related concepts to clarify or predict a given event, or give a broader understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Tamene (2016) further explains that a conceptual framework of any research undertaking assists the readers to comprehend the reasons a researcher decides to research a particular topic, the assumptions s/he makes, how s/he conceptually grounds his/her approach, the scholars s/he employs or engages and the ones s/he agrees or disagrees with. Maxwell, (2004: 39) succinctly explains that:

The most important thing to understand about your conceptual framework is that it is primarily a conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study, and of what is going on with these things and why—a tentative theory of the phenomena that you are investigating. The function of this theory is to inform the rest of your design—to help you to assess and refine your goals, develop realistic and relevant research questions, select appropriate methods ...

Both a conceptual framework and a theoretical framework serve a similar purpose in their own right, and it is crucial for researchers to identify as well as describe an appropriate conceptual or theoretical framework based on the research question at hand. Without this, a study lacks proper direction and basis, it also adds to confusion in the literature as well as improper interpretation and explanation of the findings (Tamene, 2016).

This chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework that guides my study. I am utilizing Inclusive Education and Children's Geography as my conceptual framework for this study. I thought it befitting to complement the conceptual framework with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems as my theoretical framework, as I believe that drawing on the unique combination of Inclusive Education, Children's Geographies and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems are ideally suited to my study.

2.2 THE MOVE TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In South Africa, Inclusive Education is positioned within a human rights discourse. During the apartheid era, very few special needs schools existed, and these admitted learners according to rigidly applied categories. Learners experiencing barriers caused by severe poverty did not qualify for educational support as the few special needs schools then only favoured learners with organic, medical disabilities (WP6, 2001).

After South Africans waved goodbye to apartheid, segregation in the educational sector was eradicated and education was made compulsory for all children. This also embraced learners with special needs. WP6 was intended to transform the educational system to integrate all learners including those living with disabilities, concentrating on special needs learners who were in need of low and medium support. Inclusive Education is meant to provide “a cornerstone of an integrated and caring society” (Department of Education, 2001, p.10).

Furthermore, the discussions around Special Education Needs (SEN) are now synonymous with Inclusive Education and the eradication or minimization of barriers in all children. More broadly, it has led to debate with regards to the role of education in rights and social justice promotion (Miles and Singal, 2009). In the same vein, Parekh (2013) alludes to the fact that an inclusive model of education does not only bring education systems in accordance with international rights conventions, but also is intended to improve the academic performances of learners with special education needs (LSEN).

Internationally, Inclusive Education and Special Education have raised many debates and discussions. It has been documented that in countries like Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia despite the high awareness level of Inclusive Education, teachers are still not practicing inclusion (Hettiarachchi and Das, 2014; Muwana and Ostrosky, 2014; Nketsia and Salovita, 2013). In contrast, in Iraq, Inclusive Education was misunderstood to be creating more specialist schools for learners with special education needs and training more specialist educators instead of providing improved quality in mainstream schools (Alborz, Slee and Miles, 2013).

The Department of Education (2001) promotes important values such as equality, social justice, human rights and respect for diversity (Ngcobo and Muthukrishna, 2011). “An inclusive orientation to schooling and education was believed to be the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming societies, building an inclusive society and achieving quality education for all” (D’amant, 2010, p.11). Similarly, education is seen as a powerful tool to unify learners with disabilities and those without them (Mowat, 2010). Inclusive Education is geared towards respecting the rights of each and every learner to fully participate in his/her own learning. Inclusion acknowledges diversity in the classroom, stresses the need to offer all learners a quality education that is supportive of each learner’s individual learning needs, and encourages each learner to develop to his/her full potential. WP6 provides a framework where the education system can cater for diverse barriers to learning such as HIV/AIDS, language, disability, race, class, gender and socio-economic status differences (Department of Education, 2001).

Equal opportunities and access to education goes beyond mere integration and assimilation of learners into a physical teaching and learning environment. Activities in the classroom should reflect the ideals of inclusion which are equal opportunities for participation, growth and development (D’amant, 2010).

According to the WP6, one of the key principles is that education is a basic human right which all South Africans must be able to access irrespective of age, sex, race, physical or mental ability (Department of Education, 2001). Inclusive Education in South Africa is geared towards promoting equality and human rights in South Africa after the apartheid era. Inclusive Education is regarded as:

- (i) “acknowledging that all learners and youth can learn and that all learners and youth need support;
- (ii) enabling the education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners;
- (iii) acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infections;
- (iv) [that learning is] broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures;
- (v) changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners; and
- (vi) maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising the barriers to learning” (Department of Education, 2001, p.16).

In the same vein, Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2011) posit that Inclusive Education is framed within the human-rights discourse as it strengthens the principles of social justice, equality, human rights and respect for diversity. Inclusive Education makes education less segregated and fragmented including the differently-abled learners. Building an inclusive system brings about change in the disposition of people with regards to their response to diversity amongst learners.

According to Walton (2018) Inclusive Education can be described as a rights-based approach to education that resist exclusion and promote social justice within and from school communities thereby promoting the participation, access and achievement of all learners.

Inclusive Education is understood to be extensive than formal schooling, it concedes to the fact that learning also transpires in the home and community which occurs within formal and informal structures and settings (Department of Education, 2001). WP6 stresses the fact that

Inclusive Education acknowledges that all children have the ability to learn, provided they get the required support needed to succeed, as learners have varied learning needs (Department of Education, 2001).

In South Africa, Inclusive Education has increasingly gained prominence by legislation which requires all educators to be knowledgeable about inclusion and to be able to teach in classes with diverse learners. It is a nascent field in South Africa which has garnered scholarship originating from countries where Inclusive Education has taken its root or is well developed (Walton, 2018).

Phasha (2016) expounds that ubuntu, founded on the value of collectivism is closely relevant to Inclusive Education. He highlights three values of ubuntu which also resonate with the values of Inclusive Education as humanness, interdependence and communalism.

Inclusive education as being practiced in South Africa need a general scrutiny and re-appraisal so as to examine and strengthen the flaws to ensure that the intentions for promulgation of the legislations and policies are adhered to and accomplished. Inclusive Education should be practiced as it works in our social setting and not being practiced as it's obtainable in other international settings as context varies.

2.2.1 DISABILITY MODELS

Disability is a natural occurrence in human existence, and as new technological and medical advancement are made in the world, our world views and views of disability also change and develop (Smart and Smart, 2006). According to Llewellyn and Hogan (2000, p.157) a disability model is a “certain kind of theory, namely structural, which seeks to explain phenomena by reference to an abstract system and mechanism”. The use of models is valuable because it allows us to understand and represent information in a way that encourages understanding through specific lenses. The models we use to explain disability also change as our views change (Winnaar, 2013). With this understanding, our objective is to develop and operate a model or models that assist in empowering people with disabilities, for them to enjoy complete fundamental human rights alongside the other citizens (MDRC, 2013).

To understand fully the meaning of disability, we need to explore various disability models which give remarkable insight into the term disability. Nyangweso (2018) explored the

medical, the social and the biopsychosocial models. Retief and Letsosa (2018) explored more comprehensive models of disability: a) The moral and/or religious model: described as the act of God; b) The medical model: this describes disability as a disease; c) The social model: describing disability as a socially constructed phenomenon; d) The identity model: this talks to disability as an identity; e) The human rights model: which sees disability as a human rights issue; f) The cultural model: refers to disability as culture; g) The economic model: refers to disability as a challenge to productivity; h) The charity model: expounds disability as victimhood; and (i) The limits model: explicates disability as embodied experience. The two most frequently referenced models of disability are the medical and the social models of disability (Rule and Modipa, 2011; Engelbrecht and Green, 2001).

This study will be taking a cue from The National Council for People with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDSA) (2010) which postulates that disability can be understood using two lenses which are: the medical and social models of disability.

2.2.1.1 MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The medical model explicates that some people cannot function in the same way that others do because of the challenges they are faced with. It sees disability as a sickness or a deficiency in the person which needs professional help and specifically, medication. It further believes that because of the disability, people cannot participate on the same level with those without disability (Engelbrecht and Green, 2001; Rule and Modipa, 2011).

The medical model looks at disability with respect to the mental or physical impairment of the person. This model originated from the biomedical model and links disability diagnosis to the person's physical body. The medical model believes health is freedom from pain, disease or defect. This model disregards the social, psychological and environmental aspect of disability (Nyangweso, 2018). Disability is mostly measured according to the level of support or dependence a person required. This measurement is in consonance with the medical model of disability that thinks about disabilities and special educational needs as emanating from individuals seen as faulty, different and in need of assessment, diagnosis and medical treatment in order to be made as normal as possible (Rieser, 2006).

The whole foundation of the medical model is that the problem is seen as emanating from within the individual and that the disability renders the individual somehow deficient and abnormal.

2.2.1.2 SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The social model of disability was developed to redress the limitations of the medical model of disability (D’Alessio, 2011). Purtell (2013) alludes to the fact that people with disabilities are further disabled by the society they reside in and the impact of the society’s attitudes and structures. The social model sets out to address barriers to learning, development and participation that is experienced by people with disabilities as a result of ableist environmental and social factors embedded in the society (O’Connell, Finnerty and Egan, 2008). There is a paradigm shift from understanding disability as a characteristic solely located within the individual to an interaction among the individual, the environment and the disability (Smith and Smith, 2006).

The whole foundation of the social model is that barriers to learning, development and participation are seen predominantly as a result of external factors, outside of the individual, which create obstacles to the full and equal participation of individuals.

Table: 4: Variances between Medical and Social Models

Medical Model	Social Model
Disability is a deficiency or abnormality	Disability is understood as external barriers which hinder the efficient and effective function of the individual
Being disabled is negative	Being disabled in itself, is neutral
Disability resides in the individual.	Disability derives from interaction between the individual and society

The remedy for disability-related problems is cure or normalisation of the individual	The remedy for disability-related problems is a change in the interaction between the individual and society.
The agent of remedy is the professional.	The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society.

Source: Adapted from NCPDSA, 2010

2.2.1.3 APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE WITH REFERENCE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

We need to consider carefully the language we use when referring to learners with special needs as many labels and words can be derogatory and demeaning and consequently have a negative impact on these people.

Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018, p. 4) in their study on Inclusive Education in four Southern African countries, discovered the use of exclusionary concepts or pervasive labels in these schools such as ‘*slow learners*,’ the notions of a ‘*special class*’ and ‘*special class teacher*,’ ‘*learners with special needs*,’ ‘*learners with learning barriers*’ (LLBs), ‘*learners with learning difficulties*’; ‘*remedial learners*,’ ‘*learners with diverse needs*,’ ‘*normal vs. disabled learners*,’ ‘*learners with psychological barriers*’. Some labels have the effect of ‘othering’, thereby replicating social inequalities (Walton, 2016).

People with disabilities must be portrayed with dignity and their disabilities must be accurately explained. The United Nations Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008, p.23) highlighted some inappropriate words that should not be engaged when referring to people with disabilities e.g.

“**Victim** – instead use - person who has/experienced/with.

[**The**] **Cripple[d]** – instead use: person with a disability.

Afflicted by/with – instead use: person that has.

Invalid – instead use: a person with a disability.

Normal – most people, including persons with disabilities, think they are normal. Do not say “normal person” to refer to someone without a disability – say “person without a disability” if necessary.

Patient – connotes sickness. Instead use person with a disability.

Suffering – instead use: person who had/experienced.

Wheelchair bound/confined – instead use: uses a wheelchair or wheelchair user.

Homebound Employment– instead use: employed in the home”.

The use of various demeaning and inappropriate words and labels used either consciously or unconsciously in relation to learners with special needs by able-bodied people, results in its own challenges, as these can easily pigeon-hole and stereotype them as ‘other’ and ‘abnormal’. Similarly, the use of derogatory names for learners with special needs has negative effects which can develop into low self-esteem and seeing themselves as ‘other’, ‘not normal’ and deficient (Schwab, 2017).

All stakeholders, for example, teachers, parents, society, families, Department of Education, etc, all have roles to play in upgrading the self-esteem of learners with special needs. Those who engage in labeling these learners often form part of the challenges being experienced by learners with special needs. Everyone must be conscientized on treating them with fairness and dignity as it is their fundamental human right.

2.2.2 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Barriers to learning, development and participation often are the direct and indirect result of factors which make the system unable to accommodate diversity or thwart learners’ opportunities to access equal educational provisions (Department of Education, 2007). Visser (2002) similarly explains these factors as those things that limit or prevent learners from benefitting from education. The Department of Education (2009) also expounds barriers as those factors that make the system unable to accommodate diversity or which prevents learners from having access to educational provision. Barriers to learning can be positioned within the learner, the school, or the education system itself (Department of Education, 2002).

Welfare Society for the Disabled (2018) identified withdrawal, lack of self-confidence, lack of communication, shyness, lack of self-esteem as barriers to learning, development and participation. Tuswa (2016) highlights barriers to learning as poverty and underdevelopment, socio-economic barriers, inaccessible and unsafe built environment, lack of access to basic services, inflexible curricula, lack of parental recognition and involvement, disabilities, inappropriate language and communication, inadequate policies and legislation, and inadequate or inappropriate provision of support.

WP6 (2001, p.19) explicates one of the factors that can cause barriers to learning, that is, different aspects of the curriculum, such as:

- “The content (i.e. what is taught).
- The language or medium of instruction.
- How the classroom or lecture is organised and managed.
- The methods and processes used in teaching.
- The pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum.
- The learning materials and equipment that is used.
- How learning is assessed”.

In order to overcome barriers to learning, there should be effective partnerships involving parents being active participants in the education of their children, (Department of Education, 2002; Tuswa, 2016) and strong support structures in order to empower educators (Department of Education, 2002). Cooperative learning allows learners of different skills and traits to work together (Mpya, 2007), high quality professional preparation and training of educators to meet the needs of diverse classroom abilities (Bothma, Gravett and Swart, 2000), collaboration between educators to address barriers to learning and manage diversity (Engelbrecht and Green, 2001; Sethosa, 2001), parents consciously cultivating the habit and love of reading in their children (Mackay, 2014), are other ways to overcome and minimise barriers to learning.

The Department of Education (2002, p.141) states that “If the education system is to promote effective learning and prevent learning breakdown, it is imperative to acknowledge that mechanisms are structured into the system to break down existing barriers. Such mechanisms must develop the capacity of the system to overcome barriers which may arise, prevent barriers

from occurring and promote the development of an effective learning and teaching environment”.

2.2.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES

In order to actualise and implement Inclusive Education in South Africa, different policies were formulated to guide this process. The policies and legislations that led to Inclusive Education implementation include: the White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995); the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996; the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) (1997); the National Commission on Special Education Needs and Training and The National Committee on Education Support Services (1997); the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system (2001); the Draft National Disability Policy Framework and guidelines for the implementation of National Disability Framework (2008) and the UN Convention on rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2006 ratified by the government in 2007 (Uchem and Ngwa , 2014).

According to the South African Children’s Act (2005) Section 11, (1) b and c: In any matter concerning a child with disability, due consideration must be given to:

- b) Making it possible for the child to participate in social, cultural, religious and educational activities, recognising the special needs that the child may have.
- c) Providing the child with conditions that ensure dignity, self – reliance and facilitate active participation in the community.

WP6 (2001) serves as a foundational policy guiding the implementation of Inclusive Education in South Africa. The document was a product of two committees namely: National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training, and the National Committee on Education Support Services which was set up by South African government to research inclusive educational needs of the general society or populace (DoE, 2001; Uchem and Ngwa, 2014).

Malahlela (2017, p.123-124) posits that “there may be a need to instigate an Inclusive Education policy that would clearly and concisely make it mandatory for all educators in South African mainstream schools to implement the Inclusive Education legislative framework as stipulated in policy documents, such as the Education White Paper 6, the policy on SIAS, and

the CAPS, supported by an Act of Parliament that defines strict monitoring of such inclusive activities in mainstream schools. The policy will need to specify clearly how the inclusive learning programmes could be administered through the top-down model, to enforce the implementation of Inclusive Education by responsible education stakeholders at national, provincial, district, circuit and school levels for quality assurance.”

Table: 5: An outline of some policy-shaping documents towards South Africa’s Inclusive Education.

Year	Documents/developments
<p>The period before 1994</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The country’s education systems were governed by separate pieces of legislation based on education services for the four population groups as defined under the 1950 Population Registration Act. ❖ The schooling system was further fragmented by separate legislation governing a ‘mainstream’ system and a secondary, ‘specialised’ system.
<p>1993</p>	<p>The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1992): Framework Report and Final Summaries. A project of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee.</p>
<p>1995</p>	<p>The White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ provided a comprehensive framework for the transformation of the education system into single system ❖ outlined principles based on fundamental human rights and non-discriminatory practices in education ❖ recognised the inequalities experienced by learners with special needs and the importance of providing education support services.

<p>1996</p>	<p>The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, ended the system of separate schooling on the basis of race and created a single system for all learners.</p> <p>The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ recognised basic human rights for all citizens, such as the right to basic education, including adult basic education ❖ also included an equality clause that recognises the need for measures to address previous inequalities and protects citizens from unfair discrimination on a number of grounds, including disability.
<p>1997</p>	<p>The Integrated National Disability Strategy (DoE, 1997a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ rejected the traditional ‘medical model’ of disability and argued for a social model which recognises disability as a human right and development issues. ❖ provided a framework for the changes needed in all areas of government responsibility, including the provision of education support services and employment and training opportunities for learners with disabilities <p>Quality Education for All: Overcoming barriers to learning and development, a report by the NCSNET and NCESS (DoE, 1997b) outlined steps towards the restructuring of the education system to meet the full range of diverse needs within a single system.</p>
<p>2001</p>	<p>The Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education — Building an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001):</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ provided a framework for the building of an inclusive education and training system ❖ provided conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education.
2005	<p>Various working documents (published by the Department of Basic Education [DBE]) transpired from The Education White Paper 6, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - district-based support teams - full-service schools ❖ Draft National Strategy on SIAS ❖ Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes.
2009	Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive schools
2010	Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning
2014	Policy on SIAS

Source: Dreyer (2017, p. 387)

These policies have helped in actualising and implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa, and helped in protecting the fundamental human rights of learners with special needs from various degrees of prejudices, stereotype, segregation, bullying, labelling and social injustice generally. Stakeholders need to ensure all measures are in place to gauge and measure

the level of compliance to Inclusive Education policies in order to enforce its effective implementation at all levels.

2.2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION AND POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The post-apartheid era in South Africa welcomed the exigency of legislations that cater for the needs and protect the rights of people with special needs. The 1996 Constitution firmly talks to disability issues as no one in the country may be, on the basis of their disability be discriminated against. The frameworks have been put in place to protect the rights and dignity of people with special needs in the society, and to minimise or at best eradicate the incessant discrimination, stereotype, prejudice and injustice being meted out to them.

These policies were put in place to protect the fundamental human rights of people and learners with special needs, to mitigate against the negative and prejudicial attitudes of people towards people and learners with special needs, to ensure fairness and uphold their human dignity, to benefit from service delivery as they are fully-fledged members of the society. Some other legislation and policies that protect the rights of people with special needs are below highlighted:

2.2.4.1. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT, No. 13 of 2004.

This act serves to provide social assistance to persons, to provide the mechanism for rendering such assistance, and to provide the establishment of an inspectorate for social assistance. It caters for the payment of disability grants to people living with physical or mental disabilities that make them unfit to work for a period of longer than six months, supported by a medical report. The maximum payment for a disability grant is R1890 per month (www.sassa.gov.za; Social Assistance Development Act, No.59 of 1992).

2.2.4.2. EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT, NO 55 OF 1998

People with special needs are unfairly discriminated against in the workplace and in society generally, due to prejudice, fear and stereotypes. People with special needs experience high levels of unemployment and when employed, they stay in low status jobs and earn lesser than the average salary (Naidoo, 2011).

This act seeks to promote the inclusion of people from the various disadvantaged backgrounds (women, blacks, people with disabilities, etc). It also endorses the reasonable accommodation of people living with disabilities by providing them with assistive devices to enhance their full and optimal participation in their workplace. The interpretation of reasonable accommodation relates to the specific and unique needs of person with disabilities (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2015; Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998).

2.2.4.3. SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT ACT 1996 (AS AMENDED IN 2011)

This act fosters inclusion of learners with special education needs. For all learners to enjoy equal access to education regardless of their disabilities, the government of the day must create an equal platform for all children devoid of discrimination, prejudices and stereotypes. All public schools are mandated by law to give equal opportunities to admitting learners irrespective of gender, class, race etc. without fear, favour and discrimination. It is crucial that barriers confronting learners with special education needs be eradicated for them to enjoy equal benefits in the society (South African Schools Development Act 1996 (As Amended in 2011).

2.2.4.4. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT (SDA), NO. 97 OF 1998

This act helps in transforming skills development in South Africa. The act assists in improving the employment prospects of people that have previously experienced unfair discrimination with regards to their gender, race, disability etc. in South Africa, and serves as a compensation to those groups discriminated against through education and training (Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998).

2.2.4.5. CHILDREN'S ACT 2007

The Children's Act prioritizes giving importance to certain rights of children as entrenched in the Constitution. The principles of this act are enmeshed in the protection and care of children as stated; provide for early childhood development, highlight the rights and responsibilities of parents, provide for the partial care of children, provision for children's courts, provision for children in alternative and foster care, provide for prevention and early intervention, child, youth care centres and drop-in centres, provide for adoption of children, inter-country adoption, prohibit child abduction, and provide for surrogate motherhood (Section 1 of Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007).

2.2.4.6. THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY AND PREVENTION OF UNFAIR DISCRIMINATION ACT (EQUALITY ACT) 2000

This act looks into the elimination, prohibition and prevention of unfair discrimination in the society thereby promoting equality before the law. It succinctly states that neither the state nor anyone may unfairly discriminate against another with respect to his or her disability. According to section 6, no person may unfairly discriminate against any person on the ground of disability, including denying or removing from any person who has a disability, any supporting or enabling facility necessary for their functioning in society, contravening the code of practice or regulations of the South African Bureau of Standards that govern environmental accessibility, failing to eliminate obstacles that unfairly limit or restrict persons with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities or failing to take steps to reasonably accommodate the needs of such persons (Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000, p. 21).

2.3 CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES

There have been a number of studies done in the field of Children's Geographies (Christensen and James, 2000; Holloway, Hubbard, Jons, Pimlott-Wilson, 2010; Holt 2011; Muthukrishna,

2013). Children's Geographies is an aspect of human geographies which looks into the places and spaces of lives of children (Muthukrishna, 2013).

The field of Children's Geographies is attracting more attention as a body of research. Before now, children have rarely been given the opportunity to speak independently of adults in research situations, but instead, more often than not, have been explored through adult proxies who work or speak on their behalf (Christensen and James, 2000; Holloway, Hubbard, Jons, Pimlott-Wilson, 2010).

Children's Geographies researchers postulate that children are social actors that are capable of speaking for themselves about their experiences and telling their own stories about their perceptions of the social settings in which they live and relate to (Hood, Kelley and Mayall, 1996; James, Jenks and Prout 1998). Barker and Weller (2003) opine that children are not inactive or passive objects that depend on adults but are competent social actors that are capable of making sense of their environment and actually contributing to it. Similarly, Holt (2011) stresses the notion of children and young people as competent social actors as opposed to the traditional view of referring to children as passive dependents.

Limited research on inclusion has been conducted using children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) as active participants (Okyere, Aldersey and Lysaght, 2019). In light of this and in keeping with the foundational tenets of Children's Geographies, this study has deemed learners very important and capable of relaying their experiences and not relying on adults as a medium of communication on their behalf. Holloway et al (2010) stress that instead of relying on an adultist formulation which refers to young people as objects of education, geographies of education focus on the authentic voices and subjectivities of young people. This way of thinking forms one of the theoretical and methodological cornerstones of this research.

The Sociology of Childhood has afforded childhood formal acknowledgement in academic institutions, where children are viewed as social agents in their own right and are politically positioned especially with regards to their voices and their positions as social actors (Ennew, Abebe, Bangyai, Karapituck, TrineKjorholt and Noonsup, 2009; Moran-Ellis, 2010). The Sociology of Childhood promotes the participation of young people in decision making about their lives, policy development and views them as active contributors to daily family and social

life (Tisdall and Bell, 2006; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). Adopting such a lens enables children to be seen as competent social actors. Ansell (2009) reiterates the importance of examining the nature and limits of children's spaces of perception and action which present children opportunities to comment or intervene in events and decisions that affect or shape their lives and activities.

World Vision UK (2014) carried out a study on vulnerable children in three countries, Cambodia, Tanzania and Eastern DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo). They looked into whether vulnerable children were being included and impacted by PPA (Program Partnership Agreement). They found that they were being positively impacted. The DFID (Department for International Development), PPA (Program Partnership Agreement) funding was successful in including vulnerable children like children experiencing domestic violence, children with a disability, children threatened by early marriage, orphaned children and those not able to attend school.

Masondo (2006) conducted a study on the lived experiences of orphans living in child-headed households within under-privileged communities in the Bronkhorstspuit area, South Africa. He explored the lived experiences of orphans and established guidelines and recommendations to help the children deal with their situations. In the same vein, Chanwi (2014) explored the lived experiences of street children in Moshi, Tanzania. She looked into the diversified experiences and eventually came up with a social work intervention that might support the children.

Davis, Watson, Corker and Shakespeare (2005) elucidate that disabled children's opinions are rarely taken into cognisance because professional practices take the interests of service providers into account before that of the children. This means that the desires and needs of the special needs learners are primarily determined by non-disabled adults, whose beliefs and attitudes are often characterised by assumptions, prejudices or stereotypes about learners with special needs and young people with disabilities. In keeping with this theoretical lens, this study adopts the view that it is crucially imperative to listen to the silent voices and experiences of the children/learners in this study as relayed by them, through the use of various child centred methods of generating data.

