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**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
CARE AND EDUCATION IN AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT**

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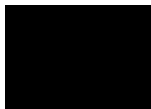
Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment/partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in educational psychology, in the graduate programme in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I **Sethabile Rejoice Zamancwane Zungu**, declare that:

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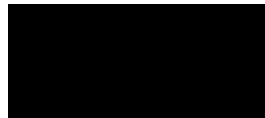
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I am thankful to the lord for putting me in this position, where I can do my master's degree. I know a lot of people could only wish, but they are deprived of the opportunity to make it happen. Therefore, I am grateful that the lord has made it possible for me. I am thankful to God for giving me the strength, ability, knowledge, and the opportunity to take on this study and reach completion.

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To my late grandmother, my prayer warrior, may your soul continue resting in peace. I will not forget how you used to pray every time I had to go back to school. Thank you for your endless support and thank you for teaching me how to pray and to be grateful for everything that I have. Ulale Ngokuthula Gogo.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my sister, Samukelisiwe Zungu.

Ngiyabonga mtase

List of Abbreviations and Acronym

ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
NDP	National Development Plan
EFA	Educational for All
ELP	Early Learning Programme
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DSD	Department of Social Development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand teacher perceptions of inclusion in early childhood care and education (ECCE) in an informal settlement using the case study design. ECCE is the period from birth to age four before formal schooling begins. This has been identified as a critical period to optimise learning and development, with ripple effects throughout the human lifespan. However, mere access to ECCE services is not enough, as low-quality programmes cannot achieve what high-quality programmes achieve in terms of early learning and development. Creating inclusive ECCE learning spaces is one way to ensure high-quality early learning experiences. Despite the need for quality in this sector, ECCE in South Africa remains marginalised with poor funding, low salaries, poor infrastructure, and unqualified personnel. This plight of ECCE is further exacerbated in poor communities such as informal settlements with makeshift homes, poverty, lack of municipal services, pollution, and inadequate health facilities for children. This study, therefore, attempts to investigate teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. The study was located within the interpretive paradigm, and a qualitative case study design was adopted. Data were generated from four ECCE teachers in an informal settlement in KwaZulu-Natal, through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. Findings show that teachers have both myopic and broad understandings of inclusion. The findings also reveal that although research participants stated that they did not receive any training on inclusion, they did attempt to implement inclusion. The study also highlights that the implementation of inclusion in an informal settlement is a challenge for teachers, as they do not receive support to create an inclusive programme for all children. Furthermore, the findings highlight limited learning resources to accommodate all children's educational needs and the lack of necessary skills to implement inclusion. The study highlights the plight of children attending an ECCE in an informal settlement and the urgent need for government intervention to improve the quality of education and care to the most vulnerable members of our society.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECD) is an umbrella term which includes all activities that support the development of children from birth to nine years. An important part of this sector is Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which encompasses the care and education of children from birth to four years before Grade R (Harrison, 2020). Researchers concur that these early years are vital, as children receive their first experiences of early learning and development in these formative years (Wood & Neethling, 2023). However, mere attendance at an ECCE is not enough; the ECCE programme's quality is essential (Aubert et al., 2017). A critical component of a quality ECCE programme is inclusion, as this nurtures respect for all people, social justice, equality, and the celebration of diversity and individuality from an early age (Kurian, 2023; Mahlomaholo et al., 2023). Cerna et al. (2021) and Vyas (2022) concur that an inclusive ECCE programme welcomes children of all genders, colours, aptitudes, socioeconomic backgrounds, special education needs, and language proficiency. This study investigates teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement using a case study design. This chapter first explores the study's background, followed by the problem statement, rationale, and purpose. I also outlined the theoretical perspective, research methodology, ethical considerations, and issues of trustworthiness. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the research report.

1.2. Background of the Study

The following section outlines the contextual background, focusing on firstly the current state of the ECCE sector and, secondly, the geographical location of the study in an informal settlement.

1.2.1. Early Childhood Care and Education in South Africa

In the South African National Development Plan (NDP) for 2030, it was acknowledged that ECCE would potentially bring about social and economic change (Republic of South Africa, 2013). Despite this, the sector remains largely marginalised, experiencing many challenges that impact the quality of the offerings (Ashley-Cooper et al., 2019; Ebrahim et al., 2021). For instance, this sector has experienced problems with quality services for the poor and vulnerable for many years (Shaik, 2022; Wood & Neethling, 2023). This has resulted in inequality of educational offerings

across different geographies in the country (Ashley-Cooper et al., 2019). In a study by Nijman and Wei (2020), it was reported that inequalities are pervasive, and a child's chances of attending an efficient ECCE programme increase with family wealth and privilege. The sector also remains largely professionalised, with under-qualified personnel who experience low salaries and job instability (Harrison, 2020). Such challenges continue to pervade the ECCE landscape, impacting the quality of the offerings, and these are often exacerbated in the context of an informal settlement.

1.2.2. Informal Settlements in South Africa

The study takes place in ECCE in an informal settlement. Due to the legacy of apartheid, informal settlements continue to flourish in South Africa (Marutlulle, 2021). In South Africa, informal settlements, which result from the unauthorised occupation of land, are a shameful facet of poverty and inherited inequality (Huchzermeyer & Karam, 2006). They are makeshift homes consisting primarily of informal dwellings, such as shacks on land that are not surveyed or declared residential (David & Busisiwe, 2019; Marutlulle, 2021). A study by Morar (2022) states that there are roughly 2700 informal communities around the country, and the number of households in informal settlements continues to expand. The physical and socioeconomic conditions in informal settlements are concerning because they pose health risks, such as pollution of the environment and deterioration of the surrounding ecosystems (Wekesa et al., 2011). A study conducted by Jikazana (2006) shows that residing in informal settlements frequently puts residents' health in serious danger because of the often-poor food storage facilities, sanitation, and drinking water quality, which exposes them to a variety of infections and serves as a breeding ground for disease. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to explore teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in the context of an informal settlement that compounds the challenges experienced by an already marginalised education sector.

1.3. Problem Statement

Inclusion is a fundamental human right that welcomes and values children with diverse identities in early learning programmes. Studies on inclusion mainly focus on the formal schooling sector, rather than ECCE (Ayaya & Makoelle, 2023; Chidarikuire, 2023; Mpu & Adi, 2021; Myende, 2023). This is despite the fact that the early years are an important window period for children to learn how to embrace diversity and celebrate differences. The implementation of inclusion contributes to quality in ECCE (Aubert et al., 2017); however, research in this sector is minimal.

Additionally, despite the advent of inclusive policies for South African education, the implementation of inclusion has been problematic (Dreyer, 2017; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Du Plessis, 2013; Mpu & Adi, 2021), especially in schools or centres that are poorly resourced, such as those in informal settlements. It is, hence, vital to focus on inclusion in ECCE in the context of an informal settlement. Seeing that a gap exists in research, this study seeks to explore how teachers understand inclusion, how they implement it, and the importance of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. It is important to address this gap so that teachers in ECCE in an informal settlement can be assisted in attaining knowledge that they need to accommodate diverse children in their care and also to show the importance of inclusive ECCE in an informal settlement which not only benefits diverse children but also parents, teachers, and the community as well.

1.4. Rationale

My interest in inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement was driven by three factors. Firstly, research indicates that implementing inclusive education policies in South African classrooms is problematic (Dreyer, 2017; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Du Plessis, 2013; Mpu & Adi, 2021). Engelbrecht (2020) mentions that despite the fact that South African teachers support the social justice objective of inclusion, a significant factor in some school communities is the absence of sufficient technical, human, and infrastructural resources to facilitate its implementation. Seeing that inclusion enables every child to access, participate and achieve in the early learning programme despite marginalisation, this ensures that children grow up accepting each other's differences from an early age (Camilleri-Cassar, 2013; Ainscow, 2020). These policies, where diverse learners are included, create many challenges as teachers have limited knowledge of inclusion.

Secondly, I have witnessed how inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement can be challenging for children and teachers. An informal settlement is an area that houses the poorest communities in our society that experience high crime rates, poor infrastructure, poor hygiene, poor sanitation, and unemployment (Zerbo et al., 2020; Marutlulle, 2021). The environment is not conducive to teaching and learning, as the classes are overcrowded, with limited resources, under or untrained teachers, low pay, low job satisfaction of teachers and insufficient parental involvement, among other factors. Seeing that 55% of people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in abject poverty in informal

settlements (Weimann & Oni, 2019), I have an interest in exploring and consequently improving the early learning experiences of these vulnerable children.

Thirdly, South African studies on inclusion in ECCE are scarce. According to Dickins (2014), we must understand it in a relevant context to facilitate effective inclusion. The latter-mentioned author explains that failing to do this we would achieve a watered-down and fragile understanding of it. Unfortunately, research on inclusion in Southern Africa mainly focuses on the formal sectors of education. Studies on inclusion, for example, by Mpungose (2023), focus on inclusion by adapting the curriculum in a higher education context. Other studies in Southern Africa focus on either inclusion in the primary or high school contexts (Ayaya & Makoelle, 2023; Chidarikuire, 2023; Mpu & Adi, 2021; Myende, 2023). Recognising the need for a more context-specific understanding of inclusion, this study looks at inclusion in the earliest years of education. Recognised as the most impactful phase of human development, where early learning experiences have ripple effects throughout the lifespan (Elliott & Davis, 2020; Srivastav et al., 2019), this study sets out to understand inclusion in this unique context. Furthermore, realising that more than 50% of South African people live in poverty (World Bank, 2020), this study offers insights into inclusion in the context of an informal settlement.

1.5. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions that teachers have of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Although the legislative and policy foundations in South Africa support an inclusive education system, inclusion has challenges as it fails to be implemented in most schools, especially in areas where poverty is rife. Firstly, the study explores how teachers understand inclusion, as this shapes pedagogical, social, and physical decisions in early learning (Aubert et al., 2017; Mahadew & Hlalele, 2022). The study further aims to understand how teachers in ECCE implement inclusion in an informal settlement and determine why inclusion is needed in an informal settlement. The following research objectives and research questions inform the study:

1.5.1. Research Objectives

1. To explore teachers' understanding of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.
2. To understand the implementation of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.
3. To examine the need for inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

1.5.2 Research Questions

1. What are teachers' understanding of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement?
2. How is inclusion implemented in ECCE in an informal settlement?
3. Why is there a need for inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement?

1.6. Research Location

The research study is located in an ECD centre in an informal settlement in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, which is situated in South Africa. The ECD centre caters to children from birth to age four as well as five-year-old children. However, the participants selected for the study worked mainly with children aged from birth to four years. A single ECD centre was selected for this study, where teachers completed a questionnaire and participated in in-depth interviews to ascertain their perceptions of inclusion at their centre. All the participants selected to participate in the study are teachers or assistant teachers from the ECD centre who work with children from birth to four years. The centre has children from different socio-economic backgrounds, many in the informal settlement near their centre. The school is located in a neighborhood that is unfriendly to children, and which contains a high concentration of criminal activities. Many parents are unemployed, many teachers commute by unsafe public transportation, and most children reside close to the school, where they are exposed to severe living conditions and illicit activities. Nevertheless, all children are accepted, and no child is left behind. Parents from diverse backgrounds can bring children to the centre, where they too will not be excluded.

1.7. Intersectionality as a Theoretical Perspective

This section highlights the theoretical perspectives that establish the study's philosophical presumptions. Later in chapter three, further details will be given to sustain the importance and significance of the work in relation to theory. The foremost theory guiding this study is intersectionality theory coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. This theory states that people who are excluded, often experience disadvantage in different ways, due to the overlapping of their various identities. Crenshaw (2013) explains that different types of disadvantages may sometimes compound themselves and create barriers that cannot always be understood by focusing on a single aspect of disadvantage (Crenshaw, 2013). For example, a person's colour, gender, and sexuality may intertwine, and the prejudice they experience is often greater than the impact of one aspect of their identity (Ferguson et al., 2014). Hence, using single identification markers such as race, gender, socioeconomic position, and citizenship status to comprehend circumstances is insufficient (Bešić, 2020). Instead, intersectionality theory calls attention to the interaction of different

disadvantages or advantages and how this could lead to greater or lesser advantage. Thus, intersectionality aims to make the world more equitable and fair for individuals oppressed by their intersecting identities. In ECCE environments, it is also necessary to achieve rights and fairness. In order to positively impact society as a whole, this theory aligns with inclusion, which seeks to better understand and improve ECCE from the perspectives of fairness and rights.

1.8. Research Methodology

The research methodology used for this study is outlined in this section. An in-depth description of the research methodology is provided in Chapter 4.

1.8.1. Research Approach, Research Paradigm, and Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach to explore teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. According to Tuffour (2017), qualitative research investigates and comprehends people's interpretations of their experiences. In addition, the literature outlines that qualitative research aims to understand participants' internal perspectives from the participants themselves and is designed to study people's life experiences (Fossey et al., 2002; Hancock, et al., 2001). Therefore, the qualitative research approach enabled me to explore teacher perceptions of inclusion. They shared their understanding of inclusion and experiences in ECCE in an informal settlement.

The study is situated within an interpretive paradigm. This orientation allows the researcher to view the world through the knowledge and experiences of the participants (Alharahsheh & Puise, 2020; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022; Frechette, et al., 2020; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Mohajan, 2018; Ormston et al., 2014). This paradigm is suitable as it seeks to explore the multiple realities of participants. Therefore, this study aims to understand the participants' perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement through their realities and knowledge of inclusion. Using the interpretive paradigm enabled me to gather an understanding of the multiple realities of the research participants.

The research design used for this study is a case study. The case study research design enables an in-depth, multifaceted examination of issues in participants' real-world contexts (Cleland et al., 2021; Fearon, et al., 2021). Literature states that it is effective when attempting to gain a comprehensive understanding of a subject, event, or phenomenon of interest in its natural, real-life

environment through extensive contextual analysis of a small number of occurrences or situations and their relationships (Quintão, et al., 2020; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Therefore, the case study design permitted me to procure a comprehensive understanding of teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

1.8.2. Selection of Research Participants

The study employed the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select participants for being able to provide data that is most relevant to the study (Andrade, 2021). Participants were selected based on their suitability for the study, and those who did not meet the profile were not selected (Campbell et al., 2020). In this study, only ECCE teachers and assistant teachers in an informal settlement were selected as participants as they had the knowledge needed for the study.

1.8.3. Data Generation Methods

This study utilised two qualitative data generation methods: semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. A semi-structured questionnaire generates participant data (Cleave, 2023) and asks more open-ended questions than a closed questionnaire. The open-ended questions enable the participants to answer them as they like, as they are not given answers as options to choose from (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The semi-structured questionnaire is designed to allow researchers to manage the amount of information participants offer while standardising the questions asked.

During semi-structured interviews, specific questions are prepared and asked every candidate, while other questions come up naturally during an unstructured exchange of ideas (Zojceska, 2018). It is a qualitative research method used to obtain in-depth knowledge or understanding of a specific topic from the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). This also allows the researcher to examine participant ideas, sentiments, and opinions regarding a specific subject and to deeply understand personal and occasionally delicate matters (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The semi-structured questionnaires are suitable for this research as they aim to explore different teacher perceptions, allowing them to answer freely without choosing their responses and without limitations on what to write. Similarly, semi-structured interviews allow participants to share their

perceptions and understanding of the study, whereby they are not limited to what they have to say but rather talk freely and talk about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

1.8.4. Data Analysis

The study employed a thematic data analysis. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2019); Kiger and Varpio (2020); and Lochmiller (2021), thematic analysis is used to detect, analyse, and interpret patterns in qualitative data. Therefore, thematic data analysis entails addressing data analysis using pre-determined themes and categories based on which the data is appraised (Proudfoot, 2022). Using this approach enabled me to gather the themes and patterns from the qualitative data collected from participants.

1.9. Issues of Trustworthiness

Rallis and Rossman (2009) define trustworthiness as a set of guidelines showing that a study has been conducted ethically and professionally. In addition, the researchers state that a study is considered trustworthy if its conclusions are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) view the level of trustworthiness as the degree of confidence in the study's data, interpretation, and research. Terms such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are frequently used to demonstrate the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Elo et al., 2014).

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), credibility determines whether the study's conclusions accurately reflect the participants' initial opinions and are based on information that can be gleaned from their original data. The study's credibility was enhanced when the participants received the findings for member checking. The member checking enabled them to confirm that their responses had not been changed and that the interpretation of their opinions was accurate.

Dependability is the degree to which research procedures are documented so that someone not involved can monitor, review, and assess the research process. It also refers to the consistency and dependability of the research findings (Moon et al., 2016). The study accounted for dependability by providing a thorough, detailed description of how the study was conducted. This will make it feasible for other researchers to duplicate this study using the same procedures.

The researcher's capacity to demonstrate that the statistics fairly represent participant responses rather than the researcher's biases or views is known as confirmability (Nyirenda et al., 2020). The

semi-structured interviews were recorded and listened to twice to ensure they were interpreted correctly. The participants' responses were interpreted multiple times to ensure that the conclusions did not reflect the researcher's prejudices or predictions. Confirmability was therefore achieved.

The degree to which qualitative research findings can be applied to different situations and include different respondents is known as transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Moon et al. (2016), state that transferability describes how applicable or helpful a phenomenon or study's findings are to theory, practice, and future research. This study sampled a relatively small population, so its findings should not be generalised. However, a thick description of the context of the participants was provided to enable those who may wish to generalise the findings of this study to choose a context similar to that of this study.

1.10. The Significance of the Study

Bradbury-Jones et al. (2017) claim that research can be deemed significant to address social issues, fill up gaps in the literature, or better comprehend a specific problem or issue. This study highlights that inclusion is a crucial aspect of quality ECCE (Tyilo, 2021; Underwood et al., 2012; Bartolo et al., 2016) and the significance of knowledgeable teachers to implement inclusion successfully (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Robinson & Young, 2020; Cooper, et al., 2008). This study makes a significant contribution as it has the potential to provide important information on implementing inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Teachers are more likely to maintain positive attitudes when they have the appropriate knowledge of inclusion (Mónico et al., 2018). However, there is a dearth of research on inclusion in the ECCE sector in South Africa, which means that teachers' understanding of inclusion is inadequate. Hence, this study seeks to fill the large gap in teachers' contextual understanding of inclusion. The study ought to significantly contribute to the body of knowledge already available on inclusion in ECCE in informal settlements. To better understand inclusion and effectively implement it in their centres, ECCE teachers especially those in impoverished contexts may find the insights from this study valuable.

1.11. Ethical Considerations

Ethical research gives the researcher guidelines to conduct research responsibly (Ajuwon, 2020). Ethical clearance was received from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethical committee. Ethical principles were followed, which respect to participants' autonomy and adhere to non-maleficence and beneficence. Consent from participants was obtained, and they also had the freedom to

withdraw at any time. Non-maleficence ensures that no harm is done to participants physically and emotionally (Ajemba & Arene, 2022). Therefore, I ensured that potential risks of harm were minimised for participants. Anonymity is observed as details of the setting and details of participants will not be mentioned; their comments on their experiences will be treated with confidentiality. Beneficence was also adhered to, as the study avoided harm and promoted good outcomes to benefit others. The study was favourable as it has the potential to lead to positive change in the long run for teachers in ECCE in an informal settlement, whereby their understanding of inclusion is enhanced, and they can adequately implement inclusion.

1.12. Limitations

Every study has its limitations. Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) define limitations of a study as weaknesses within a research design that may influence the outcomes and conclusions of the research. I had several limitations in my study; the centre I had to visit is situated in an unsafe environment. Participants in the study were also overwhelmed with their workloads as ECCE personnel and could not be interviewed or fill in questionnaires during school hours. Furthermore, participants provided similar or insufficient information towards the study being conducted. A small sample size cannot be generalised, as teachers' perceptions of inclusion in ECCE cannot solemnly be based on perceptions of four teachers. Thus, the findings cannot be generalised but instead transferred with caution.

1.13. Overview of Research Report

This dissertation is organised as follows:

Chapter One – Background and introduction to the study

This chapter serves as the study's introduction. Consequently, it provides the purpose and focus of the study, the background, the rationale of the study, and the problem statement. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the significance of the study, the research objectives, and the critical research questions that the study intends to answer. A brief synopsis of the methodology and theoretical perspective is also presented. In addition, this chapter outlines the theoretical perspective, the research design and the methodology.

