AN EXPLORATION OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMEMENTATION OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TEAMS IN ILEMBE DISTRICT

By

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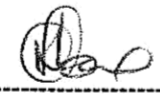
DECLARATION

This Masters dissertation is the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others, it has been acknowledged and referenced in the text.



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MS MAKIE KORTJAAS (SUPERVISOR)

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my God Almighty for his wisdom, love, guidance and kindness throughout my life.

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May the Lord our God exceedingly bless each and every one of you.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARVs - Anti-retroviral
BeD -Bachelor of Education
DBST - District Based Support Team
DoE - Department of Education
DBE - Department of Basic Education
FAL -First Additional Language
FP -Foundation Phase
HOD - Head of Department
HIV -Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IE -Inclusive Education
ISP - International Organisation for Standardization
KZN - KwaZulu Natal
LoLT - Language of Teaching and Learning
NCESS - National Commission Special Needs in Education
NCSNES -National Committee for Education and Support
NEPI - National Education Policy Investigation
PLC - Professional Learning Communities
SASA - South African Schools Act
SBST - School Based Support Team
SMT - School Management Team
SNA - Support Needs Assessment
SIAS - Screening Identification Assessment and Support
UKZN - University of KwaZulu Natal
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA - University of South Africa
ZPD - Zone of Proximal Development

ABSTRACT

South Africa has a history to have a large number of children who do not attend school because they are physically or intellectually impaired . In the apartheid era pre-1994, access to special schools was limited. Apartheid special schools that accommodated white learners were extremely well-resourced, whereas the few schools for black learners were under-resourced. When the new democratic government came to power in 1994, it sought out to redress the past imbalances and provide educational opportunities to all learners, particularly those who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development. An inclusive education system was thus established as the foundation for an integrated education and training system. It was against this background that the study aimed to investigate the knowledge that Foundation Phase teachers have of the concept of inclusive education and the application of its principles in classroom practices. I thus wanted to find out if teachers in this phase were using that knowledge to address the challenges that they faced each day when teaching learners with learning barriers. I utilised a qualitative approach and employed an interpretive paradigm. This case study involved two School-Based Support Teams in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with six Foundation Phase teachers. I analysed the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support document to understand how the participants planned and supported learners. The findings revealed that the teachers possessed adequate knowledge of inclusive education and that they did their utmost best to practise inclusivity by ensuring the participation of all learners. I also found that these teachers experienced numerous challenges such as limited information about some aspects of and policies on Inclusive Education, working in an environment that was not conducive towards teaching learners with barriers, a high number of learners with diverse needs in one classroom, and a lack of appropriate teaching aids. There was evidence relating to the participants receiving assistance from various stakeholders, such as their School Management Teams, the District Based Support Team, the School-Based Support Teams, and other departments such as the Health Department and the Safety Department. The Screening, Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) documents and forms were analysed

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The South African Minister of Basic Education has acknowledged that a broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population in South Africa. If these needs are not addressed, learners may fail to learn successfully or be barred from the learning system. Different learning needs arise from a range of aspects that include physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments; psycho-social disturbances; differences in intellectual ability; as well as particular life experiences and socio-economic deprivation (Department of Education, 2001). In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of the barriers that learners may experience as well as the support services required in education and training in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). This suggests that the Department of Education realised that there were a lot of children that did not receive the education that they deserved simply because they experienced various learning barriers. When the Department came to this realisation, it decided that it was time to do something in order to close the gap that barred learners with barriers to learning (also referred to in this dissertation as learners with special needs) from an equitable education in South Africa.

Investigations by the above bodies showed that specialised education had been provided mainly for a small percentage of learners in special schools (Department of Education, 2001). The fact that many learners with barriers did not have access to education had a negative bearing on their future, as it meant that learners who desperately needed support were excluded and their basic right to education was denied. Another conclusion that emanated from these two bodies was that the education system in its totality had been unsuccessful in responding to the varied needs of learners. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1994) states that all learners deserve an education regardless of their different needs. There was therefore a huge gap that needed to be filled and the fact that learners with barriers were largely excluded from receiving an equitable education had to be dealt with in a decisive manner. Thus policies that support inclusive education were implemented in 2005 to promote social wellbeing and a better understanding of others.

1.2 Focus and Purpose of the Study

The issue of inclusive education (IE) is a challenge that still faces the education system in South Africa. The study thus set out to explore the challenges that Foundation Phase (FP) teachers encounter while working with learners with barriers and to determine how they address those challenges. In the FP, learners must learn how to read, write, count and calculate confidently and with understanding (Department of Education, 2002). This can be very problematic for learners who are enrolled at mainstream schools but who experience barriers to learning. The study thus focused on investigating FP teachers' understanding and implementation of the principles and practices of inclusive education. This investigation was premised on the notion that it is crucial that all teachers are equipped with the necessary strategies to intervene when challenges arise during the teaching and learning processes in their classrooms, particularly in the FP which is the entry phase into formal education.

I envisaged that, based on the findings, I would be able to suggest ways in which FP teachers can be assisted to better accommodate learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. I also intended to flag those departments that should work with FP teachers in order for effective teaching and learning to occur.

1.3 Background Information

Inclusive education was instituted in South Africa more than a decade ago and there have been many changes since then. Prior to 1994, learners with barriers had to be accommodated in special schools. However, these schools were expensive and located in areas that were inaccessible to learners from outlying township and rural areas. When the current ruling party came to power in 1994, it wanted to correct the mistakes made by its predecessor (Department of Education, 2001) and started by changing some schools into full service schools with the aim of unifying the education system. Special schools were subsequently converted into resource centres that were intended to serve as sources of information for the schools around them. Well-trained teachers located at these resource centres were mandated to train all teachers in their areas and equip them with the skills and information required to address IE. Nel et al. (2011) claim that, because South African is a developing country, there are many teachers who have minimum teaching skills and even less understanding of inclusion compared to teachers in developed countries. Moreover, by combining specialised and mainstream schools, high

numbers of learners have been enrolled in mainstream and full service schools that do not have a suitable infrastructure or resources to cater for learners with barriers, and this has made it difficult for South African teachers to apply IE practices.

As was stated earlier, the Department of Education (DoE) responded to inequalities in the education system by developing various policies to redress the imbalances and provide quality education for all (Ntombela, 2011). In 1992, the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) unit made some suggestions on how to restructure the formal education system into a unitary system of education and training (Ladbrook, 2009). NEPI embeds education in the following principles: the protection of human rights, values and social justice; a unitary system; non-discriminatory practices; non-racism and non-sexism; democracy; redress of educational inequalities; and cost-effectiveness (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). In 1996 the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 abolished compulsory exclusion of learners with barriers to learning. The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy of 1997 resulted in an intergovernmental and intersectional development policy. Relevant bodies were established such as the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS). In 2001, *White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, building an inclusive education and training system* was published (Department of Education, 2001). This White Paper acknowledges the failure of the erstwhile education system to respond to the needs of a substantial number of children, who it defines as having special needs. Currently, the term 'learners with barriers to learning' is preferred, but the special needs of children are also referred. Guidelines for full-service/inclusive schools were also developed in 2009. This policy provides guidelines for schools and offers support for schools as well as school management and whole school development (Department of Education, 2009).

1.4 Rationale

My motivation for embarking on this study was largely prompted by my interest in IE as a FP teacher and my desire to advance professionally as a head of department (HOD). FP teachers face many challenges in their classrooms regarding learners with learning difficulties. For example, in my experience some Grade 3 learners could not perform activities assigned for this grade due to the fact that policy stipulates that learners should not repeat a grade more than

once in a phase. One year I had 86 learners in my Grade 3 class. Amongst those learners was one who was totally blind and three suffered from epilepsy. I found dealing with their needs in an overfull mainstream classroom exceptionally challenging because I had to cater for theirs as well as the diverse needs of all my learners. I also had to make sure that all these learners would benefit from my teaching style.

One of the challenges that we face in the FP is the language issue. Last year half of my Grade 3 learners were from Mozambique and they had a different home language to that of the majority of learners in the school. There were also learners from the Eastern Cape who spoke IsiXhosa, whereas my school is located in the northern region of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) near KwaDukuza where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is IsiZulu. The school policy in terms of the LoLT is that we should use IsiZulu as the medium of instruction. Therefore, according to the promotion policy, learners who fail to achieve appropriately in IsiZulu have to repeat the grade irrespective whether they pass all other learning areas. Most of these 'foreign' learners had a problem reading and writing IsiZulu because they communicated in their home language. My situation was not unique, as it is common knowledge that many classes in South African schools have learners who are experiencing learning difficulties. Some of these learning difficulties are so severe that it is difficult for learners with special needs to cope with the demands of any subject.