The theoretical lenses of Children's Geographies and the Sociology of Childhood are developed in response to the traditional view that children are immature, incomplete, unfinished and less than a complete human (Jenks 1996). Qvortrup (1994, p.2) points out that:

. . . “adulthood is regarded as the goal and end-point of individual development or perhaps even the very meaning of a person’s childhood. They are however revealing the maybe unintended message, which seems to indicate that children are not members or at least not integrated members of society. This attitude, while perceiving childhood as a moratorium and a preparatory phase, thus confirms postulations about children as ‘naturally’ incompetent and incapable”.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990). The ‘responsibilities of the child’ are clearly stated in Article 31 of this charter thus:

Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty;

(a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need;

(b) to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service;

(c) to preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity;

(d) to preserve and strengthen African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society, in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and consultation and to contribute to the moral wellbeing of society;

(e) to preserve and strengthen the independence and the integrity of his country;

(f) to contribute to the best of his abilities, at all times and at all levels, to the promotion and achievement of African Unity.

In the light of this, children are important citizens of every country whose responsibilities highlighted above must be judiciously executed and their rights duly upheld, guided and protected.

I have adopted this theory as one of the theories guiding this study because it is very relevant to my topic and my participants are children below the age of 18years. The principles of Children’s Geographies helped in guiding my conduct and relationship with the participants before, during and after the collection of data. It helped me to respect the rights of the children and also to work in consonance with them without jeopardising the autonomy to their information. It also gave the participants a real sense of importance, in that matters and information concerning them are sought from them and not through the voice of an adult, it

helped me to gather a rich and first -hand information from the real people going through the experiences which makes the information and data more genuine and valid.

2.4 BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory is another of the theories which comprise the theoretical framework for this research. Urie Bronfenbrenner, an American psychologist, stresses the importance of studying a child/learner in the surroundings of his or her multiple environments when trying to understand and investigate how children grow and develop (Hoosen, 2016). Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.27) defines human development as:

“...the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or great complexity in form and content”.

This study resonates with Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (1979) which alludes to the environment with which we relate as a set of structure that is interconnected (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chrono-structures), they all play a fundamental role in a learner’s development. The first support a child gets is from the innermost structure which includes adults taking care of the child and around the child (Ubuntu). Family, peers, teachers, other professionals etc, work co-operatively to bring out the best in the child. If this adult support is lacking, the child might very well be disadvantaged (Berns, 2012; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel, 2016). This type of support is bi-directional, which means adults have an influence on the development of the learner and vice-versa (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (1979) posits that there are five environmental systems that play a significant role by affecting a child’s growth and development and influence their behaviour in varying degrees: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. These are shown in the diagram below:

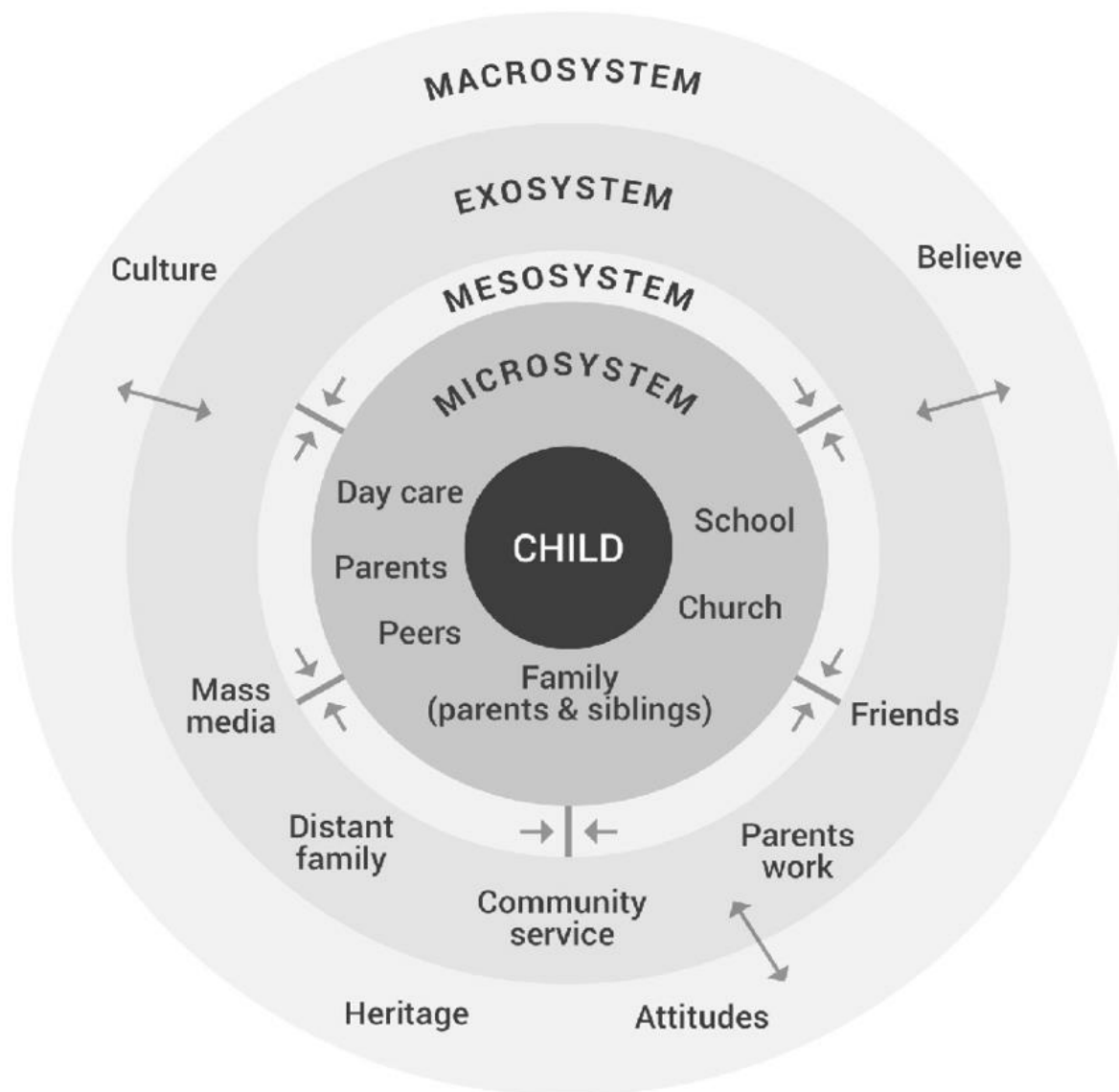


Fig. 2 - Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (sourced from researchgate.net)

2.4.1 THE MICROSYSTEM

The microsystem is the most proximal setting with particular physical characteristics where the developing person interacts face to face with others, such as the home, family members, neighbour playground areas, church members, child-care centres, teachers, health services, friends, playground relationships, classmates and everyone who has close contact with the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Edinete and Tudge, 2013). The microsystem involves various activities or relationships that the child engages in with people around him or her. All those in contact

with the child have the opportunity to impact the child's growth and development and influence the child's behaviour.

Family: - Family is the first contact a child has and therefore the child's first teacher. Families have a great impact on children's learning behaviours and academic achievement as the home is the most significant and primary environment that children relate with. The socio-economic status and educational standard of the parents also have roles to play in the child's behaviour (Li and Qiu, 2018). Positive attitudes of parents towards children contributes to a happy, loving, fulfilled home environment, which impacts the growth, development and behavioural patterns of children in a positive manner (Tudge, 2017). When the child is of age, he or she moves from being influenced by their immediate family, to being influenced by the child-care and educational institutions they are then exposed to.

School: - The school is an environment where learning takes place and where learners are instructed in reading, writing, numeracy, morals and further socialisation by their teachers and peer groups (Li and Qiu, 2018). Learners learn, grow and develop together through classroom and playground activities. They discover their strength and weaknesses by comparing themselves and their abilities within the peer group. Friendship and support exhibited during learning experiences in role taking and cooperation is enhanced through peer group activities (Nash and Collier, 2016).

Community: - The community also plays a pivotal role in the growth and development of children, where children are exposed to and learn both positive and negative behavioural patterns from the members of the community.

2.4.2 THE MESOSYSTEM

The mesosystem works in with the microsystem to develop and enhance the growth, development and behavioural patterns in the child. In South Africa, this encourages the spirit of Ubuntu as the family and the school must work cooperatively to nurture a total child, that is, a child that has been developed and nurtured holistically.

This talks to relations among two or more microsystems where the developing person interact with, the mesosystem is a system of microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Edinete and Tudge, 2013).

Any disconnection between the microsystem and mesosystem will impart the child negatively. For example, a child that is having challenges or problems of rejection with his or her parents might find it difficult exhibiting positive relationships with his or her educators. Berns (2010) explains that this theory consists of interrelationships and linkages between two or more of the developing person's microsystems, for example, the family and the peer group, or the family and the school etc.

According to Twintoh, Anku, Amu, Darteh and Korsah (2021) this system fundamentally emphasizes and integrate the relationship that occurs within the microsystem. This network of relationships is associated with a positive influence on the individual or family.

Guy-Evans (2020) asserts that the mesosystem is where a person's individual microsystems do not independently function, but they assert influence upon one another and are interconnected. For example, when the teachers and a child's parents have a good or cordial relationship, this should have a positive outcome on the child's growth and development, compared to when there is no co-operation between the school and home, which has a negative effect on the child's growth and development. In other words, the mesosystem gives support to activities playing out in the microsystems (Berns, 2010).

The microsystems and mesosystems are the systems where the developing child is physically present and interacts with. In the context of this study, relationships with family and members of the society is paramount to the learners with special needs as they relate with them on a daily basis.

2.4.3 THE EXOSYSTEM

The exosystem comprises activities or events that affect the child's growth, development and socialisation which the child does not have control on nor plays an active role in their creation or maintenance. For example, the parents' profession imparts the child's life, if both parents are doctors this means the child will most times be cared for by nannies or caregivers because the parents will be absorbed by the call to duty.

The exosystem is an ecological setting in which the developing child is not relating with directly or does not actively participate in but influences the life of the individual and can in

turn at times influence the child's life both formally or informally (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Edinete and Tudge, 2013).

The exosystem as a structure also involves important players in the life of the learner. This involves the extended family, the neighbourhood, mass media, social welfare, parents' work environment etc. These might not affect the learner directly but they play a crucial role in the effective functioning of the support structures (Berns, 2012, Nel et al, 2016).

Guy-Evans (2020) also explicates that these are environments in which the child is not involved or relate with, which are external to their experience, but nonetheless affects them. For example, if one of the parents has a disagreement or dispute with the boss at work, as a result, the parent comes home in a temper and exhibits transferred aggression onto the child which adversely affect the child's growth and development. In essence, the exosystem indirectly affects the child's life, with the influences from the exosystem affecting the child as a cascading effect because what effects other members of the community, necessarily has some related or associated effect on the child.

2.4.4 THE MACROSYSTEM

The macrosystem comprises the broader culture of the society in which the individual resides, embracing the established systems of a culture or subculture and the economic, legal, social, political and education systems (Edinete and Tudge, 2013).

According to Jonas (2010) cultural contexts include developing and industrialised countries, poverty, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, the boundaries of these cultural contexts being defined by cultural and national borders, laws and rules. This system influences the nature of interaction amongst all other levels of ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Guy-Evans (2020) expounds that the macrosystem focuses on how a child's growth and development is affected by cultural elements like wealth, poverty, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The culture of individuals influences their perceptions and beliefs about experiences in their lives. He further explains that the macrosystem is different from previous bio-ecological systems because it does not refer to the specific environment of one developing child but the already established culture and society in which the child is being nurtured or developing. For example, a child nurtured in a third world or developing country will have a different development compared to a child nurtured in a developed country. Berns (2010) explicates that

the effects of the broader principles defined by the macrosystem have a trickling impact on the interactions on all other systems. The macrosystem influences when, what, how and where the interactions are carried out.

2.4.5 THE CHRONOSYSTEM

The chronosystem is determined by consistency or change over a period of time, not only on features of the child but also in the environment the child relates with or is situated (Bronfenbrenner,1979). The Chronosystem entails factors that affect the development of the child both within the actual child and in the environment of the child, for instance, changes in the child's environment caused by outside influences and changes influenced by the stages of biological maturation within the child (Killian, 2004).

The Chronosystem is a model in which time is treated as equally important as the environment for human's growth and development (Edinete and Tudge, 2013). The Chronosystem alludes to the temporal change in individuals or the ecological systems that create new conditions affecting development. Time plays a key role in relation to the child's environment as children react to environmental changes in varied degrees. It is essential that those providing support structures take cognizance of learners revolving or changing needs so as to provide successful and apt support that they require. The Chronosystem signifies the changes that happen over a period of time in any one of the systems (Donald, Lazarus and Lowana, 2010).

Guy-Evans (2020) also explicates that this system consists of all the environmental changes that occur in the child's life which influence development. This involves historical events and major life transitions, for example, life transitions like starting school, moving to a new house or parents getting divorced.

Bronfenbrenner's theoretical conception of these various bioecological systems aids in understanding the interconnectivity of these systems and the impact and influence they have, singularly and collectively, on childrens' growth and development. His theoretical presentation of these contexts and systems helps towards the conscientization of the various influences which impact childrens' growth, development and behaviour. Although emphasis is on how these relationships in each of these environmental systems influence the growth and

development of behavioural patterns in the child, this process is not simply a one-way process, as the individual is also an active participant in the social construction of this microsystem.

The chronosystem consists of the element or dimension of time in relation to the environment of the child. The dimensions in this regard may be either external, for example, the timing of a parent's demise, or internal, like the physiological changes that occurs as a child grows or ages (Kail and Cavanaugh, 2015).

2.5 CRITIQUE OF BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory has enjoyed a warm embrace from many scholars and researchers, but it has also received some critique. Tudge, Mokrova, Karnik and Hatfield (2011) advanced an assumption that systemic features in the theory are very much interdependent and that impactful intervention at any crucial point should affect other features and set off rippling, reverberating effects that will make the systemic structures change or be modified.

These researchers also do not agree with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems and state that there are multiple behavioural and mental processes in the developmental accomplishment of culture (Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, and Garcia, 2017; Weisner, 2015,) some of these systems can be in dissonance with cultural values which produce cultural and intrapsychic conflict (Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, and Garcia, 2017; Weisner, 2009). In light of these systems, the mentality of each person's culture includes collective and idiosyncratic beliefs, practices and experiences that can lead to contradictory actions (Tonyan, Mamikonian-Zarpas, and Chien, 2013; Velez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina and Garcia, 2017). They all state that these crucial phenomena they point out are not addressed in any of the Bronfenbrenner's theory or systems.

Despite the critique of Bronfenbrenner's theory, I have selected it as one of the theories that comprise my theoretical framework because of its relevance to my study as it explains the multi-layered levels and the relationship between the child's development in relation to his or her multiple environments and the impact and influence these have on the child's growth and

development. It offers an effective lens through which to understand how special needs learners navigate their lived experiences in spaces such as the home, school and broader community and society. It further helps to highlight the relationship between the development of the individual and social context he or she relates to. These social contexts are paramount to the development of special needs learners and to the way/s in which they navigate these spaces on a daily basis.

The bioecological systems offer a multidimensional system model which helps to comprehend the influence of family and other spheres of influence in the society on the growth and development of an individual. They explicate a way to understand the human life course from childhood to adulthood, which is the stage this study explores in the lived experiences of the participants. They aid the mapping of information about individuals and the social contexts over a period of time, to fully understand their diverse systemic interconnections. This theory helped me to properly investigate the multi-dimensional influence that people and society have on the growth and development of the special needs learners which, in turn, has helped me generate or garner rich data from the participants.

2.6 JUSTIFICATION OF BROFENBRENNER'S BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Brofenbrenner's bio-ecological systems or theory of human development is suited for my study as it explicates the interconnectivity and relationships between various levels of interactions engaged in by learners in their social setting. It visualises the child at the centre of the social development process and this evolves with interrelated rings of impact and expanding circles around the child's sphere of influence in his or her geographical range. These interactions partly are also dependent on the personal characteristics of individuals, (in this case, the learners with special needs) and in the context in which they occur.

Firstly, Brofenbrenner's theory emphasizes the interrelationships and partnerships that exist between the home, school and communities. These partnerships assist in enhancing the collaboration amongst stakeholders for better service delivery and learning outcomes.

Secondly, the theory endorses fairness, equity, and equality in provision of services to the learners and their families. It encapsulates the ardent relationship between service providers (stakeholders) and the school. When low quality or paucity in service delivery is experienced

or observed, this disparity needs to be instantly addressed as this will have an adverse effect on the quality of learners' education.

Lastly, the thoughts and perspectives of learners with special needs regarding the collaboration between the home, school and the stakeholders is crucial. Their feedback or responses on services directly affecting them should be prioritized and taken cognizance of as this also helps in enhancing the validity of the Brofenbrenner's theory. Paying attention to the learners' responses assists stakeholders to holistically understand the factors that may promote or inhibit the development and education of learners with special needs.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The ideology underpinning Children's Geographies is based on the belief that children are social actors that are capable of speaking for themselves about their experiences and telling their own stories about their perceptions of the social settings in which they live and relate to, and is in direct opposition and critique to traditional beliefs to the contrary and the subsequent practices of children rarely given the opportunity to speak independently of adults. Instead of passive objects that depend on adults, Children's Geographies view children as competent social actors that are capable of making sense of their environment and actually contributing to it. Thus, Children's Geographies promotes the participation of young people in decision making about their lives, policy development and views them as active contributors to daily family and social life.

Inclusive education is geared towards respecting the rights of each and every learner to fully participate in his/her own learning. Stress is on the need to offer all learners a quality education that is supportive of each learner's individual learning needs, encouraging each learner to develop to his/her full potential, and offering equal opportunities for participation, growth and development. Integral to the vision of Inclusive Education is recognising the individual rights of each learner, and the vital role that participation plays in this quest. The move to Inclusive Education is vital to ensuring a fair and equitable future for all learners regardless of their differences, with a distinct commitment to equal access, non-discrimination and redress. Inclusive Education was introduced with the intention of asserting human rights issues and prejudiced and discriminatory education practices intrinsic in the education history of South Africa (D'amant, 2010).

As the study site is a special needs school and special needs learners have witnessed various forms of discrimination, segregation and inequality with regards to access and quality of education, choosing Inclusive Education as one of the theories guiding this research has helped me investigate the level to which Inclusive Education is being achieved in the school and whether it is being achieved in line with government expectations and standards. It also helped to investigate the aspects of Inclusive Education that need to be upgraded and worked on by the policy makers and the policy implementers in order to achieve the desired level prescribed by the Department of Education.

The Bronfenbrenner bioecological systems theory foregrounds the interaction between the development of the individual in relation to the various levels in his or her social environment. The Bronfenbrenner systems help us decipher that human behaviour, actions and behaviour cannot be comprehensively understood if the social contexts in which these behaviours took place are not taken cognizance of (Bronfenbrenner,1979).

This theory has assisted me to properly investigate the multi-dimensional levels of human interaction with regards to the child's growth and development. It acted as a pointer to the areas to be harnessed which were duly explored during the investigation, for me to garner rich data through the lived experiences of the special needs learners.

The synergy between Children's Geographies and Inclusive Education hinges on the understanding that the maximum participation from each learner should be encouraged, based on the belief that children's voices are important and that their participation is paramount. The social setting in which an individual relate with has a very vital role in the development of the individual, to fully understand stories told by such individual, the Bronfenbrenner bioecological system needs to be comprehended. Herein lies the synergy between these three ideologies. They go hand-in-hand and it is for this reason that I am drawing on these to comprise the theoretical framework which underpins my research.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underpins my study. Children's Geographies, Inclusive Education and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems are relevant theories which help in the understanding and investigation of the lived experiences of special needs learners and the ways they navigate their daily lives in their home, school and community settings. The next chapter will present a review of existing literature relevant to my study.

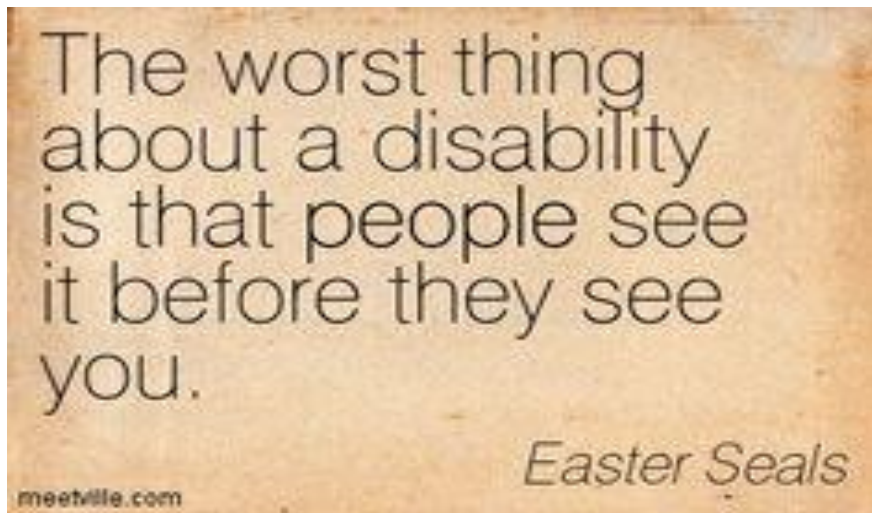


Fig: 3- Quote by Easter Seals

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

“If disabled people were truly heard, an explosion of knowledge of the human body and psyche would take place.”– Susan Wendell

“Employers have recognized for some time that it’s smart business to have a diverse workforce – one in which many views are represented and everyone’s talents are valued. Well, disability is part of diversity.” – Thomas Perez

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present a review of current literature which investigates the challenges faced by learners living with special needs, stigmas around disability in developing countries, experiences learners with special needs have to navigate, school, family and community partnerships, support structures for special needs learners and research findings related to the implementation of Inclusive Education.

3.2 CHALLENGES PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FACE

People experiencing one disability or the other face various challenges. According to the United States Division for Social Policy Development (UNDSPD), poor education or the inability to access education, free movement in the community, the choice of whom to marry and whether to start a family, participation in non-exploitative work, where to live, etc. are some of the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities. Ndlovu (2016) posits that challenges experienced by people living with disabilities oftentimes does not originate from their disabilities, be they are physical, intellectual, mental or sensory. Contrarily, their challenges more often originate from various environmental barriers, hurdles or obstacles they encounter on a daily basis, and which serve to thwart their full participation and inclusion into their societies. These can be cultural, physical, historical, social, religious or personal in nature. People living with disabilities seek to be empowered in their society so as to be self-reliant, equal in dignity and as independent as their non-disabled counterparts.

One of the factors that impact on disability include ... the attitudes of other individuals and of society, by perceiving and treating those living with disabilities as different persons; they are not seen and treated like human beings who possess and should enjoy equal rights and responsibilities (Swaziland Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013).

Likewise, the World Report on Disability (2011) highlights environmental factors that restrict the participation of people with disabilities. These include inadequate policies and standards, lack of provision of services, problems with service delivery, negative attitudes, inadequate funding, lack of consultation and involvement of people with disabilities and lack of accessibility. Phenomena which further explicate these challenges experienced by people with disabilities are: poor health outcomes, lower educational achievements, inability of living independently or participating fully in community activities, and higher rates of poverty (World Report on Disability, 2011).

3.3 STIGMAS AROUND DISABILITY IN AFRICA

While it is true that in all regions of the world, attitudinal barriers, prejudices, low expectations and fear are faced by people living with disabilities, according to Nyangweso (2018), attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards people with disabilities is a major problem on the African continent. This section will explore some of the cultural beliefs of a few African countries, in order to gain a deepened knowledge of the experiences of people living with disabilities in some countries on the African continent.

Research by Sait, Lorenzo, Steyn, and Van Zyl (2011) and Ndlovu (2016) highlight that indigenous African beliefs depict all types of physical and psychological disabilities as afflictions that must be countered with traditional therapies, cleansing or rituals; that many cultural traditions globally stigmatize disability as punishment from ancestors, divinities or rationalise them as social deviance and the embodiment of sin; that indigenous African beliefs view people with disabilities as victims of witchcraft or anger from ancestors due to moral laxity; and that they are often forced to endure rituals where they are supposedly, physically and morally cleansed of their afflictions, in order for them to be reintegrated into the society. Most times, disability is not attributed to acts of God but predominantly attributed to acts of witchcraft (Mageza, 1997, Makhubu, 2009).

In Swaziland, many people believe that disability is caused by evil spirits sent by “batsakatsi” or witches as “tilwane” or animals that disrupt the functionality of the brain normally. These witches can also send evil spirits to the proposed victim, as evil spirits cannot be limited by physical distance, walls or closed doors (Makhubu, 2009).

In some African cultures, people living with disabilities are regarded as being cursed or punished for a sin they have committed in their previous lives or sins committed by their family members (Haihambo and Lightfoot, 2010).

In Nigerian society, there has been a misunderstanding about children with disabilities which has resulted in negative treatment and perception of these children (Afolabi,1990). According to Ozoji (1990), overcoming these major negative perceptions has been one of the key challenges affecting people living with disabilities in the country.

Negative beliefs about children with disabilities are entrenched in the African cultures. Some of the beliefs are that disability is a curse from God as punishment for disobedience to God’s commandments, violation of ancestral social norms (such as stealing), offences against their gods, adultery (this is a huge abomination), incest, curses from witches and wizards, waring from gods of the land, taboo (such as fighting or arguing with elders), misbehaviour in a previous life, illegal or unapproved marriages, possessing evil spirits (due to gross societal disobedience) and so on (Nyangweso, 2018; Eskay, Onu, Igbo, Obiyo, and Ugwuanyi, 2012). In the same vein, the field studies conducted by the African Child Policy Forum (2011) in Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia, Senegal and Cameroon found that beliefs regarding causes of childhood disability include: ancestral curses, demonic possessions and the mother’s promiscuity and other sins.

I cannot but share a gory and horrid story that sent a shivery sensation all through my body. This heartless and callous incidence was against people with disabilities in Uganda.

“On November 20th of 1997, around 10am, Idi Amin, then dictator and president of Uganda, drove into Kampala’s main car park. He was accompanied by some of his ministers and bodyguards. He got out of his car and started walking around the car park. He entered one park and found a group of men playing ajua- a local popular game. Amin requested that he join in the game and one of the players gave up his position for the president. It was soon apparent that Amin was good at playing ajua. He was cheered by the crowd as he beat one man after another.

As the word went around that the president was playing ajua, the crowd grew. In the middle of jubilation, there came a crippled man by the name of Wandera Maksini. Wandera, who was very popular in Kampala, pushed his way through the crowd with his crutches and went and collapsed in front of Amin.