Chapter Two – Literature review

Guided by the research objectives, this chapter discusses the literature on inclusion, ECCE and informal settlements. A research gap is identified in this chapter.

Chapter three – Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter discusses the theoretical perspectives that underpin the research and drive every decision made within the parameters of teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. The study's foundation is built upon exploring intersectionality theory and the anti-bias curriculum concept.

Chapter Four – Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted in this study to find answers to the research questions of the study that was adopted in this study to find answers to study research questions. The definition of the research paradigm (interpretive paradigm) employed in the study is offered. Subsequently, this chapter discusses the research design (case study) adopted in the study as the research approach (qualitative research approach). Under the research methodology, the strategy (purposive sampling) utilised in the study is explained. After that, the data generation methods are discussed. This chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the study, ethical issues, and trustworthiness.

Chapter Five – Data presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings

This chapter presents the data generated using two data generation methods: semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. This chapter further shows how the thematic analysis is utilised to analyse the generated data into three themes.

Chapter Six – Conclusion, Summary, and recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, a recommendation of the main findings regarding the main questions, and a conclusion of the study. 1.1

1.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the background of the study, the problem statement, the rationale, the research purpose, the research location, the theoretical perspective, the research methodology, issues of trustworthiness, the significance of the study, ethical considerations, limitations, and an overview of the research report. The primary purpose of the research project is to find out how

teachers in an informal settlement perceive inclusion in ECCE. The following chapter outlines the literature review of the study, which will provide the backdrop of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the literature review, a backdrop for this study. According to Snyder (2019) and Sternheimer (2021), a literature review assists a researcher in locating past findings about a study. It examines the existing literature on the subjects under consideration, informing readers of the rationale for studying that topic (Snyder, 2019). This chapter will analyse sources incorporating content related to teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. This literature review explores inclusion in schools, the context of the research, and inclusion in ECCE.

2.2. Inclusion in Schools

Inclusion is a multifaceted concept (Ferdman, 2017), and its meaning cannot be determined in a single sentence with a few well-chosen words (Booth, 2010). Inclusion is the procedure of improving participation for everyone involved, children and adults, and it involves combating and eliminating all kinds of exclusion (Booth, 2010). Miller (2009) similarly states that increasing involvement and reducing segregation is an ongoing process that promotes inclusion. Additionally, acknowledging and accommodating all children regardless of their differences, is central for inclusion in the schools. Therefore, the intention of inclusive education is to respect each child's ability to actively participate and contribute as recognised members of society (Ainscow et al., 2006; Armstrong & Barton, 2008; Armstrong et al., 2011; McCullough, 2009; Naraian, 2011; Purdue et al., 2009; Theodorou & Nind, 2010; Wong & Cumming, 2010). Hence, to ensure inclusion in schools, everyone involved in the learning programme must be willing to listen to and learn from one another, including children (Macartney & Morton, 2011).

Ainscow et al. (2006) state that inclusion can be seen differently, and it looks at different aspects and concepts. In order to facilitate inclusion genuinely, it needs to be located within a relevant context. Dickins (2014) elucidates that if inclusion is not located in a relevant context; we could end up with a diluted and brittle version. For this reason, I state that it is critical to comprehend inclusion in all of its forms in order to facilitate it efficiently. Thus, literature concurs that inclusion is a principled approach to the development of education and society (Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth,

2005; Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2014), as it strives for the togetherness of diverse groups of people. Inclusion also means overcoming the stigma and other negative psychological consequences of disadvantage rather than the disadvantage itself (Booth, 2010). In addition, Cologon (2013) alludes that inclusion embraces human diversity and values and supports all people's belonging and full participation. I comprehend that providing education to all children is only one aspect of inclusion in schools. Another is recognising and celebrating diversity in addition to meeting a range of learning needs. Therefore, the concept of inclusion as a transformational process advocate for the elimination of discriminatory practices in education and unfavourable attitudes or responses to diversity in terms of race, economic class, social class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, accomplishment, and disability (UNESCO, 2009).

To understand authentic inclusion, we must further clarify the concepts of equality versus equity. According to Booth (2010), equality and related notions of equity, fairness and justice are vital to inclusive values because they represent types of exclusion, such as injustice, unfairness, and inequality. Equality is, therefore, a cornerstone of democracy as it calls for a society where all people have equal opportunities for a fulfilled life. However, Waterford (2020) states that equality implies the sameness of treatment, where everyone has the same rights, opportunities and resources. The concept of equality then may be problematic, as all people do not begin in the same place in society (Minow, 2021). Certain groups may experience greater marginalisation and exclusion and may require unique accommodations. Hence, treating all people the same seems to go against the very essence of inclusion. I therefore argue that inequality must be reduced by providing equitable educational opportunities. Hence instead of equal treatment, every child is given equity - what they need to succeed, depending on their unique background or circumstances.

Achieving inclusion in schools is a journey rather than an accomplishment, as the challenges and opportunities for inclusion are altered as conditions change. The implementation of inclusion necessitates societal transformation at all scales, encompassing individuals, communities, and schools (Ainscow & Miles, 2009). However, providing an excellent education to every child is a challenge facing education systems worldwide (Ainscow & Miles, 2009; Malik, 2018). Therefore, teachers must be trained (Orchard & Winch, 2015; Larsen-Freeman, 1983; Lowry, 1993; Sharma, 2005), buildings must be refurbished (Grierson & Hyland, 2012), and children must receive

accessible learning materials (Fletcher et al., 2014; Thurber & Bandy, 2018). I concur that with enough teaching resources, and knowledge on inclusion, teachers will be able to implement inclusion adequately. Inclusion is not just limited to education (Polat, 2011); therefore, stigma and discrimination must be tackled in communities, and individuals must be informed about the benefits of inclusive education. Inclusion in schools fosters a culture that values, accepts, and supports every person, regardless of their origins, skills, traits, or educational needs (Ainscow et al., 2006; Forlin, 2010; Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014). Therefore, I argue that inclusion in schools gives every child an education of better quality and plays a key role in eliminating discriminatory attitudes in communities.

2.3. History of Inclusion in Schools

Inclusion has a long history in education and has been a central principle in the quest for quality for a long time. Looking back on the history of inclusion in South Africa, inclusion entailed the removal of inequality (Sayed et al., 2007; Engelbrecht, 2006; Naicker, 2005) when there was racial segregation in schools (Naicker, 2005). Walton (2010) concurs that following the policy of apartheid, children had received separate education because of differences in language, race, and ethnicity, with white children receiving greater financial support. Thus, dividing schools based on distinctions were exclusive. According to Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2017), an international commitment to inclusive education dated back to 1994, and it represented a conceptual shift in the way inclusive education is thought of. Originally, focusing on children with special needs, inclusive education evolved to include children from a range of social, cognitive, and physical backgrounds (Peters, 2004; Winter & O’Raw, 2010). Hence, inclusion in schools is aligned with South Africa’s educational practices and helps meet the country’s constitutional values of the rights to education, equality, and freedom from discrimination (Engelbrecht, 2006; Walton, 2010).

Internationally, inclusive education is viewed more widely as a change that encourages and values diversity among all learners (UNESCO, 2001). I maintain that early exposure to inclusive education helps children learn about diversity. The goal of inclusive education is to eradicate social exclusion, which results from attitudes toward and reactions to differences in ability, gender, colour, social class, ethnicity, and religion (Vitello & Mithaug, 2013; Ainscow & César, 2006; Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Peters & Besley, 2014). Through inclusive education, it seems children also learn to be more accepting of differences and unlearn biases they may have toward other diverse people. The Salamanca Statement endorsed inclusion in education where ordinary

schools had to accommodate every child, irrespective of their language, socioeconomic background, skills, gender, or ethnicity (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement was the most significant international document regarding inclusive education (Ainscow & César, 2006; Ainscow et al., 2019). The advent of the Salamanca Statement argued that inclusive schools are the best way to fight prejudice, create an inclusive community, and ensure every child receives an education (Ainscow & César, 2006). Following that, in the years that have passed, many countries have worked hard to change educational practices and policies to be more inclusive (Freire & César, 2002; Ainscow, & César, 2006).

Inclusion is seen as education for all. Consequently, everyone's right to education has been recognised for decades (Cologon, 2013). According to UNESCO (2001), achieving education for all would necessitate persistent, intense, and coordinated action on multiple fronts. In addition to financial support, efficient educational systems, the proper combination of resources and a framework of social and economic policies at the national level are all necessary to convert resource inputs into learning outcomes within international debates. In the 1990s, the Educational for All (EFA) movement was founded around international policies, mostly under the direction of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), with the goal of increasing education access and participation worldwide (Ainscow & César, 2006). Though many in this movement identify education with attending school, considering education in some of the world's poorest areas offers a chance to reconsider schools as one of many tools for developing education within communities. Therefore, I concur that the Education for All movement is about removing obstacles to learning and development for every child (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

The history of education in South Africa was one of exclusion. During the apartheid regime, children were educated in separate classrooms according to their race, ethnicity, and language (Walton, 2010). It appears that the apartheid regime in South Africa had no support for inclusion in schools. Once apartheid ended, all South African children were required to attend school, and segregated classroom practices were abolished (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). New legislation and rules for inclusion in education were developed, focusing on equality and human rights (RSA, 1996; Engelbrecht, 2018). In 2001, White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, building an inclusive education and training system was published (South African Department of Education, 2001). The policy acknowledged that a significant portion of children faced obstacles to their learning and

development, and that the educational system had failed to address these issues. Even though South Africa complied with new laws guaranteeing children's equal access to education, many children continued to suffer barriers to their learning and development, suggesting that education did not benefit all children equally. Having said that, I also feel that inclusion in South African education was not upheld, and that most children received an equal education instead of an inclusive one. Engelbrecht (2006) concurs that in South Africa, inclusive education has been positioned not as just another alternative for education but as an educational strategy that can contribute to a democratic society. Therefore, inclusive education in South Africa is presented within a human rights system, converting the human principles of integration into the immediate rights of excluded children.

2.4. Diversity and Inclusion

An inclusive educational setting welcomes and values diverse children concerning race, culture, and socio-economic background. Similarities and differences within a shared humanity make up diversity (Booth, 2011). Hence, being inclusive does not limit itself to individuals perceived to deviate from a false sense of normalcy (Booth, 2011; Van Ewijk, 2011; Mazur, 2010). In fact, normal is a myth which goes against the essence of inclusion. Also, I contend that inclusion considers all differences and welcomes all children, where no child is excluded for being different. Regardless of apparent differences, an inclusive response to diversity embraces varied groups where everyone belongs equally. I believe that diversity is essential in educational settings as it exposes children to various cultures and helps them appreciate the differences among people and cultures. It fosters inclusion, promotes an environment free from bias and a safe space for all children to succeed. I argue that diversity in school is essential; it respects and values the differences among children and can further positively impact children's educational equity and outcomes.

Diversity is not only associated with race but also relates to multiple other identity markers such as gender, language, culture, social roles, sexual orientation, education, skills, income, and countless other domains (Hofhuis et al., 2011; Ghavami et al., 2020). Although differences make it harder for people to connect, intolerance negatively impacts children's well-being (Verkuyten et al., 2022). Hence, it is important that individuals embrace diversity as early as possible. In addition, I believe that people like to connect with those who share similar identities, which is why

inclusivity is not sufficiently achieved. Brooker and Woodhead (2008) argue that each child starts creating a distinct personal and social identity at birth. This process is marked by understanding the significance of characteristics, including gender, race, age, and position within the child's immediate community. The interconnected nature of these social and political identities gives each person a unique life experience, creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Taylor, 2019). Having reviewed the literature (Mahadew, 2021; Charter, 2016; Stubbs, 2008), inequalities can be overcome by embracing diversity in inclusive ECCE programmes. Therefore, all young children will feel valued and included.

2.5. Medical and Social Models of Inclusion

Inclusion in schools is understood using both the medical and social models. The medical model aligns with a myopic understanding of inclusion which centres on inclusion as the provision of services to children with disabilities, including those with severe impairments or special education needs (Millward & Dyson, 2000; Okech et al., 2021; Taneja-Johansson et al., 2021; Hutzler et al., 2019; Booth, 2010). This medical model labels children with a deficit and often implies the placement of children in a segregated environment (Cologon, 2013; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Since the medical model of inclusion only takes special needs into account rather than all children with various educational needs, I believe that inclusion is not fully achieved using this perspective. The social model, however, adopts a broad view of inclusion where all people should be given equal opportunities. In this model, people with disabilities and other vulnerabilities should be included. However, society restricts their opportunities (Lawson & Beckett, 2020). Hence, the social model transfers the emphasis from a personal deficit to social barriers against people who experience all kinds of marginalisation. Thus, the understanding of inclusion in education must transcend the medical model to include all children vulnerable to exclusion, not just people with disabilities. Also pivotal in the social model is examining societal barriers to inclusion (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2017; Kendall, 2018).

2.6. The Implementation of Inclusion

There are several ways teachers in ECCE implement inclusion in their centres. Teachers ensure that they include all children by facilitating collaborative learning so that children can work together inclusively to promote inclusivity and diversity in the classroom (César & Santos, 2006). In my view, children will lack the ability to work together without collaborative learning, which will also hinder their ability to comprehend differences. The literature further concurs that

collaborative learning strengthens peer interactions as a mediation tool to achieve more inclusive settings (César & Santos, 2006). As part of the educational strategy known as collaborative learning, children collaborate to find a solution, finish a task, or produce a product (Smith & MacGregor, 1992; Laal & Laal, 2012; Fitch & Hulgín, 2008). Through collaborative learning, teachers meet the needs of all children (Hamre & Oyler, 2004; Jenkins et al, 2003). Furthermore, teachers implement inclusion in ECCE by valuing each individual's contribution to the learning community, accommodating different learning styles, and enriching the curriculum (Yasa et al., 2023). In addition, Majoko (2016) and Turner (2019) concur that teachers implement inclusion by accommodating diversity in the classroom. Therefore, I argue that teachers should implement inclusion in ECCE by welcoming all children, making them feel valued, accommodating their learning needs, and making diverse children work in collaboration.

Implementation of inclusion in ECCE is also promoted when teachers prepare the learning programme to meet the individual needs of each child (Bruns & Mogharreban, 2007). To ensure success for all children, teachers include family and community in implementing inclusion. Family and community participation is essential in an inclusive ECCE (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Ma et al., 2015). Here, everyone can participate as active citizens, which implies that teachers should take the necessary steps to include all parents (Vandenbroeck, 2015). In my opinion, incorporating parents and the community can benefit children as they can show them the value of recognizing and respecting differences outside of the classroom. Studies have shown that better results for children can occur when communities, families, and parents are actively involved in establishing inclusive education (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Carr, 2013; Flecha, 2012). Therefore, I argue that family and community involvement is essential in implementing inclusion in ECCE. Communities, families, and parents play an important role in the early years of children's lives and promote inclusion.

The implementation of inclusion in ECCE also involves utilising language that all children will understand. To ensure that all children can understand the language used in ECCE, it is essential to use simple and straightforward language appropriate for their age and developmental level (Shiel et al., 2012). Language does not necessarily refer to spoken language only, but rather activities as well that can assist children to learn. Mahadew and Hlalele (2022), state that this can be achieved by using visual aids, storytelling, and other interactive activities that engage all

children while making learning fun and enjoyable. Therefore, I concur that inclusive teachers should receive training on identifying and honouring the various languages spoken by the children and utilising this understanding to establish a warm and inclusive atmosphere for everyone.

2.7. Benefits of Inclusion in ECCE

There are several benefits of inclusion in ECCE. Mahadew and Hlalele (2022), state that early programmes benefit children and teachers, and promote socio-economic benefits for society, the community, and families. Shaeffer (2019) and Ang et al. (2020) further argue that centres aim to eliminate all obstacles to participation, learning, and development while advancing social justice, equality, and respect for diversity. Therefore, there is a need for inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement as it would result in positive outcomes for all. Inclusive ECCE benefits everyone as diversity is valued and a sense of belonging is fostered for all members.

Inclusive ECCE programmes provide benefits to all children. Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2019) state that inclusive programmes help children better understand who they are and reinforce their belief that they are strong, capable individuals. I argue that through inclusion in schools, children can accept themselves for who they are as well, and they are always encouraged to do well where they do not doubt their abilities. Upon understanding themselves and others, inclusive ECCE programmes offer a safe environment where children can interact with each other, make close friends with children their own age and developmental stage, and push themselves to achieve things they might not have otherwise (Mohammed, 2023). For instance, when children with disabilities realise they are viewed as equals, their confidence grows, allowing them to form meaningful friendships with others that last for extended periods (Mohammed, 2023). The literature further states that inclusion also develops children's learning enthusiasm. Finally, all children are accommodated in an inclusive ECCE, which means that every child's educational needs will be met as well. Inclusive ECCE programmes ensure that all children can participate and achieve.

Inclusion in ECCE also benefits teachers, enabling them to abate inequality and increase their skills in teaching diverse children with different learning needs. According to Magaya (2023), there are several benefits for teachers who receive training on inclusion. They feel more competent and confident working with every child, special needs or not (Bangel et al., 2010). According to Carter and Darling-Hammond (2016), Yassin and Almasri (2015); and Kalina and Powell (2009),

by being inclusive, teachers learn about diverse learners' needs and how to accommodate different learning styles. Inclusive teachers also learn about different cultures and how children communicate. With that being said, I concur that it is also important for teachers in ECCE to receive training so that they can implement inclusion adequately in their centres. Furthermore, Ayaya and Makoelle (2023) assert that inclusion facilitates collaboration among teachers, allowing them to leverage each other's strengths and learn from one another to address pressing concerns and issues. Therefore, I argue that inclusion in ECCE not only gives teachers the skills they need to teach a diverse range of children but also makes it possible for them to guarantee that there is no inequality and that every child is taken care of in society.

The society, also known as the community in an informal settlement, greatly benefits from an inclusive ECCE. Mahadew and Hlalele (2022) stated that inclusion in ECCE promotes socio-economic benefits for society. The literature stated that all societies that hope to improve their futures must continue prioritising the growth and development of the adults of tomorrow (Barker, 1989). Therefore, I further argue that it is up to the community to ensure that children growing up are well developed and they know how to respect and accept differences of people round them. Similarly, (Mahadew, 2023) also stated in her literature that developing inclusive ECCE programmes could lead to increased democracy within the classroom and a more equitable society. Inclusion in an informal settlement fosters values like social justice, equality, and respect for all while recognising and valuing diversity and individuality (Pozo-Armentia et al., 2020). I therefore argue that inclusive ECCE benefits the informal settlement community in many ways.

Families greatly benefit from inclusive ECCE as well. Families feel welcomed and part of the centre, and they are involved in feedback about the child's development and share suggestions on improving the planned and shared activities in the school and at home (Bellour et al., 2017). Families become more engaged, helpful, and hands-on when it comes to their children's education, thus I believe that the more families participate in the educational activities of their children, the better. Regardless of economic, racial/ethnic and educational backgrounds, there is a strong link between educational benefits to children and various forms of family engagement, such as encouragement to succeed academically, involvement in at-home activities such as help with homework, volunteerism in schools, and participation in governance activities (Mapp, 2002; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012). Activities such as modelling reading behaviour and reading to their

children increase children's interest in learning (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). However, Xin (2022) states that getting parents involved can be challenging. I contend that some parents lack the time to volunteer at the school or attend any kind of school meeting, others are unable of providing their children with homework assistance due to a lack of time and illiterateness. Some parents do not value education, and the lack of involvement on the part of low-income parents is often attributed to their lack of time, interest, or competence to be involved, and some do not value education (Mapp, 2002).

2.8. The Context of the Research

The research context outlines the ECCE sector and its location in an informal settlement in South Africa.

2.8.1. Early Childhood Care and Education

ECCE addresses the period from birth to four years. These are the formative years because they lay the groundwork for physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and language development (Thomas, 2023). ECCE serves as the foundation for emotional well-being and lifelong learning. It promotes holistic development, gender equality, and social cohesion (Priyadarshini, 2020). These early years are crucial for developing various cognitive, social, and psychomotor qualities that contribute considerably to later life success. According to UNESCO, ECCE is the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and well-being (Paramitasari, 2021).