As I am writing this report, I am an HOD in the FP and also the coordinator of the School Based Support Team (SBST). The responsibilities of the SBST are to identify and assess the barriers learners experience and then plan to address these barriers. The team should also respond to teachers' requests for assistance by devising support plans for learners who experience barriers to learning. As an SBST coordinator, I also need to review teacher development plans, gather any additional information required, and provide direction and support in respect of additional strategies, programmes, services and resources to strengthen teachers' individual support plans (ISPs). When necessary, I should request assistance from the District Based Support Team (DBST) to enhance the ISPs or support a teacher's recommendation for the placement of a learner in a specialised setting (Department of Education, 2014). Teachers are expected to make the SBST aware of the problems that learners experience, whether these problems are behavioural, social or educational. The committee also conducts meetings to resolve these problems.

I am also expected to attend workshops planned and facilitated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on inclusive education. However, I feel that these workshops are not enough as there is a lot that we need to learn as far as inclusive education (IE) is concerned. After attending these workshops, I would thus run workshops at my school in order to meet the requirement of our school being an inclusive one. The workshops have taught me to love and support all learners regardless of their differences. I have also learnt that some learners' problems are caused by extrinsic factors such as a language issue, poverty, abuse, and cultural issues, to name a few.

Our school is trying its best to accommodate and help all learners with diverse needs. We respect all cultures and in September each year we celebrate cultural week and encourage all learners to be proud of who they are and where they come from. In that week teachers and learners dress up to celebrate their different cultures. We teach learners that it is 'OK' to be different and to achieve at different levels in their subjects and we also teach them to accept people as they were created. The teachers at the school teach lessons on how to be a friend to anyone regardless of where they come from and we teach our learners that we are all from Africa.

As an HOD I have a huge responsibility to help and develop other teachers in my school. Thus, I need to expand my knowledge and insight and keep on learning in order to stay abreast of curriculum changes and new policies such as the Curriculum Differentiation policy and the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). As an SBST coordinator, I facilitate monthly meetings by this body and we try to solve the problems that teachers submit to us as a committee. The downside is that everyone at the school expects me to have solutions to every problem. Thus by embarking on this study I envisaged that it would help me to deal with the challenges that I face in my classroom and as a team leader and better equip me to help teachers address the challenges that may arise in our school regarding issues that impact inclusive education.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

1. explore Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education;
2. better understand how Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge of inclusive education helps them to support learners who experience learning difficulties and barriers to learning.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What do Foundation Phase (FP) teachers' know and understand about Inclusive Education?
2. How has the knowledge of IE helped FP teachers to address the needs of learners who experience difficulties?

1.7 Statement of the Problem

Many studies have pointed out that teachers are not well equipped to implement IE because exclusive education has been practised in South African schools over many decades Kelly,Devitt, O'Keffee and Donovan (2014) state that there is a lack of enough training and knowledge of Inclusive Education on teachers who are already in the field. Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde (2014) are in agreement with this statement when stating that in South Africa the workshops do not provide enough knowledge or training for teachers. Florian and Rouse (2009) share the same sentiments when expressing that in the United Kingdom teachers do not have enough training in Inclusive Education. This study was therefore conducted to explore FP teachers' knowledge of and ability to implement inclusive education in the FP. The literature emphasises the importance that teachers should be prepared to go far beyond the call of duty to accommodate and support learners who experience barriers to learning and who need individual support in spite the challenges that teachers may face in their classrooms (Dalton et al., 2014). The study was thus prompted by doubts about the implementation of IE in the FP and aimed to explore the readiness of FP teachers to implement IE policies and to determine whether they had sufficient knowledge to respond to diversity in their classrooms. Two School Based Support Team (SBST) members were interviewed in order to explore the readiness of teachers.

1.8 Key Concepts

This study focused on the following key concepts:

Inclusive education:

According to (Mushoriwa, 2001), inclusive education means that schools must include a greater diversity of learners. This means that inclusive education acknowledges that all children will learn together with their peers, and this includes children with barriers to learning in the same physical environment as that of high flyers (Mushoriwa, 2001). Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) states that inclusive education acknowledges that all learners can learn and that they all need some form of support. It also means that it is important to respect people's differences in age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV status or any other disease. Landsberg, Kruger, and Swart (2016) mention that inclusive education means dedication to a more democratic society and a more equitable and quality education system in mainstream schools.

The aim of inclusion is to put an end to segregation and discrimination against learners with barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) highlights that the purpose of inclusion is "to develop an IE system that will uncover and address barriers to learning and recognize and accommodate the diverse range of learners' needs" (Department of Education, 2001, p. 45). Before inclusion, learners with barriers to learning were labelled, diagnosed and put in an institution that 'suited their needs'. These learners perceived that they were not good enough to be in mainstream schools and thus needed to be institutionalised. However, White Paper 6 stipulates that all children and youths can learn and that they need support. It confirms that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experiences (Department of Education, 2001). Correspondingly, Ntombela (2011, p. 6) notes that inclusive education needs to recognise that all children and youths can learn and that they require support to do so. Therefore, the education system should embrace diversity and assist all learners to achieve at their optimal level.

The goal of inclusion is to meet learners where they are and help them progress to the next step in their learning. According to Florian (2008), inclusion practices involve understanding how

to sort out the relative contribution of each of these factors in determining appropriate responses when children experience difficulties in learning. It also involves the understanding that not all children will experience difficulties despite being affected by sociocultural factors (Florian, 2008). From 7 to 10 June in 1994, more than 300 countries met in Salamanca, Spain, in order to discuss education for all by focusing on the provision of education for children, youths and adults with barriers to learning in the regular education system (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement that was published subsequently stresses that every child has a right to education and has unique features, interests, skills and learning needs (UNESCO, 1994).

Florian (2014) emphasises that teachers' role is to make sure that all learners are included. He claims that every teacher should create an environment for learning and devise opportunities that are sufficiently accessible to every learner so that all learners are able to participate in classroom life (Florian, 2014). According to Ferguson (2008), teachers need to continue to reinvent their roles in schools as more and more schools make the effort to become more inclusive. The first role of the teacher is to be the mediator of learning. Florian (2014) suggests that a teacher must be committed to support all learners and must believe in his/her own capability to promote learning in all learners. Florian (2014) also states that a teacher must be interested in the welfare of the whole child, and not simply in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In my view, teachers in the FP in particular need to care for the needs of all their learners.

One of the roles of a teacher is to be an interpreter and a designer of learning programs and materials. According to Landsberg et al. (2016, p. 103):

> *"*Teachers should be able to understand and interpret the provided learning programs and [be capacitated] to design original learning programs. They should identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and prepare suitable resources for learning, keeping in mind the unique needs of the learners in their class."

Therefore, a teacher needs to see a child as an individual and should attempt to design lessons according to the needs of each and every learner. Florian (2014) states that a teacher needs to differentiate among many choices of appropriate activities. Another role of a teacher is to be a student, researcher and lifelong learner. The self-motivated teacher needs to be a lifelong learner and needs to be committed to continued professional development as a way of developing more inclusive practices. Seeking new ways to support the learning of all children

and staying abreast of development regarding IE are crucial.

The DBE (2014) stipulates that the roles of teachers include: understanding inclusion and the need to address diverse needs of their learners; making learning programs and materials as well as assessment procedures accessible to all learners; not labelling learners; being observers and interviewers; and engaging in reflection in order to uncover barriers to learning. When teachers have tried all these methods and are still doubtful as to the outcomes, they must report to the SBST who must support the teacher to support the learners. Hence teachers must be aware of their support structure and understand their roles as far as inclusion is concerned.

Curriculum differentiation

Tomlison (2005) states that curriculum differentiation is a philosophy of teaching that is based on the principle that learners learn best when their teachers accommodate the differences in their readiness levels, interests and learning profiles. The DBE (2011) explains that curriculum differentiation is a key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs. It also reports that curriculum differentiation involves processes of modifying, changing, adapting, extending and varying teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies and the content of the curriculum (Ibid.).