He glared at the president and started insulting him. He called the president names and told him that he should not have sent away Asians from Uganda because the 'common man' was now suffering. "We don't have commodities in the shops, yet you call yourself president, son of a bitch! Kill me if you want," Wandera dared the president. One of Amin's bodyguards raised his pistol to strike Wandera "I hear you are a murderer and that you shoot people with guns., 'Shoot me now!!'. Amin quietly got to his feet and left the crowd with his ministers and bodyguards.

Three days later, Wandera was seen being hauled into a military vehicle. The same day, it was announced on Radio Uganda that anybody with disabilities - lame, blind, poor or disabled in other ways – who needed help should report to the nearest police station. The government announced that it would offer free accommodation and free food to people with disabilities in Jinja, a city envisioned to be the next capital city of Uganda.

The following morning, thousands of crippled and people with disabilities, turned up in Kampala police stations. They were loaded onto military trucks and driven to Jinja. On arrival at Jinja, they were all unloaded into the Nile River, the Owen falls dam-today. All people with disabilities on the trucks fell into the crocodile infested river and drowned. Those who clutched onto the trucks were shot down until they fell into the river” (Drum Magazine, 2017, cited in Nyangweso, 2018, p.1-2).

Idi- Amin's action was rather radical and beastly. This is a story of vicious or rancorous actions against people with disabilities in Uganda that the citizens will never forget in a hurry. No human being is expected to be treated in such an inhumane manner.

In Tanzania, one of the types of disabilities haunting people with disabilities is Albinism which is a hereditary genetic condition which involves a lack of melanin pigment in the skin, hair and eyes, making the albinos vulnerable to exposure to sun. Some of the erroneous beliefs on albinism are that it is often regarded as a curse on the family and also believed that the mother had an affair with spirits or a white person, or at least that she shook hands or ate with someone with albinism. There is also the belief that those with albinism are not human but ghosts or

witches or disaster omens. They are also regarded as lazy due to the fact that they avoid the sun in order to protect their sensitive skin (Mostert, 2016, Franklin, A., Lund, P., Bradbury-Jones, C., and Taylor, J. 2018). They face discrimination, awful threats to their health and ultimately their lives. Mostert and Weich (2017) point out a report that indicated that in 25 African countries, there had been 185 killings and 297 survived attacks on people with Albinism. Isolated reports of killings and attacks have come from Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Swaziland. They are often killed for their body parts which are used for witchcraft and trafficking practices. The African countries known to be involved in trafficking of albino parts are: Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa and Swaziland (Albinism Foundation of East Africa, 2008).

In Ghana, some people living with disabilities are forced to live in spiritual centres or prayer camps and psychiatric institutions against their will. In the prayer camps, they are found chained to trees frequently in scorching sun, forced to fast and denied medication as part of the healing process (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

In Sierra Leone, there is a prevalent misconception that epilepsy and seizures are contagious and those who have them are possessed (Street Child of Sierra Leone, 2018). The victim is often forced to drink kerosene or paraffin as a curative measure (Baruchin, 2010). Injuries, diseases and congenital disabilities are commonly blamed on witchcraft.

According to Rohwerder (2018) some of the misconceptions about people living with disabilities are: they are unable to contribute to the good of the family and society, they cannot have normal relationships, they are sexually inactive, they are unable to report sexual abuse, they are contagious or bring ill luck, their bodies have magical properties and are presumed to be witches.

Summarily, everyone has the rights to his or her culture, but cultural rights must have boundaries. These must not negate or cause infringement on fundamental human rights, nor should they be used to justify human rights abuse and violations, (for example, murder, torture, discrimination etc.) as stated in international law (United Nations, 1995).

Rohwerder (2018, p.2) posits that all over the world, prejudices, stereotypes and stigmas contribute to the exclusion and discrimination experienced by people living with disabilities

and their families in various aspects of their lives. She further outlines some of the causes of disability stigmas which include:

“Lack of understanding and awareness regarding the causes of disabilities and their resulting characteristics is a key factor in the stigma experienced by people with disabilities.

Misconceptions about the cause of disabilities often result from cultural or religious beliefs. Disability is often blamed on misdeeds of ancestors; misdeeds of parents; misdeeds of the person with disabilities; supernatural forces such as demons/spirits; witchcraft; or punishment or fate from God.

As a result, people with disabilities may be thought to be not quite human or a source of shame, which has serious consequences for how they are treated.

Misconceptions about the nature and abilities of people with disabilities, including that they are unable to contribute financially; that they are not able to have a normal relationship; that they will be unable to report sexual abuse; that their disability is contagious or they bring bad luck; that their bodies have magical powers; or that they are witches, also contribute to the stigma, discrimination and abuses they experience.

Discriminatory legislation and policies reinforce prejudice and discrimination, while the segregation of people with disabilities perpetuates negative stereotypes”.

Rohwerder (2018, p.2) extrapolates further that attitudes towards disabilities vary within countries, communities, or even families.

“Different types of impairments carry different levels of stigma, as does the severity of the impairment and how it was acquired. People with intellectual disabilities, severe mental health conditions, albinism, and sensory disabilities are often more stigmatised than people with physical disabilities. People with disabilities who can participate in their communities experience less stigma than those with more severe disabilities. Females who are disabled are doubly disadvantaged, due to the stigma associated with gender as well as disability. Socio-economic status can affect attitudes towards disability. People with disabilities in rural areas may experience more harmful practices than in urban areas”.

These false and erroneous beliefs affect people living with disabilities negatively, eroding their human dignity, fundamental human rights and freedom. Inguanzo (2017) posits that stigma and discrimination in conjunction with poverty and other barriers put the rights of people living with disabilities at risk. The erroneous beliefs consequently affect how they are addressed and treated which lowers their status in the community (Nyangweso, 2018).

Nyangweso (2018) further explicates some of the consequences as:

- ❖ **Stigma-** These beliefs bring shame and humiliation on the people living with disabilities which hampers their human dignity and status in the community.
- ❖ **Discrimination** – Stigmas ultimately lead to discrimination. Consequences of the stigma and discrimination result in dehumanizing and exclusive behaviour towards people with disabilities in all areas of their lives. They face great hardship in order to overcome these challenges to achieve self- acceptance and societal acceptance which cause feelings of guilt and shame.
- ❖ **Physical and sexual violence and other abuses** - People living with disabilities are physically and sexually abused because of their vulnerability and the stigmas imposed on them.

3.4 NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS NAVIGATE

Many researchers have explored the negative and challenging experiences learners with special needs have had to negotiate in their lives. Okyere, Aldersey, and Lysaght (2019) conducted a study to understand the experiences of 16 learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who were learning in four inclusive schools in Accra, Ghana. Their study on the children's experiences concludes that these children face various challenges which include victimisation, corporal punishment because of slow academic performance and low family and teacher support with regards to their learning. Similarly, learners with special needs experience various degrees of victimisation and bullying in their social contexts. A study conducted by Majoko (2016) in Zimbabwe identifies victimisation and peer bullying as vital social challenges to the inclusion of learners with IDD. It was also reported that educators were not responsive to the complaints of these learners on victimization and bullying.

Nhleko (2016) conducted research to explore the schooling experiences of six deaf learners in the Lubombo region of Swaziland. It was found that deaf learners' sign language was not recognized, some teachers do not socialize with them, there is a disconnect between them and their caregivers and parents, they were stigmatized in tours and sports, there were power dynamics at play because they were not included in decisions regarding their assessment and curriculum. Those that hold power do not include the minority group (the deaf) while making crucial decisions that concerns them and services available to them which leaves the minority powerless. It is clear from these findings, that deaf learners' education does not receive the deserved attention it should in Swaziland, with deaf learners being largely neglected in comparison with hearing learners.

According to the World Report on Disability (2011), deaf learners are also vulnerable to abuse because of their challenges with spoken communication as occasionally when people maltreat them, they are unable to fully express themselves, especially when there is no interpreter, the perpetrators go unpunished, then abuse is repeatedly meted out because of the breakdown in communication.

Correspondingly, Manzi (2016) conducted a study on six young physically disabled girls attending three mainstream primary schools in deep rural areas in Kwazulu- Natal. She sought to understand ways by which these girls navigated the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics. She found that girls living with disabilities encounter difficulties in their relationships with their peers and educators. They are also faced with various forms of abuse and insults from learners, community members and educators, despite experiencing these stigmatisation and negative attitudes. Rigid curricula and the physical geography of the school are also part of the exclusionary dynamics these learners experience.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2017) report documented that in August 2015, a fire outbreak occurred at the Leeudoringstad School for the Deaf in the North West Province of South Africa. Three deaf learners died while others were injured. The North West Department of Education and Sport Development pointed out that an alarm rang to warn learners of the fire but due to the nature of their disability, they did not hear. The Commission was assigned to conduct an inspection of the school to assess if there was violation of human rights and found that the inappropriate fire alarm and inadequate safety precautions failed to

accommodate the deaf learners therefore violating their rights to equality and equal enjoyment of various human rights.

Grobler and Wessels (2018) explored the self-configuration experiences of nine learners with mild learning difficulties within the learner-educator relationship in the Intermediate phase. They reveal that learners that experience a positive learner-teacher relationship feel valued, confident and experience a sense of worthiness. This relationship enhances both their social and academic perception of self thereby inculcating feelings and experiences of safety and trust in the learners. The participants had been exposed to so much discrimination in the society, which made them enormously appreciate the positive relationships they enjoy with their educators. Learners with learning difficulties have the same needs as their peers in mainstream schools. Educators need to acknowledge that the positive relationships they establish with these learners with learning difficulties is immensely crucial to these learners and their self-development and self-worth.

Mehta (2010) conducted a study on six young adults who had physical impairments and were from various socioeconomic backgrounds in Mumbai, India. It was found that these learners faced forms of segregation as they were placed in general education classrooms but were not included in the teaching and learning process. They actually preferred segregated schools where they enjoyed hands-on, child-centred and individualized teaching because of the small number of learners in each class. They also had benefits of easy access to better medical and rehabilitation facilities in these segregated or special schools despite their socio economic background. The attitude of educators is crucial to ensure that learners with disabilities stay in school and are not excluded from full and equal participation in all classroom activities (World Report on Disability, 2011).

Tsabedze (2018) conducted a study looking into the geographies of slow learners in a government school in the Manzini region in Swaziland. Six learners from form1 to form 5 aged between thirteen and nineteen years were used as participants (three boys and three girls). The outcome of the study reveals that slow learners have challenges in navigating places and spaces in the school and slow learners are generally not understood by their classmates and educators alike.

Selvum (2004) piloted a study on experiences of SEN learners included in mainstream general education classrooms. The study discovered that learners with Special Education Needs encounter negative experiences in the mainstream education classrooms as the learners without SEN label, ridicule and exclude learners with SEN from group work activities.

Msomi (2014) investigated the experiences of six secondary school learners with oculocutaneous albinism in various schools in the Umlazi District, South West of Durban, Kwazulu Natal, to investigate how they navigate their daily lives. She discovered that the participants encounter many discriminatory and prejudicial circumstances such as segregation, searching for a sense of belonging, physical harm by educators etc. which as a result lead them to exhibit low self-esteem and self - concepts.

Leseyane, Mandende, Makgato and Cekiso, (2018) conducted a study on nine dyslexic learners between the ages of nine and twelve years who were previously in public schools and later moved to a special school after being diagnosed as dyslexic. The study explored the experiences of these dyslexic learners with their peers and educators in public and special schools in North West Province, South Africa. It was found that the dyslexic learners are ill-treated by their peers who despise, ridicule, undermine and bully them. The educators in public schools also are not patient with these learners, using negative comments that embarrass these learners and do not give them extra attention.

Many years ago, learners with special needs in Nigeria were taught in classrooms with learners without disabilities. They faced a sort of excommunication in the society and in the school which took the form of educators yelling at them or ignoring them whenever they put up their hands to answer questions in the classroom. These learners and their parents faced the injustice of excommunication in issues of welfare in their societies (Eskay, 2009).

According to the World Report on Disability (2011), violence against learners with special needs by educators, other staff and fellow learners is a common occurrence in educational settings. Learners with special needs become easy targets of violent acts including physical threats and abuse, social isolation and verbal abuse. The fear of being bullied is equally as tormenting to them as the actual act of bullying. Learners with special needs at times prefer to attend special schools because of their fear of stigmatisation or being bullied in mainstream schools.

Magardie (2018) carried out a study on six LSEN learners between the ages of eight and ten years in Durban, Kwazulu–Natal, where she investigated the experiences of learners diagnosed with learning difficulties, exploring the effects of labelling learners and placing them in a special education school as an educational intervention, and the effects of such interventions on the academic performance and social well-being of these LSEN learners. The study found that learners with learning difficulties experience feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. It further discovered that the separation of LSEN learners and the educational instructions they receive in the special education school does not benefit them.

Chappel (2013) conducted a study on twenty-two learners with special needs in the Umgungundlovu district of Kwazulu-Natal, aged between fifteen to twenty years old. The study explores how Zulu-speaking youths with physical and sensory impairments discuss issues on love, sex, relationships and HIV & AIDS in the construction of their sexual identities. It was discovered that youth with disabilities are sexual beings who re-construct their sexual identities continuously depending on the context of discourses available to them. They do this within the intersectionality of complementary and contentious discourses of gender, modernity, culture ableism and adultism.

All the above studies investigating the experiences of learners with special needs, highlight the challenges special needs learners have to negotiate in their places and spaces daily. It is evident that they face a fair number of difficulties and challenges in their relationships with people in their social context and many are devastated by the prejudicial and discriminatory reactions to them as people with special needs.

It is clear that exposure of learners with special needs to learners without special needs and inclusion into the same classroom, does not guarantee they will be valued, accepted and included. It is currently evident that many learners with special needs still suffer from the adverse mental, physical and social effects of being excluded and their peers' prejudice, discrimination and general lack of insensitivity (De Boer, Pijl, Minnaert and Post, 2014; Sagun-Ongtangco, Medallon and Tan, 2019). Learners with special needs face more of a risk of being bullied compared to learners without special needs. These actions result in low self-esteem, depression, suicidal thoughts and tendencies, social isolation and decreased standards of

performance academically (Braddock, Twyman, Garrity, Wang, Neary, Ezzelgot, and Heithaus, 2015; Taylor, Saylor, Twyman and Macias, 2010).

In contrast, it is worthy of note that some steps are being made to support special needs learners which have significantly positive effects on these learners and they have as a result, been able to rise above their challenges. The World Report on Disability (2011, p.20) quotes the experiences of some learners with disabilities who are trying to change the world around them due to the experiences they went through.

“I lost my leg by landmine when I was 5 years old, at that time I went to the rice field with my mother to get firewood. Unfortunately, I stepped on a mine. After the accident I was very sad when I saw the other children playing or swimming in the river because I have no leg. I used to stand with my crutch made of wood and I wish I could play freely like the other children too. And when I walked to school, some children they called me kombot, meaning disabled person, and [the discrimination] make me feel shy and cry and disappointed. So, I want all people to have equal rights and not discriminate against each other.”

“At the age of 9, I became deaf as a result of a bout with meningitis. In 2002, I went for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT). The results showed that I was HIV+. I become devastated and lost hope to live because I thought that being HIV+ was the end of world for me. Later, I met a disabled person who spiritually encouraged me to accept my status. Now I have confidence to be able to speak out on HIV/AIDS openly. I have been interviewed widely by print and electronic media and I have been invited to speak in public meetings. I am creating awareness on the importance of VCT and encouraging people to know their status. My work is limited by lack of money. Deaf people living in rural areas have no information on HIV/AIDS. I would like to break the barriers by going to visit them right where they live.”

Learners with special needs need to be motivated to tap into their strengths in order to achieve the best possible futures they can. These learners need to be extrinsically motivated (as they are not intrinsically motivated) by all stakeholders to ensure they succeed and live fruitful lives. Some of the learners are intrinsically motivated despite all the challenges and discrimination they face, making the effort to make the world a better place, which is profound and laudable.

3.5 FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

3.5.1 THE SCHOOL AND FAMILY

Over the years, researchers have acknowledged that children's home environments contribute immensely to their success in school (Sheldon, 2005, Epstein and Sheldon 2006, Berns, 2012). The family is the first source of education and socialisation for a child and most learning happens at home. Parents should be involved in all aspects of their child's learning. Parents are very active in creating educational opportunities for their children, thereby, they should be involved in the education of their children and not isolated (World Report on Disability, 2011).

While every family desires all their children and members of their family to experience progressive growth, unfortunately this desire is not always extended to all children with some 'abnormality' or mental retardation (Susanto, 2018). Parents should be partners in education working in conjunction with teachers and other professionals to deliver relevant education of children (Engelbrecht, 2006), but this is not always the reality.

According to Berns (2012) the school is a formal institution in a society where learning takes place and a powerful agent of socialization between the school and family, school and peer group, school and social media, school and community etc. "The school provides social and intellectual experiences which helps children develop the skills, knowledge, interests and attitudes that cultivates them as individuals and which assist in developing their capacities into adulthood (Berns, 2012, p.205).

The family is the first social agent of all children, as social relations start from home. The school therefore extend this process with formal education. This collaboration depends to a large extent on the relationship between the family and the school.

Epstein and Sheldon (2006, p.228) posit that research conducted from preschool, elementary to high school, shows that when schools and families work collaboratively in supporting the child's / ward's learning, such learners have more of a chance at succeeding in school and later in life. They further expound that the studies allude to parents' involvement in learning being more of a factor which determines the learner's school success than socioeconomic status. They specifically state that when families; (a) "create a home environment that encourages learning (b) express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for the children's achievement and future

ambition (c) become involved in their children's education at school and community, children from low socio-economic background and culturally diverse families will perform comparatively with middle class children".

Studies have shown that parents do care about their children, but they need clear information and instructions from educators for them to consistently be involved in the education of their children from preschool to high school. Furthermore, they explain that when parents have some archaic beliefs which separate school and learners from home and community, this leaves educators working in isolation from people of influence in the lives of the children, which is not in the best interest of the learner's educational achievement (Epstein and Sheldon, 2006).

Education provision and related services vary in various schools depending on the availability of instructional materials, parental awareness and parental involvement in the education of their children (Kamau, 2017; Kiru, 2018). Lack of participation and advocacy from parents and community cause reduced awareness about disabilities which further leads to marginalization especially in the rural areas (Elder, Damiani, and Oswago, 2016).

Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow (1993) explain three key functions of parents as team members of a school. Firstly, their observations are valuable in the evaluation of the learner's education programme. Secondly, parents teach crucial specific skills, pre-academic, communication and mobility skills. Thirdly, parents ensure that homework and other school-based tasks are done at home.

The school and family need to work cooperatively to complement each other's efforts. When they complement each other, the potential of the child will be discovered and nurtured optimally. Schools getting support from multiple sources improves inclusion and educational participation (Luger, Geiger, and Lyner-Cleophas, 2018).

Families have potentials to support learners living with special needs in various ways such as, supporting them through peer support, training information and advice, promoting their rights within their local communities, for example, conducting access audits, campaigning for human rights, becoming involved in raising awareness and social marketing campaigns, participating in forums (international, national, local) in determining priorities for change, to influence

policy and shape service delivery, and to participate in research projects (World Report on Disability, 2011).

3.5.2 THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

School and community interconnectivity is expressed in the school being an agent of cultural heritage transmission, transferring beliefs, values and customs of the society from one generation to the other. The community expects the school to equip learners with necessary skills and knowledge for them to be self-sufficient, to participate efficiently and productively in the society (Berns, 2012).

Epstein and Sheldon (2006) conducted research in 1000 schools, 125 school districts, in collaboration with other state and organisational partners in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at John Hopkins University. They arrived at 7 principles which can help researchers frame better questions and apply more rigorous methods in studying this partnership that culminates in smooth working relationships that foster and support the success of learners. These are as follows:

1. School, family, and community partnerships is a better term than parental involvement which helps to recognize that parents, educators, and others in the community are stakeholders for students' learning and development.
2. School, family, and community partnerships is a multidimensional concept.
3. A program of school, family, and community partnerships is an essential component of school and classroom organization. Studies must include measures from schools to implement partnership programs that set to involve parents. In policy and practice, the family and community partnership greatly impact the school improvement planning process.
4. Programs of school, family, and community partnerships require multi-level leadership. The districts and states must lead in guiding schools on how to strengthen and sustain programs that fosters family and community partnership.
5. Programs of school, family, and community partnerships must include a focus on increasing student learning and development. The partnership should be linked to the goals of the school regarding success of learners, family and community involvement must positively affect the learning and development of the learners.
6. All programs of school, family, and community partnerships are about equity.

7. Methods of research on school, family, and community partnerships must continuously improve.

According to the World Report on Disability (2011) involving the community brings to the fore the unavoidable truth that the child is an integral member of the community. Involving them helps the attainment of sustainable Inclusive Education. The report further explains that communities can assist and support learners with special needs in the following areas: protecting the rights of persons living with disabilities, promoting inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in the community, challenging and improving their own beliefs and attitudes, challenging violence against and bullying of people with disabilities, ensuring that community environments are accessible to people with disabilities including recreational areas, schools and cultural facilities.

3.6 SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

Education White Paper 6 provides strategies in relation to the development of support structures for learners with special needs which play a fundamental role in learners' development, participation and learning. The first support a child gets is from the innermost structure which includes adults taking care of the child and around the child (Ubuntu) for example, family, peers teachers, other professionals etc. who need to work co-operatively to bring out the best in the child. If this adult support is lacking, the child will be disadvantaged (Berns 2012; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel, 2016). This type of support is bi-directional, which means adults have a significant influence on the development of the learner and vice-versa (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

There are established support structures in schools that assist learners' function effectively in their academics. The formation of District – Based Support Teams was envisioned “to provide a co-ordinated professional support service that draws on expertise in further and higher education and local communities, targeting special schools and specialised settings, designated full-service and other primary schools and educational institutions” (Nel et al, 2016, p.3). The Institution Level or School- Based Support Teams have been envisioned as a further support structure. These consist of teachers, volunteers, members of the School Management Team,

members of District Based Support Teams and other stakeholders from the community for example, non-governmental organisations, health professionals, governmental departments, whose primary role is to provide support services within the school by identifying and addressing learner, teachers and institutional needs, developing learner support programmes for learners, providing training for teachers, encouraging professional collaborative support and liaising with the DBST. When the ILST is not able to support a learner or teacher, the next level is the DBST who should respond to this request to ensure the support is provided (Nel, Nel and Lebeloane, 2013; Nel et al, 2016). The functions of DBST include: provision of resources to schools, evaluation programmes and suggestions for modifications, provision of collaborative formal and informal support with educational institutions, communities and other sectors (Makhamele, 2011; Nel et al 2016).

3.7 EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There have been concerns from different stakeholders that many vulnerable learners especially learners with SEN are marginalised despite the implementation of Inclusive Education (Tikly, 2011; Walton, 2011, Harry and Klingner, 2014).

Over the past few decades, mainstream and special needs school educators have shared varying degrees of success and challenges in inclusive classrooms (Botha and Kourkoutas, 2016, Kahn and Lewis, 2014). Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad (2019) carried out a study using thirty-six learners with Special Education Needs (SEN) and thirty-six learners without SEN from six primary schools, in the South Central region of Botswana, their ages ranges between eight and fourteen years. The study investigated the experiences of inclusion by learners with SEN in primary schools in Botswana and whether these learners with SEN had equal access and opportunities to learners without SEN in terms of participation in primary schools. They discovered that although learners with SEN had positive experiences about Inclusive Education, they also experienced challenges in accessing the curriculum. They discovered that some schools failed to provide adequate educational support for learners with SEN. There was also a universal lack of infrastructural facilities, educational materials and evidence of unfavourable attitudes towards learners with SEN.

Hodgson and Khumalo (2016) highlight some of the challenges faced by learners with special needs with inclusive education. These include: an inflexible and undifferentiated curriculum; insufficient educators and professional staff; unacceptable and unlawful abuse, neglect and corporal punishment in special school hostels; challenges with regard to getting to school; dangerous, expensive and inappropriate learner transport; non-transparent, inconsistent, insufficient and unreliable funding for Inclusive Education; ineffective and inactive support structures; negative attitudes; and insufficient expertise and capacity. Hodgson and Khumalo (2016) further explicate that learners with special needs struggle to pass (their prospect of passing being reduced by inadequate accommodation of learners with special needs in standardized examinations and testing).

Similarly, Hoosen (2016) highlights the following issues as challenges special needs learners face with Inclusive Education: poverty; sparse or lack of basic services; lack of transport; undernourishment; unemployment and lack of proper housing facilities; overcrowded classrooms; lack of resources and supporting material; lack of support from the Department of Education; and lack of support from parents.

In the study that Mosia (2014) conducted in Lesotho, he outlines insufficient classroom space, furniture, textbooks, general teaching facilities; unqualified teachers; slow development of policies regarding special needs; and inadequate resources for successful implementation of Inclusive Education, as challenges learners with special needs face. The World Report on Disability (2011) documents the following as challenges special learners face with Inclusive Education: curriculum and pedagogy, physical barriers, labelling, inadequate training and support for educators, attitudinal barriers, violence, bullying, and abuse.

On a positive note, Luger, Geiger, and Lyner-Cleophas (2018) conducted a study on a few successes of 3 learners with Cerebral Palsy who successfully completed mainstream schooling in Cape Town. They discovered that reasonable accommodation and physical accessibility are mentioned as necessary for learners with physical disabilities' effective participation in mainstream schools. Furthermore, speaking up for themselves and having others speak on their behalf which shows the value in having respectful, timely, clear and open communication within the school environment and which they found contributes to the successful completion of the schooling program. They elucidate that getting support from multiple sources enhances inclusion and educational participation.

Allman (2013) expounds social inclusion as a way of advancement of human life is exemplified by a shift towards greater equality, social justice, and collectivism. In the same vein, Simpican, Clifford, Leader, Kosciulek and Leahy (2015) define social inclusion as the extensive conceptions that involves accepting an individual beyond his/her disability, significant, mutual and communal relationships, suitable living accommodations, employment, formal and informal supports, and community involvement.

Hosking (2008) uses the Critical Disability Theory (CDT) to comprehend disability as a social construct which is used as a means to oppress others. The CDT is based on Critical Theory principles that promote human liberation from various forms of oppression like racial, political, prejudicial amongst others. He posits that:

- a) Disability is a social construct, not the inevitable consequence of impairment.
- b) Disability is best characterised as a complex interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment.
- c) The social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of ‘normalcy’ (Hosking, 2008, p. 7).