2.8.2. The Development of ECCE in South Africa

There are glaring disparities in the quality of ECCE education available to the wealthy and impoverished in South Africa. Kanyopa (2023), states that quality school education in South Africa was accessed by a few people who were privileged in the past. This means there was no inclusive education as unprivileged people could not access any quality school education like the privileged. However, receiving a quality education is still not possible for many living in informal settlements. Due to the legacy of apartheid, South Africa continues to feature a large number of informal settlements (Jeeva & Cilliers, 2020; Marutlulle, 2021; TamukaMoyo et al., 2021; Georgiadou & Loggia, 2021). I concur with the latter-mentioned authors that the state of these makeshift settlements is unsuitable for child rearing, let alone for constructing quality schools.

Similar to formal schools, the state of ECCE in South Africa is also characterised by harsh inequality. Ashley-Cooper et al. (2019), state that in South Africa, most young children suffer from various social and economic disadvantages. Many South African children are denied basic socio-economic rights, such as the right to an early education, as a result of apartheid and resulting socioeconomic disparities. For this reason, South Africa needs to catch up in terms of ECCE. The government budget is far less for ECCE services per child than for formal schooling. Hlalele (2021) clarifies that children with a variety of learning needs, such as those related to cultural or linguistic diversity, gender norms, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic position, individual situations, family upheaval, or impairments and special needs, are included in early childhood classrooms. This implies that not all children may receive early education, as they are not denied any opportunities for being disadvantaged.

Many children living in informal settlements do not attend ECCE due to the effects and inequalities that post-apartheid has on their lives. Many children in South Africa come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and only 58% of children between the ages of three and five attend ECD centres (Wood & Neethling, 2023). Stats SA (2022) allude that while 1,699,000 children aged 0–4 participate in early learning programmes (ELP), about four million children do not. Fredman et al. (2022) further stated that nearly 3.2 million children under five still have no access to any ECCE programme in South Africa. Their lives are already severely hampered in their early years by hunger, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, poverty, health problems, and complex social issues like HIV and AIDS. In addition, I argue that more ECD centres ought to be established in informal settlements so that children from impoverished backgrounds can nonetheless receive high-quality education in spite of the societal challenges that impede them. Furthermore, even though ECCE is not attended by many children in South African informal settlements, it is still vital for a child's development, which means that these inequalities intensify in schools and in later life (Fredman et al., 2022). It is important to note that access to ECCE is not the government's only concern, but improving the quality of ECCE services and ensuring equality is a pressing concern (Wood & Neethling, 2023).

All children should attend quality ECCE, and the government should ensure that no child is excluded, regardless of their background. In South Africa, ECCE was previously associated with privilege (Harrison, 2020; Fredman et al., 2022). Literature alludes that all children, regardless of

their socioeconomic background, can now more easily access ECCE because of the initiatives undertaken by the South African government (Fredman et al., 2022). The government has introduced policies and programmes to provide free ECCE to children from poor households (Ritchie et al., 2014; Kika-Mistry & Wills, 2023). Despite these initiatives, this educational sector still faces obstacles like the uneven geographic distribution of ECCE offerings, a lack of skilled training, difficulties obtaining high-quality certifications, and inadequate teacher compensation (Harrison, 2020). Therefore, I contend that ECCE in informal settlements ought to have sufficient resources, teachers should be trained to carry out inclusive education in ECCE, and teachers working in these centres ought to be compensated better.

2.8.3. ECCE in the Informal Settlement Context

In South Africa, houses constructed without permission or against building and planning codes are shacks or informal settlements (Marutlulle, 2021). These are houses that the most disadvantaged members inhabit the most disadvantaged members of society inhabit. Weimann and Oni (2019); Satterthwaite et al. (2020) state in their literature that inadequate housing, inadequate infrastructure, ineffective management and government, inappropriate environments, unregulated and unhealthy population densities, and a high risk of crime, fire, and health are the characteristics of informal settlements.

ECCE in these areas experience overcrowding, poor infrastructure and an informal, poorly paid, and under-qualified workforce (Fredman et al., 2022). The literature additionally evidences that one of the main challenges has been the requirement for centres to register with the Department of Social Development (DSD) to be eligible for government funding (Wills & Kika-Mistry, 2023; Wills & Kika-Mistry, 2021; Modise, 2021). These centres must fulfil a number of regulations related to safety, including having kitchens, lavatories, or other locations used for food preparation, as well as indoor and outdoor spaces and sick child isolation rooms, before they can be registered (Fredman et al., 2022). Most ECD centres in informal settlements have difficulty meeting these established standards, which has prevented them from being eligible for government funding. I therefore argue that the regulations or standards that centres in informal settlements should be reduced so that they can be eligible for government funding.

Another pressing concern in ECCE, especially in impoverished communities, is the quality of the workforce. Zulu et al. (2022) argue that in ECD centres, there is an astonishing absence of highly

qualified teachers. Without a doubt, the education system requires appropriately qualified teachers for a quality ECCE provision (Diale & Sewagegn, 2021; Reetu et al., 2017; Myers, 2005). In order for centres to give children a high-quality education, I contend that having qualified teachers on board is essential. The latter-mentioned authors further argue that one major issue in South Africa is the large number of ECCE teachers who are employed but have little education, training, and no qualifications, impacting how well they perform their professional duties. For ECCE teachers to fulfil the varied needs of children and raise educational standards, carefully planned, intensive training and in-service training from qualified and experienced individuals is necessary (Zulu et al., 2022). Hence, teachers must receive training to provide quality offerings at their centres. This would entail addressing the needs of young children without excluding them.

It therefore follows that a quality ECCE programme is inclusive, and much is dependent on the calibre of the teacher. Mahadew and Hlalele (2022) argue that teachers with specialised knowledge and abilities must create a high-quality, inclusive ECCE programme. Harrison (2020) also argued that a competent and professional workforce is needed to ensure the quality of early childhood services. This means teachers should have the knowledge and skills needed to provide a quality, inclusive ECCE programme. This view is also supported by Thorpe et al. (2020); McMullen et al. (2020); Melnyk et al. (2021). Studies show that several teachers (78%) do not have an appropriate qualification to teach ECCE, while 23% of teachers have no training (Visser et al., 2021). I was therefore optimistic that my study would demonstrate participants' lack of support and adequate training to create quality and inclusive ECCE programmes.

In addition, many difficulties are associated with children growing up in an informal settlement. Given the effects of apartheid and the resulting socioeconomic gaps, most South African children living in informal settlements experience a difficult upbringing (Weimann & Oni, 2019), which includes restricted access to social services, health care, education, and good nourishment (Ashley-Cooper et al., 2019). The literature further states that this hampers their growth and welfare (Maarman, 2009; Barbarin & Richter, 2013; Meth, 2013). Furthermore, UNICEF (2023) concurs that, children in South Africa, particularly those living in informal settlements, struggle with poverty, poor education, malnutrition, and health issues including HIV and AIDS. These intersecting experiences place them at a greater disadvantage. Thus, these barriers to inclusion could result in later low educational attainment, poor quality education, or high dropout rates.

Children in informal settlements are placed at a greater disadvantage and are more vulnerable to exclusion than children living in less impoverished backgrounds.

There is no equality of opportunity in ECCE in an informal settlement. Following the study of Ashley-Cooper et al. (2019), equal access to quality ECCE provision, resources and expenditure across geographic areas should be equitable. However, as mentioned, there is restricted access to social services, health care, education, and good nourishment due to the effects of apartheid. The South African education system is distinguished by deteriorating amenities, crowded classrooms, comparatively low educational attainment, sustaining inequality, and failing an excessive number of children, with low-income individuals suffering the greatest (Mohammed, 2023). These structural issues contribute to inequality in ECCE (Fredman et al., 2022; Wood & Neethling, 2023). Therefore, inequality in ECCE in informal settlements derives from inconducive learning programmes with limited resources and no support from the government.

The disadvantage of ECCE programmes in developing nations leads to inequality. Buain and Pholphirul (2020), state that developing countries require greater funding for education than developed countries do in order to reduce educational disparity, which is more likely to occur there. However, developing countries do not have a budget for ECCE programmes (Neuman & Powers, 2021). Families that are economically disadvantaged face greater challenges accessing quality education than wealthy families (Bassok et al., 2020; Buain & Pholphirul, 2020). ECCE reduces the educational disparity that affects children from economically disadvantaged families, thus helping to stop unacceptable behavior that could lead to social issues (McNair et al., 2022; Fredman et al., 2022). ECCE also helps children from less advantaged backgrounds get off to a good start in life and be more prepared for school when they start their primary schooling (Diale & Sewagegn, 2021; Layne et al., 2022; Tan & Chua, 2022). Literature similarly alludes that early childhood education benefits children by ensuring healthy growth and improving their capacity to adjust to higher schooling levels (Lipkin et al., 2020; Buain & Pholphirul, 2020).

2.9. Inclusion and ECCE

Early development impacts the development of essential attitudes later in life. Children display both favourable and unfavourable attitudes and preferences toward diversity (Connolly et al., 2002; Milner, 1983). Fine-Davis and Faas (2014), state that children develop a positive attitude towards diversity and differences. However, children also identify cultural and physical

differences and develop negative attitudes based on them (Milner, 1993; Connolly & Hosken, 2006), which is ethnic, racial, and national prejudice (Brown & Pehrson, 2019). Studies show that classroom discussions of race and racial views can help lessen bias in children who exhibit extreme discrimination (Grapin, et al., 2019; Aboud & Fenwick, 1999). Therefore, inclusive approaches in an ECCE promote acceptance, tolerance, and awareness of many cultures and customs while giving children a sense of pride and gratitude for who they are and where they come from (Laosa, 1974; Charter, 2016). This demonstrates the significance of inclusion in early development. Hence, inclusion fosters attitudes toward diversity and differences that are both positive and negative. I concur that negative attitudes are mitigated in these environments by encouraging tolerance, acceptance, and awareness of differences.

Early experiences further shape children's lives. The importance of early childhood development is shaping emotional, social, cognitive, and behavioural skills (Charter, 2016; García & Weiss, 2016; Raver, 2002) that are crucial for later academic achievement (Blair, 2002; Gestsdottir, et al., 2014; Valiente et al., 2010) and social adjustment and developmental construct over the lifespan (Blair, & Diamond, 2008). Children and young people who possess strong social and emotional skills will succeed in school and in life after school (Thümmeler et al., 2022; Dawson et al., 2000; McClelland et al., 2007; Shulman, 2016). In addition, the most important role models for fostering the development of these skills are teachers (Thümmeler et al., 2022; McClelland et al., 2007). Thus, I concur that inclusion is crucial at this developmental time because it moulds children's lives and helps them acquire skills necessary for their long-term social and intellectual development.

2.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the study's literature review that explores the concept of inclusion in ECCE. This chapter reviewed related literature focusing on inclusion in schools, the history of inclusion in schools, diversity and inclusion, medical and social models of inclusion, the implementation of inclusion, the benefits of inclusion in ECCE, and the context of the research. The next chapter discusses the theoretical perspectives for the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1. Introduction

In chapter two, a literature review is provided to situate key concepts related to the study. The chapter reviewed literature focusing on critical points related to inclusion, ECCE and informal settlements. This chapter focuses on the theoretical and conceptual perspectives of the study. The study's ideas are broadly represented in the theoretical framework; conversely, the conceptual framework includes more focused or limited ideas pertinent to the study's focus (Kivunja, 2018). This chapter will look at theoretical perspective, intersectionality theory, privilege and oppression in intersectionality theory, principles of intersectionality theory, and intersectionality theoretical perspective in relation to the study. It will further look at the conceptual framework: anti-bias curriculum, origin and importance of anti-bias curriculum, goals of anti-bias curriculum, anti-bias curriculum approach in ECCE in South Africa, intersectionality and the anti-bias curriculum, and anti-bias curriculum conceptual framework about the study.

3.2. Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective, or a theoretical framework, consists of the theories put out by experts in the field in which the research will be done (Varpio et al., 2019). Swanson and Chermack (2013) concur that the theoretical framework is the structure that contains or sustains a study of research. A theory, therefore, is an abstract explanation of the connections between ideas that aid in our understanding of the world (Murphy & Medin, 1985), and there are often multiple theories that inform our understanding of a single phenomenon (Varpio et al., 2019). Mensah et al. (2020); Kivunja (2018) mention that the theoretical framework gives you a structure for what to look for in the data, how to think about what fits together and how to explain your findings in the context of what other theories have said. Furthermore, the theoretical framework enables the researcher to add depth to their data (Mensah et al., 2020; Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Kivunja, 2018). Therefore, in the following section I outline intersectionality as a broad foundation for this study on teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

3.2.1. Intersectionality Theory

Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate and leading scholar of critical race theory, coined intersectionality theory in 1989 (Harris, 2019). Crenshaw, a professor at Columbia University and the University of California, spent more than 30 years studying civil rights, race, and racism (Coaston, 2019). Crenshaw's theory emphasises that treating black women as pure or purely black ignore specific challenges facing black women (Crenshaw, 2013). However, other factors, such as intersecting identities, which contribute to the oppression and privilege of individuals, are considered. Thus, Crenshaw clarifies that different types of injustice or disadvantage may sometimes compound themselves and create barriers that cannot always be comprehended within traditional ways of thinking about anti-racism, feminism, or other social justice activism (Crenshaw, 2013). For example, a person's colour, gender, and sexuality intertwine, and the prejudice they encounter is frequently more nuanced and significant than any single aspect of their identity could explain (Ferguson et al., 2014). Hence, using single identification markers such as race, gender, socioeconomic position, and citizenship status to comprehend circumstances is insufficient (Bešić, 2020). Instead, intersectionality theory calls for attention to all the crucial aspects that intersect inside an individual's identity since each contributes to their perception of the world and their discrimination.

3.2.2. Privilege and Oppression in Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory is closely aligned with the essence of inclusion, as justice and equality are important agendas for both. Similar to inclusion, intersectionality theory requires individuals to recognise the privilege and oppression that is allocated to particular identities (Wyatt et al., 2022). Ebbitt (2015) describes privilege as an unearned benefit or advantage in society due to the nature of one's identity. The author also states that an individual may be privileged in some ways but disadvantaged in others; however, having a disadvantage does not negate the unearned privileges we may experience in other areas.

Like privilege, the concept of oppression must be acknowledged in understanding intersectionality (Wyatt et al., 2022; Vice-President Finance & Operations Portfolio (University of British Columbia, 2021; Nair & Vollhardt, 2020). Oppression is a force that allows, through the power of norms and systems, the unjust treatment or control of people (Palmer et al., 2019). It is a situation in which alienation, a lack of autonomy, and a fear of freedom all coexist and reinforce elements

of oppression (Freire, 2020). Intersectionality explains that various disadvantages exist separately and how they intertwine to create new forms of oppression (Muirhead et al., 2020). Therefore, intersectionality helps us understand how people experience oppression and privilege differently depending on their intersecting identities (Ramsay, 2013; Wyatt et al., 2022; Taylor, 2019; Bernard, 2020). Therefore, understanding intersectionality is critical for combating the tangled prejudices that people experience daily (Gkiouleka et al., 2018; Settles, Warner et al., 2020). Literature similarly states that intersectionality can remove hierarchical exclusions and empower oppressed individuals in distinct but interconnected ways to unite around more expansive agendas for social and ecological justice (Runyan, 2018; Casey, 2020).

3.2.3. Principles of Intersectionality Theory

The principles of intersectionality help to identify how research is carried out in the field. Key concepts of privilege and oppression in intersectionality theory were discussed above. Other important principles to consider in intersectionality theory are oppression, relationality, complexity, context, comparison, and deconstruction. These six interconnected fundamental principles of intersectionality can help guide intersectional methodological approaches (Misra et al., 2020).

Oppression refers to the extensive and profound injustices that certain groups experience due to well-intentioned but frequently unintentional assumptions and responses made by others in everyday situations, media representations of certain cultures, and cultural stereotypes (Ryden & Willets, 2013). The understanding of oppression and power is fundamental to the perspectives of women of colour, especially Black women, who originally developed intersectionality by examining how their experiences were limited by factors such as class, gender, and race (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Beal, 1969; Crenshaw, 1991; Glenn, 1992; King, 1988; Zinn et al., 1986). Thus, the socio-historical context and the social phenomenon under consideration determine the relative importance of race, sex, and class in defining the conditions of black women's lives, which are neither fixed nor absolute (King, 1988).

Recognizing *oppression* is thus core to intersectionality. Intersectionality reveals that power works in uneven and differentiated ways (Chun et al., 2013). Intersectional scholars are focused on recognising how oppression shapes the human experience. Collins (2022) further alluded that every person fits into a complex matrix of domination, or the overall organisation of hierarchical

power relations in a given society. The matrix of domination is not, therefore, neutral but reflects oppression.

Relationality is the concept that everything in the world is interrelated and depends upon everything else. The relational underpinnings of intersectionality reflect that oppression for some groups is interconnected with opportunity for others (Carbado, 2013; Branch, 2011). Intersectional scholars show how categories of difference are interconnected and how forms of privilege make other categories invisible (Misra et al., 2020). It enables us to comprehend how, within the white feminist movement; the oppressions of black women were rendered invisible due to a universal category of femininity (Breines, 2006; Collins, 1996; Breines, 2002).).

Intersectional researchers also emphasise that social inequality is **complex** (Misra et al., 2020). Contrary to Western epistemology, which aims to categorise the world into binary oppositions such as man against woman, black versus white, homosexual versus straight, and the West versus the rest, intersectionality's central idea of complexity exemplifies a fundamental theory of knowledge (Lugones, 2003). Crenshaw considered groups at the point of intersection to be mutually constituted (Walby et al., 2012). Similarly, the literature states that intersectional researchers identify race, gender and class identities as mutually constituted rather than separate systems of inequality (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014; Walby et al., 2012). Therefore, complexity illustrates that rather than pulling apart these factors, and we must recognise how they intermingle to create outcomes through complexity (Collins, 1998), as each dimension of oppression contributes to identities as they are created through one another (Misra et al., 2020).

Context is also an essential principle in intersectionality theory, and many intersectional scholars pay close attention to it (Misra et al., 2020). Sociological researchers more generally consider context, while intersectional researchers pinpoint the contexts in which privilege and disadvantage are manifested (Byrd et al., 2015; Misra et al., 2020; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Norris, 2012). There is no authentic experience of inequality, and it is a complex issue that affects different people in different ways (Wilkinson, 2006; Bapuji, 2015). Browne and Misra (2003) allude that people encounter oppression in ways that mirror disparities in privilege and power and where the significance of statuses such as gender, class, and ethnicity varies according to location, time, and circumstance (Misra et al., 2020) concur that intersectional researchers think about when and where a particular set of overlapping conditions matter the most. Subsequently, conducting

intersectional research necessitates understanding how many socially constructed dimensions of differences intersect with different contexts to shape outcomes.

Intersectional researchers use *comparative* reasoning, which is common among sociological researchers (Misra et al., 2020). According to Bauer and Scheim (2019), many intersectional researchers compare outcomes for diverse groups, for instance, looking at differences in policing by race and gender (Misra et al., 2020). Intersectional studies also compare sub-groups, such as an analysis of black mothers in which she identifies different strategies for mothering black children in a racist society (Dow, 2019). Exploring all the possible intersections is not feasible in a practical sense. Therefore, researchers should consider which intersections are most important for the research question (Browne & Misra, 2003). Lastly, intersectional researchers work to analyse the most salient statuses for their research question, recognising that exploring other socially constructed dimensions of difference might lead to different insights.

Finally, *deconstruction* can be used to identify and challenge how various social identities are created and interact in the context of intersectionality. Misra et al. (2020) further state that deconstruction aims to show how arbitrary and incomplete socially constructed categories are and how they are frequently the result of oppression. Although this does not prove that inequality does not exist, deconstructing categories and showing their fragility helps researchers better understand how inequality functions.

The principles of intersectionality theory are oppression, relationality, complexity, context, comparison, and deconstruction; they govern intersectionality and are all interconnected (Misra et al., 2020). Considering these principles when conducting research is essential; however, this does not mean all principles must be considered.