There is no one-size-fits-all method of teaching and assessment (Subban, 2006; DBE, 2011). Teaching should be learner-centred so as to benefit all learners. UNESCO (1994) argues that learners with special needs (or barriers to learning) should receive supplementary instructional support based on the regular curriculum, and not a different curriculum. Research has shown that individuals do not learn in the same way (Subban, 2006). According to Ferguson (2008), teachers can differentiate lessons according to students' current abilities, interests and learning styles. However, while teachers know that not all learners are the same and that their needs are diverse, few teachers adapt to these differences in their classrooms but rather opt for uniformity (Subban, 2006). Employing differentiation involves changing the pace as well as the level of instruction that the teacher provides in response to an individual learner's needs, learning style and interests (Department of Education, 2001).

Planning for differentiation involves thinking about different ways in which any lesson or learning project may be presented to better meet students' needs (Ferguson, 2008). The latter author also states that teachers can differentiate content, processes and products, which means

they need to embrace awareness of what each learner learns, how each learner learns, and what each learner produces as evidence of learning.

Screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS)

The purpose of this policy is to repair the process of identifying, assessing and providing programmes for all learners who need extra support so as to improve their contribution and inclusion (Department of Education, 2008). Another purpose is to provide procedures on enrolling learners in special schools and settings; this also recognises the vital role played by parents and teachers (Department of Education, 2001). It provides organised intervention, identification of barriers and ongoing support to make the most of learners' participation in schools and classrooms (Department of Education, 2008). According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), the aim of the SIAS process is to increase admission to quality education for vulnerable learners and those who experience barriers to learning, including learners in ordinary and special schools who are failing to learn due to barriers of whatever nature. It also includes children of required school-going age and youths who may be out of school or have never registered in a school due to incapacity or other barriers. The Department of Education (2008) argues that SIAS is a framework that develops a profile for each learner from Grade R or Grade 1 to when the learner exists school. It is organised in such a way that it guarantees that teachers and schools understand the support needs of all learners. The SIAS process intends to assess levels and degrees of support that are needed to take full advantage of learners' participation in the learning process. It first identifies individual learners' needs in relation to the home and school contexts to establish the level and extent of additional support that is needed; and secondly it outlines a process for enabling the accessing and provisioning of such support at different levels for the learner (Department of Education, 2008). Mahlo (2017) views SIAS as a policy that provides guidelines and information on the procedures that should support learners who experience barriers to learning. It outlines the role of teachers, especially in the FP, as well as that of parents, managers and support staff within a framework of a new vision of how support should be organised. He states that the application of the SIAS policy clearly shows which learners are in need of support. Therefore, SIAS will help teachers to identify all those learners who experience barriers to learning and it all also equips teachers with the necessary information to support those learners. This suggests that teachers will have to work with different stakeholders to offer the necessary support to learners who need it.

Support teams

A key driver of IE has been the establishment of District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) and School Based Support Team (SBSTs). The function of these two bodies is to render support to teachers and to give clarity on inclusive education as well as teaching and learning practices (Department of Education, 2001). Mfuthwa and Dreyer (2018) concur as they state that these bodies were formed to give support to teachers, ensure teacher development, and prevent problems from occurring. The SBST should help teachers by providing the resources and aids they need in the classroom. The team should also help teachers with career guidance, facilitate collaboration of teachers within the school, and support teachers with the appropriate placement of learners whenever necessary (Mfuthwa & Dreyer, 2018). Nel, Nel and Hugo et al. (2018) explain that the functions of the SBST are to:

- study and make meaning of reports submitted by teachers regarding learners' problems.
- evaluate the help that is needed by teachers by developing programmes for teachers and parents;
- conduct workshops and inform teachers of procedures to be implemented in the classroom if needed;
- monitor and keep evidence on procedures that have been used;
- identify the need for more assistance if the teacher needs it; and
- encourage team teaching.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study was underpinned by the sociocultural theory that has its roots in the work of Vygotsky, who was a Russian psychologist. According to Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006), Vygotsky explained that the sociocultural theory is about human development that proceeds toward the conversion of social relations into mental functions and not towards socialisation. Vygotsky stated that "it is through others that we develop into ourselves" (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Therefore, learning cannot happen if a learner is alone; thus a learner needs another learner or an adult in order for learning to occur. According to Vygotsky, children construct their own understanding of the world through interaction with other children and adults. In this process they use language to make sense of their environment and their place within it (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016). According to Robert Lake (2012), Vygotsky believed that learners need another individual who is more advanced in that particular learning realm

and who can explain the point of learning in a way that leads to growth. He states that Vygotsky calls this the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD), which means that a learner needs the help of others to achieve in a social context of learning (Lake, 2012).

Vygotsky also believed that individual learners must be studied within a social and cultural context. Moreover, education is an ongoing process and not a product (Subban, 2006). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) share these sentiments as they articulate that Vygotsky stated that culture and social context are import for a child's learning and development. According to Terre Blance and Durrheim (2006), socially constructed methods, like their interpretive counterparts, are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meaning. They report that social constructionist researchers want to show how understandings and experiences are derived from larger discourses. Social constructivism treats people as though their thoughts, feelings and experiences are the products of structures of meaning that exist at a social rather than individual level (Terre Blance & Durrheim, 2006).

According to Vygotsky (1978), constructivism sanctions group work to resolve problems. Moreover, his theory requires that assessment tools in a constructivist classroom are not tests or quizzes; instead, learning occurs when a learner makes connections with the environment and then adopts that understanding and new experiences to influence him/her to build new ideas. Thus it is important that FP teachers are able to operationalise this theory in their classrooms because then they will allow their learners to construct their own understanding. This theory underscores the importance of IE because it allows learners to use the teacher as well as capable peers and adults such as their parents to reach the desired stage of knowledge (i.e., their ZPD).

1.10 Methodology

This study was located in an interpretivist paradigm. According to Cohen et al. (2000), an interpretivist paradigm is a view of social science; a lens through which one examines the practice of research. Newman (2000) argues that an interpretivist researcher uses cautious methods to collect rich qualitative data to obtain in-depth understanding of how people create meaning in everyday life. Similarly, Bertram and Christiansen (2015) state that researchers explain and recognize how people interpret their own surroundings and how they make meaning

of their actions. Interpretivists believe that people behave in a certain way for a reason and that the reason is usually their past experiences (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) explain that this approach is considered by a particular ontology which believes that people's personal experiences are real and should be taken seriously. It also considers that, to understand others' experiences, one needs to relate with them and listen to what they say, which epistemology is and key to the generation of useful data.

A qualitative research approach was used in order to obtain in-depth knowledge of the first-hand experiences of selected School Based Support Team members who taught in the FP. Babbie and Mouton (2007) state that this approach is about describing and understanding rather than explaining human behavior. They mention that qualitative researchers always try to study human action from the viewpoint of social actors themselves. Furthermore, Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014) argue that the use of a qualitative methodology refers to research that produces descriptive data that are generally the participants' own written or spoken words pertaining to their experiences or perceptions. This statement is supported by Babbie and Mouton (2007), who note that using a qualitative methodology is a commitment to perceiving the world from the point of view of the participant/s. This methodology allows the researcher to know people individually, to see them as they are, and to experience their daily battles when challenged with real life situations (Brynard et al., 2014). A qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study as it enhanced the quality and depth of the information provided. It also allowed me to interact with my participants in order to get a deeper understanding of their knowledge of inclusive education, their attitudes towards this educational policy, and to understand how they implemented it in their classrooms. It allowed me as a researcher to ask questions that allowed my research participants to share their views and experiences openly.

1.11 Chapter Outline

This study report is divided into five chapters:

Chapter One elaborates on the background of and the rationale for the study. The objectives and main research questions are listed and the key concepts are briefly explained. The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky is introduced and the chapter is concluded with a summary of the chapters.

Chapter Two presents a review of related literature with specific focus on inclusive education. Vygotsky's sociocultural theoretical framework, which served as a guideline for the study, is discussed in more depth.

Chapter Three discusses the research design and the methodology that was employed. I explain the data generation tools that I used to assist me in generating the empirical data that I required. These tools were semi-structured interviews and document analysis and were used to elicit data in order to better understand the screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) system that is used in schools. The chapter also addresses the issues of credibility and trustworthiness and I explain the manner in which I adhered to ethical requirements that guide a study of this nature.

Chapter Four focuses on data generation and analysis and the main findings that emerged from these processes are discussed. Verbatim quotes from the interviews are used to underscore the findings that are augmented and compared with data that emerged from the document analysis process and the literature review. The findings are discussed under themes that were identified as a result of the thematic analysis method that I employed.