There are many challenges experienced by learners with special needs on a daily basis from people they encounter or relationships within their social settings. People need to be conscientized on disabilities and how to relate with people living with disabilities generally and learners with special needs specifically, as this will assist in boosting the morale and self-esteem of learners with special needs which cascades into them appreciating themselves and owning their world.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the review of recent research which relates to my study. It explored disability as a crucial disabling factor for learners living with special needs. This category of learners have experienced stigma and various levels of prejudice against them in their social settings on a daily basis. The literature reveals that many learners with special needs experience abuse, social isolation, discrimination, segregation, and violence, amongst other negative experiences, being meted out to them by those that should be supporting them, and that this

inadvertently culminates in these learners experiencing low self-esteem which further results in poor academic achievement.

The onus is on everyone in the society to change this narrative. It is absolutely imperative that learners with special needs experience inclusion rather than exclusion, isolation or rejection. All special needs learners' lives and education matter. Their needs and wellbeing have to be prioritized and not neglected, by all stakeholders. It is worthy of note that the partnership between the school, family and community needs to be reinforced for learners with special needs to perform optimally academically. It is vital that support structures and educational policies need to be effective, concretized and solidified.

Despite the frustrations and challenges being faced by learners with special needs, literature reveals that some learners with special needs have overcome their predicaments and negative experiences, through perseverance and negotiating and navigating successfully the barriers and challenges they face on their path to attain success in life.

From a strength-based approach and capabilities perspectives, all stakeholders should engage in conscious intervention to inculcate in learners with special needs the necessity to be resilient and thrive in the face of adversity, and build capacity in them to realise they have potential, and that they have abilities within their (dis)abilities. Instead of amplifying their problems, challenges and vulnerabilities, they should be supported to see the opportunities, hope and solutions in the challenges they daily face instead of feeling hopeless and lost. They should be made to appreciate their strengths and capabilities, rather than their insecurities and challenges. All stakeholders must engage the spirit of Ubuntu to bring out the real attitude and values inherent in individuals to perform optimally.



Fig: 4- Quote by Susan Boyle

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“We, the ones who are challenged, need to be heard. To be seen not as a disability, but as a person who has, and will continue to bloom. To be seen not only as a handicap, but as a well intact human being.” — Robert M. Hensel

“When you focus on someone’s disability you’ll overlook their abilities, beauty and uniqueness. Once you learn to accept and love them for who they are, you subconsciously learn to love yourself unconditionally.”– Yvonne Pierre

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The core purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of learners with special needs in a special school in Pietermaritzburg. It interrogates the complex ways in which these learners negotiate and navigate the diverse places and spaces in their school, home and social contexts and the dynamics affecting their learning process with regards to Inclusive Education.

According to D’amant (2010, p.88) “conceptual, theoretical, and methodological coherence is paramount in ensuring that key principles run through every vein of the research process, from the overarching theoretical affiliation selected by the researcher, through to the choice of research paradigm and approach, selection of individual data generation methodologies, and how data is analysed, interpreted and presented. A researcher’s selection therefore involves an active matching process between all aspects of research methodology and the purpose, participants and context of the research, including the personal and theoretical affiliation(s) of the researcher”.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) expound that the methodology serves as the guiding structure of the research. This study explores the lived experiences of learners with special needs through the use of conversational interviews, photographs and self-drawings in order to fully understand the complex and varied experiences of the learners. Wilson (2016) posits that in the development agenda, learners with special needs voices are largely missing, which means that in policy design and service delivery, their needs and priorities are not adequately harnessed and addressed. This study serves to foreground the voices of learners with special needs which highlights to education stakeholders and policy makers these learners’ experiences,

needs and priorities in the hope that they will then be able to adequately address them in future service delivery and subsequent policy designs.

The study utilizes a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. Cohen et al (2007) explain that an interpretive paradigm is characterized by a concern for the individual, the core aim being to understand the subjective world of human experiences. The interpretive paradigm pursues retention of the integrity of the phenomenon being studied and is aligned with efforts to understand from within. This helps the researcher to probe and understand first-hand experiences of learners and how they navigate their world from their perspective (Nhleko, 2016). This study concurs with Sikhakhane (2015) who asserts that young people and children generally are capable individuals that can speak for themselves about their experiences in the social contexts they navigate on a daily basis.

No singular approach to data generation has been written and cast in stone or passed on as a sacred text (Neuman, 2000). Looking through the lens that there is no simple formula or recipe for carrying out a social science research (Babbie, 2002), multiple approaches are immensely beneficial in qualitative research as it equips the researcher with conceptual methods in generating and making sense of the data collected. It is for this reason that I have utilised multiple approach to generate rich, relevant data.

This chapter presents the methodology design I have utilized that is best suited to investigating the key research questions at the heart of this research work.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.2.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Some of the major differences between qualitative and quantitative research talks to the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry. Another difference is the distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (Huysamen, 2001). Some of the characteristics of qualitative and qualitative methods of data collection are highlighted below:

Table 6**CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Characteristics	Qualitative	Quantitative
Type of data	Phenomena are described in a narrative fashion	Phenomena are described numerically.
Analysis	Identification of major themes	Descriptive and inferential statistics.
Scope of Inquiry	Broad, thematic concerns	Specific questions or hypotheses
Primary advantage	Rich, in-depth, narrative data generated, specific and unique to the individual participants	Large sample, statistical validity, accurately reflects the population
Primary disadvantage	Small sample, not generalizable to the population at large	Superficial understandings or no understanding of participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences

Source: (Vanderstoep and Johnson, 2009, p.7).

A qualitative research design is best suited for this study because it looks into the lived experiences of special education learners and inclusive educational practices in the school. My study involves collecting authentic stories from these special needs learners in order to get a glimpse into their worlds and to better understand the experiences they need to navigate on a daily basis. A qualitative design allows the participants to freely share their views and perspectives about special education, inclusive education, differentiation in class, societal views about them as special education learners etc. Qualitative methods are able to extract deeper and richer content from participants which quantitative methods cannot (Green and Thorogood, 2004). When utilizing a qualitative method of inquiry, the researcher will not know at the beginning what the perceptions, commonalities and issues will be. The content of the

narrative evolves as the research advances. There is therefore a necessary emphasis and understanding of the process of generating narratives and rich data in qualitative research endeavours.

Qualitative research utilizes participants' raw data texts to record the experiences and perspectives of each participant (Schutt, 2018). Coy (2019) explains qualitative research as naturalistic and emergent, using the collected data to discover the main information in the investigation. Therefore, the researcher does not determine the variables of importance before collection of data. The data gathered in this study aligns with Coy's (2019) statement as the main information with regards to the lived experiences of the learners with special needs in my sample. These needs could not be predetermined by the researcher. They emerged after the data was collected by the researcher and analysed, providing a valuable insight into the everyday worlds of the participants.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.2) "qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives".

The qualitative research design of this study resonates with the principles of individualisation and participation in that it foregrounds understanding human lived experiences from participants' unique perspectives. A qualitative research design understands knowledge as a social construction, positing that human existence cannot be divorced from its context and that people cannot isolate themselves from reality but are submerged in it. Given this synchronicity between participants and their world, reality cannot be observed as an isolated entity but is instead, jointly interpreted by the researcher and the participants.

The principles of individualisation and participation are vital principles on which most aspects of qualitative research are hinged. The principle of individualisation integrates concepts such as accommodating differences, celebrating diversity, authentic representation of participant voices, emphasis on the particular, a move to include the other, understanding issues of multiplicity and complexity, and the importance of context specificity. The principle of

participation relates directly to the principle of individualisation as research methodologies draw on the authentic voices of participants, promote those voices disempowered and marginalised by dominant discourses, emphasise context-specificity and the situatedness of participants, and, considers subjectivity, sensitivity and participants' independence.

The visual presentation of the above discussion is presented in the diagram below. It expresses how the principles of difference, individualisation and participation are vital to the research process. It illuminates the lucidity that exists between the conceptual framework, research design and methodology as key principles in qualitative research.

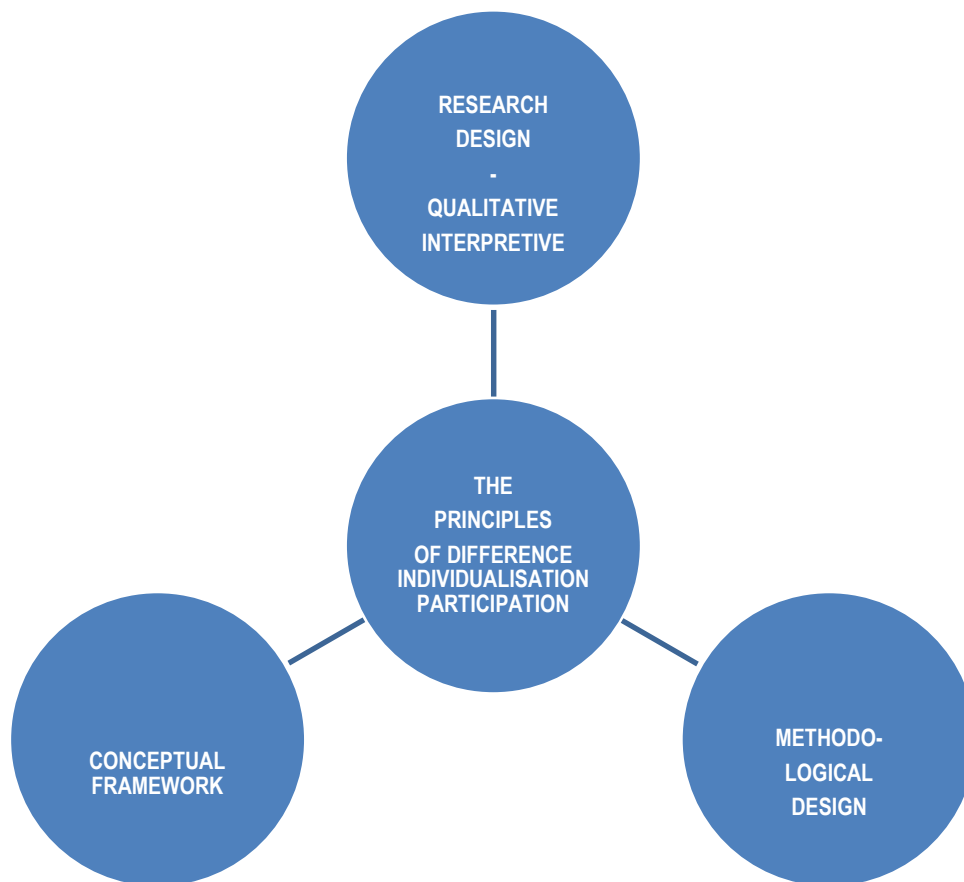


Fig:5 – the interrelationship between aspects of the research and the centrality of the key principles of participation, difference and individualisation.

Further principles of participation and difference and individualisation are highlighted below:

In following the principle of participation, researchers need to choose a research ethic that includes the participation of their participants. By doing this, researchers attempt to break down the distinction between the researcher and the researched; do away with this traditional power dynamic; break away from seeing the people they are researching as 'subjects' or simply

objects that they are getting knowledge out of; and instead, designing their whole methodology around encouraging their participation in the process of generating and creating knowledge. This is more a person-centred approach which does research with people, not on them or about them, and takes seriously the kind of knowledge they offer and the data they generate (D'amant, 2010).

In following principles of difference and individualisation, researchers need to acknowledge and celebrate difference and individualisation in their research, focus on people's subjective understandings of themselves, their experiences and their lives, as well as the contexts in which they live. Their research ethic should speak out against homogeneity (sameness and uniformity) on all levels and seek to recognise and identify the plurality of peoples' experiences and their individual ways of making sense of the social context and world they daily navigate (D'amant, 2010).

Qualitative research is established upon the natural setting of the inquiry and the subjective perspective of the researcher with regards to the intentions of the research and the investigation. However, analysis still needs to be conducted with attention given to managing researcher bias (Coy, 2019). As a qualitative researcher, it is not humanly possible not to be affected by the stories we listen to. It is only natural that we could tend to internalise some of the participants' experiences. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge that the researcher is not free or absolved from subjectivity, even in the case of the most experienced researchers. It is better to factor this subjectivity into our research and consider it with the research findings.

4.2.2 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

I utilized narrative inquiry as my research design. Taking Coy's (2019) advice that the researcher must decide which methodology best addresses the research question under investigation, I employ the use of narrative inquiry in this study. Narrative inquiry is one of the oldest forms of eliciting responses from people in research (Hendry, 2010). It entails the study of the experiences of people in the form of their own authentic story telling (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Narrative inquiry research can make use of varied and interesting ways to gather, analyse and interpret stories other than simply expecting participants to talk about their experiences. A multiplicity of ways to generate the data exists, and can include photo-voice, diaries and letters, drawings, collage etc. (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). In line with Marshall

and Rossman (2011), I engage the use of multiple methods in an attempt to generate rich data for this study. These methods include: objects and pictures as conversational prompts, conversational interviews and self-drawings.

Narrative research has the ability to give voice to and validate the experiences of people (Moriarty, 2011). Telling their stories enables participants to reflect on and be introspective about their experiences in relation to the spaces and contexts they inhabit. Personal narratives “show human beings ... in the process of creating, negotiating and performing meaning in a world of others, making their way through a world that poses obstacles, interruptions, contingencies, turning points, epiphanies and moral choices... These accounts seek to express the complexities and difficulties and coping and feeling resolved, showing how they change over time as they struggle to make sense of their experience” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.748).

Integrating narrative inquiry into a research design is more than simply storytelling. It is a mode of inquiry (Lawler, 2002; Lyons and Kubler LaBoskey, 2002; Jipson and Paley, 1997). The power of narratives lies in utilizing the voices of participants and foregrounding their authentic voices; capturing the situatedness of participants, revealing the subjective complexities of their realities and experiences; contextualizing participants, making them present and real in all their humanity; being sensitive to the agency and independence of participants; showing human beings in the process of constructing and negotiating meaning and their identities; and promoting the understanding of the meaning-making processes in which individuals engage. This move to include the other and encourage participation is shaped by the assumption that researchers cannot directly capture another’s lived experience and should therefore gather and present data in such a way that the participants speak for themselves. Researchers therefore need to attend to the stories participants tell, as these can reveal a great deal about them and the social, contextual world they inhabit (D’amant, 2010).

Personal narratives have the ability of evoking a feeling that the experiences described are possible and believable. This enables the research to achieve some level of validity and trustworthiness. When readers experience the narrative as authentic, believable and possible, readers will be thinking with the stories they read instead of about the stories. In this way, readers will be able to resonate with the stories and relate directly to the storytellers (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

Authentic, trustworthy and ‘valid’ research needs to utilize the issues of: voice (the extent to which a research text draws on the voices of participants), critical subjectivity (the researcher’s

self-reflexivity), and reciprocity (the extent to which the research relationship becomes reciprocal rather than hierarchical) (D'amant, 2010). The identities of participants are undoubtedly related to the social contexts they inhabit. The process of identity construction and negotiation is regarded as being more complicated than simply an identification with single, externally imposed categories (Lawler, 2003).

According to the view that identity is constructed through narrative over a period of time, each stage of storytelling (or conversational interviewing) involves participants in the process of identity-construction. Through these narratives (within social and institutional constraints) people make and produce identities (however fragmented, multiple and contingent) (Lawler, 2003, p.254).

Authentic personal narratives give opportunities to the readers to look through the participant's eyes, empathise with their experiences and realities which enables the study to achieve credibility, validity and trustworthiness. This affords readers the chance to glimpse into the world of the participants and have a subjective understanding of their realities.

Narratives can be compared and judged against each other, but there is no right or wrong narrative. There is also no yardstick to measure any narrative against the events narrated as the meaning of the narrative experience is embedded in the specific and unique expression of each narrative. For this reason, Maphanga (2014) alludes to the fact that narrative inquiry provides an effective way to undertake the systematic study of personal experiences and how the participants construct meaning of these events. Invariably, exploring the lived experiences of the active participants is the fundamental focus of a narrative inquiry and qualitative research. Creswell (2012) explicates that the use of stories serves as a gateway to understand people's experiences and gain new perspectives on the experiences and the specific issues faced by a specific community.

Stories produced in narrative research are "stories that create the effect of reality, showing characters imbedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle, resisting the intrusions of chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalisation and incoherence, trying to preserve or restore the continuity and coherence of life's unity in the face of unexpected blows of life that call one's meanings and values into question" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.744). D'amant (2010) further maintains that narrative inquiry has the ability to provoke readers to empathically enter into worlds of experience different from theirs, thus giving readers the

opportunity to understand the realities, experiences and perspectives encountered experientially. Bearing this in mind, I would like the readers to journey empathically into the worlds of my participants in order to better understand the experiences they navigate as special needs learners.

The narrative data generated from the participants in the research sample highlights crucial issues and experiences special needs learners are negotiating and navigating on a daily basis. This will be of immense benefit to other special needs learners, mainstream learners, educators, parents, policy makers and the society at large.

4.3 PARTICIPANTS AND THE SAMPLING PROCEDURE

A sample of participants used in a research endeavour refers to a small group or subgroup of the overall population under inquiry (Chiromo, 2009). I engaged the use of purposive sampling for this study. Purposive sampling means that participants are chosen on the basis of possessing certain defining criteria or attributes that are crucial or essential for the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Eight learners with special needs (mild to moderate category) were purposively chosen for this study, representative of both genders. Four boys and four girls were purposively chosen, which is a balanced representation of both genders. I selected participants who have spent 3 and 4 years at the study site as learners with special needs so as to get rich data and a wealth of experiences.

The defining criteria used (taking into cognizance that the study site is a special school) are as follows:

- the participants were available and agreeable to be interviewed and willing to offer information needed by the study.
- the participants had the mental capacity to provide consent (this was verified from psychological reports in learners file).
- the participants had been in the school for at least three years, so as to garner rich data due to the length of years.
- the participants were between the ages of 13 -17 years of age in order to display some level of maturity and understanding of the content.

- participants were comfortable with being audio-taped.

To determine the mental capacity of the learners to provide consent, I obtained permission from the SMT (Senior Management Team) to have access to the psychological reports of the participants to ascertain their mental capacity to provide consent.

Table 7: PARTICIPANTS BIOGRAPHIES

Please Note: These are not the real names of the participants as pseudonyms were used to conceal the identity of participants.

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Years spent in the school
Zinzile	Female	17	African	4
Sabelo	Male	17	African	4
Lindelani	Male	17	African	4
Thokozani	Female	17	African	4
Graham	Male	16	White	3
Siphokazi	Female	16	African	3
Sibusiso	Male	17	African	4
Nonjabulo	Female	16	African	3

4.4 METHODS OF DATA GENERATION

According to Lawler (2003) if we want to fully comprehend how people negotiate their identities, make sense of their place in the world, interpret the world and themselves, we will need to listen to the stories they tell. In order to journey into the worlds of the participants, and interpret the experiences they navigate, I used a combination of creative and visual methods as prompts towards the generation of narrative data, in the form of:

- a) Use of Objects
- b) Use of Photographs (Photo Voice)

c) Conversational Interviews

a) Use of objects - Appadurai (1986:5) expounded that ‘things are the stuff of material culture and the meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses and their trajectories’. Speaking about objects especially the ones that are of importance to the speaker or participant in this instance, encourages narratives to be expanded and elaborated which helps to offer a greater and deeper interpretation and insight into the topic being deliberated on.

b) Use of photographs (Photo Voice)

Photo Voice – This is a visual methodology that has been enjoying a growing literature base (Shumba and Moodley, 2018). There is a growing interest in the use of visual methodologies as a means to involve learners with special needs in intellectual disabilities research. Photovoice assists in actualizing the purpose of inclusive research which promotes researching with people with intellectual disabilities as opposed to researching on people with intellectual disabilities (Cluley, 2016).

Process of Photo Voice	
Step 1	Select and recruit target audience
Step 2	Recruit participants
Step 3	Introduce photo voice methodology
Step 4	Obtain informed consent
Step 5	Identify an initial theme
Step 6	Distribute cameras
Step 7	Provide time to take pictures
Step 8	Meet to discuss photographs

Process of Photo Voice	
Step 9	Plan a format to share photographs and stories with policymakers or community leaders.

Table 8: Photo voice implementation process (Cluley, 2016).

This process of conducting photo voice was meticulously adhered to, except the distribution of cameras, because the data was collected during the Covid- 19 pandemic, I asked the participants to take the photographs with their cell phones (ensuring high quality of photographs), and to send these to me electronically (in order to reduce contact through the use of the camera, to ensure safety of everyone).

c)Conversational Interviews - Conversational interviews allows researchers opportunities to explore, in an in-depth manner, issues that are unique to the experiences of the interviewees, that gives insights into how they perceive and interpret their experiences (Mcgrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl, 2019). Such interviews hold the potential to give voice to minorities and groups in society that may not be heard elsewhere (Reeves, McMillan, Kachan, Paradi, Leslie and Kitto 2015).

The combination of these methods assisted me in collating rich data for this study. Each participant was asked to bring (a) his/her favourite object; b) his/her least favourite object; c) favourite photograph of themselves d) least favourite photograph of themselves. Participants were also asked to send photographs of their favourite and least favourite places at home, at school and in their community to me through WhatsApp. Due to the challenge of Covid – 19 we are presently experiencing, I eventually did not utilize my cameras (that is, giving my cameras to participants to take home in order to capture their experiences), in order to avert the spread of the deadly virus among participants and myself. I asked them instead to use their phones to capture clear photographs of their experiences and spaces individually and send these to me. The participants were asked to speak to their objects and the photographs for me to understand the experiences they navigate. I asked them questions about each object and photograph and I allowed them to speak or express themselves freely so as to gather rich data.

Pain (2012) extrapolates that visual methods are effective and acceptable methods for qualitative research and are becoming widely utilized in multiple disciplines. The use of visual methods enhances the richness of data collected and boosts the relationship between the researcher and participant. The use of visual methodologies simplifies communication, enhances rapport building and the manifestation of emotions and tacit knowledge (unexpressed and unspoken), and also promotes reflection. This method recognises participants as experts on their own lives, allows for collaboration and facilitates empowerment. Visual methods produce enriched communication which enhances the data.

Glaw, Inder, Kable and Hazelton (2017, p.1) expound that “visual methods enhance the richness of data by discovering additional layers of meaning, adding validity and depth, and creating knowledge. They add to traditional methods by capturing more detail and a different kind of data than verbal and written methods. Visual methodologies can be used on almost any population by allowing participants to express their ideas in a nonverbal way but have been underutilized in health research. Visual methods result in increased trustworthiness of the findings through member checking”.

Conversational interviews using open-ended questions allow participants to freely narrate their stories. This process of data generation affords the participants opportunities to think about their experiences and tell their stories in their own ways.

I engaged child-centred methods of generating data that respected the rights of my participants and recognised them as capable of telling their own stories and relating their own experiences and perceptions on aspects of their lives (as opposed to being seen and treated as objects to be explored and exploited in the research process).

Throughout the data generation process, I tried as far as was humanly possible to silence my own voice and anticipations of participant’s lived experiences, to better allow their authentic experiences to emerge, without filtering them through my expectations and preconceived ideas. At this juncture, it is imperative to declare that it is almost humanly impossible to put my own subjectivity and expectations on hold as a qualitative researcher, but conscious efforts were made to be as unbiased as possible. I refrained from interjecting or finishing what the participant were saying and I did not assume I understood what participants were trying to say but asked for clarification when I was unsure of what they were saying.

My research design promoted openness and flexibility in the research process. Before commencing with the data generation process, I met with participants for the purpose of familiarising them with my research and the process I intended to follow. I outlined the purpose of the study, explaining to them what I was wanting to investigate and what process the research would take, before the consent forms were issued to participants and were sent home to parents. I liaised with them to further establish their trust and confidence. I established and maintained a constant rapport with the participants in order to foster mutual trust and for them to feel that they could be free in their interactions with me. This helped them to be more willing to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with me in an honest manner. Establishing a relationship built on mutual trust ensured the participants' co-operation and also improved the quality of data collected (Schurink, 1998).

They were able to ascertain that I did not mean them any harm. They saw my transparency with regards to the purpose of the research, the process of data collection and how the results generated would be utilized.

The data generation process took place in three phases:

Phase 1: I met with participants one-on-one at a venue in the school that was conducive for privacy, recording and social distancing. These meetings took place after school so as not to impact negatively on the participant's learning programmes in school. I gave the participants a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, what would be required of them, and answered their questions and responded to their concerns truthfully. Parents/guardians were given prior notice of the period of time to be used after school. Participants were asked to bring their favourite / least favourite objects and send their photographs to me at this stage.

Phase 2: I engaged in a one-on-one meeting with the participants again at a venue conducive for privacy and audio recording. This was done after school so that the crucial learning time of participants was not infringed on. Participants were asked to speak to their favourite photographs at home, school and their community, and also their least favourite photographs at home, school and community. This stage of reflection and explanation of their objects and photographs to me were informal rather than formal.

The following prompts were used:

(i) Tell me about this photograph of your favourite place: (a) at school (b) at home (c) in your community.

(ii) Tell me about this photograph of your least favourite place: (d) at school (e) at home (f) in your community.

I engaged the use of open-ended questions such as: “Tell me why this object/photograph is your favourite /least favourite?” Each participant was encouraged to speak to their objects and photographs and offer their personal stories / narratives surrounding each object and photograph. The open-ended questions gave the participants freedom to describe his or her object and photograph in his/her own words instead of the use of closed questions which would have presented tight limits or boundaries on the content of responses of participants. The stories surrounding the objects and photographs were used as visual prompts or jumping-off points for the purpose of this study, towards the generation of individual participant’s narratives. Prompts were used when necessary, to ensure rich data. The audio recording was done at a conducive venue ensuring social distancing.

Looking at each picture one after the other, participants were encouraged to tell their stories freely with prompts being utilised when and where necessary. The objects and photographs were utilized as tools or jumping-off points for discussion (Young and Barrette, 2001). These verbal reflections and responses about the objects and photographs were digitally recorded and transcribed and comprised the individual participant’s narratives which I was then able to engage with directly for interpretation and analysis.