3.2.4. Intersectionality Theoretical Perspective in Relation to the Study

Children in ECCE in an informal settlement possess intersecting identities, and these identities subject them to either oppression or disadvantage. Similarly, their centre in an informal settlement is disadvantaged due to intersecting factors that disadvantage them. These factors include inadequate teaching resources, untrained teachers, non-conducive learning programmes, and inadequate infrastructure. Although ECCE in informal settlements are disadvantaged, they still welcome all children with diverse identities, and teachers promote inclusion, equity, and social

justice to ensure that no child is oppressed and excluded. Furthermore, ECCE looks at how to create equal opportunities for children who are both positively and negatively affected by their identities so that no child is disadvantaged or privileged by the other.

Intersectional categories cannot be separated (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Garry, 2011; Bernstein, 2019). They can merge to produce distinct oppression and privilege experiences (Vries, 2012; Rosette et al., 2018). For instance, girls of colour (black) have intersecting identities that produce oppression experiences. In a classroom, there are children with intersecting identities that are oppressed as well, for instance, a disadvantaged black girl, a disadvantaged foreign child, a black girl, and a disabled child with a disadvantaged background. However, in school, their experiences should not be the same; teachers should ensure that every child is treated fairly. Therefore, intersectionality theory helps identify the processes of discrimination and exclusion (Settles et al., 2020; Bešić, 2020). At the same time, promoting inclusion helps tackle these challenges and create the most successful educational landscape possible for all children (Mannion, 2003).

3.3. Conceptual Framework: Anti Bias Curriculum

The following section explores the foundations and meaning of the 'conceptual framework' in this study's context. A concept is an image or symbolic representation of an abstract idea (Liehr & Smith, 1999; Chinn & Kramer, 1995; Green, 2014). Furthermore, Liehr and Smith (1999) concur that a framework for research as a structure that guides the researcher as study questions are fine tuned. Once data are collected and analysed, the framework is used as a mirror to check whether the findings agree with the framework. Therefore, a conceptual framework, as mentioned by Imenda (2014), is devised when a researcher believes that just one theory or a subset of concepts within one theory may not adequately address his or her research challenge. In such situations, the researcher might have to synthesise the ideas already expressed in the literature about a particular scenario, drawing from theoretical and empirical findings. Liehr and Smith (1999); Tamene (2016) further allude that the combination, sometimes known as a model or conceptual framework, essentially serves as an integrated method of Looking at the problem. However, the literature also states (Kivunja, 2018; Imenda, 2014; Ngulube et al., 2015; Tamene, 2016) that a conceptual framework is the comprehensive, logical arrangement and correlation of all elements that constitute the fundamental concepts, frameworks, strategies, plans, and execution of your whole research project.

To summarise, therefore, both conceptual and theoretical frameworks represent an integrated understanding of issues (Fain, 2020; Parahoo, 2014; Tamene, 2016) within a given field of study, which enables the researcher to address a specific research problem (Imenda, 2014, Green, 2014). Therefore, just like the theoretical perspective/ framework, the conceptual framework enables the researcher to add depth to data analysis. Hence, the following section elucidates the underpinnings of the concept as a narrow foundation for study on teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

3.3.1 Origin and Importance of Anti-bias Curriculum

The anti-bias curriculum, also known as anti-bias education, emerged in the late 1980s due to the pioneering work of Derman-Sparks and the Anti-Bias Task Force (Escayg, 2018). Anti-bias describes the prohibition of unjust discrimination against individuals based on race, religion, or other characteristics (Escayg, 2018). The goal is to lessen the likelihood of people mistreating others by raising awareness of how their opinions may influence their judgment (Nguyen, 2021). A study articulated by Marcroft (2022) stated that a method of teaching and learning known as an anti-bias curriculum aims to actively combat prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination in schools by fostering a greater appreciation of differences and their importance to civil and respectful society. Additionally, the anti-bias curriculum emphasises a philosophy that prioritises children's rights, particularly those related to supporting positive identities, granting them equal opportunities to reach their full potential, and presenting them with chances for personal empowerment (Derman-Sparks et al., 2015).

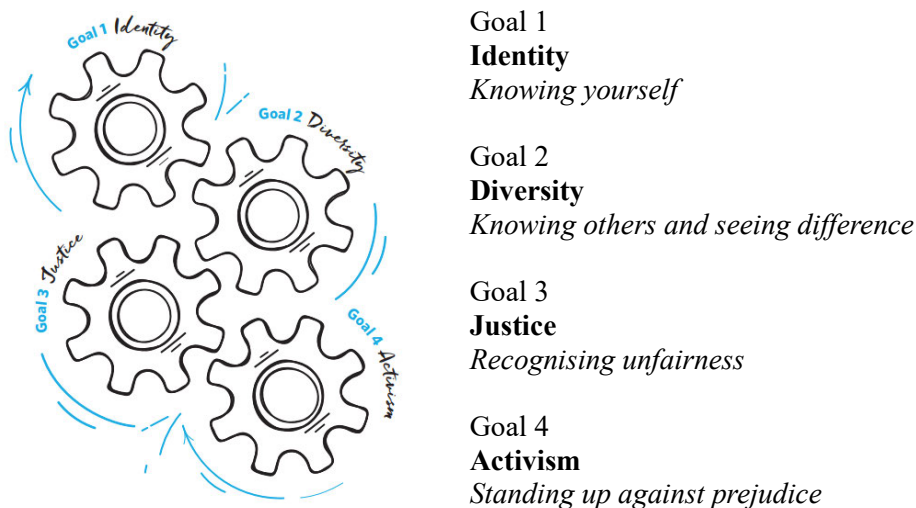
The anti-bias curriculum takes into account factors such as gender, class, and physical ability, in addition to cultural and linguistic diversity (Derman-Sparks, 1989). Anti-bias education seeks to establish a secure and nurturing learning atmosphere for all children. It enables them to grow into self-assured individuals without feeling superior to others, recognizing and valuing human diversity, cultivating a sense of justice and fairness, and gaining the capacity to advocate for themselves and others. The anti-bias curriculum acknowledges that differences are essential and addresses problematic topics head-on rather than ignoring them. Teachers must face their biases and racial prejudices and become aware of their children's cultures and needs (Pagán, 2022). Therefore, teachers must receive training on implementing an anti-bias curriculum into their

teaching practices to effectively execute it in the classroom (Carter et al., 2020; Nemeth & Hill, 2021).

School Children face racial discrimination and inequality (Hope et al., 2014). Due to the systematic racial hierarchy and discrimination that occurred during apartheid, South Africa is still highly racially divided in terms of opportunities and wealth distribution, as well as intensely culturally and socially segregated (Seekings, 2008). Some children still face racial discrimination today created by the apartheid regime (Ndimande, 2012; Walters, 2001). Unequal education is a form of racial discrimination (Gordon et al., 2000). The literature further concurs that racially segregated schools and racial disparity in school resources are products of social and political processes that also lead to racial discrimination in the workplace and racial segregation in living arrangements (Walters, 2001). Furthermore, segregated schools are unequal, and there is very little evidence of success in creating “separate but equal” outcomes on a large scale (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Therefore, to promote inclusivity and eliminate inequality, racial discrimination in schools ought not to be encouraged in ECCE.

3.3.2 Goals of Anti-bias curriculum

Anti-bias in Education is based on four goals:



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Figure 3.1. The Four Goals of an Anti-Bias Curriculum

Source: Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), 2021

The four core goals of the anti-bias curriculum are interconnected; they are like a gear system (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010), connected or related to each other, as shown in Figure 3.1 above. They work together to help all children reach their fullest potential and create a safe and supportive learning programme for every child (Kimura et al., 2021; Kok, & Yang, 2021; Derman-Sparks and Edwards, 2010; Mitsch et al., 2022). Therefore, Mitsch et al. (2022) concur that teachers should implement an anti-bias curriculum to ensure that children respect and embrace differences and eliminate bias and unfairness. Derman-Sparks et al. (2020) assert that an anti-bias curriculum is an optimistic commitment to supporting children living in a highly diverse yet inequitable world. Engelbrecht (2020) affirms that rearranging the classroom to lessen negative behaviour, attitudes, and bias or discrimination helps to address issues fostered by intergroup conflicts. Therefore, establishing an inclusive and friendly classroom atmosphere for all children is crucial, and teachers can help create a positive climate that benefits everyone by taking action to lessen bias and discrimination. According to Derman-Sparks et al. (2020); Kok and Yang (2021), the four goals of an anti-bias curriculum identify and mitigate the adverse emotional and psychological effects that prejudice and bias in society have on children.

The first goal of the anti-bias curriculum is to pursue children's *identity* development. This goal encourages children's confidence in their individual and social identities (Derman-Sparks et al., 2020). Social identities relate to the significant group categorisations of the society in which we grow up and live and which individuals share with many others. A strong sense of individual and group identities is the foundation for the three other core anti-bias goals (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). This goal enables teachers to advance each child's construction of knowledgeable and confident personal and social identities. Diversity involves appreciating human differences and similarities and building positive relationships with others (Kok & Yang, 2021; Hjerm, Eger, Bohman, & Fors Connolly, 2020). Identity ensures children demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. Within these learning programmes, children can build confidence in their identity without superiority (Mitsch et al., 2022). It means children will learn accurate, respectful language to describe who they and others are. Teachers will support children in developing and being comfortable within their home and school cultures.

The development of *diversity* is the second goal of the anti-bias curriculum. Diversity encompasses all children. Their diverse personalities, ethnicities, language, family structures, and learning styles

all contribute to the makeup of a diverse classroom (Katz, 2012). Teachers interact with and teach children different from themselves to appreciate these differences and become more accepting and tolerant of diversity (Lin et al., 2008; Miller & Sessions, 2005; Afriadi, 2020). Although teachers are uncomfortable discussing diversity issues (Hook, 2002), this topic is still necessary (Garmon, 2005). Thus, children gradually express comfort and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form deep, caring connections across all dimensions of human diversity (Derman-Sparks et al., 2020). Diversity guides children to be able to think about and have words for how people are the same and how they are different. It includes helping children feel and behave respectfully, warmly, and confidently with people who are different from themselves. This goal is the heart of learning to treat everyone caringly and fairly. Diversity development is essential in ECCE to alleviate tension among diverse children unaware of differences. Tension among children may partly stem from some children coming to school with negative attitudes and misconceptions of different racial and ethnic groups (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Justice is the third goal of the anti-bias curriculum. Justice fosters children's ability to differentiate fairness from prejudice and understand the ramifications of discrimination (Kok & Yang, 2021). The development of justice enables teachers to foster each child's capacity to identify bias critically and will nurture each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019; Plascencia-Carrizosa, 2021). Children will increasingly recognise unfairness, have the language to describe it, and understand that unfairness hurts (Sapon-Shevin, 2017; Derman-Sparks et al., 2020). Justice builds the child's innate, budding capacities for empathy and fairness and their cognitive skills for thinking critically about what is happening around them. According to Derman-Sparks et al. (2020), justice is essential as it enables children to identify unfair experiences and learn that unfair can be made fair; children gain an increased sense of their power in the world. Sapon-Shevin (2017) concur that children cannot construct a strong self-concept or develop respect for others if they do not know how to identify and resist hurtful, stereotypical, and inaccurate messages or actions directed toward themselves or others. Therefore, developing critical thinking skills strengthens children's sense of self and capacity to form caring relationships with others.

Activism is the last goal of the anti-bias curriculum; it is about giving children tools to stand up to hurtful, unfair, and biased behaviour based on any aspect of social identity (Derman-Sparks &

Edwards, 2019). Activism further equips children with the knowledge and skills to advocate for justice (Kok & Yang, 2021). Through activism, teachers cultivate each child's ability and confidence to stand up for oneself and others in the face of bias (Gebretensae & Hornstein, 2019; Cople, 2003; Wolpert, 2005; Chen et al., 2009). Therefore, children will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act (Canning, 2007) with others or alone against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019). This goal is essential because it strengthens children's perspective-taking development, positive interactions with others, and conflict-resolution education. Crozier and Dimmock (1999), Chang (2021), and Thornberg (2013) concur that name-calling, teasing, and exclusion based on identity hurt children's developing sense of self. Therefore, children who engage in such hurtful behaviours are learning that it is not acceptable to hurt others, the earliest form of bullying.

3.3.3. Anti-bias Curriculum Approach in ECCE in South Africa

According to Soudien (2004), the restrictive practices, beliefs, and presumptions of assimilationism led to the development of the anti-bias movement in the United States and the United Kingdom. Multiculturalists believe that ignorance about other cultures leads to prejudice (Kendall, 1996; Siddle, 1992), and Bennett (2009), Spiegler, Christ, & Verkuyten (2021) concur that prejudice would disappear if people learned about each other's cultures. Therefore, establishing safe, courteous, and reciprocal connections that celebrate diversity between children and their classmates, teachers, and families results from applying an anti-bias curriculum and strategy in the ECCE environment (Charter, 2016).

In South Africa, recent political changes have compelled the new government to rethink the status of ECCE (Goduka, 1997). Furthermore, the new South African government seeks to guarantee that every child benefits from primary and early education in order to address injustices and disparities upheld by the former administration during Apartheid at all educational levels. Therefore, South African ECCE programmes need an additional approach sensitive to dealing proactively and positively with differences (Biersteker et al., 2003), and that approach is an anti-bias curriculum. The South African education and training system aims to assist children in acquiring the values, information, and abilities necessary to engage actively and responsibly in a democratic society (Biersteker et al., 2003).

3.4. Intersectionality and the Anti-bias curriculum

The goal of both intersectionality and anti-bias curricula is to promote inclusion, equity, and social justice (Hunting et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2008; Ares, 2023). Intersectionality incorporated into an anti-bias curriculum acknowledges that people have multiple identities that interact with one another (Escayg, 2019) and create unique experiences of privilege and oppression. Adopting intersectionality epistemologies is the most practical way to make the anti-bias approach more critical, inclusive, and transformative (Nguyen, 2021). Integrating intersectionality into anti-bias education helps early childhood teachers recognise how the discourses of -isms strongly influence young children's learning experiences (Nguyen, 2021). Hence, by acknowledging and addressing intersectionality, an anti-bias approach can better promote equity and social justice.

Children in ECCE have diverse intersecting identities that result in a unique combination of discrimination and privilege. For instance, a girl of colour possesses intersecting identities that result in oppression or disadvantage. Girls are categorised as being inferior to boys, and people of colour fall under the minority group along with females. Therefore, teachers utilise an anti-bias curriculum to promote inclusion, social justice, and equality for girls with intersecting identities so that they are not subjected to oppression, discrimination and bullying as they are disadvantaged and oppressed. They do this by treating girls and boys equally.

Furthermore, an anti-bias curriculum integrated with intersectionality examines how diverse identities that oppress children in ECCE can be overcome (Brady, 2022). Teachers should, therefore, teach children about differences so they respect one another without excluding and bullying others for being different. Early childhood teachers can challenge the prevailing ideas of a new generation regarding race, gender, sexuality, and other oppressed groups by providing young children with examples that reject traditional societal norms. Therefore, through an anti-bias curriculum, teachers provide children with tools to stand up against prejudice, recognise injustice, and understand that unfairness hurts (Nguyen, 2021; Derman-Sparks et al., 2020; Wolpert, 2005). This allows children to embrace their identities and be comfortable with human diversity, thus respecting each other while actively resisting prejudice and discrimination (Derman-Sparks et al., 2015).

3.5. Anti-bias Curriculum Conceptual Framework in Relation to the Study

Due to the expansion and diversity in society, there is also a growing diversity in schools. For this reason, Vittrup (2016); Corson (1998) concur that ECCE teachers should promote anti-bias education because children may behave differently around those different from them. This will help them learn to accept and value differences in others. However, anti-bias education initiatives have been implemented in various ways, and there is little and inconsistent data demonstrating the programmes' ability to apply what has been taught effectively (Levine, 2006). However, due to multiple differences, children end up bullying, teasing, stereotyping, and excluding each other. A truly anti-bias response would necessitate ways to teach about race, gender, and dis/or the ability to broaden children's understandings about difference, prejudice, and becoming allies (Sapon-Shevin, 2017). The teachers are responsible for teaching the children about differences to avoid exclusion and oppressive behaviour.

The study also looks at how teachers implement inclusion. Promoting an anti-bias curriculum in the classroom is one-way teachers can implement inclusion (Sapon-Shevin, 2017; Lin et al., 2008; Devarakonda & Maconochie, 2024), as they create a peaceful environment whereby children know and respect each other's differences. Through creating a peaceful environment whereby children respect differences, teachers should tell children how much pain can result when children are teased or treated differently because of their differences (Mills & Carwile, 2009). Without an anti-bias curriculum to help children differentiate between right and wrong, inclusion will not be adequately implemented in an ECCE learning programme.

Children in ECCE have intersecting identities, which subject them to oppression and disadvantage. For instance, a girl of colour, a boy from a disadvantaged family, an overweight child with learning disabilities, and a disabled immigrant child may face oppression. Therefore, Mohan and Jepkemboi (2019), and Nguyen (2021) allude that teachers help oppressed children stand up for themselves and embrace their diversity. Teachers in ECCE must address challenging biases and prejudice based on these inequalities, and they should treat all children equally in the classroom without neglecting any child or having anyone feel oppressed or discriminated against.

3.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an account of this study's theoretical and conceptual framework and further stated how it relates to inclusion in ECCE. The anti-bias curriculum is a teaching approach that

aims to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the early years. It is designed to help children develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or other social identities. Intersectionality theory examines how intersecting identities subject children to oppression and disadvantage. It enables teachers to alleviate oppression and privilege in the classroom by embracing equality. Therefore, theoretical and conceptual frameworks promote inclusion, equity, and social justice in the classroom. The next chapter presents the research methodology chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

Guided by my research objectives, the previous chapter covered the literature review summarising the current and relevant knowledge concerning inclusion. This chapter presents the research methodology, which entails the research paradigm, research approach, case study research design, participant selection, study location, study location, data generation methods and generation processes, thematic data analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and limitations to the study. The research methodology entails how the data for the study will be acquired in keeping with approved standards of empirical investigation. Details of adherence to ethical issues and limitations of the study are also presented.

Study area

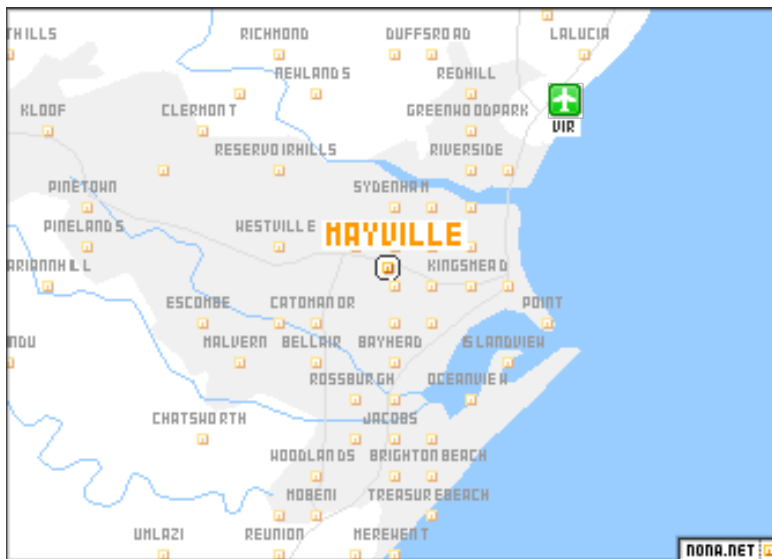


Figure 4.1. Mayville Map

Source: <https://nona.net/features/map/placedetail.1015047/Mayville/>

4.2. Research Methodology

A research methodology describes how a researcher intends to conduct their research. It is a methodical, logical approach to solving a research challenge (Sileyew, 2019). A methodology describes a researcher's approach to the research to produce trustworthy, credible results that fulfil the researcher's goals and objectives. It specifies what data will be generated, where, and how it will be generated and interpreted (Sileyew, 2019). The research methodology discusses and explains the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data generation and analysis methods employed in the study (Rahi, 2017; Williams, 2007).