Chapter Five presents a discursive summary of the findings and a conclusion. Implications for future research are discussed and recommendations associated with the findings of the study are offered.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented an introduction to the study as the study focus, purpose and background were discussed. These sections were followed by a discussion of the rationale of the study and the statement of the problem was then presented. I then briefly listed the research objectives and questions that had to be addressed to achieve the aim of the study. I also briefly discussed key concepts such as inclusive education, curriculum differentiation, the SIAS policy, and I briefly referred to the theoretical framework that underpinned this study. The methodology that was employed was also briefly explained. The next chapter presents the literature review that formed the basis of the study.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In democratic South Africa, the issue of inclusive education (IE) has persisted as a challenge for the education system. This phenomenon has been widely researched but remains a challenge due to implementation barriers. The purpose of this study was to investigate Foundation Phase (FP) teachers' understanding of inclusive education and the strategies they used to implement it, if at all. In the previous chapter, I gave a brief explanation of what inclusive education is and what its purpose is in the teaching and learning of young learners. I gave insight into the reasons why I was motivated to conduct a qualitative study on this topic. I also discussed the screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) policy and curriculum differentiation and explained the functioning of the School Based Support Team. In this chapter I shall review literature related to the study topic and discuss the following aspects in some detail:

- Inclusive education and its historical origins
- Inclusive pedagogy
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Challenges experienced in implementing inclusive education
- Support structures for inclusive education.

The second part of this chapter will focus in more detail on the theoretical framework.

2.2 Inclusive Education

2.2.1 What is inclusive education?

As was explained briefly in Chapter One IE is explained differently by various scholars, but there are some aspects that they all agree upon. According to White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), IE is about knowing and accepting that all young people can learn and they all need support. It also means respecting that learners are different and that these differences

must be valued. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) also stipulates that IE is about recognising and supporting each learner's needs and ensuring that all learners participate in the educational context to the best of their ability. UNESCO 1994 explains that IE is when schools include all learners even though they may be physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and linguistically challenged and points out that even when challenges that are not mentioned above are experienced, no child should be prevented from coming to school. According to Ainscow and Miles (2009), IE is about enrolling all learners in public schools even if they are different in terms of race, age, gender, nationality, language, religion, and background. Haug (2017) explains IE as a system that allows disabled learners to become full members of regular classrooms in their neighbourhood schools where parents will be allowed to be part of their children's education.

Hodge (2017) views inclusion as a social justice issue that allows learners to be treated as equal members of their communities where they are respected and given the dignity that they deserve. Like White Paper 6, Hodge (2017) states that inclusion is not just about independence but about interdependence and being in unity with other people. Correspondingly, Haug (2017) views IE as a social justice issue, stating that IE is about democracy, equity and justice where learners will be viewed as people who are capable of participating in society.

The above views highlight that inclusion is not just about learners learning together, but that it is also about respecting all learners and treating each learner like a normal human being that matters. Sants study guide (2019) state clearly that all learners are important and can play different important roles in school and can gain from each other, for example a learner who is in a wheelchair may need a learner who is not in a wheel chair to push him or her while the learner who is not in a wheel chair can gain a lot of information from a learner who is intelligent but in a wheel chair. This also means that inclusion is stating that even though a child is not like everybody else, he or she is still an important member of the community. Thus all learners should be treated with the utmost respect regardless of their physical or mental conditions and the challenges they experience.

White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) states that the inclusion policy requires that the curriculum should be adapted to accommodate the diversity of all learners. UNESCO, 1994 is in agreement with this statement as it argues that the curriculum must fit the learner and that the learner must not try to fit in with the curriculum. The policy is against referring learners but

it states that learners must be taught where they are because if the school fails to do so that process is not called inclusion but integration. UNESCO, 1994 also mentions that teachers must endeavour to include all learners; but if some learners end up not benefitting, then they can be referred for more specialised education. Learners who are transferred should be allowed to visit mainstream schools at certain times so that they may feel as if they are also respected members of society. However, UNESCO, 1994 supports the notion that inclusion is the answer, especially in countries with few and exclusive special schools. It is mentioned that public schools should establish special classes for learners with barriers to learning. Bui et al. (2010) state that all learners benefit from inclusive education, but argue that placement in a special environment is important if it is to be to the benefit of the learner. According to the study done by Saloviita (2019) it shows that even though teachers thought that learners with severe disabilities will demand extra care, it is the learners with mild disabilities that demanded extra care.

Inclusion, mainstreaming and integration are different concepts even though most people use these terms synonymously. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) explains the difference as follows:

Table 2.1: The difference between mainstreaming and inclusion

Mainstreaming and Integration	**Inclusion**
Mainstreaming is about getting learners to 'fit into' a particular kind of system or integrating them into this existing system.	Inclusion is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on similarities.
Mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that they can 'fit in' or be integrated into the 'normal' classroom routine. Learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as the placement of learners in programmes.	Inclusion is about supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus is on teaching and learning actors, with emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to *all* learners.
Mainstreaming and integration focus on	Inclusion focuses on overcoming barriers in

changes that need to take place in learners so that they can 'fit in'. Here the focus is on the learner.	a system that prevents it from meeting the full range of learning needs. The focus is on the adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom.

Source: DoE, 2001, p. 17

Even though inclusion and integration are almost the same, there are vital differences. Table 2.1 illustrates that inclusion is against referring learners to special schools; instead, it favours learners being taught in mainstream schools. Integration on the other hand clearly requires that learners be referred to special schools should the need arise. Kauffman et al. (2016) point out that effective instruction of a learner with a disability does not rely on placement. They state that, despite decades of research and advocacy for full inclusion, they are aware of no definite evidence indicating the effectiveness of placement in reaching anticipated educational outcomes for learners with disabilities. Logic and empirical evidence do not support full inclusion, but they do support placement in the least restrictive environment. Inclusion is not an intervention, which means it is not an instructional strategy or method but a belief about where instruction is most effectively delivered (Kuffman et al., 2016). Thus inappropriate inclusion in a mainstream school can cause more harm than good, and inclusion in a specialised school and class can be highly effective.

2.2.2 Historical overview of inclusive education

According to Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), there is a dire need for inclusive education in a democratic dispensation because schools during the apartheid era were categorised according to two segregating criteria, namely race and disability. Schools that accommodated White disabled learners were well-resourced whilst the few schools for Black disabled learners were systematically under resourced. Specialised education and support were thus provided on a racial basis with the best human, physical and material resources reserved for White people (Department of Education, 2001). Therefore, inclusion is seen as a tool that will eradicate segregation in education. Engelbrecht (2006) points out that inclusive education in South Africa is not promoted simply as one more option for education, but as an educational strategy that can contribute to a democratic society. He also states that, after the abolishment of apartheid, the new democratic government committed itself to the transformation of the

education system; hence its key policy documents and legislation stress the principle of education as a basic human right that is enshrined in the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996).

Hodge (2017) agrees with White Paper 6 as he states that inclusion is about lowering a drawbridge to admit those who we know do not really belong but whom we are obliged by law to accommodate into spaces that will bridge the gap created by exclusive apartheid policies. Pather (2011) states that young Black children were marginalised, especially those who were living in rural communities in South Africa during the apartheid era, as there were laws that formally separated communities racially in all spheres of life. Pather (2011) affirms White Paper 6 by stating that the provisioning of support services at special schools and institutions applied mainly to White and Indian urban communities and did not apply to the majority of Black learners who constituted approximately 80% of the population. Many of these learners had no access to education or were already mainstreamed in ordinary schools by default where educational support services were non-existent. Learners from such areas are now in schools with teachers who are aware of IE and they are supposed to be screened and identified as learners with barriers so that they can get support (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

According to Mayaba (2008), the South African Constitution focuses strongly on three basic rights. She quotes Hay and Malindi (2005) who state that those rights are the right to equality, the right to human dignity, and the right to education. It can be assumed that these rights were often violated in pre-democratic South Africa. She states that the right to equality education appears in Section 9(1-5) of the Constitution which entrenches every citizen's right to enjoy equality before the law. Neither the state nor any person may unfairly discriminate against anyone directly or indirectly on the basis of race, gender, colour, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language. Mayaba (2008) points out that the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) unit of 1992 found that the White and Indian communities had well developed education systems, whilst the Coloured and to the least extent the Black communities only had a facade of a dual education system. By 1990 the White education department had 89 special schools representing 37.1% of the total special schools in the country, while White learners made up only 9.7% of the total learner population. Special schools for Blacks totalled 71 which constituted 29.6% of the special schools in the country and 25% of all special schools. The Coloured community had only 20 special schools (8.3% of all special schools for 2.4% of the learner population).