Phase 3: At this stage, participants were engaged in conversational interviews. Conversational interviewing is synonymous with terms such as free interviewing, in-depth interviewing, narrative interviewing, creative interviewing and unstructured interviewing (Schurink, 1998). The advantages of unstructured interviewing are linked closely to the objectives of qualitative methodology (Schurink, 1998). Unstructured interviewing gives the researcher the opportunity of an ‘insider view’ of the experiences and realities of the participants, thus affording the researcher a better understanding of participants’ individual lives and experiences from the participants’ perspectives (D’amant, 2010).

Participants were asked the questions: What are your experiences as a special needs learner in your home/school/community? These questions gave each participant ample opportunity to share their experiences moving from each category, that is, from home, school, community. This helped in generating rich data about the lived experiences of the participants as learners with special needs.

This session between the researcher and the participants was conversational like a social visit devoid of tension and stress, thus helping to create a shift from participants seeing the researcher as an authority figure and expert in the field to an ordinary person, genuinely interested and wanting to listen to the individual stories being shared by the participants about how they navigate their everyday lives.

I constantly took cognizance of the vulnerability of participants and ensured that their well-being and identities were protected. The principle of confidentiality was at every stage reiterated - participants were constantly assured that their identities, situations, experiences or interpretations of these in all circumstances were treated as confidential. The principle of confidentiality connotes that the dignity of participants would be respected (De Vos, 1998). When the fears of the participants concerning the principle of confidentiality are well allayed, the nature, quality and richness of the data generated would be ensured.

Stories told by learners with special needs requires a face-to-face encounter ensuring social distancing, in order to garner rich and quality data from them. The narratives were instrumental in capturing the participant's subjective voices with regards to how they navigate their daily spaces in their homes, school and communities. Participants were motivated and excited about the whole exercise, and they felt important, in a relaxed atmosphere (Idol, 2000; Miles and Singal, 2010).

Opendakker (2006, p.42) expounds that social cues from the participants, such as voice, body language, intonation, among others, will give the interviewer a lot of additional information that can be added to the verbal responses of the participant while answering a question. The individual face-to-face interviews gave me the opportunity to explore experiences the participants would not have felt comfortable exploring in the presence of other participants. The body language, voice, facial expression etc. were cues useful to me as the interviewer which the face-to-face interview makes available to access. Each interview lasted between 35-45 minutes. All the participants were comfortable conversing and sharing their experiences in the English Language. I later engaged in the transcription of the audio recordings.

4.5 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

My research was conducted in the context of a special school in the Umgungundlovu District in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal province which caters for 600 learners with special needs

in the mild to moderate category. The majority of learners in the school experience intellectual and behavioural challenges, and a few of them experience physical challenges. Learners spend 4 years in the school (1st to 4th year) acquiring academic and vocational skills which prepares them for the workplace. The home language of the area is IsiZulu with English Language being the second language. Many of the day scholars come from the surrounding rural township areas which are characterised by poverty and a high incidence of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. The school has up to 60 members of academic staff, many well qualified while others are not well grounded in teaching special learners. In-service trainings are regularly organised at the school to professionally equip and support teachers towards efficiently executing their duties physically and emotionally. Qualifications of the educators range from a diploma in Education to a Masters degree in Education, and a few of the educators are pursuing their Doctorate in Education. Learners are accepted into the school by referrals from psychologists who have conducted investigations and assessments of the learners before referring them. After being referred, the school conducts interviews with respective applicants' parents to verify that the individual challenge of each child can be catered for or accommodated in the school. Some of the learners are from child-headed homes, poverty-stricken homes, suffering from undernourishment, lack of proper housing facilities and reside with unemployed parents and grandparents.

The school offers a feeding scheme programme that is funded by the Department of Basic Education which is called the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). This feeding scheme helps feed learners that attend school on empty stomachs. It has helped such learners concentrate in class and ultimately positively impacts their academic performance. This feeding scheme has benefited both the learners and the school as it minimises late-coming, absenteeism and the drop-out rate of learners.

The study site services the entire Kwazulu–Natal province as it is one of the few schools that caters for learners with mild to moderate learning disabilities. Many learners come from neighbouring areas who are day-scholars. In addition, the school has a boarding establishment which makes it possible for learners to access schooling from as far as Richards Bay, Inanda, Empangeni, Durban, Sodwana Bay, Ladysmith, Newcastle, Mtubatuba, etc.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative research, there is no right or wrong approach to data analysis (Schurink, 1998). Just as there is general openness and flexibility of the research design and methods of data collection, the same degree of openness and flexibility applies to the techniques of interpretation and analysis of the data collected.

Narrative analysis was utilized to analyze the data that was generated. Narrative analysis is a type of qualitative analysis in which the researcher pays attention to how experiences of participants are arranged in order to recognize and appreciate the experiences they have participated in (Check and Schutt, 2012).

I recorded the raw data from participant's conversations and stories about their objects, photographs and the follow-up conversational interviews. I then transcribed participants' narratives and engaged in a process of reading and re-reading this raw data in order to comprehend and familiarize myself with their narratives. I subsequently looked for themes which emerged from this raw narrative data and began organizing the data according to these various themes which emerged using the main research questions. I looked for common themes, thought patterns, common terminologies etc.

4.7 VALIDITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ETHICAL ISSUES

To ensure validity and trustworthiness in my research, mixed methods were utilized to generate data. These included the use of objects, photographs and conversational interviews. The reason behind this was to generate multiple layers of data in order to garner richer, multi layered, more credible data than using only one method of data generation. This triangulation ensured trustworthiness in this qualitative study. Triangulation is defined as 'involving varieties of data as well as methodologies in the investigation of the same phenomenon' (Denzin,1989, p.237). It involves the use of different methods as major data collection strategies for qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). The rationale behind triangulation is "to overcome any intrinsic limitations or bias of utilizing a single research method (Denzin, 1989).

Triangulation helps the researcher bring out “similarity, consistency or congruence of results and seeks one set of data enriching, expanding upon, clarifying or illustrating the other” (Greene and McClintock, 1985, p.524). Triangulation of multiple sources of data helps to enhance the study’s validity, credibility and dependability. It helps to bring more than one source of data to bear on a single matter. The data from various sources is used to elaborate, corroborate and illuminate the research (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Rossman and Wilson, 1985).

There must be some level of validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research which supports the argument that research findings are “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). According to Guba (1985), there are four issues that are key in any qualitative research endeavour: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These help to evaluate whether or not research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data; the degree to which findings can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of specific research endeavours; assess the quality of the integrated processes of data generation and analysis; and measure how well findings are supported by the data generation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Similarly, Golafshani (2003) supports the utilization of triangulation to improve research validity, reliability and evaluation of research findings. Triangulation has witnessed optimum patronage in qualitative studies in a bid to minimize bias and establish validity. Designing research in which multiple participants and multiple data generating techniques have been utilized can greatly strengthen the significance, usefulness and transferability of the research to other settings (D’amant, 2010).

In order to generate rich data for this study, I utilized multiple methods of data generation. When methods are combined, the advantages of each methodology should complement one another, therefore making the design and results of findings stronger, more valid and reliable (Laws and McLeod, 2020; Castillo and Flórez-Martelo, 2020).

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) maintain that since educational research relates to human beings, it is crucial to take into cognizance the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research. This study involves the participation of minors (school learners), thus ethical standards needed to be upheld to a very high degree.

I obtained permission from the Department of Education District Office. I later sought the permission of the principal of the study site before I approached the learners with regards to their willingness to participate in the study. Voluntary and informed consent was obtained from participants before the commencement of the research process. I gave the participants a clear and full explanation of what was required of them so that they could make an informed decision. I explained to them how the data would be generated and recorded, processed and later stored. The participants were in no way coerced, deceived, manipulated, threatened, induced, rewarded or promised any reward to secure their participation in this research. The engagement of such tactics would have limited the autonomous and voluntary choices of the individuals (Sieber, 1998). I ensured that all participants were treated with respect and I was always courteous with them. I constantly had in my mind the need to uphold their fundamental human rights. They were encouraged to share information that they were comfortable sharing and that was relevant to the study, thus reducing the risk of privacy invasion and inadvertently disclosing confidential information.

Throughout the research process, I created and maintained open lines of communication, as informed consent requires two-way communication between the participants and the researcher. I made myself available to answer all queries or concerns by participants. All the participants were given my mobile number and were able to text me or give me a missed call, in order to avoid any cost accruable to them. I always called them back to answer all their questions or concerns.

In order to ensure a smooth transition of the research process and good relationship between the interviewer and the participants during this process, ethical standards were duly upheld, as outlined in the following points:

- Before I started the data collection process, I gained ethical clearance from the University of Kwazulu- Natal. I obtained permission from the school principal, the participants and their parents through the use of consent letters. This was done to ensure the rights of the participants and the school were protected, that participants were knowledgeable and conscious of what they were doing and free to contribute freely to the study without fear of negative consequences.
- The participants and the school did not receive any material gains for their participation.

- Participants were not in any way forced to disclose what they were not comfortable to disclose. Their participation was voluntary and it was explained to them that they could opt out at any time they felt they wanted to or when or if they felt their rights were being compromised, without any negative consequences to them.
- Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process and the personal identities of participants were not disclosed but protected through the use of pseudonyms. Faces of individuals in the photographs collected as data were concealed to protect their identities - their faces were covered so as to protect their anonymity.
- The data will be stored in the University of Kwazulu–Natal, locked in a cupboard and destroyed after five years of being stored.

Trustworthiness

Long and Johnson (2000) posit that it's impossible to address the issue of validity and reliability in qualitative research the same way as quantitative research because the two studies vary in nature. In qualitative research, the concept of trustworthiness, which includes dependability, transferability, confirmability and credibility are used instead of validity (Shenton,2004).

Credibility

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) maintain that in order to ensure credibility of the study, the researcher needs to make sure that findings must accurately define the phenomena being researched. In order to improve the credibility of the findings of this study, I employed the use of audio tape recordings during the various interview sessions conducted. The audio data recorded was later transcribed and participants were given the opportunity to check the accuracy of the data in order to verify if what they said corresponded with the transcriptions or not in order to ensure consistency (Creswell, 2008).

Dependability

A researcher needs to make sure that the research study is logical, systematic and well documented in a manner that the reader can understand. The dependability of the study is enriched through the use of qualitative study analysis, data transcription, arrangement and

interpretation of findings where there are similar emerging themes. A detailed report of the research process needs to be provided so as to ensure dependability and the followed research process can be traced by readers. As succinctly expressed, in order to more directly address the dependability issue, the procedure followed in the study should be described in detail, which enables a replication of the work by a future researcher, if possible to gain the same results (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Transferability relates to the degree to which the findings of the study can be applied to other situations. The researcher has no power over the transferability of the study - this is the prerogative of the reader of the study (Stringer, 2004). In order to ensure transferability of this study, the researcher provides a detailed and thorough description of the research context and findings so that whoever decides to transfer the results of this study to a different context or similar setting can measure the sensibility of such transfer.

Confirmability

The main essence of confirmability is the degree of the neutrality of the study (Shenton, 2004). The researcher in a study must ensure that he/she reveals the reality of the participants rather than portraying his/her prejudices and biasness (Cope, 2014). This can be achieved only by progressively revealing how the conclusions were drawn and how the interpretations were established. The researcher must try to be reflexive as much as they can, to make sure that their preconceptions do not have an emotional impact on the study or influence the participants' perceptions and views (Thomas and Magilvy, 2014).

4.8 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

Researcher positionality is a necessary process of any investigator engaging in research. This involves being prepared to critically self-reflect on issues such as social constructs, contexts, layers, biases, power structures, identities, objectivity and subjectivities on the viewpoints

undertaken within the research, and the willingness to be up-front and transparent regarding these issues (Throne and Oddi, 2019).

Examining the research process in the context of my positionality can be termed as reflexivity. Reflexivity involves self-scrutiny on the part of the researcher; a self-conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher and an “other” (Bourke, 2014; Pillow, 2003). Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is crucial to the overall validity of the research. This is the process of the researcher reflecting on herself as a human instrument and the inevitable part that she plays in the research. The engagement of qualitative research enables researchers to become storytellers, experimenting with personal narratives and reflexive investigations. In doing this, the researcher needs to be conscious of conducting subjective, yet disciplined interpretations, not forgetting that the goal is not to portray the facts of happenings but convey the meanings attached to the experiences by participants.

The nature of qualitative research positions the researcher as the data collection instrument. It is expected that the beliefs, political stance, cultural stance (gender, class, race, socioeconomic status, educational background, etc.) are all variables that can affect the research process. The concept of the researcher as the research instrument reveals the likelihood that the researcher’s subjectivity will reflect on the research and reporting of findings. Positionality is a space where objectivism and subjectivism meet (Bourke, 2014). The existence of the two is a “dialectic relationship” (Freire, 2000, p.50). We must acknowledge our identities as individuals and how we negotiate our social positions. We can try to remain objective but must be conscious of our subjectivities.

Due to the fact that I am an educator at the study site, my position could have had a negative impact or connotations. The participants may not have been entirely truthful or may have told me what they thought I wanted to hear, despite allaying their fears about not seeing me as an educator. This may have affected the credibility of the study. In order to address this, I engaged in triangulation of the data and also endeavoured to remain as objective as possible throughout the process of data generation. I had to adopt an ‘outsider’ position to their lived experiences so as not to allow my previous knowledge or understanding of their experiences to cloud or preclude what participants might share in the research process.

4.9 LIMITATIONS

Firstly, due to the fact that I am an educator at the study site, some participants might have viewed me as an educator and not a researcher and may not have been forthcoming with some of their experiences or related them only in part. At the onset of the research, I spoke with all participants asking them to see me as a researcher and not an educator and that they could feel free to talk or confide in me, as whatever they told me would not be divulged to anyone and would not be used against them in my capacity as an educator in the school. The confidentiality clause was reiterated consistently at every step of the process of data generation. While familiarizing myself with the participants, I consciously built a positive, open and honest rapport with them, hopefully establishing their confidence in me so that they felt free and safe enough to be able to relate their experiences whether positive or negative. I endeavored to create a tension-free and friendly atmosphere for them to feel free to share their experiences.

Secondly, some segments of the results of the findings might not be generalizable to all special schools as each special school has its own category and uniqueness. Each special school can relate to those aspects of the findings that is peculiar to their case(s). Some experiences might be peculiar to each participant(s), and so might not be a general experience of all special needs learners. Broad generalizations cannot be made as “the particularities of individualised experiences cannot be eclipsed by generalisation, or otherwise abstracted, reduced, or typified by totalisation” (Berger, 2015, p.24). Each participant’s story is unique or exclusive to him or her.

The findings are not a representation of the experiences of all races represented in the school, as most participants were of the African race.

However, some findings can be understood as relating to special needs learners across most categories of disabilities as disability is a general phenomenon common to most disability categories. Generalisability is being tested constantly by readers as they determine if the study speaks to their experience or other people’s experiences (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

Some learners did not come back to school after the Covid-19 breakout and lockdown period. Therefore, I could not draw on them as participants in the data collection process. I eventually utilized the learners that were available but still met the criteria set out.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined the methods of inquiry utilized to investigate and understand the experiences of the participants in this study through their own eyes and voices.

Being qualitative research, I utilized multiple methods of data generation in order to obtain rich data and to generate authentic narratives from the participants. This type of methodology used can be termed to be participatory as it engages the active involvement of the participants throughout the research process. People engage personal narratives as a central means of connecting together past and present, self and other, to interpret the social world and their place within it, and also, to construct a sense of self, and can furthermore reveal a great deal about the social contextual world the participants inhabit (Lawler, 2003). For these reasons, I believed qualitative research and narrative inquiry were best suited to my methodological choices for this research.

The methods utilised valued the perspectives of the participants regarding their personal realities and experiences to generate in-depth, rich and quality data which relied on the authentic voices of the participants as the primary narrative data. The participants were cooperative during the research process, with all the ethical processes duly adhered to. This chapter talks to the methods of data collection utilized (use of objects, photographs and conversational interviews) and justification for their use.

The narratives of the participants will be presented and the themes that emerged will be discussed in the next chapter.

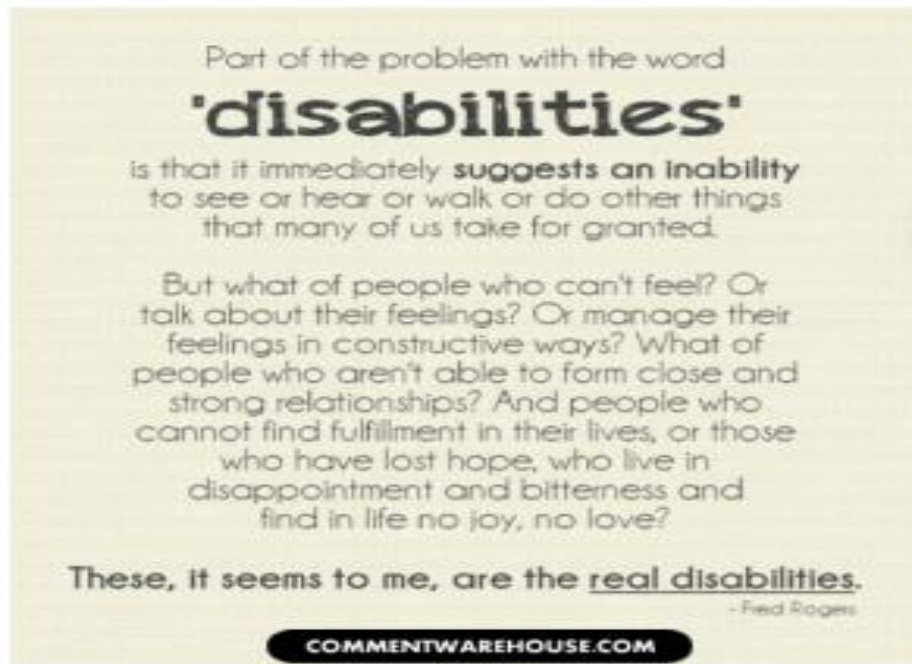


Fig: 6- Quote by Fred Rogers.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

“People with disabilities deserve the chance to build a life for themselves in the communities which they choose to live.” – Barack Obama

“Enable the Disabled; Translate Disability into Ability; Capability, a winning Opportunity- Indeed a Reality” – Dr Veena Kumari

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the presentation and discussion of the generated data from the study’s participants during the research process. The key research questions of the study have been utilized, to guide in organizing the chapter and the presentation and discussion of the data generated. The key research questions for this study are:

1. What stories do learners with special needs tell about their schooling, home and social experiences?
2. How do these learners negotiate their spaces at school, home and in their social contexts?
3. How is Inclusive Education being realised in these learners’ contexts?

As part of the presentation and discussion of data, I use direct excerpts (original voices) from the narrative data generated to illustrate and highlight important themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data. This is in keeping with the point that Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) make about the importance of keeping the flavour of the original data, and reporting direct phrases and sentences of the participants, not only because they are often more illuminative and direct than the words of the researcher, but also because it is pertinent to use the participants’ exact words faithfully.

Using direct narrative excerpts from the participants’ data allowed me to present the authentic voices of the participants and to present the data to the readers from the participants’ perspectives. If done otherwise, their experiences and cogent points might have been lost in the translation. The use of direct narrative excerpts is in keeping with qualitative research which

helps to capture the voices of the participants, and represent them and their experiences as much as possible in a truthful manner (Mauthner and Birch, 2002). In the viewpoint of Messiou (2019), voice refers to participants’ thoughts and emotions, and listening to children’s voices is an expression and demonstration of inclusion (Messiou 2006). Listening to the participants’ voices gave them a sense of belonging and a disposition that they are very important and their opinion matters.

The organization of data was manually done, using different colours of highlighters for coding, patterns, themes and categories. Joffe (2012) opines that a thematic analysis helps to highlight the most relevant collection of meanings inherent in the data. Thematic analysis is used to identify attributes, elements, descriptors, and concepts. This type of analysis assists in organizing a group of repeating ideas and enables researchers to identify relevant responses to the study’s research questions (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove, 2016). Vaismoradi, et al, further extrapolate that each theme may have subthemes as subdivisions to achieve a comprehensive view of data and reveals a pattern in the accounts of the participants.

Three themes were brought out from the data gathered:

- a) Special needs learners’ experiences;
- b) How learners negotiate their school, home and social spaces;
- c) To what extent inclusion is being realised.

Sub themes were also brought out from these 3 themes which are itemised in the table below:

Table 9: Themes identified from the data.

	Themes	Sub themes
1	Special needs learners’ experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Labelling and Discrimination. ➤ Love for Sports. ➤ Equipment and school facilities. ➤ Preference of skills to academics.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bullying/Body Shaming / Low Self-Esteem.
2	<p>How learners negotiate their school, home and social spaces:</p> <p>a) At Home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The importance of family and family acceptance- a sense of belonging. ➤ Dealing with stress. ➤ Household Duties/ Chores
	b) At School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discrimination among learners. ➤ Educators' Support. ➤ Gender Stereotyping in acquisition of skills.
	c) Social Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stigmatisation and discrimination against special needs learners. ➤ Distaste for unsafe and dirty environments. ➤ Love for nature
3	To what extent inclusion is being realized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individualized instruction and support. ➤ Preferring to be in a special needs school.

5.2 LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

5.2.1 LABELING AND DISCRIMINATION

One of the sub themes that emerged from the data is labelling and discrimination. The special needs learners during their individual interviews attested to the fact that they are being labelled and called names, such as ‘dumb’, ‘mad’, ‘fools’ and the like, and humiliated by people in the society and their peers. Low self-esteem is common among children with learning disabilities due to academic challenges. They are labelled as slow learners and experience rejection from their peers (Pandy, 2012).

When interviewed to share their experiences about being learners with special needs, some of the participants recounted their experiences as follows:

“Emmm, some of them understand and some hey, it’s very hard, like friends, talking about their homework and their school things, you can’t share with them, let’s say they are talking about Maths and you can’t talk to them about Maths and they look at you like you are stupid, they say you are dumb, you don’t know ah, what is this, you mustn’t talk to us, you need to go and fetch your what, school fees, yeah” (Lindelani).

This discriminatory attitude made the participant very sad.

“I was more scared of how other learners would treat me, I was scared of the impression that I got from the school when I was in mainstream I was normally told that that’s a school for stupid kids and stuff” (Graham).

As important as every child having the fundamental right to education, is every child being able to experience a sense of belonging in the school environment. This impacts on the degree to which the child accumulates or learns effectively in class. If a child feels out of place or feels unwanted in class or school, it will inevitably affect the academic performance and social behavior of such child. The child might withdraw socially and develop a negative attitude towards school and schooling. This could end up fueling segregation and social exclusion. Segregation in schools must be discouraged, as this alienates children from benefitting from the objectives of education for all. Mainstream learners must learn to integrate and accommodate learners from special needs schools because all learners have the right to education, despite their intellectual competencies. Labelling and discrimination should be discouraged at all levels of education.

Smith, Murray, Yousafzai and Kosaonka (2006) assert that the society's negative attitudes, stereotypical views, and the lack of support for disability-related matters, often not only exert influence on the formulation (or non-formulation) of policy, but ultimately impact on low self-esteem and how persons with disabilities feel about themselves and their social contexts.

Schooling experience has been a negative experience to some special needs learners even in primary school. For example, as narrated by one of the participants in the excerpt below:

“Honestly, it's been hard and I felt left out, I didn't feel I fit into the group with other children, well, like ummn, in primary school, it's not just a special needs school, it's also, what's this word, mainstream, so there were only 2 special classes (junior and senior special classes) umm, there in the school, at first I didn't know, because I was a child, all I know is that most of the students had ADHD, I had to go, Haibo! I mean to school, I had to go there and learn, even in my group, it was hard for me to find friends there because I didn't know them and I was different, so like, when I came into the mainstream, they called me names, teased me, this made me feel like I don't belong, it made me feelin a hard way, I felt like I was nobody, nobody was there to support me, and nobody to talk to, and they were saying words, even if you tell a teacher, they wouldn't pay attention to you, like when we go to the hall, there were certain grade 7s like sit on benches and we sit on the floor, it made us feel left out, even after school, we stand, there is a place for grade 7s, we were not allowed there as if we were not in grade 7, we were discriminated against, I felt left out a lot, I felt that I was nothing, and after that, there in primary school, there were children who used to mock me, some children take tablets like Ritalin, so they tease us, go and take your Ritalin, you are mad, they say many nasty words that you won't even believe, we feel horrible and they say lots of things..... You see in the school here, we are all the same, you know, in our different ways but outside school those that know the school, they take the school like nothing” (Zinzile).

“Ironically, the promotion of the delusion that, being present in a school equates with being socially and educationally included, is one of the most dishonest and insidious forms of exclusion” (Cooper and Jacobs, 2011, p. 6). United Nations (2016, p.7) decries that learners with special needs that are constantly exposed to discrimination tend to internalize prejudice or stigma in the form of shame, fear, stress, low self-esteem, and poor mental and physical health.

Excerpts from the participants revealed that they are very sad when they are called names or cannot share their ideas when their friends from mainstream schools are talking about their homework. Their friends mock them, they feel lonely and out of place even in the school environment, and they feel there is no one to support them. Labelling and discrimination from mainstream learners and people in the society, were very much a part of the special needs learners' experiences. Stigmatisation, discrimination and exclusion are all latent negative consequences of labelling people (Algraigray and Boyle, 2017).

5.2.2 LOVE FOR SPORTS

Taking a cue from UN Inter-Agency Task Force (2003), sports is regarded as all forms of physical activities that stimulates physical fitness, social interaction and mental well-being, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games. UNESCO (2015), describes sports or physical education as not only an entry point for lifelong physical activity, but it also enhances health awareness, civic engagement and promotes social inclusion.

Some of the participants alluded to the fact that they pursue their love for sports as it helps them to release emotions and stress, and they also represent the school in sports. They are passionate and spoke enthusiastically about their love for sports and their accomplishments in their field of sport.

When I asked a participant about his favorite place at school, he spoke fondly about sports as his face brightened up, which shows he is passionate about sports. He replied thus:

“At the tennis court, umm, at the tennis court, we play soccer there, so, I love playing soccer so, if I run away from problems and stress, I go to the tennis court to release my emotions there, when I come out, I come out a different person” (Lindelani).



Image 1: Lindelani's picture: Tennis court where he loves playing soccer.

When I asked another participant about what he loved most about his school, he had this to say:

"For me, I would say its sports because I have travelled to where I never thought I would travel to, so its sports. I represented my school in rugby, soccer and athletics" (Sibusiso).