4.2.1. Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is the presumption and belief that gives research its shape. “A paradigm is a broad framework or point of view that offers insights into life and is based on certain beliefs about the nature of reality.” (Babbie, 2001, p.3). The term research paradigm in educational research describes a researcher’s worldview (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Khatri, 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). This worldview is the point of view, way of thinking, school of thought, or collection of shared beliefs that informs the interpretation or meaning of research results (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Furthermore, it provides a set of assumptions and understandings which underpin all aspects of the research process.

The interpretive paradigm is suitable for this study as it allows the researcher to view the world through the knowledge and experiences of the participants (Alharahsheh & Puise, 2020; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretive paradigms highlight “that reality is socially constituted and that social scientists aim to comprehend how people interpret that reality” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p.15). Thanh and Thanh (2015) assert that interpretivists see the world through the eyes of the participants chosen to give their interpretation of reality to include their view of the world. This paradigm is appropriate as this study aims to understand and interpret teachers' responses to their experiences with inclusion in an early childhood centre.

Researchers in this paradigm aim to describe and understand how people make sense of their world. The purpose is to understand how people make sense of the context in which they live and work (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Hence, this study intends to get the perceptions and experiences of the participants as inclusive ECCE teachers in an informal settlement. This

paradigm is suitable as it seeks to find multiple realities or truths that are specific and non-generalizable.

4.2.2. Research Approach

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach. This approach enabled me to investigate certain particular concerns in-depth and open investigation (Hancock et al., 2001; Hanson et al., 2011). It aided in gaining a thorough understanding of teachers' behaviour and performances and the factors underlying such behaviour and performances. This also aids in categorizing difficulties as they emerge during the research process. In this study, semi-structured questionnaires and interviews were utilised. This approach will describe teachers' perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

4.2.3. Case Study Research Design

While the research methodology is a logical approach to solving a research challenge, the research design specifies how data will be generated and the analytical methods to be used. In this study, a case study is used as a research design. Usually, a research design aligns with the research objectives and context (Harrison et al., 2017). Hence, the case study design enables an in-depth, multifaceted examination of complicated issues in participants' real-world contexts (Crowe et al., 2011). It is especially effective when attempting to gain a comprehensive understanding of a subject, event, or phenomenon of interest in its natural, real-life environment through extensive contextual analysis of a small number of occurrences or situations and their relationships (Heale & Twycross, 2018; Zainal, 2007; Crowe et al., 2011; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The case study method in this study will allow me to evaluate data in a specific context. In this study, a small number of people will be analysed from a specific centre, whereby their perceptions concerning inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement will be evaluated.

Researchers employ this research design in the interpretive paradigm (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It is a well-known method that allows researchers to broaden and give a comprehensive view of a specific circumstance, event, or thing (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Crowe et al., 2011). In this case, an exploration of teachers' perceptions of inclusion in early childhood care and ECCE education in informal settlements will be compared to the participants' lived experiences.

4.2.4. Selection of Participants

Reaching every individual in a particular group is practically impossible and time-consuming. Sampling is used to target individuals for interviews and questionnaires. Purposive sampling was utilised in this study to ensure that the selected participants could provide the information needed for this study or data relevant to the study (Kelly et al., 2010; Campbell et al., 2020).

With purposive sampling, the researcher can select participants who provide data most relevant to the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Participants are selected based on their knowledge or need for the study, and those who do not meet the profile are not selected (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mason (2017) and Robinson (2014) state that purposive sampling is only effective when limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of the research design and aims and objectives. The participants must be able to provide in-depth knowledge of the study (Bernard, 2017) and share their understanding and perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Using purposive sampling, teachers were selected from the school's suitable sampling frame to participate in this study. This selection technique was ideal for this study since it ensured that every participant selected could provide in-depth and relevant data. In the end, a sample of four participants was selected from a centre situated in Cato Manor. The participants included three teachers and one teacher assistant working with children from birth to four years in the Cato Manor informal settlement.

The participants selected included three teachers and one teacher assistant, they all work with children from birth to age four, and they are able to provide data most relevant to the study due to their knowledge and experience that they have in the centre. All the participants are female, they are all black and their nationality language is Isizulu. Their teaching experience ranges from one year to twelve years in ECD. Three of the participants have a level 4 further education and training certificate in ECD, and one participant that is the teacher assistants has certificates in short courses for early childhood development. The table (4.2) below provides more detail of the research participants. To ensure confidentiality, the names of participants were replaced by pseudonyms.

Table 4.2: Participants' Details

Research Participants	Teaching Experience	Age Group of Children Taught	Qualifications	Number of Children	Nationality Home Language
<i>Samu – ECCE Teacher</i>	12 years	4-5 years	Level 4 further education and training certificate in ECD	39 children	Isizulu
Jabu – ECCE Teacher Assistant	One year	4-5 years	Certificates in short courses for early childhood development.	39 children	Isizulu
Hlengiwe - ECCE Teacher	8 years	3-4 years	Level 4 further education and training certificate in ECD	60 children	Isizulu
Smangele - ECCE Teacher	7 years	0-2 years	Level 4 further education and training certificate in early childhood development. First aid short course certificate	21 children	Isizulu

4.2.5. Location of the Study

The research study takes place in an informal settlement in Cato Manor, Mayville, in KwaZulu-Natal, as shown in Figure 4.1. According to Cross, Bekker, Clark, and Richards (1992), the area, was originally given to George Christopher Cato by the Governor of the Cape in 1845 in recognition of his services. He subdivided the land and sold it to Indians, who later let the land out to tenants. The area was close to the central business district and convenient for workers employed in the city. Hence, the area began to attract the development of informal settlements in the mid-1940s. The lack of playgrounds, the narrow roads, the dumping site close to the centre, and the ongoing criminal activities make this area unsuitable for the development of young children. Although Cato Manor is recognised for being home to Indians who were impacted by the apartheid group areas act, a large portion of the township is now made up of unemployed Black Africans, where the living conditions are extremely harsh due to limited resources and jobs. There are preschools, elementary schools, high schools, a police station, and a post office among the available resources. The preschool and daycare centre selected for the study consists of three groups of babies, toddlers and young children. The preschool and daycare centres, known as crèches or preschools, offer programmes for young children, ages 0 to 5, to acquire critical social, emotional, and cognitive abilities (Ngwaru, 2012).

4.2.6. Data Generation Methods and Generation Processes

The study uses semi-structured questionnaires and interviews to obtain participants' in-depth understanding of the study. This qualitative research captured a comprehensive understanding of the study within multiple data sources (Patton, 1999; Thorne, 2000). Furthermore, the literature alludes that using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena is called triangulation (Patton, 1999). Hammersley (2008) further concurs that triangulation is based on the premise that it is possible to lower the likelihood of forming incorrect conclusions by gathering evidence from sources with very different potential risks to validity. Therefore, the study uses semi-structured questionnaires and interviews.

Data was generated face-to-face during school hours. A grade R classroom was used to conduct interviews, children from that the grade R class were sent to a different class so that interviews can be carried out. The teachers were interviewed one at a time, and the interviews were recorded using a smartphone, and teachers were given time to freely respond.

The study further uses transcription as a data generation process to transcribe semi-structured interviews. Transcribing data from audio recordings involves converting speech into written text (Bailey, 2008). This was done manually, and the audio recordings were transcribed to written words, which were then reduced, and after that, they were interpreted and represented to make written text readable and meaningful.

4.2.6.1. Semi-structured Questionnaires

Questionnaires are the most common data generation instrument used in educational research (Adejimi et al., 2010; Valli, 2017; Nworgu, 2006). In this study, semi-structured questionnaires were used to generate data from participants. Semi-structured questionnaires differ from structured questionnaires as more open-ended questions are posed (Cleave, 2023). The open-ended questions enable the participants to answer as they want to, in their own words (Bertram, & Christiansen, 2014). Semi-structured questionnaires allow for open-ended questions that can be tailored to the needs of the individual participants (Adejimi et al., 2010; Bowling, 2005); this allows researchers to gather detailed and nuanced data on a particular topic. Semi-structured questionnaires enable participants to provide detailed, in-depth responses explaining the issues (Bowling, 2005). The semi-structured questionnaires are suitable for this research as I aim to explore teacher perceptions, thus allowing participants to offer detailed explanations of their experiences.

Semi-structured questionnaires were used to gather in-depth data about the participants' perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. These were initially explained and dropped off with the participants to complete. Participants, however, stated that the language used in the questionnaires was too tricky. Thus, I looked at each question and translated and rewrote them into IsiZulu for a clearer understanding. The participants were given enough time to fill in the questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed in their own personal time and collected once completed.

4.2.6.2. Semi-structured Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are a popular method for generating information about people's experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings about reality (Ryan et al., 2009; Edwards & Holland, 2023). Interviews are classified into three types based on their degree of structuring, namely, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The study will employ semi-structured interviews to understand people's complex behaviour. Semi-

structured interviews combine both structured and unstructured interviews (Adams, 2015). During semi-structured interviews, specific questions are prepared and asked to every candidate, while other questions come up naturally during an unstructured exchange of ideas between me and the research participants (Zojceska, 2018). This is useful in qualitative research, as in-depth knowledge or understanding from the participants on a specific topic is shared (Kallio et al., 2016). This allows the researcher to examine participant ideas, sentiments, and opinions regarding a specific subject and deeply investigate personal and occasionally delicate matters (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Furthermore, a semi-structured interview is conducted conversationally instead of mindlessly following the questions precisely as stated in a standardised survey. A possible limitation of semi-structured interviews is that the conversation may stray from the agenda and touch on entirely unnecessary content (Adams, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews are significant for this study as they are carried out conversationally with a carefully constructed interview framework consisting primarily of open-ended questions. This helped extract pertinent layers of information, even some I had not anticipated. Participants shared their perceptions and understanding of the study, where they could talk freely about their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perceptions on inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to generate in-depth data. The interviews were arranged at the centre by appointment and, the sessions were recorded using a cell phone. Notes were also made during the sessions. Confidentiality was ensured as information shared was not discussed with other participants. Due to limited time, interviews were carried out on two different days. The participants were allowed to use their mother tongue, which enabled a flow in the conversation and more detailed insights into the participants' lived experiences.

4.2.7. Thematic Data Analysis

The analytical framework used in the study is thematic data analysis. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020); Guest et al. (2011), thematic analysis detects, analyses and interprets patterns in qualitative data. It exclusively applies to qualitative data and focuses on identifying patterns and themes. Lester et al. (2020) assert that thematic analysis is a good beginning point for learning and conducting thorough qualitative analyses for various reasons. The authors mentioned above saw thematic analysis as having significant theoretical flexibility and the ability to be utilized as just an analytic method rather than a methodology, as most other qualitative approaches are. Caulfield

(2022) argues that thematic analysis is a helpful method for conducting research when you want to learn something about people's ideas, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from a collection of qualitative data, such as interview transcripts, social media profiles, or survey responses.

A deductive approach was applied through thematic analysis. This entails addressing data analysis using pre-determined themes and categories, based on which the data is appraised (Proudfoot, 2022). The themes and categories required for the research govern the study's results in this type of thematic analysis. In this study, I started by analysing the data to identify the basic themes used for the analysis. After becoming familiar with the data, the next step in the thematic analysis is coding the transcripts of the organised data. After that, highlighting the themes is one of the most critical steps of the thematic analysis. It involves studying the codes and keywords identified in the previous step and categorising the data into different themes. I followed this by reviewing the themes, ensuring that they are suitable for the main objective of the research. Thereafter, I described the themes, and set definite criteria. This assisted in categorising the data into each theme more effectively. Finally, I studied the categorised data carefully while making relevant observations and inferences. Having done this, the data were turned into the final report for thematic analysis. Figure 4.2 outlines the data analysis procedures that were carried out.

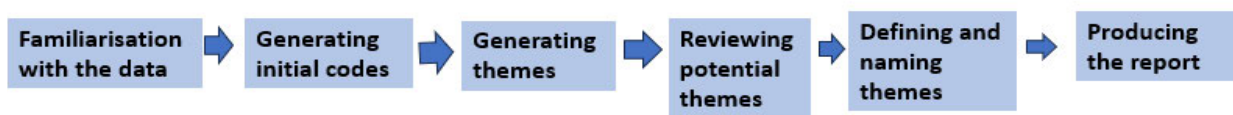


Figure 4.2 Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis

Source: Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke, 2006

4.2.7.1. Steps in Thematic Analysis

Familiarisation with the data

This is the most arduous stage. Prior to transcribing and taking initial notes, I first listened to each interview. I then manually transcribed the interviews after listening to them once more. Subsequently, the data were examined several times so to get familiar with it.

Generating initial codes

I coded the transcribed data, by writing key themes on the side and highlighting them. This made it easy to note the codes. The codes were informative in developing themes.

Generating themes

After relevant data were coded, I reviewed, analysed, and combined the coded data to form themes. The relationship among the different codes was interpreted, and I examined how this relationship informed the narrative of a given theme. The themes and subthemes were assembled in a table.

Reviewing potential themes

I reviewed the themes in relation to the coded data. A review of the relationship of each theme and subtheme was done, and how the themes related to the data. Some themes were revised upon reviewing them so they related to the data as well as the sub-themes.

Defining and naming themes

I then presented a detailed analysis of the thematic framework. Each individual theme and sub-theme were expressed in relation to both the data presented and the research questions. Naming themes is very important, as they indicate what has been captured from the data. The names that were given were concise and informative.

Producing the report

Pertinent data were then selected to be included in the research report.

4.2.8. Trustworthiness of the Study

Adler (2022) concurs that all research must be trustworthy to be relevant. Trustworthiness, also known as the rigour of a study, refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). Bertram and Christiansen (2014) similarly stated that the degree of confidence in the study's data, interpretation, and research methodology is referred to as its level of trustworthiness. Rallis and Rossman (2009) define trustworthiness as standards demonstrating that a research study has been conducted competently and ethically. Curtin and Fossey (2007), further state that by trustworthiness, they mean the extent to which the findings are an authentic reflection of the personal or lived experiences of the

phenomenon under investigation. Trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry supports the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth paying attention to (Elo et al., 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985); and Anney (2014) trustworthiness should be evaluated by looking at credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.8.2.1. Credibility

An important aspect of trustworthiness is credibility. This relates to the confidence in the research findings (Kyngäs & Kääriäinen, 2020) and the authenticity of the findings in a study. Credibility concerns about how congruent the findings are with reality (Nyirenda et al., 2020). The literature further states that the approaches to enhance credibility include prolonged engagement, triangulation, saturation, rapport building, iterative questioning, member checking, and inclusive coding approach, where all themes are coded iteratively rather than reduced to fit predetermined criteria and reflexivity. Furthermore, Credibility is enhanced by the researcher describing his or her experiences as a researcher and verifying the research findings with the participants (Cope, 2014). In this study, methodological triangulation ensured credibility by using more than one data collection method (Stahl & King, 2020). This study used semi-structured questionnaires and interviews; I further ensured credibility through participant verification of findings, which entailed sharing a copy of the research findings with participants to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the data (Stahl & King, 2020).

4.8.2.2. Confirmability

Confirmability also contributes to trustworthiness and relates to the neutrality of the findings, where the research findings reflect participants' opinions, perceptions, and experiences rather than the researcher's interests or biases (Kyngäs & Kääriäinen, 2020). Anney (2014) concurs that confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study could be verified or corroborated by another researcher. The bracketing process enables researchers to become aware of their own beliefs, which may impact their interpretation of the research findings (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The researcher can show confirmability by explaining how conclusions and interpretations were made and providing evidence that the findings were obtained directly from the data (Cope, 2014). In order to attain confirmability, researchers need to show that the findings are connected to the conclusions in a manner that is easy to follow and can be repeated as a procedure (Moon et al., 2016). Studies show that the confirmability of qualitative inquiry is achieved through an audit trail, reflexive journal and triangulation (Anney, 2014). During the study, I reflected how the research

findings were interpreted and to what extent they influenced preconceived notions were reflected. Once more, participant verification of the findings ensured this component of trustworthiness.

4.8.2.3. Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be used in other situations and with different types of respondents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). According to Cope (2014), findings that can be applied to different people or environments are said to be transferable. The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thick description makes it easy for other researchers to do a similar study with similar conditions in a different setting (Anney, 2014). The findings of this study may be relevant to teachers and researchers in the ECCE context, who may be able to relate the findings to their own experiences. Seeing that there is limited study on ECCE in an informal settlement, this study may contribute to the limited study where teachers in ECCE are given more knowledge and this could build on existing research on the study to help enhance study of other researchers.

4.8.2.4. Dependability

Dependability is the degree to which the findings of the study are consistent and replicated (Kyngäs & Kääriäinen, 2020). Similarly, Cope (2014) concurs that consistency of the data under comparable circumstances is referred to as dependability. Dependability is the degree to which research procedures are documented so that someone not involved in the study can follow, review, and assess the research process; It also refers to the reliability and consistency of the research findings (Moon et al., 2016). The procedures used in the study should be documented in detail to directly address the dependability issue. This will allow another researcher to replicate the work, but perhaps not with exactly the same outcomes. Consequently, one could think of the research design as a prototype model (Shenton, 2004). In addition, dependability ensures confidence in the study's results and conclusions and is achieved by adhering to the research methodology with transparency (Amin et al., 2020). To achieve this, I once more encouraged participant verification of data, triangulation of data sources and greater reflexivity in interpretations and conclusions.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

Ethical research gives the researcher guidelines to conduct research responsibly (Ajuwon, 2020). The researcher must follow ethical principles, which respect participants' autonomy and adhere participants' autonomy and adhere to the principles of non-maleficence and beneficence.

Researchers should get consent from participants who are free to withdraw anytime. Giving consent means the participants agree to participate in the study. After receiving a clear explanation of the study, they can decide to participate and volunteer for the research. They are also free to stop participating in the research at any time. Non-maleficence ensures that no harm is done to participants physically and emotionally. Anonymity is observed as details of the setting and details of participants will not be mentioned; their comments on their experiences will be treated with confidentiality. The researcher must always act beneficence by avoiding harm, promoting good outcomes, and benefitting others. The study will be favourable as it would lead to positive change in the long run; the experiences of classroom teachers can create some change in the challenges they face in inclusive classrooms.

Participants were given a consent letter stating that their participation was entirely voluntary. This clarified that their personal information and identity would be kept private and that participants might withdraw from the research at any time during the data generation in the form of interviews and questionnaires. Children were not included in this study under any circumstances.

Before embarking on the indicated study, I obtained the following:

- Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's ethical committee.
- Permission from the Department of Education to conduct research in schools.
- Gatekeeper's permission (principal).
- Informed consent forms were given to teachers to consent to participate by signing them.

Data generation commenced, ensuring all participants' complete confidentiality and trust.

4.4. Limitations to the Study

The centre is situated in an unsafe environment, where there is a large number of unemployed individuals engaging in criminal activities. Participants in the study were also overwhelmed with their workloads as ECCE personnel and could not be interviewed or fill in questionnaires during school hours. I had to therefore make provisions to visit them after school hours. Furthermore, participants provided similar or insufficient information towards the study being conducted. To solve this issue, I had to probe and ask more profound questions, which meant repeat interviews and an extended timeframe for data generation. Small sample sizes also cannot be generalised;

they must be transferred cautiously. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to all ECD centres in informal settlements as teacher perceptions, understanding, and experiences come from a few participants from one centre.

As the principal researcher, I also encountered various challenges throughout the research project. Initially, being a young female required travelling a significant distance to reach the research site. The ECD centre in an informal settlement was far from my residence, necessitating three taxis to reach the destination. In retrospect, seeking a peer's assistance to accompany me on fieldwork could have been prudent for safety reasons.

4.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the research methodology employed in generating the required data. The chapter presented an interpretive research paradigm and qualitative approach. The chapter outlined the research methodology, which entails the research paradigm, research approach, case study research design, participant selection, study location, data generation methods and generation processes, thematic data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and limitations to the study. The next chapter explores the data presentations and findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter covered the research methodology, including the research paradigm, research approach, case study research design, selection of participants, study location, data generation methods and generation processes, thematic data analysis, study trustworthiness, the study's ethical considerations, and limitations. This chapter presents the study's data presentation and analysis. The findings reported in this chapter are based on semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical examination of the research findings. The data were interpreted by transcribing the interview session from an audio clip and transcribing the data presented in questionnaires by participants.