Hodge (2017) discusses inclusion and social justice as similar issues, arguing that that they are both about people being acknowledged and valued as human beings; they are both about claiming your place in the world unrestrained by the malefic impairments of poverty, illness and prejudice; and they are both dependent on quality housing, health, social care, and access to work or other forms of occupation and equitable education. He states that neither is about being educated, but about desperately seeking to remain human and to stay alive. He also mentions that neither is about autonomy and independence, but about community interdependence, connectedness, unity and working together. They are both about protection and enabling people to live their lives in ways that are right for them whatever their gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, class, economic status, age or physicality. Lastly, inclusion and social justice are both about focusing on the shared elements of being human and about recognition of and respect for those characteristics that distinguish us as human beings.

Ainscow and Sandill (2010) maintain that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a just society. Extending the social justice dialogue, they argue that inclusion refers to diversity as a concept rather than categories of differences. African countries generally perceive inclusion as a Western concept but are now becoming aware that inclusion is a social justice and human rights issue and embedded in the discourse of education for all (Ainscow & Sanddil, 2010). Florian (2011) indicates that inclusion should put an end to segregated education, the overrepresentation of students from minority groups in special education and the stigma of labelling. Similarly, Ntombela (2011) points out that the post-apartheid South African Department of Education gained a legacy of disparities. In response, it has tossed out several policies in the drive to amend these inequities and provide quality education for all. However, she also points out that these new policies came with much excitement amongst supporters for change and security but also with stress among those who are expected to implement them. Engelbrecht (2006) mentions that a flourishing democracy involves acknowledging the rights of all previously marginalised communities and individuals as full members of society, and that it requires the recognition and celebration of diversity as reflected in the attitudes of its citizens and in the nature of its institutions. Engelbrecht (2006) states that South Africa was different from other African countries because of apartheid. The policies of the country all favoured exclusion; but when a democratically elected government came to power, one of the most significant changes that was made was to abolish segregation in schools.

According to Landbook (2009), before 1994 Blacks were taught a different curriculum to that of Whites. She also states that some teachers in Black schools were not suitably qualified. White schools adhered to a Eurocentric education which was seen as discriminatory as it prepared learners for future academic progress or for exclusive positions in trade and industry. Conversely, Black education seemed to prepare learners for work as labourers. Ladbook (2009) refers to a speech made by Pallo Jordan of the African National Congress in 1990 in which he raised a number of points about the future education system in South Africa. The speech explored the links between a democratic education system and society of the future by equipping individuals to live as equals nationally and internationally through an appropriate response to diversity. He argued that education can become a vehicle for uplifting the working class and preparing all South Africans to take their place in a productive economy. Ainscow (2005) stipulates that inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. The country thus has a moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in an equitable education system (Ainscow, 2005).

2.3 Inclusive Pedagogy

Makoelle (2014) describes inclusive pedagogy as the teaching methods, approaches, forms and principles that stimulate learner participation in the classroom. According to Florian (2014, p. 289), inclusive pedagogy "is an approach to teaching and learning that supports teachers to respond to individual differences between learners" and ensures that all learners are treated equally. Thus, when adopting this approach, teachers should use a wide range of methods to accommodate all learners. Additionally, inclusive pedagogy is said to embody beliefs and conceptions about the elements that constitute inclusive teaching and learning (Makoelle, 2014). Alborno (2017) stated that in some countries such as United Arab Emirates they view disability as a gift from God, a curse from God or God just wanted to show what He can do. Teachers thus have a huge responsibility to ensure that they implement methods and approaches as mandated by the Department of Basic Education in order to address the principles of inclusivity.

When adopting inclusive education, it was crucial that the DoE approved changes in the curriculum. Matters that needed to be addressed included curriculum content, the language policy, classroom organisation, teaching methodologies, pace of teaching, time available to

complete the curriculum, the provisioning of teaching and learning support materials, and assessment (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

The Department of Basic Education (2011) identifies the following factors that may hinder learning: some learners may have problems to write and read, some may be visually or hearing impaired, some may be poor, some may be sensitive and have health problems, some learners may find it difficult to remember what was learned, and some learners may need devices and adapted materials such as Braille and hearing aids. Nel et al. (2018) endorse curriculum differentiation as a means of facilitating IE because it allows learners to experience success at their own level. Differentiation prevents the start of learning gaps and provides opportunities for thinking development by reducing challenges (Nel et al., 2018). O'Grady, O'Reilly, Portelli and Bean (2014) state that the aim of curriculum differentiation is to put a learner's needs at the heart of a course of learning and then to deliver the curriculum according to those needs. According to the Department of Basic Education (2011), the aim of a differentiated curriculum is to allow diversity in the classroom.

Subban (2006) describes curriculum differentiation as accepting different learners' backgrounds, their level of readiness, their languages and their different interests. Tomlinson, Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Moon, Brimijoin, Conover, and Reynolds (2003,) define curriculum differentiation as "a method of teaching whereby a teacher proactively adjusts syllabi, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and learner product to address the different needs of individual learners". Tomlinson (2005,) defines curriculum differentiation as "a philosophy of teaching that is based on the fact that the learner learns best when the teacher acknowledges and respects his level of development and interests". On the other hand, O'Grady et al. (2014,) define curriculum differentiation as "learning that is arranged in such a manner that it cuts across subject matter lines, bringing together different parts of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study".

Tomlinson et al. (2003) state that when teachers cater for learners' unique levels of readiness, interests and learning preferences, learners grow faster academically. Their view is that teachers can no longer ignore the fact that learners are different and so are their levels of development. They coined the phrase 'mosaic learners' to describe the differences in learners. Teachers thus need to know and understand each learner well to enhance their level of development with appropriate teaching and learning approaches. Tomlinson et al. (2003) also state that teachers

are compelled to differentiate the curriculum because of the diversity of the learners that they teach. O'Grady et al. (2014) state that teachers need to come to an agreement with learners as to what they lack academically and they should teach according to their learners' needs.

However, regardless of the need to differentiate and policies that mandate it, many teachers still see no need to change their teaching methods and they are still using a one-size-fits-all methodology. For this reason many learners fail to advance academically, emotionally and psychologically (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Some teachers still resist changing their teaching methods and they are unlikely to adopt methods that equip them to change their teaching approach (Tomlinson et al., 2003).

Conversely, Dar and Resh (1994) argue that low achievers do not benefit from curriculum differentiation. However, Bui et al. (2010) disagree, stating that inclusion ensures good results for all learners, whether they have disabilities or are high achievers. Marshall (2016) keeps a relatively open mind, but mentions a few points against a differentiated curriculum. He states that highly gifted learners get bored when teachers try very hard to include everyone, especially when a high number of learners are taught in one classroom. He argues that teachers are overburdened when they try to prepare lessons that will suit everyone, and thus teachers are stressed all the time. Marshall (2016) thus concludes that there is no proof that curriculum differentiation benefits all learners. Nel et al. (2018) also admit that curriculum differentiation has some problems such as promoting differences among learners which may lead to division.

White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) clearly stipulates that education should be flexible and cater for all learners' needs, and O'Grady et al. (2014) support this view. The Department of Basic Education (2011) states that teachers should be flexible and bear in mind that learners are different. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2011), a successful inclusive classroom needs teachers who are sensitive to diversity and creative in their choice of teaching strategies and learning activities. They state that a teacher must find ways of meeting the learners' special educational needs and address these needs by providing learning support. In other words, they must make it easier for learning to occur. White Paper 6 stresses the fact that teachers are supposed to be an important factor in achieving inclusive education in schools and teachers need to be equipped with new skills to be able to implement IE (Department of Education, 2011). It is the task of the teacher to make sure that learning occurs (Engelbrecht et al., 2011).

According to Ramrathan, Grange and Higgs (2017), teachers need to provide epistemological or meaningful access to learning and they need to be reflective of their own practices and the manner in which they respond to learners. They have to have an awareness of the diverse needs of their learners as well as knowledge of their backgrounds, needs, existing knowledge of a topic, misconceptions they may hold, and possible intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to their learning. According to Nel et al. (2016) and White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), the term "learners with barriers" is the most acceptable because it allows people to see learners as human beings first before looking at them as needy people, whereas the term "special needs" forces people to look at such learners as problematic. Extrinsic barriers means barriers that are outside a person. In developing countries such as South Africa, there are more extrinsic barriers than in developed countries (Nel et al., 2016). These include problems that may be caused by the school or the place where they live. It could be problems such as poverty, abuse, lawbreaking, viciousness and a lack of basic resources such as water, housing and electricity. Intrinsic barriers on the other hand refer to problems from inside a person. These problems that a learner experience usually originate at birth and include sensory impairments, cerebral palsy, and neurological conditions such as epilepsy (Department of Education, 2004). Learners who experience barriers to learning may also suffer from ill health, visual impairments, and hearing difficulties (Nel et al., 2018).