When relating with the participants about their favorite objects, love for sports also came to the fore. Lindelani replied that:

"It's a soccer ball. I grew up playing soccer and my father was a soccer player, I grew up loving soccer, It's in the blood, especially when I watch soccer on the Tv, like I feel like I can kick something, I just take soccer ball, dribble and (probes) do you play for your school? Yes, I play for my school, number 8, midfielder".



Image 2: Lindelani's picture: Picture of a soccer ball he loves playing.

Another participant also shared the same sentiment. In his words:

“It's a soccer ball, I love soccer very much, I think that's the only thing that I can do best, it's my hobby” (Sibusiso).

The opportunities, or lack thereof, for children with disabilities to participate in sport is an indication of the value a society places on their social inclusion. We cannot deny the fact that not all special needs learners can participate in sports such as rugby. We also cannot deny that not all learners living with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in an accessible sport. Schools in South Africa present opportunities to all learners to participate in sports through the Life Orientation curriculum, and in some schools, sport is offered as extramural activities (Wegner and Struthers, 2011).

Participation in sports and youth development programs is very beneficial to learners and youth generally. This is part of harnessing their microsystem. Learners who participate in various

activities display more positive social, psychological, emotional and physical outcomes compared to their non-participating peers (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Ettekal and Mahoney, 2017).

5.2.3. EQUIPMENT AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

Update of Technical skills equipment and school facilities was also mentioned. Some of the participants stated that the technical skills equipment should be upgraded, and old equipment discarded in order to be current and relevant at the world of work, where modern equipment is being utilized. It was stated that more chairs should be provided for the learners, where they are eating their food. The state of the toilets was also mentioned as being dirty sometimes, which gives off an unpleasant smell because learners don't flush the toilets and graffiti is also used to deface the wall etc.

While the participants were expounding on what they would love to see change about their school, they alluded to various areas of concerns they wanted to see change in. This is what they had to say:

“I prefer to have more of the state-of-the-art equipment in the workshops because in the real life there is.... Stuff that you use but you can't really buy but they have it because the company makes money but the school use the old hand techniques, if I could I would say better equipment should be bought for the school, because some of the learners leave the school and they go to a workshop and there are tools that they have not seen and they won't know how to use it but bring old tools they will” (Graham).

“Ah, everything is good but em, but I was thinking they should add workshop to do music, because music is another good industry, most people who are in the music industry were not good in school so, I was thinking maybe it will be a better idea” (Sibusiso).

“They must put another thing like when it's like hot they must put something for like people to sit and not to stand when they are eating, we need more chairs” (Siphokazi).

“Em...it's the toilets, because like sometimes there is this smell, when you come to the toilets, like it doesn't smell good” (Thokozani).



Image 3: Picture of the school's girls' toilet

“In the school, ah, the boys' toilet, eh, it's not nice because there are drawings on the wall, some are not flushing the toilet, it's disgusting, it smells” (Lindelani).



Image 4: Picture of graffiti on the toilet wall

Magardie (2018) posits that provision of facilities in special education schools around the country still differs from one school to another school, displaying severe discrepancies along class and racial lines. The participants voiced their concerns about the machines or skills acquisition equipment being used presently and reasons they needed an upgrade of their skills acquisition equipment. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) chronosystem, it can be stated that the use of substandard technical skills equipment can hamper the academic achievement of the special needs learners. It also makes them antiquated or non-conversant with cutting-edge equipment which makes them obsolete and a relic of a lost age.

5.2.4 PREFERENCE OF SKILLS TO ACADEMICS

Almost all the participants echoed the same sentiment of preferring to be in technical workshops than being in academic classes. It seems that special needs learners prefer to work with their hands, rather than being confined to the classroom environment. They love displaying their skills which they feel they perform better in, rather than in academics. Being in technical centers prepares them for the future, helps them to be free, confident and to show who they are.

Haya, Haryoko, Saharuddin, Suhaeb, Sabran, and Mantasia (2018, p.2) assert that “vocational skills will be more quickly accepted by the child when given a repetitive training, so that children will be accustomed even though less theoretically understood but mastered in practice, thereby it can be concluded that skills education is a special ability that is held so that students have skills that are useful for himself as the provision of his life in society”. They further posit that vocational skills are support skills that help special needs learners compete in the labour market. Pre-Vocational schools have contributed immensely to equipping many special needs learners with various skills that helps them earn a living, the study site is not an exception.

When participants were asked about their favorite/least favorite place in the school, their narratives revealed that, they prefer to be in technical classes than in academics. Below are excerpts from their narratives, stating their preferences.

“In the school, I don’t like being in the academics, I prefer technical, in academics I feel like, I don’t have anyone. I love being in technical, because I believe, I feel free to be myself and I feel free to talk to my teacher more than students, ‘cos like, I may be close to some students but I don’t talk so much talk with them” (Zinzile).

“Hahaha! Basically, it’s the technical ma’am, wow! in technical, we just use our hands, we don’t like have to use a pencil all day till your hands hurt ma’am, so yeah, basically, in the workshop, you must be creative, be more specific with your job, be responsible, like take your time and do your thing”. (Laughs) I don’t like the classes, the classes, the teachers there, they are so moody sometimes, they basically like us but then teachers are supposed to be patient with us and we are also supposed to be patient with teachers, but then the classes are, the homework we are supposed to do and the classes are sometimes cold, there is no heater so there is nothing actually to keep us warm in the class and it’s so boring” (Sabelo).

“Emm.... Workshops, workshops, because every day, I gain more knowledge, I learn new stuff every day and am happy with that, and that prepares me for the future” (Lindelani).

“Emm...em... its em...its by my technical, that place, I love to be there” (Thokozani).

“That’s the workshops. That’s where I feel most comfortable, I know that if I do something there it’s not because am doing it wrong, it’s because I have to do it. When we work on the vehicles, I feel that I know what to do, I’m confident in the workshops” (Graham).

“The thing that I like, I like to be in this one class, ECD class, yeah, when am in that class, I feel happy because I like to be with babies” (Siphokazi).

Cedefop (2015) asserts that there is a growing insistence that vocational skills cannot be delivered in the same manner as academic programmes. This is because vocational skills are germane to practical tasks and activities that catch and sustain the attention and interest of learners. Learners’ attention is sustained because vocational skills are hands-on and require activities where their creativity and ideas are explored. Being a pre-vocational school, the learners believe, that is the core of why they are in the school, since they have performed below standards in their former schools. At the technical centers, they do less written work and more practical work, as special needs learners love to be hands-on and detest lots of written work.

5.2.5 BULLYING/BODY SHAMING/LOW SELF ESTEEM

One of the salient features of bullying is the imbalance of power, that is, the one perceived to be stronger dominating or maltreating the one perceived to be weaker. Some of the participants pointed out their least favorite picture, as the one talking to their body size. Some learners also body shame other learners calling them derogatory names, for example, Mam Ruby, Sdudla, Big, Fat etc., which eventually have an enormous negative impact on the special needs learners as these can culminate into social exclusion, increased risk of being victimised and low self – esteem. Besag (1991) asserts that name-calling can be one of the most distressing teasing behaviors that children must cope with, and the damaging effects are often underestimated by adults.

When interacting with the participants about their least favorite pictures and objects, they had these to say:

“Yeah! That picture, even in primary I had weight problem, you see, so people used to call me obese and tease me about my body, just because am not slim, they teased me, they called me fat, you see those names, and that’s not nice, they teased me a lot, they called me Mam Ruby, those names, that’s why I don’t like the picture, because I believe I’m biiiiig in the picture” (Zinzile).



Image 5: Zinzile’s picture: Her least favorite picture

“My least favorite object, actually, I hate that object, but then, I got it for my own good, it’s a hearing aid, so basically, you know, when I was growing up like my childhood, it wasn’t so great, I was called names, all kind of names when I was wearing those hearing aids so basically when I grew up, I became uncomfortable wearing them” (Sabelo).



Image 6: Sabelo's picture: His hearing aid

"When I was small, eh, the picture, I don't like it, like it reminds me of when I used to be bullied a lot because I was tiny and all the other boys were like big, I used to have small hair and I love big hair" (Lindelani).



Image 7: Lindelani's picture showing how small he was.

"My least favourite picture, em... in the picture I was fat so I don't like it, people laugh at me that am fat" (Thokozani).



Image 8: Thokozani's picture- Least favourite picture

Family, peers, school and the social environment generally are the key factors that shape self-esteem. People with low self-esteem are afraid of failure, they believe they do not have what it takes to attain their goals in life (Sheykhjan, Jabari and Rajeswari, 2014). A participant alluded to this fact when I asked him how he felt when he was to start school at the special needs school. He stated that:

“I felt disappointed in myself, I felt like am a failure, like am useless, am not like other kids” (Lindelani).

In the same vein, Carter, Lane, Crnobori, Bruhn and Oakes (2011) argue that an understanding of individual's strength and limitations, coupled with the belief in oneself are effectively essential in self-determination. The study of Sheykhjan, Jabari and Rajeswari, (2014) showed that there is a high positive link between the students' academic performance and their self-esteem. When learners have a positive and high belief in themselves and their self-worth, it cascades to their improved academic performance and general behaviour.

5.3 HOW SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS NEGOTIATE VARIOUS SPACES.

5.3.1 AT HOME

5.3.1.1.THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY AND FAMILY ACCEPTANCE – A SENSE OF BELONGING

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes that the role of families in the lives of learners with special needs cannot be underestimated. Family bond, attachment and involvement is crucial to the children with disabilities which cumulatively fosters their achievements (Balli, 2016; Shourbagi, 2017). Attachment theory suggests that there is a sturdy connection between the mental health of individuals, and attachment relationships that made the individual feel emotionally comforted, supported and protected (Procaccia, Veronese and Castiglioni, 2014).¹¹¹

From the participants' stories shared with the researcher, it was obvious that they cherish the attachment with their family members whether dead or alive, and they hold their memories dear to their hearts. When they were asked to talk about their favorite objects and least favorite objects, they expressed themselves thus:

“This object is a three legged pot, it’s my favorite because it was my grandmother’s, my grandmother gave it to me but I was young then, she said my mum should keep it for me, just in case, if she passes on, that it will belong to me, so that object is very special to me because it reminds me of my grandmother, even though I don’t remember her that much, I still remember her face, so it brings me memories” (Zinzile).



Image 9: Zinzile’s picture- The three - legged pot

“My favourite object is my cologne. My grandmother bought it for me, whenever I look at it and use it, I miss her” (Thokozani).



Image 10: Thokozani's picture: Her cologne

“Emmm.....my favorite object is door handles, it sounds funny enough, the story about that is that my uncle, when his workshop started, he ummm....., when he was younger, he couldn't afford door handles at the time, because he used all his money, he left one of the big companies, he left, okay it was my uncle that has the workshop and then my other uncle, they bought a company when they were younger but the company broke up, so my uncle he said, you can take all the money, how he put it was, he doesn't want dirty money because he owed a lot of people money, millions of rand and yet he needed a door, so he took '23' and '24' spanners, he used it as door handles just so that because it's a mechanic workshop it would look so apart as I can put it, and it's still there, he doesn't want to take it off, he said that's what the people know”

“It's my grandmother's radio, so my grandfather and grandmother used to em, lay in bed and my grandmother used to put on the radio, early in the morning, she listened to the radio and em on one morning, my grandmother woke up, she tried wake up my grandfather while the radio was playing and my grandfather did not wake up, he passed away in his sleep. So my grandmother, she didn't really like the radio anymore, so umm... but she kept it, then emm, one Easter when I was younger, she decided with my

aunt, they didn't normally speak because they used to fight, so one Easter she said she wanted to see her daughter, so we went down to pick my grandmother, after we went to em, the Coast to visit my aunt, and em, my grandma told me she left 'am gonna miss you' and she told that to everyone at first we didn't know what was going to happen so my grandma had diabetes and she was a chain smoker, she smoked, she didn't stop smoking and then , Monday morning my grandma went to hospital and she went into a coma and she never woke up again. So I got the radio, it always reminds me that I didn't really know my grandmother and these are painful memories” (Graham).



Image 11: Graham's Picture- The door handles

While relating with the participants, they shared narratives about their favorite pictures. They also spoke passionately about their family members, which depicts the potency of the family attachment. Their narratives are highlighted below:

“Emmm, I like to bake a lot, my grandmother bakes, and then she taught me to bake, yeah, I like to bake, when I bake, it reminds me of my mother, she passed away, but when I bake, I remember her, so I feel close to her” (Siphokazi).



Image 12: Siphokazi's Picture: Displaying her baking skills

“My favourite picture is the one where I was with my family, em..(Clears throat) the place was in Adams near Durban ma'am, so basically, my family said we were going on a trip like I was kind of confused, I never knew where we were going, okay, I had a kind of like, mystery that I was going somewhere where I don't even know, I went with the flow though, so when I got there, I met people, my in-laws, not my in-laws but my mother's in laws, emmm, soon as I got to meet them, so warm welcoming like they welcomed us with warm hands ma'am, ,so I basically enjoyed my whole day there ma'am, we got there around 9-10am, we got to know each other and connect with the people there, so yeah, it was awesome” (Sabelo).



Image 13: Sabelo's Picture: With his family members

“It was the picture at my granny’s funeral, every time I look at the picture, I get those memories of my granny and she was a very good person so I kind of miss her” (Sibusiso).



Image 14: Sibusiso's picture: His picture during his granny's funeral

Most of the participants alluded to the fact that their family members accept them the way they are, and do not show any discrimination against them. There is a strong link between family acceptance of learners with special needs, and the families' collaboration with the school. Due to this acceptance, the family members give their full support to the learners for them to succeed optimally at school. A positive collaboration between schools and parents positively influences children's achievements and attitudes (Unicef, 2014).

Kandel and Merrick (2007) disclose that recently there has been a revolutionary change in the mind-set of families of children living with disabilities. They further state that to a very high degree, the ways families cope and their capacity to withstand the onerous challenges they face, determine their children's functionality and social integration. Unicef (2014) alerts that in the case of children with disabilities, family willingness to collaborate with the school is influenced by the nature of disability, socio-economic status and parent-child or guardian –child relationship. When special needs learners have a strong family acceptance or support system, it translates to them having higher grades and achievement at school, which increases their self –worth and esteem.

From the data gathered from the participants, their families are playing a crucial role in their lives as special needs learners. The members of their families have accepted their challenges and are giving them the required support needed to navigate their schooling journey, thus fostering love and family cohesion. The participants shared that:

“In my family, am treated the same as always, since I was young, I helped with fixing cars, putting in geysers, the first place where I learnt motor mechanics was by my uncle, because my uncle is also a mechanic, since I was young, I grew up in that working environment and no one treat me differently. My one cousin is also in a practical school in Witbank and he does Electricity and we are in the same level” (Graham).

“At home, they are okay that am in a special school” (Thokozani).

“At home, they treat us the same way, there is no one bigger than the other (probes) do your brothers go to mainstream school?. Yes, they do. I am the only one in a special school and they treat me nicely” (Sibusiso).

“They don't treat me bad, they treat me as they treat other children, they don't look down on me” (Nonjabulo).

Parental bonding is a primary socialization goal, and it is often used to measure the status of families with regards to love and acceptance. Parent-child bonds are beneficial to all adolescents. The special emphasis families place on family interconnectedness make the parent-child bond even more important for the children's positive development (Love and Buriel, 2007).

Parents are integral to the processes and decisions in planning and implementing special education and related services for learners with disabilities (Zagona, Miller, Kurth, and Love, 2019). When parents are actively involved in the schooling experiences of their child, it helps parents to know how to support their child when the need arises, as well as equips them with enough knowledge and facts about skills their child can accomplish, and job prospects after school. Parents also form a support structure assisting one another when the need arises, thus helping alleviate some of the challenges they face.

Parents are expected to be equal partners in the processes of implementing special education to their children. They are also stakeholders in the lives of their children and should be included and considered in decision making. Balli (2016) posits that the role of parents is imperative and unique in the implementation of inclusive education for learners with special needs, as well as for optimal educational and social development of the children.

5.3.1.2. DEALING WITH STRESS

Some of the participants alluded to the fact that they love it when they are free, love their own space, they do not like to be confined to a place, they also like places that are relaxing, this helps them to de-stress. They go to the places like the dining room, sitting room and bedroom to clear their head, this help them feel better when they are apprehensive, angry or stressed. Learners with special needs are stressed by experiences they navigate on a daily basis which they have no control over, parents are expected to support their children to ensure a smooth navigation of these stressful moments and fosters family cohesion. Parental support in the form of a strong parent-child bond may serve as a buffer against stress (Love and Buriel, 2007).

Stress may result in the development of non-communicable diseases, including metabolic syndrome, reduced insulin sensitivity and obesity, resulting from unhealthy lifestyle habits and stress system dysregulation (Pervanidou and Chrousos, 2012).The World Health Organisation

(1996) explicates that students must be healthy and emotionally secure for them to fully participate in education (World Health Organisation, 1996).

While discussing with the participants, they revealed how they relax and relieve stress in the excerpts below:

“My favorite place at home is my room, because I feel free, I get more time for myself and I get to listen to music especially when am angry, music help me calm down a bit cos when am upset, I just want to be on my own, it helps me calm down, it helps me a lot, I feel free in my room, as I love my own space a lot” (Zinzile).

“My favourite is the one with the couch, the couch, let’s say I’ve done everything I’m supposed to do at home I want to relax, I just lay down there by the couch, there is a remote there close to the couch, basically, I just relax and watch TV the whole day, because it’s relaxing and stress free” (Sabelo).

“Emm, the sitting room, I like to sit in the sitting room, I feel more relaxed and yeah, comfortable” (Lindelani).



Image 15: Lindelani’s picture: Sitting room where he loves relaxing

“Em..it’s the dining room, I like because its where as a family we gathered sometimes, watch TV yeah, relax and do some other stuff, and have family time” (Thokozani).

“My favourite place at home is my room, em...I spent most of my time when I was younger in my room not because I was naughty but because my parents used to fight, I used to go to my room, close the door and listen to music to calm down, em, and what

happened was when I was younger, my brother came into my room and he sat by me and told me everything is gonna be okay, that actually took my heart ma'am, that's why my room became my favorite place" (Graham).



Image 16: Graham's picture: His bedroom where he spends most of his time.

"I like to be in TV room, I like TV room, yeah, I love watching movies a lot to relax, well, em, it makes me thinking, think of my future, some of them, some of them they show me how it is when you get out from school" (Siphokazi).



Image 17: Siphokazi's picture: Loves watching movies in TV room

"It's the sitting room because I chill there, we watch soccer, we play video games, we watch movies so yeah, it's relaxing" (Sibusiso).

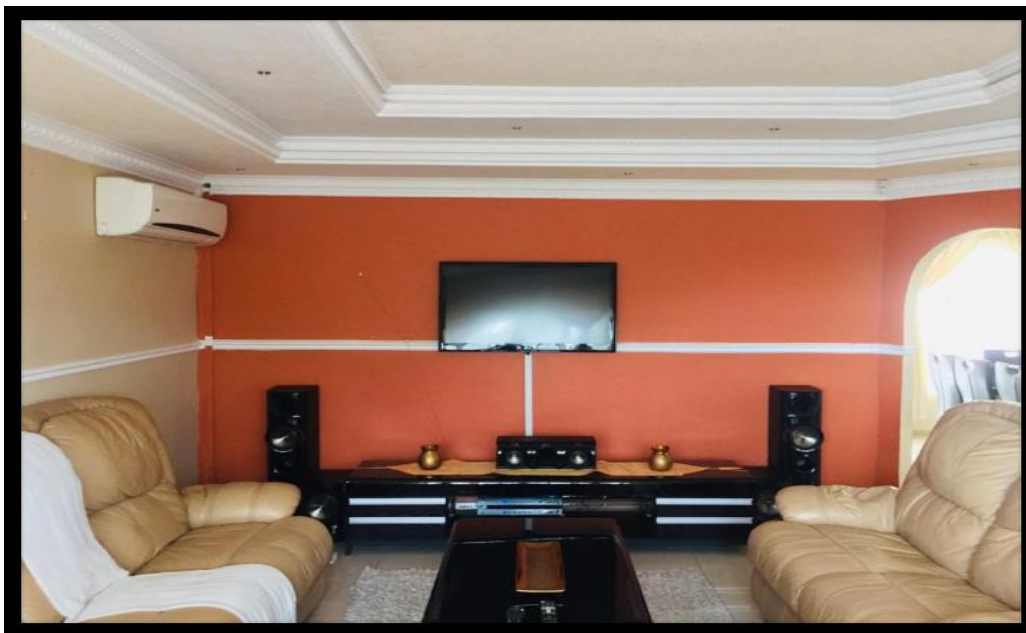


Image 18: Sibusiso's picture: The sitting room where he loves relaxing

“In my room, because in my room there is nobody to disturb me, I feel comfortable in my room and relaxed” (Nonjabulo).



Image 19: Nonjabulo's picture: Love relaxing in her room.

Eysnek (1998) explicates quality of life, as the perceived difference between what the condition of life is presently; and what it should be at another time. There is a connection between excessive anxiety or stress on poor performance of students, patterns of students' behaviour and their quality of lives.

Excessive anxiety and stress have various demanding effects on the learners' body and mind. It decreases their physical health and also decreases the students' health-related quality of life, learning ability, retention of material, interpersonal relationships, and health related behaviors such as sport. Relaxation has also proved to be effective for relieving stress and anxiety in different conditions such as chronic insomnia, preoperative distresses and many other conditions (Dehghan-nayeri and Adib-Hajbaghery, 2011).

5.3.1.3 HOUSEHOLD DUTIES /CHORES

In the last decades, parents have started paying attention to having their children engage in house duties or chores, as a way to foster their development (Drummond, Coster, Rabelo Gomes and Mancini, 2018). Household task engagement has long been considered a crucial part of childrearing, it acts as an important part of the daily routine, while promoting family unity. Evidence shows that children’s participation in household tasks lead to lower levels of depression and anxiety and higher self-regulatory capacity (Park, Rapoport, Soled and Adesman, 2020; Pennick, 2013) and promote pro-social behaviour (Grusec, Goodnow and Cohen, 1996).

This study aligns with the recommendation made by Drummond et al. (2018) that, future studies should investigate the importance attributed to house chores and satisfaction of children derived from it. This study reveals that the learners with special needs are dissatisfied and detest household chores as they do not like engaging in it. One of the participants believes it is a duty for females. Girls are also more likely to be involved in excessive housework than boys (Putnick and Bornstein, 2016). This belief should be discouraged as both genders need to be efficient in house chores as the house is being utilized by both genders. Besides, the work at home should be shared by children of both genders.

The participants spoke their minds on this matter as illustrated below:

“Kitchen, yo!, (sighs), in the kitchen, ma’am, they make me cook, and wash dishes, eh, I don’t like washing dishes, I just don’t like kitchen, am not a fan. Like I want to run away, I wish there wasn’t kitchens at all” (Lindelani).



Image 20: Lindelani’s picture: Does not like doing kitchen chores

“It’s the kitchen, especially the dishes place, I don’t like it because they look dirty, when it’s my turn to wash it, I just wish that I should go somewhere to hide myself, I hate dishes, we are all brothers, no sister at home so yeah, I don’t like doing dishes but I can cook, I can bake, I try, but dishes and pots, it’s a no, no” (Sibusiso).



Image 21: Sibusiso’s Picture: Doesn’t like washing dishes

It’s pot, I hate cleaning pots especially the Phuthu one, yo! Smiles, I hate it (probes) why? because it’s very hard, you have to scrape everything out, its irritating, I clean the dishes, but when I see the pots, I get tired very easily” (Nonjabulo).



Image 22: Nonjabulo’s Picture: Hate cleaning pots

Cerrato and Cifre (2018) posit that, germane to gender differences are cultural differences in gender egalitarianism, beliefs or attitudes about gender equality within the culture. Gender ideology seems to determine the percentage of tasks considered to be traditionally feminine such as washing, ironing, cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc.

5.3.2 AT SCHOOL

5.3.2.1 DISCRIMINATION AMONG LEARNERS

It is very disheartening to see special learners bully and discriminate among themselves despite the fact that they are all in special needs school. According to Algraigray and Boyle (2017) labelling and discrimination could also affect children's attempts to integrate into a social group, and these labels could stay with them all through their lives.

Ross (2003, p.27) explicates bullying as intentional and generally unprovoked attempts by one or more individuals to inflict physical hurt and/or psychological distress on one or more victims. She explained further that “bullying can either be direct (involving face to face, physical or verbal confrontations) or it can be indirect (involving relational bullying like social exclusion or spreading of rumours)”.

The participants voiced their experiences about their struggle with discrimination and bullying among themselves as learners; the learners that feel they are better academically than the rest, they look down on others and call them names. These are expressed thus:

“Like some learners call others slow learners and mad and those things” (Thokozani).

“Some that do very well academically sometimes look down on those that can't, am.... they think they are higher than someone else but we all are in the same school and someone told me, a teacher told me that we all have problems, my problem and the other person's problem are different, so, yes, ma'am” (Graham).

“Some of us, some of them they look at others like you are nothing, you are like this and like this, so yeah, some believe they are better than the others” (Siphokazi).

“Some learners look down on other learners, but that shouldn't be done because there is nothing different because we are still in same school, same class, yeah!” (Sabelo).

“Yes, some of them, they do that, if they can read and write, so, they believe if others can’t do that, they are stupid and they call them names” (Sibusiso).

“Some look down on others that are weak, some they don’t. those that do, laugh at you that you can’t read, can’t write, and they call you names like ugly, short, stupid, fools etc. Makes me feel disappointed in them to do that to other children” (Nonjabulo).

When individuals are constantly exposed to discrimination, it leads them to accept and internalize the prejudice or stigma directed towards them, which culminates in feelings of shame, poor self-esteem, fear, stress, and also poor mental and physical health (United Nations, 2016). These finding is in affirmation with Selvum’s (2004) point that, in South African schools, learners with special needs experience negative experiences within the school and classroom environments.