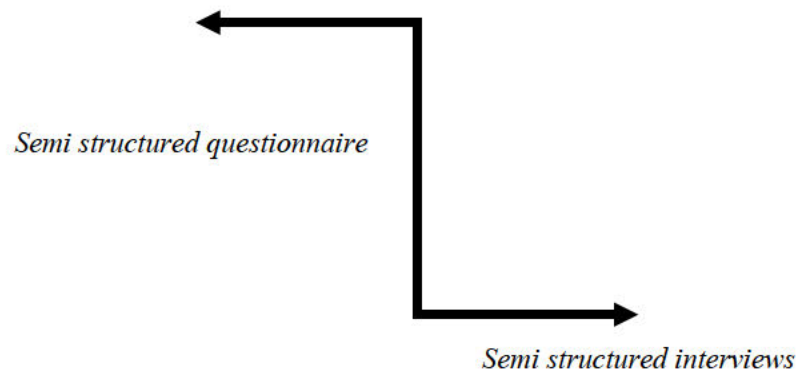


Figure 5.1: Research methods for teachers

This chapter will examine ECCE teachers' perceptions of inclusion in an informal settlement. This research aims to learn about teachers' perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Semi-structured questionnaires and interviews were used to generate data on the thoughts and understandings of four participants (Figure 5.1). The following research questions drove the investigation:

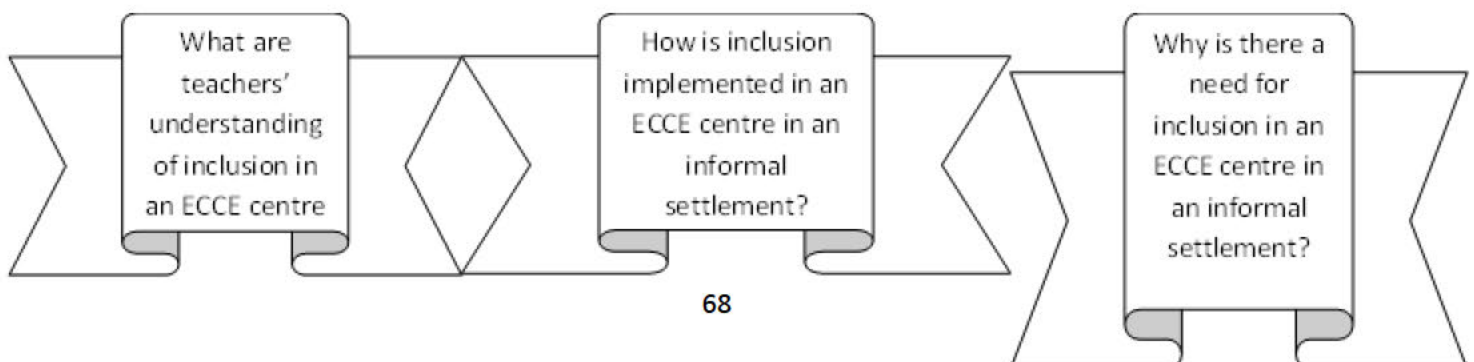


Figure 5.2: Research questions

Guided by the research questions demonstrated in Figure 5.1, the study generated data that was analysed in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Using thematic analysis, the data generated from the participants through questionnaires and interviews were analysed, whereby common patterns of data were identified and grouped into themes that revolved around teachers’ understanding of inclusion in education. This helped make sense of the data presented.

Data generated from the semi-structured questionnaire and interviews, , will be categorised into common themes relating to teachers' perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Themes were developed according to the data that was generated and transcribed. Using pseudonyms protected the participants' identities and enabled accessible communication with few restrictions.

Table 5.1: Research Questions and Findings

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS			
Research Question	Data Generation	Theme	Sub-themes
1. What are teachers’ understanding of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured questionnaires • Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THEME 1: Teachers’ understanding of inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myopic vs broad views of inclusion • Equity vs equality • A need for teacher training in inclusion • Intersectionality
2. How is inclusion implemented in ECCE in an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured questionnaires • Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THEME 2: The implementation of Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including All children • Collaborative Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groupwork

informal settlement?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming all children • Family Participation • Prepare the environment. • Language • Dialogue • Praise • Accommodating different learning styles • Use of stories • Respect for other teachers and the school
3. Why is there a need for inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured questionnaires • Semi-structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THEME 3: Benefits of an inclusive ECCE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to children • Benefits to teachers • Benefits to families, community, and society • Promotes justice and kindness among children. • Justice • Respect for all diversities

Discussion of findings

In this section, the three main themes that emerged from the data are discussed:

Participants’ understandings of inclusion, how teachers implement inclusion and why teachers need to be inclusive in ECCE.

5.2. Theme 1: Participants’ Understandings of Inclusion

The following theme highlights participants’ understanding of inclusion in relations to short sighted (myopic views) of inclusion versus broad views of inclusion. The theme also reveals participants’ understanding of the concepts of equity and equality. The need for participant training to enhance their knowledge of inclusion and the concept of intersectionality is also underscored.

5.2.1. Myopic vs Broad Views of inclusion

The data from the semi-structured questionnaires and interviews revealed that participants believed inclusion centred on special needs and disability. For instance, Hlengiwe mentioned that “*inclusion is where you combine children in the classroom along with those who are considered to have special needs. It means a school will educate all abilities and backgrounds in a mainstream environment.*” The understanding of inclusion shown by Hlengiwe is based on children who are considered as special needs in the learning programme. This short-sighted or myopic view of inclusion looks at how children with disabilities are included with children who are considered regular or ‘normal’. This view centres on how children who have disabilities are accommodated and catered for in a mainstream school and overlooks other social identities, vulnerable to exclusion in the early learning programme. This understanding of inclusion, where impaired children are educated alongside children in regular classrooms, aligns with a medical model of disability (Cologon, 2013; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Consequently, this model focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of an impairment, which may entail the placement of a child in a special environment and the labelling of a child according to a category of impairment (Harfiani et al., 2020; Mahadew & Hlalele, 2022; Florian, 2019). Aligned with the theory of intersectionality and the anti-bias approach, inclusion in schools deals with more than a medical model as it has a broader social justice agenda, which could include several other identity markers vulnerable to exclusion.

The data that emerged from the research also indicated some participants' views of inclusion adopted a social model. In this model, not only the disabled but people from diverse identities need to be included. Jabu stated, “*inclusion is to embrace all people irrespective of race, gender and disability. It is to welcome all people, not only those with disabilities, as it includes many other identities that are vulnerable to marginalisation*”. Samu also mentioned in her narrative “*inclusion is where we combine different children by their languages and by how they live. The disabled and those who are not disabled, it could be physically or psychologically, along with children who can speak along with those who cannot speak.*” Both Samu and Jabu’s understanding of inclusion aligns with Musara et al. (2020) and Mahadew and Hlalele (2022), who claim that inclusion has a broader human rights and social justice agenda.

Participant Samu's statement also emphasises a critical conclusion regarding participants' understanding of inclusion. Samu's statement indicates an understanding of inclusion, which includes children who may have physical or psychological impairments as well as children with speech difficulties. The presence of physical disabilities may be easily identified and accommodated by early years teachers in comparison to psychological impairments, which are not so easy to identify but still require intervention and accommodation. Hence, the building of ramps at schools to accommodate wheelchairs is just as critical as providing accommodations for a child diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety or dyslexia is just as vital. Aligned with the anti-bias approach and intersectionality theory, Hlengiwe's and Jabu's statement recognises inclusion as a broader concept, including children with special needs and those from other identities and backgrounds. These identity markers could include diversities in skin colour, gender, religion, language, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation, to name a few. It was clear that participants' understanding of inclusion in this study included both narrow and broad views.

5.2.2. Equity vs. Equality

The participants displayed an understanding of equity and equality in their narratives on their understanding of inclusion. In contrast to equity, equality denotes a system in which all individuals have equal access to opportunities and resources, as a one-size-fits-all approach to human rights (Segall, 2013). For instance, in her narrative, Samu stated, "*The role of teachers in an inclusive classroom is being able to face the different types of children in the classroom. As a teacher, you must be able to accommodate all of them and not treat any child differently.*" She shows an understanding of equality in inclusion as she says the different types of children should not be treated differently, which means there should be equality where all of them are treated the same or receive equal opportunities.

Additionally, aligned with Samu's understanding of inclusion, Jabu stated, "*If intersectionality has to do with children who are discriminated, then they should not be discriminated at school, but they should be treated equally.*" Children who are discriminated against are those who possess identities that make them vulnerable to exclusion; the interconnected nature of their social identities creates interdependent systems of disadvantage. Jabu stated that these children who face discrimination due to their social identities should be treated equally, which means there should

be equality among them, and they would receive equal access to opportunities and resources in the classroom. Inevitably, creating an environment where all children, regardless of background, have equal opportunities in terms of both access to and quality of education should be the goal of efforts to ensure social justice in education. Scholars have proposed that schools can make a difference and promote social change in response to many societies' social and academic disparities (Gümüş et al., 2020). Nevertheless, aligned with the anti-bias approach and intersectionality theory inclusion in schools is more than providing equal opportunities for diverse children with diverse abilities. It is also about knowing how different children learn and providing resources and opportunities that would work for them to help them succeed.

The data generated from the participants also reveal notions of equity in their understanding of inclusion. Equity, unlike equality, acknowledges that different populations face different barriers to success and works to limit or eliminate these barriers (Grant & Sleeter, 2012). Hlengiwe states that *“different activities should be provided to different children according to their abilities, no one is to be left behind not doing anything in the classroom, and everyone should get an opportunity to learn something.”* Providing different resources is seen as a way to achieve fairness and justice where equality may not be enough. This understanding of inclusion aligns with Milken Institute School of Public Health (2020) and Buchholtz et al. (2020), that *equity* means achieving equality by providing additional support or resources to those who need it. Jabu also mentions, *“We set lessons to be inclusive by identifying the learning objectives and planning specific learning activities by creating a timeline to assess children.”* Her narrative demonstrated an understanding of equity as she says they plan specific learning activities upon identifying learning objectives; this implies that children with diverse learning styles receive the support and time they need, thus providing equitable opportunities resulting in their success. Teachers should be able to identify the diverse social identities that children possess. In so doing, they would also identify their difficulties, thus providing opportunities that would benefit them and help them succeed. Aligned with the anti-bias approach and intersectionality theory, treating children equally proves to be a barrier to inclusion. It is evident that participants' understanding of inclusion revolved around both concepts of equity and equality.

5.2.3. A Need for Teacher Training in Inclusion

Data generated using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires revealed that participants believed there was a need for teacher training in inclusion. The participants in the study did not receive any training or workshops to implement an inclusive ECCE programme. Teachers must receive training in inclusion to treat children appropriately (Alasuutari et al., 2019). For instance, Samu stated, *"It is important to study inclusive education as we get a variety of children in the classroom, as much as we do not usually get disabled children, but children also vary in languages in the classroom. In order to work with these children adequately, teachers need to study inclusive education to know different communication methods."* Therefore, inclusion training is vital as it allows teachers the flexibility to accommodate diverse learning needs.

Samu also claimed that training an inclusive teacher would enable teachers to recognise and embrace children with diverse identities. *"It is important as a teacher to understand inclusion because we foster different children in the classroom. If you do not understand inclusion, you will not be able to face different children in the classroom with their different needs"*, stated Samu. Training enables teachers to accommodate diverse identities in early care and education. Also, in agreement with Samu, Hlengiwe stated, *"We need inclusive education in schools because we get a variety of children, so as teachers, we can gain skills so that we have experience in teaching diverse children."* Training helps teachers better understand inclusion and how to implement it adequately by accommodating diverse children in their care. In addition, to be inclusive, teachers must be prepared to become lifelong learners eager to learn, unlearn, and relearn to adapt to a continuously changing reality (Mahadew & Hlalele, 2022). By achieving this, teachers may also be able to teach children about inclusion so that they know how to work together and understand the importance of inclusion from an early age. This could help eliminate negative behaviour, such as stereotyping and discriminating against different people. Participants thus stated valid points on the need for teacher training in inclusion. It was clear that these teachers required training to be able to understand inclusion appropriately.

5.2.4. Intersectionality

Findings revealed that the research participants required a more in depth understanding of intersectionality. For teachers to create an inclusive ECCE, they need to understand intersectionality, as this vital understanding ensures authentic inclusion. Intersectionality assists

teachers in understanding that not all identities experience privilege or discrimination in the same way. Therefore, teachers need to consider the intersectionality of multiple identities in the early learning programme. Some participants in the study showed no understanding of what intersectionality is; for instance, Jabu stated, *“I have not heard about intersectionality. It is the first time”* However, Jabu could recognise diverse identities with diverse needs in her classroom. Firstly, she mentioned she had *“a learner who is half Zimbabwean, he is very disruptive, he hits other children and has been expelled from his old school for his behaviour. He does not know how to behave. He is always all over the place and has limited knowledge of the IsiZulu language.”* Jabu recognised that this child’s identity as a foreigner who spoke a different language experienced exclusion in so many different ways the early learning programme. He spoke a different language, was a foreigner, and exhibited behaviour problems. Secondly, she noted how identities from poorer socio-economic groups were also disadvantaged. *“I have a learner who is disadvantaged in my class, she has breakfast and lunch in school. She has a problem concentrating most of the time, she is often tired and sleepy.”* Jabu felt that this situation disadvantaged the child as she felt excluded when other children were having their snacks from home. Although the school provided breakfast and lunch for the children, a snack period was allocated where they eat their snacks from home. The child with no snacks therefore felt excluded. From Jabu's reflections, it was apparent that although she stated that the concept of intersectionality was new to her, she did understand that the children in her class had diverse identities, and these diverse identities often resulted in greater or lesser marginalisation in her classroom. This was important for the study, as to fully understand intersectionality theory, teachers must first recognise how diverse identities intersect in a complex manner resulting in greater privilege or oppression. Jabu’s understanding of diversity alone therefore does not capture a deep understanding of intersectionality theory and the complex effects of the intersection of multiple identity markers.

5.2.5. Theme Summary

This theme revealed teachers’ understanding of inclusion. Participants indicated both a myopic and broad view of inclusion. Some participants understood inclusion as a centre of special needs and disabilities, yet others had a broader view of inclusion where they alluded that *all* children should be included, and no child should be left behind. Participants further indicated an understanding of equity and equality in inclusion, where equity aligns with intersectionality and an anti-bias approach, where children have individual needs. The theme also revealed that

participants needed an in-depth understanding of the concept of intersectionality to understand authentic inclusion. They indicated a need for training to improve their knowledge of inclusion.

5.3. Theme 2: The implementation of Inclusion

Participants revealed that inclusion can be implemented in various ways at their centre. Participant reflections revealed that inclusion can be implemented by including all children, adopting collaborative learning, welcoming all children and encouraging family participation. Teachers need to prepare the environment, overcome language barriers, praise the children and accommodate different styles. To implement inclusion, participants also emphasised the need to use stories and work with peers at the centre respectfully.

5.3.1. Including all Children

Participants in the study agreed that implementing inclusion means including all children. Hlengiwe mentioned in her narrative, *“when doing an activity in the classroom, I ensure that it is an activity that all children will enjoy, an activity that will not take all their time. For those children who are unable to read and write, they go to ‘special corners’, where they play with toys while others do the activity, this means everyone is included and has something to do.”* She mentioned that activities given to children are activities that all children will enjoy, and every learner does an activity that they have the ability to do. Hence, everyone is included and has something to do. A crucial component of inclusion in education is identifying learning challenges and supporting children (Yoro et al., 2020). As a result, inclusion was genuinely implemented by Hlengiwe. Hlengiwe ensured that the younger children who were engaged in playful activities would be able to advance their skills and knowledge when they were ready to do so.

5.3.2. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning reduces stigma and enables children of all abilities to learn and develop alongside each other. This can be achieved when teachers create opportunities for all diverse children to communicate, work and play with one another. For example, Smangele stated, *“to implement inclusion, there should be a way in which children are able to sit well together, as there may be children who cannot speak; integrating children in one space would allow for development to take place without having to exclude children for not being able to do something.”* Smangele’s statement emphasises that implementing inclusion requires that children who experience difficulties or children who are slower to develop should not be excluded due to their inabilities or

difficulties. Learning and playing with children of all abilities encourages positive social-emotional interactions and establishes a supportive peer structure (Berthelon et al., 2019). Children require a supportive and inclusive classroom environment to flourish, and one way to do this is by developing a supportive peer structure. According to Sanger (2020), a tool for promoting a sense of belonging and community among diverse children with a range of learning needs is peer learning. According to the participants, the implementation of inclusion entails involving every child, ensuring that no child is left out, and ensuring children receive the support they require from both teachers and one another. Aligned with the Anti-bias approach, children learn to care for their peers during collaborative activities. This care may later translate to social activism in the classroom, where they speak out against bullying or teasing of children from marginalised identities (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019).

5.3.3. Welcoming all Children

The implementation of inclusion ensures that all children are welcomed, and that their physical and educational needs are accommodated. Implementing inclusion in ECCE is about welcoming children with diverse identities (Mahadew & Hlalele, 2022). Participants stated that they welcome children and give them love. Samu indicated in her narrative that *“I give all children love, I do not divide them, and I ensure that I listen to all of them.”* In addition, Jabu stated, *“I give them a warm welcome and show them love at all times.”* Moreover, Hlengiwe mentioned, *“I am always happy around them. I greet them with a smile and always welcome them.”* The three participants above mentioned that they welcomed children and gave them love. This aligns with research by Berkowitz et al. (2016) in their review of various studies, that when teachers build warm relationships, the result is increased participation and achievement for all children, even those with marginalised identities.

5.3.4. Family Participation

Participation from the family in inclusive schools is essential for fostering the inclusion and well-being of children with a range of needs and abilities. Family participation is crucial in the implementation of inclusion in ECCE. The family's participation makes all children, and their families feel comfortable and supported, especially the vulnerable and marginalised ones (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Hlengiwe asserted, *“You can tell that some parents do not care about their child's education by seeing that children only take out their books or learn in the classroom. I get*

parents involved by asking them to help their child in areas they struggle so they do not fall behind. Some parents are grateful for being included in their child's education and they comply." Hlengiwe stated that some parents care about their child's education and are grateful for being included in their child's education, whereby they comply when asked to get involved and help their children where they are struggling. According to Gómez et al. (2021), families that identify as marginalised may face discrimination, harassment, and social exclusion due to their disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, or other distinctions in society. Their confidence, self-worth, and faith in the educational system may all be impacted. Concerns about their involvement potentially exposing their children to more bullying or discrimination are another concern. Hence, some parents do not participate in their children's education. However, the involvement of family in their children's educations enhances children's sense of belonging, identity, and self-esteem (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Contrary to involved families, no involvement will result in less confident children who do not perform well (Moneva et al., 2020).

The participation of family and community ensures the well-being and development of children, and it promotes cooperation and communication between them and teachers (Murphy et al., 2021). Additionally, it improves children's performance in school. For instance, Jabu also said, *"I divide children into groups and call on each groups parents and show them their children's work, telling them where they do best and where they have difficulties. I then ask the parents to help their children with speaking at home, or with whatever difficulty they may have. For those children who have special needs, I talk to the parents at the side and ask them to get professional help for the learner, as I am not trained to meet their learning needs."* Jabu involves parents assisting the children where they struggle; they may assist them with their learning needs, which would also help improve their performance (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). She also informs parents of children with special needs to get professional help that she cannot offer, which shows how much she cares for the child's needs. Therefore, participants implement inclusion by involving family so they may feel respected and a sense of belonging at the centre.

5.3.5. Prepare the Environment

Teachers need to prepare the environment so that they can implement inclusion adequately. Smangele stated, *"In class, you have to take care of children and ensure that the working environment is in excellent condition for teaching and learning to occur, ensuring that nothing*

will harm children in any way.” She stated that children need to feel safe in their surroundings, where there are no apparent dangers, and they can feel secure. This aligns with Aina and Bipath (2022), who assert that young children learn effectively when they feel safe and secure.