Teachers should possess a strong content knowledge base about the subjects they teach. It is important that both teachers from both mainstream schools and special schools should possess professional knowledge and skills and work together to change their roles or adjust to new roles in order to cater for learners who experience barriers (Booth & Ainscow, 1998). They should also have knowledge of classroom management and organisation and have the ability to think and reflect on the impact of their own teaching, methodologies, techniques and strategies. According to Nel et al., (2018) learners in a classroom have different learning needs so it is important that a teacher understands that and uses more than one method of teaching. The Department of Education (2001) suggests that one of the ways of achieving that is through curriculum differentiation where a teacher teaches a learner according to his or her ability.

Pather (2011) conducted a study on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and all the learners who were interviewed stated that the level of support they received and teachers' capacity to teach well were key factors in their positive experiences at school. They considered their

teachers to be friendly and good which promoted a positive learning atmosphere. What the learners were not happy about was the use of corporal punishment, the lack of respect from some teachers, and name calling. Pather (2011) also found that the learners loved teachers who were committed, hardworking and approachable.

It is the responsibility of teachers to know which learners will be learning at different levels of difficulty or a different pace so that they may acquire or devise special teaching materials. While some learners may demonstrate what they know in writing, others may impart their knowledge orally. Teachers will make a difference in the lives of learners if they make an active effort to adapt the learning environment in creative ways and promote learning and the development of the learners in their care (Engelbrecht et al., 2011). According to Masango (2013), it is important to remember that it is a teacher's responsibility to meet not only the educational needs of their learners, but also their social and emotional needs. Teachers therefore require support throughout their teaching and learning journey, such as counselling, career guidance, specific teaching and learning techniques, social interventions, and other assistive devices.

Florian (2011) argues that teachers use approaches or methods that are determined by their beliefs about how people learn. Ferguson (2008) agrees with Florian and states that general and special teachers could blend their professional knowledge and skills to work together to adjust their roles and reorganise their practices to provide groups of quite diverse students with the ongoing support for learning that they need. Florian (2011) supports the notion that teaching methods are not differentially effective for different types of learners but for what is being taught as much as by who is being taught. He also states that teachers must recognise that not all learners are the same but they vary across many dimensions. Thus teachers should constantly make multiple decisions about how to respond to all kinds of inputs.

Engelbrecht et al. (2011) mention that the practicalities of adapting classrooms to accommodate the learning needs of all learners are generally the responsibility of class teachers. They argue that teachers have to deal with complex dilemmas both in and outside the classroom in the process of delivering the curriculum in a way that is relevant to the diverse needs of their learners. This situation means that teachers can aggravate feelings of loneliness and isolation if they are not sensitive to the needs of all learners (Engelbrecht et al., 2011).

Researchers have offered various views on the practicality of inclusion. According to the Department of Basic Education (2012), inclusion can work if teachers differentiate the curriculum. Differentiating the curriculum means that teachers should differentiate by content (which means what is being taught), by process (which means they should use different methods for different learners) and also by assessment (which means they should use different assessments for different learners). However, Kauffman, Anastasiou, Badar, Travers and Wiley (2016) do not support the idea of full inclusivity. They claim that there is no scientific evidence that shows that inclusion works wonders. Marshall (2016) also specifies that there is no physical evidence that curriculum differentiation works. According to her, differentiation is based largely on interest and a certain apparent logic. According to Kauffman et al. (2016), change is not synonymous with improvement and they stress that if inclusive education is to move forward, it must involve placing students with disabilities in general education which is the environment in which they will most likely learn the skills that will be most important for their future. Kauffman et al. (2016) argue that change does not always mean progress, but it can also mean regression, depending on the measure of movement. Bui, Quirk, Almazan and Valeni (2010) on the other hand fully support the idea of inclusion. They point out that both quantitative and qualitative research has shown that inclusion has contributed to great improvement for learners with both high incident and low incident disabilities. They explain high incident disabilities as learning disabilities and other mild disabilities and they explain low incidence disabilities as intellectual, multiple, and severe disabilities. Quirk et al. (2010) stress that research has shown that learners with disabilities get more instructional time in mainstream schools and they depend more on their peers for help instead of adults. They claim that learners with disabilities get thirteen times more instruction directed teaching than learners without disabilities.

However, one wonders and asks questions such as: "*At whose expense are learners with disabilities gaining that extra instructional time − and is this even possible in already overcrowded classrooms?*" Marshall (2016) also asks questions as far as a differentiated curriculum is concerned. She asks questions like: "*Doesn't trying to differentiate the curriculum keep teachers exhausted?"* and *"Is curriculum differentiation the same as tracking the learners?"* She also wonders: "*Is a differentiated curriculum spoon feeding learners and in this process undermining their thinking and independency*? *Does it minimize group work? Is curriculum differentiation even effective?"* Marshall (2016) also wonders if we running the risk of missing the forest for the trees. She suggests that maybe, instead of focusing

too much on inclusion and differentiation, we should focus on these two questions: "*What are the learners supposed to be learning; and are all learners grasping it?"* Marshall (2006) sees differentiation as the complication of teachers' work. She mentions that teachers have to use multiple materials as they try to make sure that all learners are catered for, so teachers end up frustrated and they resign from the profession.

Kuffman et al. (2016) also argue that the fact that inclusion results in the same or better outcomes for some or most learners is not convincing evidence that it will do so for all learners. Their point is that believing in full inclusion without reliable evidence to support it is not a path to social justice, and believing in a doctrine or philosophy does not make it true. Although proponents of full inclusion believe inclusion in general education is always best and make the claim that research supports their view, Kuffman et al. (2016) suggest that such a belief is inflexible, fundamentally irrational, and without convincing evidence. On the other hand, Bui et al. (2010) stress that their study showed that 40.7% of learners with disabilities made progress in mathematics in general education classes compared to 34% in traditional special education settings where they learnt without the presence of able bodied learners. In another study, Kauffman (2010) found that 43.3% of learners with disabilities made comparable or greater progress in mathematics in an inclusive setting versus 35.9% in a traditional setting. Kauffman et al. (2010) agree that more learners than in the past can and should be included in social and academic life in general education, when the leaners with barriers show high improvement than the learners in special schools.. This means that opportunities for appropriate inclusion must always be sought but cannot come at the expense of appropriate and effective teaching. Effective teaching should be the primary concern of special teachers, who must not allow other issues such as societal attitudes and condescending ideals, important as they may be, to take away effective instruction, otherwise many learners with disabilities will be treated inconsiderately (Kauffman et al., 2010). Kauffman et al. (2010) also believe that advancing towards a more socially just and inclusive society relies on effectively educating learners with disabilities to realize their desired outcomes. This means placing them in mainstream schools only when that is where they will best learn the skills that are most important for their future.

At times it is very difficult to separate people's own interests and commitments from those of their students, and commitment to an idea or ideology can shape people's attitudes, beliefs or philosophical perspective to be misleading and ultimately destructive of students' best interests (Kauffman et al,.2010). However, according to Bui et al. (2010), placing disabled learners in

mainstream schools does not only help them gain academic knowledge, but other skills as well. In their study they found that 11 000 learners with a range of disabilities who spent more time in a general education classroom were positively correlated with less absenteeism from school, fewer referrals for disruptive behaviour, and better outcomes after high school in the areas of employment and independent living (Ibid.).

However, it is undeniable that some learners can do better in special schools than in mainstream schools, particularly those who have multiple barriers. *Is it really beneficial for such learners to be in mainstream schools in overcrowded classrooms with poor infrastructure and teachers with no knowledge or proper training to deal with them?* Ainscow (2005) specifies that it is important for teachers to know that inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers and it involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. He also states that inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Ainscow (2005) supports the idea that the present is concerned with where children are educated and how reliably and punctually they attend. He believes that participation relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, learning must incorporate the views of the learners themselves. Moreover, achievement is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum and does not merely rely on tests or examinations, which was Vygotsky's (1978) view as well.