5.3.2.2. EDUCATORS’ SUPPORT

When educators show learners with special needs support, it is appreciated by the learners and gives them a sense of belonging and security as they have been faced by many hostilities in the social settings they navigate. The positive attitude of educators to special needs learners gives them a sense of acceptance. Educators’ attitudes undoubtedly have a great influence on the learners with special needs, their school achievement and social behavior (Fareo, 2015). The findings of this study correspond with Balal and Ilyas’ (2012) findings, where the participants praised their educators for their help and guidance, majority of their participants agreed that the attitudes of their educators is very positive and helpful in their schooling journey. Likewise, some of the participants asserted that the educators have been showing them nothing but love in the school, they do not discriminate against them; they are patient and respect them as learners with special needs; they also attend to their individual needs. The excerpts from their narratives state:

“Ah! the teachers are good, and none of them that show us rudely, none of them show us badly. They treat us well and respect us” (Siphokazi).

“They treat us well” (Thokozani).

“For my teachers, all of them are fine, they treat us nicely, they are friendly, they are patient, they love us, they are okay with us, they don’t call us names” (Nonjabulo).

The positive attitude of educators to special needs learners helps increase their self-perception and their general academic performances. It affects to a great extent the learners' social behavior and school achievement (Fareo, 2015). Lopez and Corcoran (2014) explicate that educator-student relationship is crucial to positive experiences at school, and particularly for learners with special needs.

Educators are expected to act in 'loco-parentis' to learners, that is, they are expected to act as temporary parents or guardians of the learners, when they are in their custody at school. The relationship fosters mutual trust and help learners relate better with their educators.

5.3.2.3. GENDER STEREOTYPING IN ACQUISITION OF SKILLS

The participants alluded to the fact that they want the school to give them opportunity to learn skills they are passionate about, without being restricted by their gender, like

“Emmm... basically, its 2020 now ma'am, emmm! like gender doesn't matter now, like in 2020, there are girls that can do electricity ma'am, girls can do motor repairs, girls and boys that do cooking, ECD and hairdressing you see, so what I actually want to change is that, they mustn't put things based on our gender because ma'am like me, I don't want to become a woodworker, my dream is to actually be a chef, I want to open my kitchen not in one place but in different places that means when I get out of this school, am gonna have to start all over again, so basically, I want to be able to grow my own plants and my own animals, to be honest, my dream, I actually figured it out this year, emm, it was late July, June there, when I go out of the school, I would go to Khulisani there in Howick, when am done, then am gonna study agriculture then when I am done there, I will go to culinary school or chef school”

“Emmm.. the school, I don't know, it's because of gender or something, you see me personally, I do woodwork, but woodwork is not my dream job, my dream job is to become a chef, I wanna be someone in a business where it's all about cooking, yes I can do woodwork but I wouldn't say it's in my blood, I can do it yes, but what I have passion for is to be a chef, ma'am. What I don't like about the school is that they separated us, from like boys and the girls. Boys need to do girls technical and girls do boys technical subjects, let's say for instance, a girl wants to do panel-beating but is not able to do that because of the way the school is set up” (Sabelo).

“I want the Department of Education to help us with more needs in school and provide us with more technicals, girls to do boys technical and boys to do girls technical, put more stuff and increase equipments in schools” (Siphokazi).

5.3.3 SOCIAL CONTEXT

5.3.3.1 STIGMATIZATION AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

Learners living with special needs do not only face physical problems, they also face psychological and social problems in life (Balal and Ilyas, 2012). Community attitude had always been to stigmatize and discriminate against disabled people. Discrimination is negative behaviour directed towards members of social groups who are being prejudiced. (Baron and Byrne, 2004). Discrimination and stigmatization result in social exclusion of the learners with special needs. Self- perception, academic performances, cognitive and social development and general psychological health of learners with special needs is largely based on the attitude of the society (Balal and Ilyas, 2012).

Discriminatory attitude was reported by majority of the participants. Some discriminatory attitudes came from their peers as previously reported, others came from people in their social setting. The participants’ narrations are highlighted below:

“Okay, the taxi rank, they harass you because you are a special needs learner, they tease you, they mock you, look at you as if you don’t exist, and there was this guy, a kombi driver, who asked me if I am still a virgin, and I asked him how is that his business? He said I wanna be with you, and I want to know, and yeah, they harass us, take advantage of us, this makes me angry, actually, makes me very angry because they take advantage of you because they feel you cannot fight for yourself and yeah! that has been a problem, a lot” (Zinzile).

“Some people believe this school has a bad reputation and it’s for like stupid people, basically, I wish I could change that, so that they can actually see the bigger picture, basically, in this country, ma’am, we need schools like this, like basically, there are some people with degrees, diplomas things like that and they still don’t work ma’am,

so this would actually help people who can use their hands instead of their minds ma'am, and then again, the minds work with the hands so, it's something we need in this country, to have like technical schools so, yes" (Sabelo).

"Emm... by my community, they don't know, but anytime I tell them, that my school is a special school in Pietermaritzburg, they always say, yo! Crazy people study there and am like no, not all of us are crazy. This makes me feel embarrassed, I don't show it, I just say, no, not me" (Thokozani).

(Sighs) "Emmmm, (laughs) that they must tell other school to treat learners from special schools normal, we are not different, the things that we don't know is that we can't catch up very easily, it's not that we are crazy and stupid, they must not treat us like rubbish. I want special learners to be respected like they respect mainstream learners" (Nonjabulo).

Societal attitudes have a tremendous impact on the lives of learners with special needs (Balal and Ilyas, 2012). Bronfenbrenner (1979) alludes to the fact that the negative stereotypes and images expressed by members of the society may become integrated by learners with special needs, thus limiting their physical stability. Some of the learners with special needs have internalized the stereotypes and negative images being created by the society regarding them, such that they start to believe the negative images about themselves.

5.3.3.2. DISTASTE FOR UNSAFE AND DIRTY ENVIRONMENTS

According to Vygotsky (1987), the environment where children grow up influences what they think about and their thought generally. The environment children live in, influence their behaviour thus, children need to live in a clean and sane environment for them to be positively influenced.

When asked about their least favorite object and least favorite place in the community, one can understand that the participants detest or have a distaste for unsafe and dirty environments as narrated in their stories thus:

"There is a passage you go through when going home, I don't like those passages. They are very dangerous, very dangerous, I don't like it and I feel unsafe, you see the moment you enter those passages, you literally get goosebumps, so I don't really like, I mean

bad things can happen or you can get raped, killed. “There have been, like four times, where people have been hurt, raped and robbed and shot. So it’s not a safe place especially when its dark” (Zinzile).

“It’s the road, the road basically reminds me of my accident, the one that made me have this scar on my head. I was in grade 2, it was 2012 yes, I was on my bike emm, I was very short, the bushes were too taller than me, so then, I don’t know, the accident happened so fast, its,em,em, what can I say, it was too fast, that’s all I can say, it’s just that I can’t explain how did it happen?” (Sabelo).



Image 23: Sabelo’s Picture: The road that reminds him of his accident.

“Em... .it’s the taverns, I don’t like them and am not willing even to go there, because it’s a crowded space, there are lots of thugs and a lot of people who are drunk, yeah” (Thokozani).

“Emm..... it’s by the liquor shop, ummm, I got ummm, jumped, I got threatened twice, one was at knife point and then one verbally, I also got pick-pocketed, they pick-pocketed my wallet, luckily I didn’t have, I only had a twenty rand but yeah, I don’t really go there because of what happened. There is also a gang that hangs normally there, they drink, they make mischief there, the police had to go a few times to take them away” (Graham).

“The liquor shop, yeah, I don’t like to go there. I hate that place because they are drinking alcohol even teenagers doing wrong things, I don’t like to see everything that is wrong” (Siphokazi).



Image 24: Siphokazi's picture: The liquor shop

“It's the park by the rank, I don't like that place because, I've been there and have seen some other children who are wasting their lives smoking, drinking and some of them bunk school to go there, it's not a good place, they are destroying their lives there” (Sibusiso).

“Taxi Rank, it's not easy, its, its dirty, in other corner it smells like pee, it's so disgusting. Yeah, and then litter everywhere, I don't like dirty places” (Lindelani).

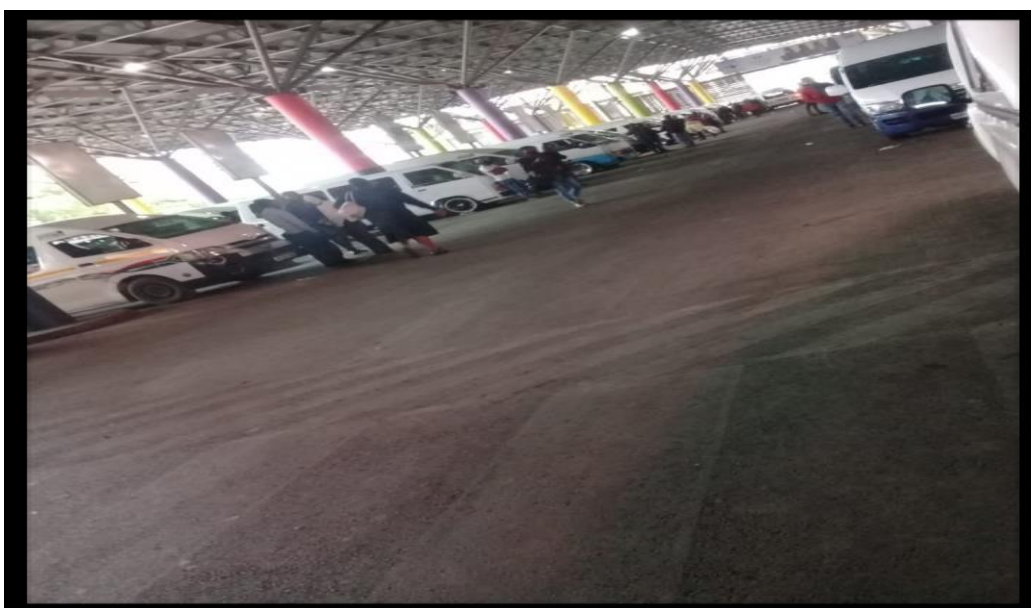


Image 25: Lindelani's picture: The taxi rank

“Aww..., I don’t like, am scared of guns, guns, it’s not my thing because of what it does” (Siphokazi).



Image 26: Siphokazi’s picture: Scared of guns

From the excerpts of the participants, learners with special needs have a distaste for unsafe and dirty environments. They explained that there is a lot of violence taking place by the taverns and taxi rank, which makes them uncomfortable with the place. Miscreants normally make these places their places of hangout and abode, and this tends to make the special learners feel unsafe as some of miscreants interfere with them, as recounted by some of the participants.

Learners with special needs also love being around nature, as they appreciate such, examples of nature could be a forest, a grass field, a pond, city parks, or trees that line city streets (Newman, 2020). According to Wilson (2014), time spent in nature is of immense benefit to individuals of all ages physically, mentally and emotionally. Wilson (2014) further expounds that nature has been clinically proven to enhance children’s problem - solving skills, growth and development, physical health, cognitive abilities, creativity, social relationships, self-discipline and it reduces their stress. Learners with special needs’ relationship with their natural environment helps them to have a balanced life. There is now a conviction by child psychologists and psychotherapists that contact between children and their natural environment is expedient, to ensure their balanced psychological and physical development as adolescents and adults. (Sailakumar & Naachimuthu, 2017).

5.3.3.3 LOVE FOR NATURE

When asking the participants about their favorite picture and favorite place in the community, most of them voiced their passion about the garden, park, field, dam which connotes that they love being close to nature. They said they feel great tranquility and peace which helps them relieve a lot of stress and relax.

Below are the excerpts from their narratives:

“That picture, that my best picture makes me feel, there is this place I used to go, it’s a garden, that my favorite place, I love taking my picture there, and it makes me feel comfortable, I feel like it’s my comfort zone, I feel like I’m free there, nobody telling me what to do, nobody to shout on me, come here! And it makes me closer to nature” (Zinzile).



Image 27: Zinzile’s picture: Her favourite picture

“My favorite picture was the one with me and my dad at Albert Falls Dam, am..., what happened there was, em... we went to the dam because we didn’t see each other for

quite some time so my dad's girlfriend took that photo and em... we had a good time that why it's my favorite picture ma'am" (Graham).



Image 28: Graham's picture - His favourite picture

"Emmm.... It's the picture in the park, where we play soccer ma'am, it becomes stress free, like it's a way of bonding with our friends, you see like, bonding with ourselves, so it helps me to be free" (Sabelo).

"Ummmm.... it's the community park, I like it because, emm.... I go there to take picture, some pictures and I go there with my friends, like just to sit there, like watch the view or just do anything yeah, together, its relaxing yeah, when you are bored" (Thokozani).

"Em..., that's in the field, the view, it's from where we can see the whole Ashburton, we used to go to the field, we sit there and talk, we talk about stuff, I used to go there even alone when I needed to calm myself down" (Graham).

From these excerpts, we can deduce that, these participants enjoy being close to nature as it relaxes their nerves, makes them feel free, calms them down etc. Going to these natural settings is therapeutic to them and boost their mental health. These natural settings should continue to be accessible and conserved judging from these crucial therapeutic benefits highlighted by these participants.

5.4 TO WHAT EXTENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS BEING REALIZED

5.4.1 INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT

The participants alluded to the fact that Inclusive Education is being practised in the school as learners' individual needs are being addressed by educators. Educators did not utilize the 'one size fits all' approach to teaching but individualized approach, which helps to foster Inclusive Education in the school. Also the peer instruction or buddy system is also utilized in order to ensure individual needs of learners are met. One of the goals of Inclusive Education is for the individual needs of each learner to be met, this is being achieved according to the excerpts from the data collected.

In order to find out if Inclusive Education is being realized in the school, and if as a result, educators are using one size fits all or their individual needs are being attended to by the educators, the participants stated:

“Emm, the teachers first teach us all and then they ask those who are in need, all they have to do is they raise up their hands, then the teacher teaches individually, the needs of individual learner is being taken care of” (Sabelo).

“They teach us individually, yeah, that helps a lot” (Lindelani).

“They do teach us all and then if you have a problem they will come and then teach those that need help” (Sibusiso).

“Emmm... sometimes they teach all of us but if you have a problem, he or she comes to you and he/she helps you. Teachers attend to learners needs individually, they try” (Thokozani).

“They, they teach us equally and then if you don't understand something, you ask them, they teach you again and they are really taking good care of us. They also ask the strong learners to help the weak learners” (Siphokazi).

“Sometimes, teachers pair us with other learners that can read and write so that they can help us and they teach us individually. We get the support we need from our teachers” (Nonjabulo).

From the narratives of the participants, we can see that Inclusive Education is being practiced at the study site. As learners in each class have mixed abilities, individual attention is being paid to learners depending on the support needed, the participants affirm that they get the individual support they need from their educators who teach them at their individual pace, one size fits all, which defeats the purpose of Inclusive Education is not being practiced in the school.

5.4.2 PREFERRING TO BE IN A SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS

Many of the participants voiced their preference for continuing to study in a special school instead of being taught in conjunction with learners in mainstream schools. They brought to fore their fears that, they will not get enough support from this arrangement as they need more support from educators because of their learning challenges, this support needed by the special needs learners is currently offered to them at the special school.

This finding is in contrast to the findings of Papageorgiou, Andreou and Soulis (2008) where the majority of their participants with mild learning difficulties preferred to learn with their peers in the mainstream classroom rather than in the special school, as stated thus:

Interestingly the majority of learners ‘with mild learning difficulties’ found that they preferred their educators to make adaptations to support their needs in the classroom, because they were happy and more confident to work with their peers in the mainstream classroom and because they can learn more in the mainstream classroom rather than in the resource room (Papageorgiou et al, 2008).

“I prefer to be in a special school, the reason I said that is because I wouldn’t say am dumb and stupid ma’am, it’s just the way I am ma’am like basically what am saying is that, I have my days when a teacher teaches us something, it takes long to get in my mind, but there are some days where I can just do my work like snappy, snappy (snaps fingers) like that. I prefer to be in a special school, where teachers will be able to have patience with us and be able to take things step by step ma’am, yeah ma’am, because in mainstream, mostly the teachers just handout the papers, just like that, they teach once and it’s up to you if you are going to put it in mind (Sabelo).

“I prefer to be in a special school, ah, because if I am in mainstream, they will treat me differently, I wouldn’t cope with the work, because I need help with some school work. Yes., we get the support we need” (Lindela).

“I better be here in a special school, it’s too hard in mainstream, yes” (Thokozani).

“Ah!... I would like to be in a special school, emm, when I was in first year, I did have few times that I thought I wanted to go back, but em, I would actually prefer to be in a special school, because the way they learn, it feels like it’s only you, the way they teach, some of the teachers you can ask them to come and assist you and they will assist you right through, whereas in the mainstream school, they don’t. If someone can’t read, they guide the learner right through” (Graham).

“Ah....., I prefer the special school because I learn more, yes, like, practicals, yes” (Siphokazi).

“No, I prefer to be in a special school. (probes) can you tell me why? Because I think eh, some other children who think they are smart they will look down on us, so I think it’s better if we are all on the same page, we don’t have to be mixed with em, the mainstream, am comfortable learning in the special school” (Sibusiso).

The findings of this research negate the findings of Magardie (2018), which had contended that, the segregation and teaching of LSEN learners in a special school environment has not been beneficial to the learners with special needs, and that being in a special school delay their development and integration in the society as adults that can independently function on their own. In contrast to this view and aligning to the findings of this study, Warnock (2005b), as cited in Shaw, 2017) opined that, learners with severe learning difficulties are better placed in special schools as learners with special needs placed in mainstream schools suffer in the present system especially those whose special needs are not visible or obvious.

In the same vein, Hornby and Witte (2008) investigated learners’ perspectives of their experiences of a residential special school for learners with Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties (EBD), and reported that, the participants were very positive about their experiences at the special school but, were consistently negative about the experiences of mainstreaming. Reed, Osborne and Waddington (2012) also compared the impact of placing children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in mainstream and special schools, and its attendant effect, it was concluded that special schools demonstrated superior performance, this

propelled them to propagate the need to place children with ASD in special schools unlike in mainstream schools where their needs wouldn't be met.

5.5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that special needs learners encounter various challenges such as labelling and discrimination, bullying, body shaming and low self-esteem in their day-to-day activities. Narratives on their experiences as learners with special needs also reveal their love for sport, their preference for skills to academics, and their desire to have the school equipment and facilities updated. Some of the learners believe that technical skills equipment should be upgraded to meet the required standard at the workplace, as this is where they will eventually work to display their skills and talents after leaving the school. This will help them get used to state of the art equipment relevant to their skills. Their lived experiences were explored in segments, that is, at home, school and in their social setting or contexts.

At home, they expressed that they do not face any segregation or discrimination from their family members as they understand and are supportive of them. They expounded on how they attach sentimental value to the gifts given to them by family members, dead or alive, their dislike for household duties and how they generally relieve their stress.

At school, sadly, they experience discrimination, segregation and bullying among their peers in the same school. The strong academic learners discriminate against and label the weaker learners which cause segregation amongst the learners with special needs. They also revealed gender stereotyping in acquisition of skills. They want to be able to learn any vocation or skill in the school without being excluded because of their gender. They voiced their opinion of preferring to learn skills they are passionate about and not being denied that right. They want the school to make provisions for learners to freely choose skills they are passionate about instead of being restricted by their gender specification, as it is presently practiced in the school. They want boys not being restricted to learn skills like Food Production, Early Childhood Development, Hairdressing, Needlework and Office Practice; and also that girls are not restricted to learn skills like Panel Beating, DIY, Woodwork, Metal Work, Plumbing, Motor Vehicle Repairs, Agriculture and Building. They also disclosed the strong support and love shown to them by their educators, they stated that they love being in the school as they are

shown support and love. In other words, this expression of support displayed by their educators towards them, helps them enjoy a sense of acceptance, belonging and security in the school.

In their social setting, they are also unfortunately subjected to bullying, stigmatization, abuse and discrimination. People in their environment label special schools and special needs learners in a derogatory manner, looking down on them and calling them unprintable names, amongst others. All these various forms of discrimination against learners with special needs have culminated in low self-esteem being displayed by these learners. They also shared their love for nature and their distaste for unsafe and dirty environments. They do not like to be in dangerous, unsafe and dirty environments as they believe their safety will be compromised.

The findings revealed further that, Inclusive Education is being realized in the school, in as far as individualized educational support is being offered to each learner in the school. Participants believe they get the support they need as special needs learners. All participants prefer learning in a special school as opposed to learning in mainstream schools, as they believe their individual needs will not be understood and attended to in mainstream schools, where they believe they will be taught according to a 'one size fits all' learning and teaching environment, which would put them at a disadvantage.

In the next chapter, the study will present the final analysis and commentary on the findings from this study. The following chapter will also make suggestions for future research on related areas of interest and offer recommendations that will be useful to policy makers and the education sector as a whole.



Fig: 7- Quote by Stephen Hawking.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“People with disabilities have abilities too and this is what this course is all about, making sure that those abilities blossom and shine so that all the dreams you have can come true.” — Mary McAleese

“Every disability conceals a vocation, if only we can find it, which will ‘turn the necessity to glorious gain.’ – C.S. Lewis

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented and discussed the findings of this study. In this final chapter of my thesis, I look into a brief overview of the study and encapsulated the key research findings of this study. I further made recommendations for possible extended research which provides interventions in the area of special needs education and Inclusive Education. This chapter presented the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study, based on the interpretation given to the findings discussed in chapter five. As suggested by the Hamilton College Writing Centre (2015), the purpose of the concluding chapter in doctoral research is to bring a researcher’s argument to a logical close, by justifying the argument to the reader(s). It includes a description of key points of the study and the overall intended impact of the research. It also contained concluding remarks derived from the results that emerge after juxtaposing the analysed data generated against the research questions posed in chapter one. The chapter ended with recommendations, which acknowledged the possibility and recommendations for further studies on the findings that arose in the course of the research.

6.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study looked into the narratives of eight learners with special needs, (four boys and four girls) exploring their lived experiences in the home, school and social settings in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and how these special needs learners navigate their spaces.

In Chapter One, the objectives of the study were highlighted. The following three key research questions were formulated to guide my study:

1. What stories do learners with special needs tell about their schooling, home and social experiences?
2. How do these learners negotiate their spaces at school, home and in their social contexts?
3. How is Inclusive Education being realised in these learners' contexts?

The researcher's intention for this study was to listen to the authentic voices of the special needs learners, as they shared their experiences on how they navigate their daily activities at home, school and in their social contexts. It is my sincere hope that the data generated and the analysis that emerged from this data will provide a solid understanding of the experiences of the special needs learners, which will consequently propel the required and appropriate intervention.

6.3 SUMMARY OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

A number of key findings emerged from the data which the study generated. To garner rich data in response to the key research questions, I investigated the experiences of the special needs learners at home, school and in the society, to better understand how they experience and navigate these spaces.

6.3.1. EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS AT HOME

Acceptance is the most significant step in embracing a child with disabilities. With the birth of an intellectually disabled child, adaptation may be quick for some families, while it may take longer for some (Purba and Simanjuntak, 2020). When people garner positive support from people around them, it makes them exultant, and the insurmountable will seem surmountable. Learners with special needs are social beings who need support from everyone around them.

There is an African saying which is: 'Umntu ngomuntu ngabantu', this means 'human beings rely on others to be what they are' (Nwoye, 2017). Human beings are inter-dependent on each

other because, no one is an island. Human beings need one another to live and thrive. We all need to be loved, accepted and supported. Participants in this study unequivocally stated that they received support from their family members, nuclear and extended. There is also much evidence that points to learners who enjoy support from members of their family, tend to do well academically (Balli, 2016; Shourbagi, 2017).

The participants revealed that the family members support and accept the special needs learners for who they are, and they share a strong bond. They spoke fondly of their parents and family members, and cherished items given to them by family members who have since passed on. They expressed joy about spending time with their extended families during family functions such as funerals, weddings etc. They saw such times as opportunities to bond with family members. They clearly cherish these memories and hold them in very high esteem and close to their hearts.

Learners with special needs are also human and emotional beings, who need to be accepted and shown love, as this assists them to navigate life despite the daily challenges they are faced with. Studies on the psychology of emotions have shown that children too have feelings. Thus, if a child feels he or she is not wanted, it will have an impact on the child's character, and they will look for various ways to be noticed, sometimes doing something extreme. When the love of the father and mother fills his or her life, the child will feel happier, socially developed and emotionally enhanced (Purba and Simanjuntak, 2020, v.290).

It was also ascertained that participants love any situation that is relaxing, and gives them a sense of freedom, as this relieves them of stress. They also have a distaste for unsafe and dirty environment. They are not supportive of violence in the society and do not like to stay in unsafe or filthy places. They love to relax and de-stress at the parks, which makes them feel close to nature.

6.3.2. EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS AT SCHOOL

The study undertook to investigate participant's experiences through a social justice lens or perspective, which enables a spontaneous and transgressive stance towards inequalities, oppression, and exclusion (Bell, 2016). The data gathered from the participants show that learners with special needs also discriminate amongst themselves, as the stronger ones

academically bully the weaker ones and call them names, in an effort to show superiority over the weaker ones. Ross (2003) expounds that an important feature intrinsic to the definition of bullying is the existence or reality of an imbalance of power, where the bully is construed to be stronger, dominant and more powerful than the victim. Ross further defines bullying as intentional and generally unprovoked attempts by one or more individuals to inflict physical hurt and/or psychological distress on one or more victims. There must be an imbalance of physical or psychological power. Advocacy needs to be organised for learners with special needs to enlighten them on the dangers of bullying other learners in any way, as this offers them acceptable ways of relating to others.

It was revealed in the data that participants experience skills gender stereotyping, whereby participants learn skills that are traditionally deemed relevant to their gender. Girls learn skills such as Needlework, Early Childhood Development, Hairdressing, Food Production and Office Practice while boys learn skills such as Motor Vehicle Repairs, Metal Work, Building, Woodwork, Plumbing, Panel Beating, DIY, Agriculture, Landscaping etc. The female participants expressed how much they would love to learn skills that are stereotyped as appropriate for only boys and vice versa. It is noteworthy that, at the study site, girls have now been given the opportunity to study Agriculture as a vocational subject. This is a laudable action towards actualizing the participants' desires and yearnings. This moving passed traditional gender role bias and stereotyping is emphasised in the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI 2012, p. 11) report which states, "...on the supply side, females should not be limited to certain subject areas in their training and education by any constraint other than their own choice, while on the demand side, more emphasis should be placed on creating jobs, particularly those of the calibre that allow women to make the most of their education and skills".