The implementation of inclusion in ECCE requires that there should be adequate resources to meet all needs of children. Samu stated, *“The classroom should be set so that all children are satisfied where everything should be.”* Similarly, Jabu stated, *“I would make my classroom inclusive by getting access to a wider range of resources and prepare the environment with these school resources such as educational toys and books.”* They pointed out that adequate resources should align with the children in the class. For example, books, charts, games and toys should be culturally responsive enough for children of diverse identities to feel included in the early learning programme. They also indicated that resources were hard to come by and they had to improvise many of their resources, due to financial constraints.

5.3.6. Language

The centre comprised of children who used different languages. Samu remarked, *“Teachers need to ensure that they use one language of communication that the majority would understand, for example English.”* She stated that teachers should use a language that the majority would understand. This is problematic as children who do not understand the language of instruction would be excluded. Samu’s remark indicated that she would exclude children who did not understand the language of teaching and learning. Instead, Smangele claimed, *“As we are learning about children, we also have to pay attention to those children who have different communication languages, we have to learn how to teach these children using one language so that they engage along with others.”* Smangele pointed out that one language that all children understand should be used in teaching. Unlike Samu who said a language that the majority would understand must be used, Smangele clarified *“We have to learn how to teach these children with different languages.”* Smangele explained that teaching strategies could include code-switching to include diverse languages in the daily programme.

5.3.7. Dialogue

An essential aspect of establishing a secure and welcoming learning programme for every child in the classroom is having discussions and allowing children to share their knowledge and perceptions. Having a dialogue with the children is having respectful, candid discussions that value

their opinions and experiences and empower them (Gauna et al., 2020). Children's critical thinking abilities, empathy, and comprehension of various cultures and backgrounds are all developed through inclusive dialogue (Pollarolo et al., 2022; Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2020). Jabu stated, *"It is important to ensure that all children share their perspectives, they love being heard and it makes them happy."* Similarly, Hlengiwe said *"inclusion can be implemented by providing opportunities for children to share their own experiences and perspectives on top of that, as we combine a variety of children in the classroom, one should understand each and every learner's situation."* Sharing experiences and perspectives is essential to enact inclusion (Van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2021). This would help teachers understand the children better, provide support, and improve academic achievement (León-Jiménez et al., 2020). It makes children feel welcomed and respected.

5.3.8. Praise

Children should receive encouragement and praise during their early years of education (Wardani et al., 2020). An inclusive ECCE has diverse children with different identities, and teachers implement inclusion at these centres by praising all children, as they may shine in different ways. For example, Jabu said, *"I promote inclusion in the classroom by praising children even for the smallest efforts that they make, by offering tangible forms of encouragement such as giving them stars when they answer questions correctly and when they are well behaved."* Jabu praises children and gives them stars for every answer they get correct, which is very encouraging. The more children are praised, the more they want to keep trying, and it also makes them feel welcomed and appreciated. Jabu also says, *"when asking questions, I allow every learner to give an answer and encourage them to engage; even when the learner answers wrong, we clap hands."* Giving children credit for their work can boost their self-esteem and confidence, improving their attitude toward learning (Morin, 2022). Finally, rewarding children for their accomplishments inspires them to perform even better because they feel accomplished, which can pique their interest in learning and drive them to aim for the highest grade (Wardani et al., 2020).

5.3.9. Accommodating Different Learning Styles

Children do not learn the same way and have different learning styles; teachers must accommodate the different learning styles to help children learn more effectively. Smangele said, *"I teach babies from 0 to 2 years old, I do not do much teaching, but I would say it is important to identify*

children's learning styles because they do not learn the same way. Some children like writing, some children like listening and others like talking. As a teacher you should know the different learning styles of all your children, so you know how to teach them." Smangele mentioned that teachers should know the different learning styles of children so that they know how to teach them.

Howard Gardner, the founder of the theory of multiple intelligences, suggests that instead of having a single general intelligence, people have different unique forms of intelligence. These categories emphasise a comprehensive view of human potential and include linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence (Marens, 2023). Teachers should find which learning styles work for the learner and accommodate them, and there will be inclusion if different learning styles are accommodated. Smangele said, *"There are children who prefer individualised learning, they do not engage like other children when learning, I take such a learner to the side, teach him or her, and it becomes easy to make them responsive and engage."* She accommodates the learning style that the children prefer. By doing so, Smangele ensures that no learner is left behind. Hence, acknowledging different learning preferences and intelligence types are both ways that children can be included.

5.3.10. Use of Stories

Teachers use stories when teaching children, which helps them understand better what is being taught; stories include pictures with words embedded in them. Hlengiwe said, *"I use story cards with pictures to teach and explain, the pictures usually go along with what I am saying and makes it easy for all children to understand."* Hlengiwe claimed that pictures make it easy for children to understand her words. In a class with diverse children, there will be children with cognitive abilities who cannot read or understand what is being said. The use of stories will help them understand what is being said clearly. Smangele stated, *"I use a story book, where I sit and read to the babies, and discuss what has been read, I also show them pictures to help them understand or get a clear picture of what had been taught."* She reads from a storybook, explains what she has read and shows children pictures. Children want to be in the moment and have a big imagination. A way to ensure that all children understand what is being taught is to use pictures and explain in a language they will understand. It was clear that stories were effective in accommodating all children to engage and learn in the early learning programme.

5.3.11. Respect for Other Teachers and the School

Teachers in an ECCE should not only have respect for diverse children in their care, but they should also respect other teachers they work with and the school personnel. For instance, Jabu stated, *“every learner deserves to experience and learn in an atmosphere of respect, where teachers can also develop and maintain friendships with other teachers and the school at large.”* Jabu said children need to learn in an atmosphere of respect, which implies that the more respect teachers have for one another and the school, the better it is for children, as it would create a more open and accepting environment where they will be keen to learn. Smangele also claimed, *“As a teacher I make sure that I have respect for all children and their parents and everyone that I work with.”* Smangele asserted that she respected everyone, including the children, their parents, and the instructors she collaborated with. It was evident that respect was a foundational principle for inclusion and teachers were role models to the children by being respectful to the people around them.

5.3.12. Theme Summary

Many factors contribute to the implementation of inclusion. Participants in the study implemented inclusion in various ways; they accommodated different learning styles by ensuring that all children with different learning needs were catered to. They also allowed children to share their knowledge and perceptions through dialogues, praised children for their smallest efforts, and used stories to teach children as young children learn well through storytelling. Children in ECCE understand better when teachers use stories to teach them. Participants also stated that they welcomed all children, accommodated their needs, gave them love, and welcomed all diversities. This ensures that no child was excluded. Teachers further implemented inclusion by ensuring collaborative learning, where diverse children work together and build good relationships. Participants praised children for the smallest efforts; which kept children happy and motivated them to learn. Teachers prepared the environment, ensuring safety and security and adequate resources to teach diverse children. Teachers ensure families participate in their children’s learning to foster their inclusion, well-being, and academic performance. The findings also revealed that implementing inclusion entails accommodating different languages and overcoming barriers to language in ECCE.

Drawing on both the intersectionality and anti-bias curriculum, both theories support these two findings on the implementation of inclusion. Both theories support inclusion of diverse children in ECCE in an informal settlement. Through the implementation of inclusion all children are included, no child is excluded, even children with overlapping identities that disadvantage them are included whereby they are given the right to an education as well. Children are also taught to accept one another and respect each other's differences through anti-bias curriculum, they also learn to be proud of who they are and embrace their differences. There is collaborative learning, group work, and accommodating different learning styles. Through this, both frameworks are infused, as children are taught to work together, and they receive support in their different learning styles; they are all welcome and none is excluded for being different. Other elements of the implementation of inclusion such as family participation, preparing the environment, use of language, and praising children ensures that children receive support in and out of school, they feel motivated to learn and are encouraged to always do their best.

5.4. Theme 3: Benefits of an Inclusive ECCE

Findings revealed that inclusion benefits all members of the centre, including children, teachers and families.

5.4.1. Benefits to Children

Children benefit from inclusion in different ways. Teachers will support children in creating informed, self-assured, unique social and personal identities. Children will show positive social identities, self-awareness, confidence, and family pride (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019). Smangele alluded, *“Children benefit as they are filled with joy by being with one another, as they learn new things about each other, they learn different things all the time. Inclusion helps children learn about themselves, it helps them learn about how to tackle challenges and build knowledge and thrive.”* Smangele mentioned that children learn new things about each other and themselves; they will learn precise, respectful language to describe themselves and others and be nurtured in their construction of knowledge.

In an inclusive ECCE diverse children, identify differences that they have. Children learn about people's differences while accepting and respecting these differences (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019). Inclusion therefore benefits all children as they learn to be kind and respectful to all, irrespective of differences. Hlengiwe concurred, *“inclusion helps children know what another*

person is. It teaches them that we are different, we do things differently, we come from different places, but at the end we are all human, we should respect each other.” Children learn about different identities and how they should treat each other with respect without discriminating or bullying each other. In addition, Hlengiwe said, “*children benefit in the classroom as they get to grow or develop in stages, as everything done in the classroom has holistic development needed from birth to six years old.*” Early education is essential for promoting children's holistic development, which encompasses their physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, moral, and affective growth (Lunga et al., 2022). Therefore, learning that addresses social, emotional, physical, and intellectual practices simultaneously is holistic development. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Learning activities attempt to incorporate these areas as much as possible to develop an inclusive and well-rounded curriculum.

Disadvantaged children benefit from inclusive ECCE, as it welcomes and supports these children while in their care. Jabu mentioned, “*The centre is beneficial to all the children. Some children have their first and last meal of the day here, they do not even focus on learning because they are looking forward to having breakfast or lunch that will be served. During holidays the children get to come to school, they still receive food, and we take care of them. Parents are very grateful for the little that we do for the children, it is better that we keep them away from the streets and in here where we can take care of them and make sure they never get hungry.*” The disadvantaged and oppressed minority groups are thus also assisted in inclusive ECCE programmes.

5.4.2. Benefits to Teachers

Teachers benefit in different ways from inclusive ECCE. With diverse children with different social identities under their care, they learn how to foster diverse children's needs and accommodate different learning styles. Jabu stated, “*as a teacher, I get the outlet of creativity, because I must design and plan lessons for the children. There are plenty of possibilities to try something new as I also get to learn from them.*” Due to the diverse children in her care, Jabu said she gets the outlet of creativity as she designs and plans lessons for the children. She gets to learn from them as well. Teachers learn from children as well; they learn about their diverse identities, which they get to embrace, as well as how to communicate with them. Hlengiwe concurred, “*on Heritage Day I get to make children practice dance where they can embrace their different cultures and I get to learn about them.*” Thus, Hlengiwe learns about the different cultures of different

children in her classroom. Smangele also learns something from an inclusive ECCE, and she stated, *“I get to learn how children communicate. I may not have known everything especially about how children communicate, how to communicate with children that use a different language or those that cannot communicate at all.”* It is essential to understand how children communicate, as it is a way to express themselves. Communication is crucial for children to develop healthy relationships, as effective communication entails speaking and listening in a way that gives children a sense of importance. Hence, from these reflections, it was evident that teachers also benefited from an inclusive ECCE programme.

5.4.3. Benefits to Families, Community, and Society

Inclusive early childhood education benefits children, the community and society. According to Kurian (2023), inclusive ECCE fosters values like social justice, equality, and respect for all while recognizing and valuing diversity and individuality. Hlengiwe mentioned, *“The centres bring more than just different children together; they also bring families, the community, and society together as well. Their children get to receive an education, some drop off their children very early in the morning and we become parents to their children, we provide breakfast to them and ensure that they are safe. The children get to learn, make friends, and receive support as well.”* According to Hlengiwe, the centre brings together families, the community and society as it does children. A society or a community within an informal settlement has faced many obstacles, disadvantages, and oppression. In addition, Samu alluded, *“for people who live in a disadvantaged community, we do not take care of each other the way that we should, we are not united the way that we should. Parents, families, or guardians that bring different children to our centre are brought together and they learn to work with each other. During parent meetings, they bring up their issues, work together in coming up with solutions. They do not only interact in school only, but outside school, through WhatsApp as well. They become united for their children are in an environment that unites them as well.* Samu stated that the community and society become united for their children as they are also in a united environment. In addition, a society that longs for change and equitable opportunities can obtain both things for their children through inclusive ECCE. The community and society gain from this, as their children can attend school without feeling left out or subjected to discrimination. Hence it was evident that families, and the wider community and society benefited from inclusion in ECCE.

5.4.4. Promotes Kindness Among Children

It is important to teach children the values of empathy, compassion, and respect for others from a young age. Smangele alluded *“In the morning I make sure that we show love among each other, by greeting and hugging each other. We also play a game that we can all enjoy and enable us to work together.”* She makes children show compassion for one another. According to Cheang, Gillions and Sparkes (2019), compassion can be a powerful tool to promote understanding and acceptance of diversity in an inclusive class. Jabu also unpacks, *“I expect children to give each other the same love I give them. I also teach them to share because they do not come from the same homes, some children may not carry snacks, so they share with those that do not have.”* Jabu promotes kindness among children, where they learn how to share with those who have less. Everyone can practice kindness because it is a universal language, regardless of identity or background. Promoting kindness among diverse children in a school setting can help create a secure and welcoming atmosphere where everyone is treated with respect and value (Omodan & Ige, 2021). Furthermore, kind children spread kindness and become kind adults.

Children can learn about fairness and develop the ability to recognise unfairness and bias by acting with compassion and kindness. Jabu mentioned, *“In an event where a child from a poor home is bullied and discriminated, when others laugh at the torn clothes that the child is wearing, I would come to school the following day with torn clothes as well, to show children that there is no problem with wearing torn clothing, they should not bully others and laugh at them, this would make the disadvantaged children feel comfortable.”* Jabu teaches children about fairness and the ability to recognise unfairness and bias by acting with compassion and kindness. Children bully and discriminate against disadvantaged children because of torn clothes. Jabu fosters each child’s capacity to identify discrimination and nurture each child’s empathy critically. Children will increasingly recognise unfairness or injustice, understand that unfairness hurts, and treat the disadvantages fairly and indiscriminately. Hence, it was evident that inclusive ECCE promoted kindness as an important value.

5.4.5. Justice

According to Derman-Sparks et al. (2020), justice enables teachers to foster each child’s capacity to critically identify bias and nurture each child’s empathy for the hurt that bias may cause. To put this into action, children will increasingly recognise unfairness or injustice, have language to

describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. Aligned with the concept of justice, Hlengiwe stated, *“Teachers should combine children with disabilities and no disabilities while ensuring that they do not mistreat each other by trying to make them understand and accept one another.”* By critically identifying the bias of disability or difference, Hlengiwe helps children understand each other's differences and prevents them from mistreating each other. This builds empathy for the hurt that bias causes, promoting justice. Therefore, inclusion is implemented through the promotion of justice as it creates a safe environment where children with identities that oppress or disadvantage them receive kindness and fairness.

Hlengiwe mentioned that she has a child with cognitive difficulties in her class; she stated that *“she is four years old, and her speech is delayed. She is also not potty trained; I have to change her napkin every day.”* She continued by saying, *“I make children understand her situation, I tell them that she is human as well, and they should not exclude her or bully her because she has feelings, she might not be able to do certain things as well, but she is also here for the same reason, which is to receive an education.”* Hlengiwe further promotes justice by making children understand the situation of the child with cognitive abilities while nurturing each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes, by telling them that they should not exclude nor bully the child as she has feelings, implying that it would be hurtful to her. Children will, therefore, recognise injustice and understand that unfairness hurts. This will inevitably create a safe environment where children know what is fair and unfair and always attempt to do what is right. The participant implemented inclusion through the promotion of justice, to ensure that children identify bias while nurturing the empathy that bias causes. It is evident that inclusive ECCE promotes greater justice in the early learning programme.

5.4.6. Respect for All Diversities

Inclusive ECCE respects all diversities, and every child is treated equally. It entails appreciating and accepting differences among individuals, groups, cultures, races, and religions, among other things (Abduh et al., 2020; Hjerm et al., 2019). It entails not passing judgment on people based only on their differences but accepting them for who they are. When we respect diversity, we become more open-minded and knowledgeable about everyone around us. Jabu mentioned, *“Having children with different identities in one space is a practice of diversity as no learner is excluded, all children with their different identities are incorporated, respected and they get to*

learn different things about each other and different ways of doing things.” She stated that having diverse children with different identities is a practice of diversity as different identities are combined and respected. Respecting diversity requires constant learning, which is a continuous process. We can build a more inclusive and equitable society by valuing diversity. Jabu also stated, *“I let every child know that they are important, regardless of their race, culture, etc. I let them know that they are special, even the disabled, and that they all have a purpose. We learn from one another; I can get to learn a few things from them as well.”* Jabu respects each child's various identities, a hallmark of honouring diversity. It is apparent that an inclusive ECCE programme values diversity and guarantees that all children, regardless of their social identities, are accepted and included and that their differences will not lead to exclusion or discrimination.

5.4.7. Theme summary

This theme covered the benefits of inclusion and showed how children, teachers, and society or community benefit from it. It also shows how promoting justice and kindness among children is a benefit of inclusion, as respect for all identities. Participants stated how they support children in creating personal identities, help children learn about identities and differences, and how they should respect each other, be kind and show empathy for one another. They teach children how to share and teach them about fairness and how unfairness or bias against others affects their well-being. Participants stated that teachers also benefit from inclusion and learn how to embrace diverse children. They learn about different cultures and the different ways in which children communicate. In addition, they stated that society also benefits from inclusion because inclusion fosters values like social justice, equality, and respect for all while recognising and valuing diversity and individuality. Aligned with the anti-bias and intersectionality framework inclusion ensures that all people who are excluded or disadvantaged due to their overlapping identities are treated fairly.

5.5. Chapter Summary

Data were gathered from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data generation indicated teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. In response to the first research question, the findings revealed that the participants have both a myopic and broad understanding of inclusion. They were understood the concepts of equity in opposition to equality for authentic inclusion. Participants also indicated a need for training on inclusion and a more in-

depth understanding of the theory of intersectionality. In response to the second research question, participants indicated how they implement inclusion in their centre. They indicated that they accommodated different learning styles, praised children for their efforts, engaged in dialogues to value children's opinions and experiences, prepared the environment by utilising a language that all children would understand, and made use of collaborative learning and stories to teach children. In response to the third research question, the findings revealed that inclusion benefits all children, teachers, families, community, and society. It promotes justice and kindness among children and respects diversity. It was evident from the information obtained that although teachers in an informal settlement had a myopic and broad understanding of theoretical concepts related to inclusion, they found creative ways to implement inclusion at their centres. This was despite their difficulties and challenges at their impoverished centre. The next chapter will summarise the study, recommendations, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Introduction

The data obtained from the study were analysed in Chapter 5. Using thematic analysis, three themes were extracted from the data generated. The study aimed to explore teacher perceptions of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Teachers and teacher assistants at the centre answered questions related to the study. They provided unique perceptions of inclusion in ECCE through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. This chapter outlines the study's summary, followed by the study's recommendations and the conclusion.

6.2. Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were structured into three themes to respond to the three research objectives.

Theme 1: Research Participants' understanding of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

The first theme demonstrated that research participants adopted both myopic and broad understandings of inclusion. Despite their disadvantaged backgrounds and a lack of formal training in inclusion, the research participants also demonstrated an understanding of the differences between equity and equality. Although research participants were unaware of the concept of intersectionality, they understood the concept of diversity and recognised the impact of marginalised identity markers.

Theme 2: Research Participants implementation of inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

Although research participants stated that they did not receive any training on inclusion, they could adequately implement inclusion. In theme two, research participants demonstrated that they had to make all children feel welcomed, valued, and included to implement inclusion. Research participants ensured that the teaching and learning programme was peaceful, where children were taught about differences and to respect diversity without bullying one another. In addition to welcoming all children, the research participants accommodated different learning styles to ensure

that all children's learning needs were met. Research participants also implemented inclusion by preparing the environment and using collaborative learning, where children worked in groups to learn from one another and form friendships. Research participants also implemented inclusion by having respect for other teachers, school personnel and families. Here, children learn behaviour from the people around them; therefore, upon seeing that teachers respect each other, they, in turn, practice respect as well.