Conversely, Kelly, Devitt, O'Keffee and Donovan (2014), like Kuffman et al. (2010), state that after many studies there is still no proof that inclusion works. They mention that just because learners are in the same school does not mean that they will start mixing. Devit et al. (2014) mention that they found that, because mainstream schools have not changed their programmes, learners with special needs find it hard to cope and therefore drop out. Conversely, Bui et al. (2010) state that inclusion prevents learners with needs from dropping out. Devit et al. (2014) argue that allowing learners with disabilities in mainstream schools makes it hard for them to cope. They are usually ridiculed and they are thus often lonely and marginalised. Ferguson (2008) states that even though he is in favour of inclusion, he cannot deny the fact that learners with disabilities may be *in* but not *of* a class in terms of social and learning membership.

2.4 Professional Learning Communities

In April 2011, the Department of Education initiated a programme called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). MacLean (2012) escribes PLCs as a number of teachers working together

in mindful effort to adapt and improve their practice to the learning needs of learners. The Department of Basic Education (2011) describes PLCs as group of people that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers, school management and subject advisors to participate collectively in defining their own developmental courses, and to set up activities that will drive their growth. Stoll et al. (2006) explain that a PLC is when teachers come together with the purpose of sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning oriented, growth-promoting way. According to Gupta and Rous (2016), principals intentionally create PLCs to promote collaboration and supportive dialogue around inclusion, thereby offering a forum in which knowledge can be shared and decisions are made collaboratively. Pang and Wand (2016) explain that a PLC is when staff members learn together and that this learning is directed to learners' needs and learning. This means that when teachers develop themselves, learners are benefiting as well.

The word *professional* in this name is used because teachers are regarded as professionals and are expected to use this platform to debate issues and solve problems related to their teaching profession (Department of Basic Education, 2011). By using the term *professional community*, the Department of Education also stipulates that teachers could discuss and apply what they have learned to reflect change in their practice; thus teachers may learn from one another about inclusive education and they can use this platform to develop inclusive practices (Department of Basic Education, 2011). According to Acedo (2008), such groups are called a community because it requires collaboration within and among schools, closer links among schools, communities networking across contexts, and the collection and use of contextually relevant materials. This is a learning community and not a teaching community because even though the aim of a PLC is to improve classroom performance and learner results, the group focuses on its own learning as part of growing towards professionalism (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Stoll et al. (2006) explain that it is a learning community because teachers' learning is related to learning through community services and other community learning. Professional learning includes learning based on knowledge from practice and knowledge from research. This research can be done by teachers in their classrooms, for example by comparing the effect of various instructional strategies on learning (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Stoll et al. (2006) state that, through learning communities, teachers collaborate to reinvent practice and share professional growth.

A PLC is a community with communal experiences. It is believed that it is important to have a shared interest and goal in order to have a community. Learning is supposed to be social because it is believed that people learn more within a nurturing group than by operating on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, as long as teachers work together and teach one another new strategies, inclusion is possible because they can find solutions to problems that they may experience. Stoll et al. (2006) explain that PLC teachers do not work in isolation or as individuals, but collaboratively. Teachers then become a community of learners. Stoll et al. (2006) also explain the importance of the learning relationship among and the interdependence of teachers. It is important that teachers support one another and share ideas that may lead to the acquisition of knowledge.

The functions of PLCs are that teachers get the opportunity to discuss the problems that they experienced in class and deliberate ways to solve them. PLCs also assist teachers to integrate their own professional knowledge with the latest research-based knowledge (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Working together and interacting with staff of other schools help to develop what is called enough knowledge in building towards justifiable development. (Ainscow. & Sandill, 2010). They point out that when teachers work together they can minimise the polarisation of schools to the benefit of learners who may have been excluded before and whose performance and attitudes cause concern. Ainscow and Sandill (2010) specify that if teachers work together, they can achieve positive results in terms of how they view themselves and their work. They also state that the way in which teachers view learners with barriers can change, and those learners can provide feedback on existing classroom arrangements so that teachers will understand how these arrangements should be applied to be of benefit to all the learners in the class.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2011), the goals of PLCs are the following: To develop hands-on attitudes and mind-sets; to cultivate teacher pride in self-development; to encourage self-reliance and responsibility for self-development as part of a career path leading to formal and informal credit and accreditation; to release creativity and problem- solving skills as teachers travel on the journey to self-empowerment; and to grip critical thinking as a developmental tool. Stool et al. (2006) state that the goal of PLCs is to improve teacher effectiveness as professional educators to learners' advantage.

PLCs support inclusion because teachers can work together to find new ways of dealing with learners' disabilities in a safe environment where there is mutual trust, respect and support (Stoll et al., 2006). Teachers discuss their experiences and challenges and what they have done to overcome their problems in a safe environment. Warren (2009) who, studied a mathematics PLC, states that to master new knowledge and skills, newcomers are required to move towards full participation in the sociocultural practices of the community. Thus, the participating teachers in this professional development [group] are called upon to move on from the position [of being] a novice, particularly with regard to their knowledge about a new mathematical domain."

Therefore, by sharing and learning from one another, teachers can be better prepared to embrace inclusive practices.

2.5 Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

Scholars have stated again and again that there are many factors that can hinder the success of inclusion. A few of these barriers are the following: teachers' attitudes; inadequate knowledge; lacking skills and poor training of teachers; a lack of teacher support by different stakeholders; inadequate facilities; poor school infrastructure; a lack of assistive devices; and a language of teaching and learning that is foreign to some learners. These issues have been recurring and are inarguably problematic.

The first problem is teachers' attitudes. A positive teacher attitude is a very important factor in the implementation of inclusion. Attitude is described as a learned and stable reaction to a given situation, person or other set of cues in a reliable way. (Parasuram, 2006). Nel et al. (2011, p. page) describe attitude as way someone behaves, it may be positive or negative towards a certain object, be it a person, idea or situation. They state that attitude is closely related to one's opinions and is based upon previous experiences. A person's attitude often relates in some way to interaction with others and represents a vital link between social and mental psychology (Nel et al., 2011). Therefore, if teachers have a negative attitude, inclusion cannot be successful. Avramidis and Norwich (2010) also support the idea that, in order for IE to be successful, teachers have to change their attitude because they are the drivers of inclusion. Engelbrecht et al. (2011) argue that a change in teachers' attitude and practices will not occur overnight, but the South African government has committed itself to protect learners with disabilities and teachers should embrace this mandate. Avramidis and Norwich (2010) state that a negative

attitude can create numerous challenges in the classroom while a positive attitude is very important in order for inclusion to be successful. Yada and Savolainan (2019) stated that teachers preferences differ and they are controlled by the countries that they come from. They mentioned that some teachers preferred learners with severe disabilities while some others preferred learners with mild disabilities, the teachers' preferences are controlled by their culture and political backgrounds, Therefore the culture does play a very important role in shaping the attitudes of the teachers and as the political background.

Inadequate knowledge, limited skills and inadequate training of teachers are factors that play a very negative role in the implementation of inclusive education. Based on a study that was conducted in 1999, Swart et al. (1999) found that their participants felt that they did not possess adequate knowledge or skills to address diversity or teach learners with special educational needs. Swart et al. (1999) concluded that there was an apparent inability to manage variety, which often resulted in teachers feeling fearful and useless and referring learners for assessment by a specialist to diagnose and place them in special programs. Swart et al. (1999) argue that there are misinterpretations and confusions about the concept of inclusion and that these frustrate the implementation of appropriate inclusive practices. In another study, their participants felt that neither their pre-service training nor their in-service training helped them to teach learners with barriers to learning (Swart et al., 2002). Pather (2011) focused on inclusion of learners with disabilities in deep rural areas who have been included in a mainstream school. The study discovered that teachers had little or no training at their initial teacher training institutions in remedial work or special education and lacked confidence in implementing inclusive education. The teachers also felt that they needed to learn strategies to support children with specific disabilities and saw little value in workshops (Pather, 2007). This suggests that inclusive education should comprise an integral part of the initial teacher training curriculum.