It also emerged that the learners with special needs demand an upgrade of technical skills equipment and school facilities, with more sophisticated and modern machines in their technical centres. They professed to prefer skills-based subjects to academic subjects as these help them showcase their skills and talents unlike in the academic classes.

The participants spoke proudly of the love shown to them by their educators who seem to understand their challenges and do not use these against them. Educators who understand the challenges of these learners and offer appropriate support needed by each learner to achieve optimally, serves to empower participants to conduct themselves in a confident manner.

Learners spend many hours at school (between 6 to 7 hours daily) which makes it imperative that they are shown acceptance, care and support from educators and others in the school environment. Teaching is a noble calling rather than simply a profession with its responsibilities not limited to facilitating learning but extending to developing learners holistically (Sanchez, Chua and Melgar, 2021).

Positive relationships and support from their educators are of paramount importance to learners with learning difficulties (Prunty, Dupont and McDaid, 2012). Similarly, Learned (2016) alludes to the fact that learners who experience challenges with learning actively look out for positive relationships with their educators as this offers them a sense of safety and trust. Educators give and spend time with these learners which ultimately boosts the morale and self-worth of the learners with special needs. It has been asserted that when educators spend time with learners, the learners ascribe meaning to themselves and they feel valued and confident and experience a sense of worthiness (Grobler and Wessels, 2018). Educators unarguably contribute immensely to the way special needs learners see or portray themselves, whether positive or negative.

The findings also reveal that the learners with special needs enjoy individualized instruction and support from their educators, which helps the learners greatly to learn at their pace and to have their individual needs met and their barriers to learning addressed. The learners with special needs also revealed in the data that they prefer to be taught in a special school, as their educators understand them, their individual needs are met and learners learn at their own pace unlike in the mainstream school. They alluded to the fact that their needs would not be taken care of in the mainstream classes which was why they were referred to the special school in the first place, where they are adequately supported. According to Gould (2011) learners with learning difficulties find it difficult to cope with the demands and pace established in mainstream schools and struggle to keep up with their peers, while special needs education facilitates matching of learners with qualified educators who understand their disabilities and are trained to meet their individual needs (Gilmour and Henry, 2018).

Special needs educators are faced with various challenges in their professional journey. In a study assessing special needs educators' needs, it was discovered that they need regular professional development to equip them for the herculean tasks of teaching learners with special needs. Some of the priority professional development areas that emerge from this study are: organisation of teaching, learning strategies, behaviour management, discipline,

instructional methods, curriculum modification and instruction to match unique needs of learners with special needs, training in sensory disabilities skills (visual and hearing impairments), equipment to work with sensory impairments, infrastructures that are disability friendly (accessible desks, ramps, wheelchairs etc.), assistive technology (projectors, laptop, computers, etc) (Chitiyo , Hughes, Haihambo, Taukeni, Montgomery and Chitiyo, 2016).

Given the importance of the educator-learner relationship and the quality of teaching and learning for those learners who experience barriers to learning, development and participation, and the impact these have on their learning and their self-image and self-confidence, it is therefore necessary that educators in special needs schools are offered all the training, support and resources needed to offer these learners the best quality education for their specific needs.

6.3.3. EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS IN THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT

It is important to note that in the data, learners with special needs face various levels of discrimination from the society, such as labelling, discrimination among their peers, being bullied, stigmatisation, body shaming, etc. These learners with special need are subjected to being called derogatory names like hlanya, stupid, crazy learners, domoroza, fat, dumb, Mam Ruby etc. Such language and labelling has the effect of ‘othering’ these learners, thereby replicating and maintaining social inequalities related to the form of oppression known as ableism (Walton, 2016).

The immediate effects of bullying are extremely demoralising to the victims, some of the attendant effects being decreased academic performance of learners, low morale and acute despair experienced which in turn leads to truancy, running away, chronic illnesses and even suicide. Victims of bullying are known to endure depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, avoidant behaviour and impaired concentration (Carter and Spencer, 2006). Negative attitudes towards learners with special needs have translated into low self-esteem and a lack of confidence and the feeling of being alienated even in their own society. In such circumstances, the credo of ‘Ubuntu’ (which promotes the spirit of togetherness and care for everyone), which resonates with the principles of Inclusive Education and the plea to embrace diversity in education, is not displayed according to the experiences of these learners with special needs which definitely hamper or inhibit social cohesion.

The findings discussed how the participants feel like aliens in their own land. This form of segregation and discrimination they face in their social settings is appalling. The girls are also sexually harassed because they feel they cannot defend themselves.

Zinzile expressed herself thus:

“At the taxi rank, they harass you because you are a special needs learner, they tease you, they mock you, look at you as if you don’t exist, and there was this guy, a kombi driver, who asked me if I am still a virgin, and I asked him how is that his business? He said I wanna be with you, and I want to know, and yeah, they harass us, take advantage of us, they touch our bums and sensitive parts, this makes me feel very angry, they take advantage of you because they feel you cannot fight for yourself.”

This attitude by members of the society should be investigated and perpetrators brought to book as the well-being of these learners with special needs is being endangered and their fundamental human rights are being violated. From the above excerpt, it is clear that this participant felt violated and disempowered as she could not affirm social justice by herself. A strong recommendation of this study is to change the negative orientation, attitudes and behaviours of the populace about and towards learners with special needs. Baglieri and Shapiro (2012) argue that a change of attitudes and behaviours towards learners with special needs is a crucial step towards building a more inclusive society. It is clear from the findings that the participants long for change - they are tired of facing acute bullying, discrimination and segregation from people that should support and protect them, and they desperately want their fundamental human rights respected.

6.3.4. THE REALITY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive Education is a scholarly concept that has generated many global debates and fuelled many discussions over the years. It is among the most daunting tasks of all academic pursuits within the field of education because Inclusive Education on its own is an exceptionally broad term encompassing all individuals to one degree or another and the direct result of different beliefs, laws, cultural practices and inefficient resources in various countries (Namanyane and Shaoan, 2021; Shyman,2015).

Inclusive education is becoming an increasingly popular approach to special needs education and involves partial or full integration of learners with special needs and those without special needs (Zigmond, 1995). While Inclusive Education does promote placing learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools as far as possible, the misunderstanding widely exists that all special needs schools will therefore be done away with. This is not the case. Chitiyo and Dzenga, (2021, p.55) explicate that “children with special education needs possess unique learning characteristics which may inhibit their effective learning in mainstream, general education classes. Special education practices are therefore designed to address the educational needs of students with disabilities through various strategies including thorough assessments of students’ characteristics, individualized curriculum planning, and provision of essential services and resources to maximize learning”. Inclusive Education allows for the possibility that some learners with special needs are better off in a special needs school. One of the main findings of this study indicates that learners with special needs are more comfortable being taught in a special needs school than in a mainstream school. All the participants affirmed their desire to sustain their education in a special needs school, as according to them, their educational needs would not be met in the mainstream schools due to the fact that they need specific and individualized attention and support.

In special needs education, academic and curriculum programmes are systematically designed to cater for the specific needs of individual learners in ways that increase their educational outcomes (Hornby, 2014). It may very well be that learners with special needs’ educational requirements may not be adequately met in mainstream classes as some aspects of the curriculum are not specifically adapted to cater for their specific needs (Chitiyo and Dzenga, 2021). Special needs education involves instruction that is more precise and individualized to each learner’s needs. Zigmond (1997, p.385) described the characteristics of good special needs education as being “carefully planned... intensive, urgent, relentless and goal directed. It is empirically supported practice, drawn from research”.

The assertion that every educator should be trained as a special educator for him or her to be competent in dealing with learners with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities is as erroneous as the assumption that every physician should be trained as a psychiatrist and be well equipped to deal with all mental health issues (Kauffman and Hung, 2009). They further succinctly argue that special education educators can sometimes collaborate with mainstream teachers to provide support on teaching learners with special needs. However, there remains

the need for special education teachers to work in separate environments dedicated to special instruction.

Warnock (2005) asserts that inclusion should mean being involved in a common initiative of learning, rather than being under the same roof. Mainstream educators teaching learners with special needs reveal their experiences as stressful, especially because they are not equipped or trained to teach special needs learners (Sanchez, Chua and Melgar, 2021). If due diligence is not observed with regards to Inclusive Education, this initiative will frustrate both the learners and educators.

Mainstream educators also experience stressors like deficiency of professional competence in teaching learners with special needs concurrently with mainstream learners, assessment of learners with SEN, providing differentiated instruction, providing varying visual materials, problems with class management, and ultimately, lack of training in Special Education, which have all immensely contributed to the burnout experienced by some mainstream teachers (Sanchez, Chua and Melgar, 2021).

It is noteworthy that learners with special needs require various degrees of support in the classroom. In each class, there are various levels of abilities which also require the principles of Inclusive Education to come into play. Each learner is supported according to his or her needs or barriers to learning. As no learner should be left behind, all learners are given individual time and support for each to reach his or her full potential which is achieved at different times, each learner working at their own speed. The Education White Paper 6 (2001) encourages educators to deploy new approaches that focus on development of learners' strengths, competencies and problem solving skills instead of focusing on learners' limitations only.

Kauffman and Hung (2009) opine that while some learners with special needs can be taught alongside learners without special needs, how well they are taught should be the salient issue. Moreover, inclusion is not possible with some learners with special needs as they might be in need of greater degrees of support and specialised knowledge relating to specific learning disabilities and would be more effectively taught in special needs schools.

6.3.5 SHARED EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS

All participants were admitted to the study site because they met the criteria of having one disability or the other, whether invisible or visible. Some of the experiences of the participants were similar, while some were diverse. A finding common to all the participants was their positive experience of the support they enjoyed from their teachers and families. They all also appreciated being in their technical classes rather than their academic classes because they loved working with their hands and were more excited to do practical work than theoretical work which they referred to as boring. Further findings revealed that some participants experienced bullying, stigmatisation, labelling, discrimination and segregation on a higher level while others experienced it on a lower scale both at school among their peers and in their wider societal context, which resulted in them experiencing low self-esteem.

They had varying or divergent experiences on issues of where and how they relax and deal with stress. Some participants reported embracing household chores while others detested it. Some shared about their love for sports, their sentimental attachment to gifts from family members, and their distaste for violence.

Learners with special needs have been labelled as abnormal and ‘other’ for so long and have been exposed to the belief that they need to be cured and that they should accept the nasty fact that they cannot be completely embraced or allowed to engage in mainstream society because of the deficit of their disability. Such derogatory beliefs and judgements are inevitably internalized by learners with special needs which only serves to add further barriers and obstacles to the vision of inclusion. However, more learners with special needs are finding their voices and asserting their rights to find their rightful place in society (McCain, 2017; Namanyane and Shaoan, 2021). This is a benefit of this study - to re-orientate the populace about learners with special needs, by affording them the opportunity to be listened to and their long-silenced voiced about their experiences to be made public.

A paradigm shift from the medical model which presents the learners with special needs as the problem which needs to be fixed or cured, is long overdue. Adopting the social model which stresses that the society has a salient responsibility to create inclusive communities, is by far more preferable a paradigm to embrace (McCain, 2017, Namanyane and Shaoan, 2021).

6.4 THE WAY FORWARD

This study focused on the lived experiences of learners with special needs in a special school in the urban area of Pietermaritzburg. It would be valuable if similar studies are conducted with special needs learners in the rural areas. In this instance, it is hoped that future studies may provide the basis for comparison between the study findings of the lived experiences of special needs learners in the rural and urban areas.

The school with the support of the Department of Education should put facilities into place, to break the barrier of skills gender stereotyping in the school, so that special needs learners can choose any skill they are passionate about, regardless of their gender, unlike what is currently obtainable at the study sites.

Governments should also provide adequate funds for procuring current and up to date educational modern equipment and instructional materials to enhance educational needs of learners with learning disabilities (Oluka and Okorie, 2014).

Various municipalities should be encouraged to run awareness and advocacy campaigns in schools and communities on appropriate inclusive attitudes and ways of relating to learners with special needs. The negative attitudes of the society should be encouraged to change through this medium in order to rid society of the social ill of exclusion and ‘otherness’. Through such interventions, learners with special needs will feel more accepted and included in all aspects of society. This inclusive awareness can also be inculcated into the mainstream schools’ curricula so that mainstream learners will relate freely with learners with special needs, without eschewing the feeling of superiority which contributes so much to learners with special needs’ low self-esteem. Excerpts from some of the participants show their expectations about the re-orientation of the society about them:

“They must tell other schools to treat learners from special schools normal, we are not different, the things that we don’t know is that we can’t catch up very easily, it’s not that we are crazy and stupid, they must not treat us like rubbish. I want special learners to be respected like they respect mainstream learners” (Nonjabulo).

“To treat us all the same, because whenever we go em.... to some places, we are being treated like, these ones are slow learners, and these ones are mainstream learners and all those things, you never heard that a special learner got 100% and he/she should be

congratulated by the social media, they only do that for the mainstream learners” (Thokozani).

“I think the Department should accept us for who we are, they should show that they are supporting us, they should care about us, they shouldn’t like leave us out in some things just because we are special needs, because some of us can understand and some of us cannot understand because of our own disability, I think the government should improve more” (Zinzile).

Negative beliefs and stigmatization surrounding disability should be completely eradicated. As a restraining measure for future offenders, convicted culprits could be published on a quarterly basis stating their penalties through public outlets and aggrieved disabled persons should be instructed on the legal procedures to file their complaints against the people violating their fundamental human rights (Eskay, Onu, Igbo, Obiyo, and Ugwuanyi, 2012).

According to United Nations Division for Social Policy Development ((UNDSPD; 2016), to overcome the cultural negative beliefs, at national, state and community levels, celebrations can be held to celebrate people living with disabilities stating and magnifying their contributions to the society. For example, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International of the African Child, Day for International Albinism Awareness these days, can be positively utilized to create positive awareness, to increase their visibility and to inspire people with disabilities and not to invoke pity. School-based awareness could include the use of human rights education, training on disability rights for parents’ support groups, training educators on accommodating learners with disabilities and incorporating greater coverage of disability rights abuses into mainstream human rights organizations.

Summarily, UNDSPD (2016, p.8) explicates ways of combating negative beliefs about disability as:

- Empowering persons with disabilities;
- Developing community-based sensitization and education campaigns;
- Implementing school-based disability rights awareness programmes;
- Strengthening documentation and reporting on human rights violations against persons with disabilities that are rooted in stigma and customary beliefs;
- Undertaking law and policy reform efforts to combat stigma.

All over the world, UNESCO has aimed to implement to a large extent the guiding principle of inclusion at all levels of education. For example, “[I]t has now been several decades since the international community provided itself with significant legal instruments which, by stressing the right of ALL children to, benefit from an education without discrimination, express – implicitly or explicitly – the concept of ‘Inclusive Education’” (UNESCO, 2008, p.3) This study and the data generated contributes to the body of knowledge on Inclusive Education nationally and worldwide which helps to gauge the implementation of the guiding principles of Inclusive Education.

Inclusive Education is more extensive than formal schooling in that:

- It acknowledges that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal setting and structures (Beverly and Thomas, 1999; UNESCO, 2009, 2010);
- Educators are expected to change their behaviours, attitudes, curricula, teaching methodologies and environments to meet the needs of all learners (De Bettencourt, 1999; UNESCO, 2009, 2010);
- Learners must be empowered by developing their individual strengths and giving them opportunities to participate critically in the process of learning;
- Some learners may require more specialized and intense forms of learning support for them to develop to their full potential (McConnell, 1999; UNESCO, 2009, 2010);
- Participation of learners must be fully encouraged in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and must unearth and reduce barriers to learning (Rafferty, Leinenbach and Helms, 1999; UNESCO, 2009, 2010).

Based on the above, participation and competence of individual learners is to be promoted. This aligns with the vision of Inclusive Education in South Africa, whereby prejudice and discrimination are vigorously detested and combated in policies and practices, and also where differences in individual learners are valued and respected (UNICEF, 2009).

Motitswe (2012) argues that inclusive policy is a necessary tool to achieve the implementation of Inclusive Education. Motitswe explains that a strong inclusive policy will prevent learners with disabilities and other special needs from exploitation, violation of their human rights, and unfair discrimination, as well as being denied access to a quality education. An effective policy of inclusion, Motitswe further argues, helps to generate a strong conducive work environment

that can accommodate all categories of people, including individuals with disabilities and other special needs.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The sad reality in South Africa is that learners with special needs still experience various forms of segregation, labelling, discrimination, bullying, teasing, stigmatization, etc., despite the fact that the South Africa's Constitution, education policies, White Paper 6, etc., promote the respect of diversity among all learners, regardless of their differences.

The findings from this study revealed that learners with special needs still experience discrimination and stigmatization. Findings highlighted that although they enjoy their family's acceptance, the wider society still exhibits various forms of discrimination against them, which have contributed to their low self-esteem. Learners with special needs ought to be shown acceptance, love and care, from the wider society and community as well as at the study site. They need people they can trust around them, as this helps to instil a sense of belonging and security in them. Baglieri and Shapiro (2012) argue that the attitudes of those working closely with people with disabilities can have a remarkable impact on how others in a particular society treat disability.

Special needs learners are integral members of the society and therefore should be integrated and included and not isolated or discriminated against. They have the potential to contribute to the economy of the nation, through the skills they learn at the special school, giving them a platform in the labour market and thus contributing to the per capita income of the nation.

This study has helped me tremendously as it has helped me change the lens through which I look at and deal with learners with special needs. They have very rich stories which the society needs to patiently listen to for better understanding and improvement on social cohesion. Listening to them also helps them come to the realization that they have an important place in the society, which improves their self-esteem and productivity, unlike their previous belief and perceptions, we need to rapidly change the narrative.

All progressive citizens have to come to the consciousness that, there is ability in every (dis)ability and this should be exemplified in everyone's day to day interaction with learners living with special needs. It is a collective responsibility to make the world a haven of

acceptance, inclusion, peace, tranquillity and social justice. We all need to collaborate in changing the negative narrative of learners with special needs to more positive ones by ensuring a paradigm shift in our mind set and attitudes. Most importantly, at every point in time, it is essential to bear in mind that, all individuals and all lives matter.

Everyone living with one disability or the other are all human beings and creatures of God, they should be shown love, be respected and not ostracised. I hope this quote by William E. Lightbourne drives home this standpoint:

*“Use the skills that I have got.
Do not focus on what I have not.
Of course, I am aware of my limitation.
Yet, I am a part of God’s wonderful creation”.*

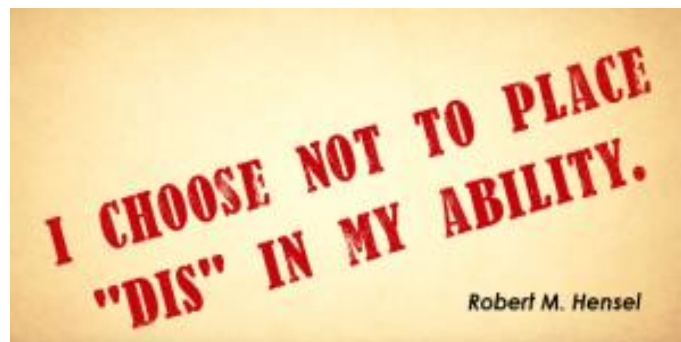


Fig: 8- Quote by Robert M. Hensel



Fig: 9- Quote by Karen Clay



Fig: 10- Quote by Martina Navratilova

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Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



07 July 2020

Mrs Fadekemi Olamide Bankole (210553647)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Bankole,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001419/2020

Project title: Children's Geographies: Exploring learners lived experiences in a special needs school in Pietermaritzburg.

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 01 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

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

This approval is valid until 07 July 2021.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Appendix 2: DOE Permission



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Tel: 033 392 1063/51

Ref.: 2/4/8/4075

Mrs F.O, Bankole
26 Granton Mews
45 Howick Road
WEMBLEY
3200

Dear Mrs Bankole

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES: EXPLORING LEARNERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN A SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL IN PIETERMARITZBURG"**, 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 25 February 2020 to 10 January 2022.
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 /Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.



Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 25 February 2020

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

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Appendix 3: Consent form for school principal

School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education

Pietermaritzburg Campus

University of KwaZulu-Natal

031 260 4557

27th July 2020

Dear Principal,

Re: Request for permission to conduct research in your school.

I am currently studying towards my Doctoral studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, conducting a research project titled: **Children's Geographies: Exploring learners' lived experiences in a special needs school in Pietermaritzburg**. I will be interviewing learners about the experiences they are going through as special education learners at school, home and community.

I humbly request your assistance in this research project by being granted permission to conduct my study in your school. The participants in my study will be special school learners from your school. They will be required to participate in individual interviews that are expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes.

Please note that

- The schools and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Learner's parent/guardian will consent to the child's participation in this study.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained..
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

F.O Bankole
0780862466
fabambolu2008@yahoo.com

Supervisor: Dr Antoinette D'amant
082 735 9084
damant@ukzn.ac.za

Research Office: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM:

If permission is granted to conduct my study at your school, please fill the form below.

I,....., (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at my school. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/2020

Appendix 4: Informed Consent For Parents

School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education

Pietermaritzburg Campus

University of KwaZulu-Natal

031 260 4557

27th July 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), School of Education, I am carrying out a research in your child/ ward's school which is titled: **Children's Geographies: Exploring learners' lived experiences in a special needs school in Pietermaritzburg.**

The purpose of my research is to look into the experiences special needs learners are going through which are mostly overlooked, special needs learners are often neglected and their voices silent, this research help make their voices audible and relevant to circumstances that affect their very existence, they are very important people in our society just like their counterparts in mainstream schools.

Please be informed that your child/ward has been selected to share some of his or her experiences as a special needs learner which will be recorded and later transcribed, all information will be treated with utmost anonymity and confidentiality. The times for these sessions will be conveyed to you before time which will be after school.

Please note that you are under no compulsion, if you do not feel comfortable with this, your child/ward will not participate and if you decide your child/ward should withdraw at any point during the research due to breach in agreement or ethics, you are free to do so. There is no financial or material gain for your child/ward's participation.

If you consent to your child/ward participating in this study, kindly fill the consent form below and send back as soon as possible

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

F.O Bankole
0780862466

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CONSENT FORM:

If permission is granted that your child participates in this study, please fill the form below.

I,....., (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for my child/ward to participate in this research project. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/2020

Appendix 5: Informed consent for participants

School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal
031 260 4557
27th July 2020

Dear Learner,

I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), School of Education. I am carrying out a research in your school which is titled: **Children's Geographies: Exploring learners' lived experiences in a special needs school in Pietermaritzburg.**

The purpose of my research is to look into the experiences special needs learners are going through which are mostly overlooked, special needs learners are often neglected and their voices silent, this research help make their voices audible and relevant to circumstances that affect their very existence, they are very important people in our society just like their counterparts in mainstream schools.

I humbly request your assistance in this research project by being a participant in this study. The interview will be conducted in your school premises. You will be required to participate in individual interviews that are expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes. You will be required to bring your favourite and least favourite object and pictures to the venue. The date and time will be communicated to you earlier before your schedule.

Please note that

- The schools and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The schools' or the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- There is no right or wrong answer, please be truthful or sincere with your stories.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.

- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

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0780862466
fabambolu2008@yahoo.com

Supervisor: Dr Antoinette D'amant
082 735 9084
damant@ukzn.ac.za

Research Office: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM:

If you wish to participate in this study, please fill the form below.

I,....., (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby voluntarily want to participate in this research project. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/2020

Appendix 6. Interview Questions Schedules

No pre-formulated structured questions are scheduled for the conversational interviews. Data generation prompts as highlighted below will be asked and subsequently probing questions asked when necessary.

(Data Generation Prompts)

Phase 1- Use of objects:

- a) What is this object? Describe this object to me.
- b) Tell me what makes this object your favourite?
- c) Tell me what makes this object your least favourite?

Phase 2- Use of photographs:

- a) Tell me about this photograph in your favourite place in your home?
- b) Tell me about this photograph in your least favourite place in your home?
- c) Tell me about this photograph in your favourite place in your school?
- d) Tell me about this photograph in your least favourite place in your school?
- e) Tell me about this photograph in your favourite place in your community?
- f) Tell me about this photograph in your least favourite place in your community?

I will utilize the following prompt questions to encourage and unpack participants' stories:

- (i) Tell me about your favourite places?
- (ii) Why are they your favourite places?
- (iii) Tell me about your least favourite places?
- (iv) Why are they your least favourite places?
- (v) Can you tell me stories about what has happened to you / what you have experienced in these places that makes them your favourite / least favourite places?

Phase 3- Conversational Interview:

- a) Tell me about your experiences at school?
 - (i) Where do you feel happiest and most comfortable?
 - (ii) Where do you feel unhappy and uncomfortable?
- b) Tell me about your experiences at home?
 - (i) What makes you feel happiest and most comfortable at home?
 - (ii) What makes you unhappy and uncomfortable at home?
- c) Tell me about your experiences in your community (outside of school and home)?
 - (i) What makes you feel happiest and most comfortable?
 - (ii) What makes you feel unhappy and uncomfortable?

Appendix 7: Turnitin

Phd thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10% SIMILARITY INDEX	9% INTERNET SOURCES	3% PUBLICATIONS	3% STUDENT PAPERS
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PRIMARY SOURCES

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8	P. H. Lipkin, J. Okamoto. "The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Children With Special Educational Needs", PEDIATRICS, 2015 Publication	<1%

Appendix 8: Editor's Letter

Daniel Taye Medoye, Ph.D



Core Services:

- Public relations (image and reputation management)
- Marketing and Advertising (branding and promotions)
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- Editing Services.

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8th December 2021

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Attestation of Editing/Proof-reading Service – Fadekemi Olamide Bankole - 210553647

This serves to confirm that I, Daniel Taye Medoye, PhD, edited/proof-read the Doctoral Thesis of *Fadekemi Olamide Bankole* titled – “*Children’s Geographies: Learners lived experiences in a Special Needs School in Pietermaritzburg*”, preparatory to submission to the School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I trust that the service has been of some benefit, in improving the quality of her thesis in terms of syntactic (grammatical) construction.

Should there arise a need for clarification in respect of this service, I can be contacted via my contacts as detailed top-right above.

I take this opportunity to wish her well, as she proceeds in her research.

Kind regards,



Dan. Taye Medoye, PhD.