Also in this theme, the research participants implemented inclusion by enabling children to share their knowledge and perceptions. Participants reported that children love being heard and feel included when their teachers value their opinions and experiences. Participants praised children for their most minor efforts in the classroom and reported that this motivated them to learn more and made them feel included. Additionally, to implement inclusion, participants involved families in their children's education by sharing their difficulties and encouraging them to assist children at home. Furthermore, participants used stories to teach children, as most children enjoyed learning through stories and felt included. Participants also reported the use of code-switching in children's home language to ensure that they understood the instructions.

Theme 3: Research Participants' perceptions of the need for inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement.

The research participants noted that the children were not the only ones who benefited from an inclusive centre; teachers, families, society, and the community also benefited. Participants reported that children benefited as they learned the impact of bullying behaviour. This developed empathy and respect for children from diverse groups. Participants reported that when diverse children are included, they form friendships with each other, learn how to get along and learn how to look past differences. Teachers also benefit from an inclusive ECCE as they gain more experience in accommodating children from diverse groups. In addition, they learn about different cultures and the different ways in which children communicate. Participants also felt that the society and community benefit from an inclusive ECCE as inclusion fosters values like social justice, equality, and respect for all while recognising and valuing diversity and individuality.

6.3. Recommendations

6.3.1. Teacher Workshops

Workshops to educate ECCE teachers in informal settlements to enhance their knowledge of inclusion. Most of these teachers are underqualified, possess just a level four certificate, and struggle to implement inclusion at their centres. The training will help teachers become more adept at accommodating a varied range of children in the classroom and will teach them the value of ensuring every child feels included and has equal access to educational opportunities.

Young children behave and learn differently (Tizard & Hughes, 2008), and they are frequently misunderstood. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers empathise with children and do not send them to different schools or keep them from participating in any educational activities. Instead, they should be able to accommodate children, so they don't feel excluded. Teachers should try to understand children and what drives them, as they are frequently the targets of punishment when they act out or behave in a way that interferes with learning. Children may not have been exposed to an environment with other children because they come from different homes where they are also accustomed to their cultures and unique ways of doing things. As a result, teachers need to ensure that all children feel valued and respected for their differences (Nieto, 2006; Ford & Kea, 2017), and that their needs are met to get along and work with one another.

6.3.2. Teacher Training on the Utilization of Resources

A classroom is equipped with various resources for teaching and learning, including toys, posters, cue cards, photographs, and more. In order to incorporate inclusion into their teaching, teachers must be able to employ these resources effectively. To keep every child interested in the lesson and accommodated, teachers must adapt and effectively use their resources in a classroom full of diverse children (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005), some of whom have challenges, disabilities, and unique educational needs. Resources are crucial because various children learn in different ways. For example, some children may comprehend visual content better than written wording. Some children struggle to comprehend written material or pictures, so teachers ought to converse with the children verbally so they can understand what they are teaching. They might also need audio and visual aids to ensure the children understand. In order to help them understand better and get the growth and development they require, young children learn best when resources are put into

play (Frimpong, 2021; Mohanty, 1996). They require games, charts, drawings, and demonstrations as part of the teaching and learning process.

Technology can be significantly challenging, particularly for teachers who lack computer skills or training, have never taken a computer course, or are unfamiliar with cutting-edge technology (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012; Hew & Brush, 2006). Technology is used in education to enhance cooperation and communication while engaging lessons (Jonassen & Driscoll, 2004). Technology can be used in centres with a varied group of children who have varying learning needs. Technology in early childhood education enhances the learning process for children while promoting the desired learning and growth outcomes (Clements, 2019). Considering that technology is essential to our daily lives, and numerous educational programmes that are more interesting and engaging for young children are available, it makes sense for them to access it.

6.3.3. Local Social Workers to work with Children.

Social workers are professionals that assist individuals in managing problems or challenges in their life and enhancing their overall well-being (Dominelli, 2009). They have training in counselling, child wellbeing, and family support (Russell et al., 2016). Children in ECCE in informal settlements come from different homes, and they are from areas that may face crime each day, where they witness bad things happening in their communities and their homes. This may affect them when it comes to participating at school as they may seem distracted; they need people to talk them through their problems and keep them going, giving them the support and help they need. The social workers' main goal is to address the personal, emotional, socioeconomic, and behavioural barriers to learning and create an environment that promotes academic success and social well-being.

There should be local social workers in the centre to support all children, those with difficulties and disabilities. Social workers will help identify and address all children's unique physical, emotional, and learning needs. In addition, social workers help children navigate the social and emotional challenges of school life. Unique children in an inclusive setting will experience challenges that may make them feel out of place or excluded, which may lead to bullying and discrimination. They provide counselling and support to help children cope with bullying, social isolation, and other issues that can arise in the school environment. Social workers are essential to the education system, providing critical support to all children and their families. They help ensure

that all children have access to the resources and support they need to succeed in school and beyond.

6.3.4. Nurses from nearby clinics may visit the school every month.

It is important to have school nurses appointed in ECCE as they would ensure that they provide health care to children with acute or chronic health care problems, ensure that children take their prescribed medication, administer first aid or CPR, and they could also educate children on hygiene and safety practices. Teachers may have limited knowledge on how to carry out medical situations that children may have; nurses will ensure that children's medical needs are well taken care of.

Inclusive ECCE has diverse children with diverse needs. These are not only educational needs but also their medical needs. Teachers may be overwhelmed with much work and trying to divide their attention evenly among every child, making it difficult to tend to children's medical needs. This is why it is crucial that nurses are there so to assist teachers in making their work slightly more manageable. Having a nurse in an inclusive early childhood centre can be beneficial in several ways. A nurse can help ensure that children receive prompt medical attention when needed, monitor children's health status, administer medication, and provide health education.

Additionally, a nurse can help identify children needing additional support or services and collaborate with other professionals to ensure that children receive the necessary care. They may notice what teachers can not notice and ensure that children receive the help they need. Furthermore, having nurses in centres in informal settlements can also assist parents or families that cannot take their children to medical centres; their children can receive help from school.

6.3.5. NGO's/ Businesses Provide Resources to Implement Inclusion Due to Limited or Delayed Government Resources.

There are several resources needed to implement inclusion in schools. Schools in informal settlements have limited resources, which is a challenge in implementing inclusion adequately. Resources should be provided to centres in informal settlements to ease the teaching and learning process, and children can receive the growth and development that children at their level of development should receive. Without sufficient resources, teachers struggle to accommodate different learning needs, and there must be different teaching resources to help children learn

(Boyle et al., 2011), as children's minds need creative lessons that utilise different resources to help keep them continually engaged.

Resources that can help implement inclusion in ECCE can also be toys, which centres in an informal settlement can lack. Toys bring children together; diverse children come together and play together without considering each other's differences (Perlman et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2020). Toys can assist children in finding common ground and ways to interact as friends. They can interact well and have flowing conversations with each other when they have toys, which are objects to initiate discussion (Mueller & Brenne, 1977). Lastly, teachers can also promote inclusive play by reconsidering both indoor and outdoor spaces where children can play with toys (Miranda et al., 2016). They can provide a range of learning opportunities, allow children to choose their own adventures, and be adaptable so that any child can participate.

6.3.6. Provision of Funding for Disadvantaged Children

Some children come from impoverished families and cannot afford basic resources such as books, school uniforms and food. There should be funding for these children to receive an education like others without being excluded. Children have the right to an education, no matter who they are, regardless of race, gender, disability, or socio-economic background. It is unimportant where children come from as long as they receive quality education like every other child. Children's growth and development depend on education, crucial to ending poverty. We must keep fighting for children to go to school and working to ensure every child has access to high-quality education.

Providing funding that ensures children from underprivileged families can obtain quality education and are not excluded from school in early childhood care ensures inclusion in school. Children will feel welcome as there are means to ensure they receive the education they need. Without funding for such children, they would not be able to go to school like other children and receive the education they need at their earliest stage of development. The intersecting identities that oppress them will put them at a disadvantage where they are not able to receive an education because they are not privileged enough and come from informal settlements. These intersecting identities should not be a barrier to children receiving an education, but they should be treated equitably and receive the same quality education as all.

6.3.7. Provision of Individualised Support to children and provision of workshops to parents so that they can assist their children at home.

Children in an inclusive ECCE have diverse learning needs (Bellour et al., 2017), and teachers must provide individualised support to ensure they get the help they need. McDonnell et al. (2001) concur that providing individualised support to children who require additional support helps them with what challenges them the most so they can learn as other children. Teachers can work with parents or caregivers of children to identify the child's needs and develop an individualised plan to support them. Not all children learn the same way or learn at the same pace; that is why some children require additional assistance to help them learn and receive the development they need.

Although they progress through the phases in the same order, children differ in how quickly they go through them (Kohlberg, 1971), every domain, including the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive, develops at a different rate. Additionally, parents might not know how to support their child's growth and development. For this reason, children in ECCE should also receive potty training as well as education in respect, love, and cooperation, and any other education to enhance their development in other domains. Therefore, it is evident that children require individualised support because they have distinct demands and areas of development that teachers can help with without isolating children based on their varied needs and potential issues.

Additionally, parents can attend workshops that will teach them how to support children at home, thus reinforcing the idea of inclusiveness. In order to meet teachers halfway, it is crucial that parents attend workshops that will teach them how to support their children at home, as many parents may not know how to do so.

6.4. Conclusion

Inclusion welcomes all children and gives every child a sense of belonging. It ensures that differences are celebrated and that an environment welcomes all. Undoubtedly, inclusion adds quality to ECCE programmes; however, this study reveals that much still has to be done to develop inclusive ECCE offerings significantly in impoverished areas like the informal settlement in the study. These early experiences of inclusion build solid foundations among the youngest members of society. Solid foundations which promote greater acceptance of human differences of all kinds. This research addresses critical social issues regarding diversity, bias, and inclusion. Due to the scarcity of research in ECCE in South Africa, this study also fills a knowledge gap on providing

quality and inclusive ECCE programmes. This study makes a significant contribution as it provides stakeholders with information on the experiences of implementing inclusion in ECCE in an informal settlement. Finally, this study contributes significantly by offering insights into creating a more socially just learning climate, with ripple effects for a more socially just society that embraces and celebrates all differences.

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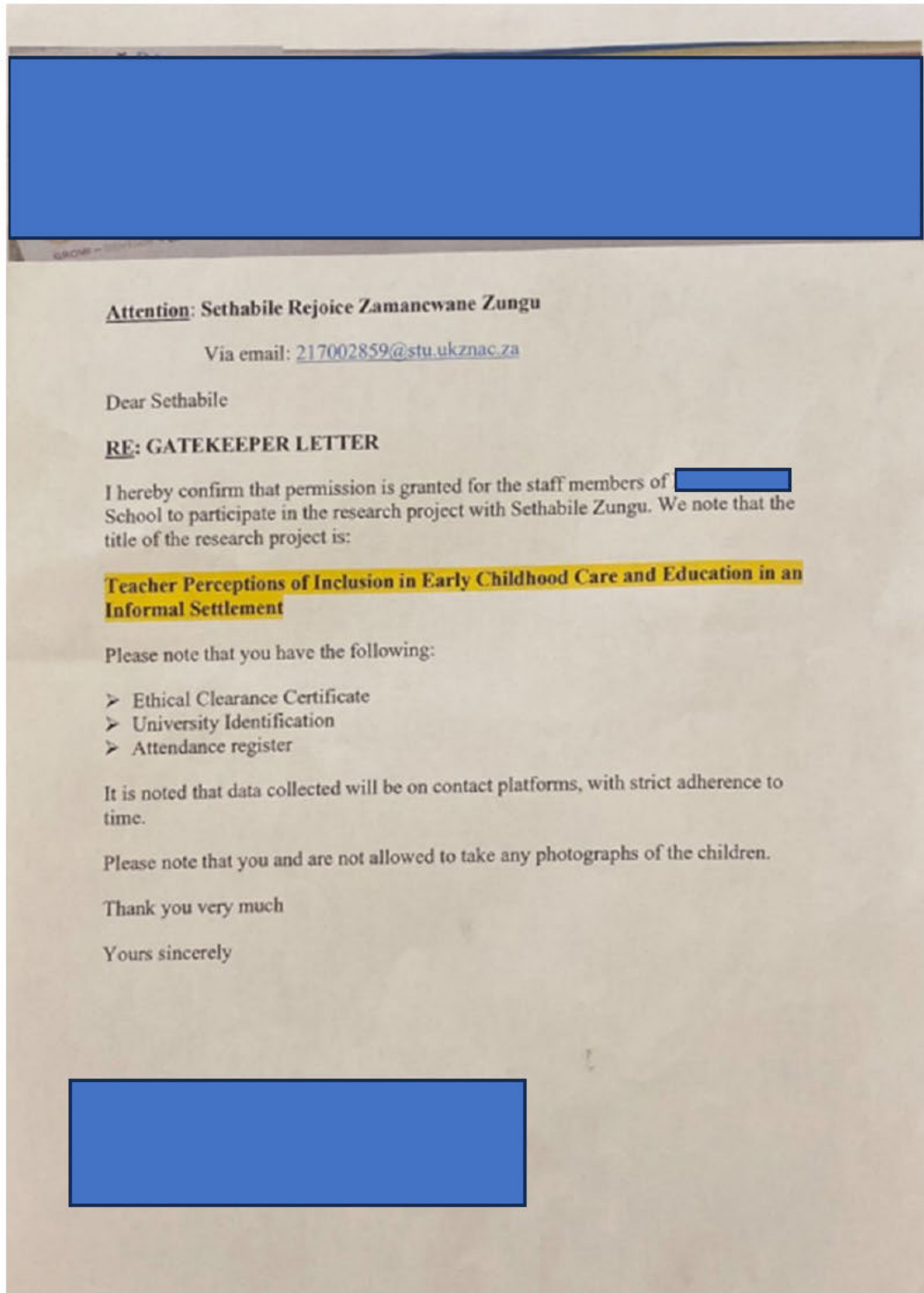
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Gate keeper Permission



Appendix B: KZNDOE Gatekeeper Permission Letter



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/54

Miss SRZ Zungu
PO Box 1223
ESHOWE
3815

Dear Miss Zungu

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT"**, 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 17 April 2023 to 31 March 2026.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMLAZI DISTRICT


Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 19 April 2023

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Letter



11 July 2023

Sethabile Rejoice Zamancwane Zungu (217002859)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear SRZ Zungu,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005751/2023
Project title: Teacher perceptions of inclusion in early childhood care and education in an informal settlement
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 20 June 2023 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 11 July 2024.

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.

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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

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

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix D: informed Consent Letter

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Participants,

My name is Sethabile Zungu. I am a masters student from University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) Edgewood campus, 121 Marian hill Road, Pinetown. My contact number is [REDACTED] my e-mail address is 217002859@stu.ukzn.ac.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on teacher perceptions of inclusion in early childhood care and education in an informal settlement. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore the different perceptions that early childhood care and education teachers have on inclusion in an informal settlement. The study is expected to enroll four participants within the school. It will involve the following procedures; unstructured interviews and semi structures questionnaires. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be 30 minutes for two different days that we will be meeting.

The study may involve the following discomforts such as unfolding the schools' policies and programs that are not seemed to enhance the learner integration in school. We hope that the study will create the following benefits to participants as the study will provide an understanding of ways that may be used to help other ECCE teachers and give them light as to what it is like to be in an inclusive classroom with children. I will maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group. Again, all the participants will be informed regarding the disclosure of their well-being been compromised or at risk, that they should inform me and I shall also seek their consent in addressing the matter.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number _____).

Also, the discussions will be audio-taped with your permission and the data generated will be transcribed and made available to you to ensure that the correct information has been captured. Besides, all the data generated will be kept in secure location, and destroyed after a period of five years. More important, in order to protect your identity, I will use a pseudonym in my transcript and my research report. If you are uncomfortable at any time you are at liberty to stop the participation and you can withdraw from the study. Universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect will direct my research. Moreover, every precaution will be taken to maintain the confidentiality and safety of each participant in the focus group discussion that will take place online.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me through the contact details mentioned above or my supervisor Dr Ashnie Mahadew on mahadewa@ukzn.ac.za or on [REDACTED] Or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private

Bag

X

54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

HREC UKZN Oct 2018

PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT REPLY SLIP

I..... have been informed about the study entitled "Teacher perceptions of inclusion in early childhood care and education in an informal settlement" by Sethabile Zungu.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study is to explore the perceptions that early childhood care teachers have on inclusion in informal settlements. It is to explore how inclusion is implemented in ECCE centres and to explore why there is a need for inclusion in ECCE centres.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher on [redacted] r e-mail address 217002859@stu.ukzn.ac.za

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private

Bag

X

54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additionally,

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date

Appendix E: Semi-Structured Questionnaire Questions

Semi Structured Questionnaire for teachers at the Centre

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

PURPOSE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire will serve to find out how much teachers from an ECCE centre in an informal settlement know about inclusion. It will help explore the teachers' thoughts, feelings and beliefs about inclusion in early childhood care and education.

- 1.** In your own understanding, what do you think inclusion in education is? (*What do you understand about inclusion?*).

- 2.** Name some of the challenges that teachers face when it comes to implementing inclusion in ECCE centres. (*Name the challenges that you also face as a teacher when it also comes to implementing inclusion in your ECCE centre.*).

- 3.** How do parents benefit from inclusive ECCE centres? (*How is the centre helpful to parents that drop off their children every morning?*).

4. In what ways can teachers in ECCE centres implement inclusion in the classroom?
(Name the ways in which you as a teacher in an ECCE centre also implement inclusion in your classroom).

5. How do you set out your lessons for an inclusive classroom, how do you carry out your lessons in the classroom? (Considering that there are diverse children in the classroom, how do you ensure that every child feels included and part of a unity?)

6. What are some of the most important roles or responsibilities of a teacher in an inclusive ECCE centre? (Name as many roles as you can including your roles at the centre).

7. How do you ensure that you evenly provide attention for every learner in the classroom? (As a teacher dealing with small children that crave attention).

-
-
-
8. How do you deal with an overcrowded classroom? (*When it comes to disciplining the children/getting their attention/ teaching them*).

THANK YOU

Appendix F: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Semi-structured Interview Questions

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

To explore teachers' understanding of inclusion in an ECCE centre in an informal settlement

Question 1

What do you think inclusion is or how do you understand inclusion? |

Question 2

Why is it important for teachers to understand inclusion?

Question 3

What is the most important role of teachers in an inclusive classroom?

Question 4

How do you promote or encourage inclusion among children in the classroom?

Question 5

How would you describe an inclusive classroom?

To understand the implementation of inclusion in an ECCE centre in an informal settlement

Question 1

As a teacher, how can you support the process of inclusion?

Question 2

What are some of the challenges that you face when it comes to implementing inclusion at your centre?

Question 3

How can inclusion be implemented or facilitated in the classroom?

Question 4

As a teacher, how do you make your classroom an inclusive setting?

Question 5

What can pose as a barrier in implementing an adequate inclusive environment at your centre?

To examine the need for inclusion in an ECCE centre in an informal settlement.

Question 1

How does inclusion impact learning?

Question 2

Why do teachers need to study inclusive education?

Question 3

How do you think inclusion benefits children in the classroom?

Question 4

Why do we need inclusion in schools?

Question 5

How do you benefit from inclusion as a teacher and why do you think it's important?

Appendix G: Turnitin Report

Sethabile

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8%	6%	2%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	www.ualberta.ca Internet Source	1%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
4	Joya Misra, Celeste Vaughan Curington, Venus Mary Green. "Methods of intersectional research", Sociological Spectrum, 2020 Publication	<1%
5	scholarworks.waldenu.edu Internet Source	<1%
6	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	<1%
7	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1%
8	www.slideshare.net Internet Source	<1%

Appendix H: Letter from the Editor



Centurion
Tshwane
precision4edits@gmail.com

MANUSCRIPT REVIEW PROOF

10 January 2024

To Whom It May Concern

This letter is to confirm that **Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion in Early Childhood Care and Education in an Informal Settlement** by **Sethabile Rejoice Zamancwane Zungu** was edited by a professional language editor. As the language editor, the author was supplied with two versions: the first contained comments and edits [track changes], and the second was the accepted version with no track changes. As the language editor, I cannot be held responsible for decisions that the author or authors make concerning the edits and comments supplied.

Sincerely,

Dr Moodley

Language Editor

PRECISION EDUCATION CONSULTANCY