Florian (2008) has a different view on teacher knowledge, arguing that teachers do not really need any special knowledge to teach learners with special needs. He speculates that the same methods used to teach mainstream learners can help learners with special needs. Parasuram (2006) concurs, stating that what teachers believe is a vital factor in inclusive practices. Parasuram (2006) mentions that, as long as the teacher has a positive attitude, s/he will be able to practise inclusion. Florian (2008) argues that the emphasis is on the strategy rather than

apparently different teaching approaches. Florian (2008) asserts that if the teacher believes in the rights–based philosophy of inclusion and is willing to try it out by including learners who might otherwise have been excluded, then the teacher's knowledge about inclusion practices will develop as long as he or she has confidence to try. Florian (2008) also states that even if a teacher has no knowledge of inclusion but works in a school where inclusion is of primary importance, that teacher can be won over. Florian (2008) maintains that teachers have all the knowledge they need and many skills needed to teach all children, but they may not have the confidence to put this knowledge into action and help children who are experiencing barriers to learning. Florian (2008) believes that teachers must learn to work with others and through others.

According to Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (2011), teachers are in constant need of concrete advice on how to handle difficult situations to enable them to cope. Sometimes teachers are in a situation where they have to use trial and error strategies that lead to more confusion, conflict and stress (Engelbrecht et al., 2011). Tired and anxious teachers are unlikely to adapt to change effectively and this has negative implications for their learners (Engelbrecht et al., 2011) Florian and Rouse (2009) state that dealing with differences and diversity is one of the biggest challenges teachers have to face in Europe as well as outside this continent. They also point out that behavioural and social or emotional problems present challenges for inclusion and it is believed that these challenges are exacerbated by inadequate preparation of teachers, particularly in the area of special educational needs. The United Kingdom now offers special training for teachers in IE and their specialty is the development of separate teacher education programs with different curricula that focus on knowledge and skills that are unique to disciplinary perspectives (Florian & Rouse, 2009). In South Africa, only some tertiary education programmes for teacher training include IE, so only a few novice teachers may to be familiar with the IE concept and how to implement it.

Scholars such as Swart et al. (2002) and Mohangi and Berger (2015) believe that teacher support plays a crucial role in the implementation of inclusive education. According to Swart et al. (2002), it is very important that all teachers get the help they need to implement inclusion; but the support offered to teachers remains limited and does not necessarily include collaboration. Mohangi and Berger (2015) state that an extended community of support is encouraged to collude with learners, parents and the school to support inclusion. They state that professionals

such as educational psychologist, health workers, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists may work together to reduce certain causes or confirm others. They specify the importance of the school psychologist by stating that educational psychologists play a fundamental role in developing the knowledge bases for both psychology and education, and they argue that using effective strategies and possessing the necessary skills to help learners succeed academically, socially, behaviourally and emotionally are vital.

However, insufficient facilities, a poor infrastructure and a lack of assistive devices such as accessible buildings, appropriate instructional material and equipment seem to be some of the factors that hinder inclusive education (Swart et al., 2002). Moreover, Swart et al. (2002) found that teachers felt that, in order for inclusion to be successful, there should be enough classrooms that have all the necessary teaching aids and suitable material that will address the diverse needs of all learners. The teachers admitted that they were stressed and had to manage large classes in schools with a low teacher-learner ratio. Most teachers felt that teaching overcrowded classes was the most difficult obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusion (Swart et al., 2002). Likewise, Pather (2011) found that schools had very large class sizes and that there was a lack of funds for support staff and the required services. Swart et al. (2002) also found a lack of water, electricity and toilet facilities and argue that some schools have unsafe and rundown buildings due to lack of maintenance and poverty. The research that was conducted by Pather nine years later showed that there were still problems due to insufficient funding, a lack of implementation capacity, and a lack of clear national guidelines pertaining to funding norms and standards. Nel et al. (2011) also indicate that many schools still lack certain facilities and resources to support all learners, especially learners with special needs. They claim that this hampers the progress of learners. However, De Boer et al. (2011) state that teachers with low numbers of learners in their classes have a very positive attitude towards inclusion.

The use of an inappropriate language of teaching and learning seems to be one of the obstacles in the implementation of inclusive education. It is very easy for teachers and educational practitioners to misunderstand learners who use a language that is foreign to them and they end up labelling such learners as ‘learners with learning disabilities’ instead of ‘learners with a language barrier’ (Makoelle, 2016). Learners who are taught in a language that is not their mother tongue may struggle with their school work because they may experience difficulties in understanding instructions and expressing themselves (Makoelle, 2016). For this reason the language of instruction in South African schools for the first three years is the child’s mother

tongue. It is now compulsory for all schools to use the learners' home language in the FP and to use English only as the First Additional Language (FAL), which means that English is used only during the English period in the FP. However, this policy is not really helpful. For instance, in my school many learners' home language is not IsiZulu as they are from Mozambique, the Eastern Cape and Zimbabwe. These learners battle to use IsiZulu and I as the teacher battle to help them as I am not proficient in their different mother tongues.

2.6 Support Structures for Inclusive Education

According to Engelbrecht (2011), support for teachers in their increasingly demanding roles within a whole-school approach is imperative. Engelbrecht (2011) also specifies that many classroom teachers feel that they do not have sufficient training and support to meet the many challenges presented by the learners in their classes and the general problems facing their schools. Masango (2013) mentions that all teachers should have access to an excellent and equitable programme that provides solid support for their teaching and is responsive to their prior knowledge, intellectual capacity, strengths, and personal interests. Professional support involves a planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings, and other interventions designed to help teachers teach learners with learning barriers so that they will achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school (Masango, 2013). Thus teachers need support throughout the year − but they should know how to and when to ask for help. Masango (2013) argues that it is the responsibility of the Department of Basic Education to provide the necessary training and resources to assist teachers and learners on their journey to developing their skills and to ensure they are adequately equipped to participate fully in integrated classrooms. Mfuthwa and Dreyer (2018) state that, in order for schools to be inclusive, it was necessary to convert special schools to mainstream schools. District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) were then appointed in all the districts to ensure that teachers were trained and assisted to acquire the necessary skills in order to drive inclusion (Mfuthwa & Dreyer, 2018).

According to UNESCO (1994), support services are vital for the success of inclusive education. It stipulates that support in ordinary schools can be provided by both teacher education institutions and by outreach staff from special schools. Special schools should thus be used increasingly as resource centres for ordinary schools and should offer direct support

for children with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement also stipulates that both training institutions and special schools can provide access to specific devices and materials as well as training in instructional strategies that are not provided in regular classrooms. Thus teachers based at special schools should conduct workshops to educate teachers in mainstream schools because they have experience in supporting learners who are challenged in various areas.

The School Based Support Team (SBST) also plays a crucial role in the introduction and improvement of inclusion practices. This body usually consists of a teacher who is on the management team (e.g., the principal, a deputy principal or a head of department), teachers who are directly involved with learners who experience barriers to learning, teachers with special skills and knowledge in learning support (life skills, guidance or counselling), volunteer teachers who are interested in special needs education, staff members who represent different educational levels, and non-educator representatives such as administrative and care-taking staff (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The SBST has a very important role to play as far as supporting inclusion is concerned (Department of Basic Education, 2014). It needs to study reports submitted by teachers on any barriers identified in learners; provide support; and assess the impact of that support. It also needs to find ways of support and devise appropriate intervention programmes for teachers and parents. If the need arises, the SBST provides teacher training or support in the classroom and also monitors progress after support has been given and makes sure that suggestion have been implemented. They also identify further SBST assets and mobilise them and encourage peer or collegial support. The most important role of the SBST is to provide ongoing support by: coordinating all learner, teacher, curriculum and school development support in the school; collectively identifying the school's needs; identifying the barriers to learning that impact learners, teachers, the curriculum and the school; collectively developing strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning; obtaining required resources from within and outside the school; and monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an action-reflection framework.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), the SBST has a role to play in SIAS. In this regard the team contacts the DBST if all resources that are cost effective have been

exhausted and when every single strategy has been tried and failed. It provides the DBST with evidence of support provided to the learner at school level and ensures that parents are always involved in remedial programmes. It also informs parents about decisions taken to support their child. Ladsberg et al. (2016) state that the SBST takes responsibility for the in-service training of teachers in the identification, assessment and support of all learners, including those who experience barriers to learning. It establishes networks that promote effective communication among learners, teachers and parents as well as with non-governmental organisations and the departments of welfare, health and justice. It further identifies and discusses leaner development and the placement of a learner in another school if necessary; facilitates the sharing of resources; ensures parental involvement; monitors and supports learner progress; and plans strategies that prevent child abuse, drug use, and malnutrition. The authors state that this team must work hard and be known at the school, but the class teacher of the child with learning challenges must lead the team. Ladsberg et al. (2016) also state that the SBST must be flexible and very active. Pienaar and Raymond (2013) state that it is important that the SBST rotates after a year or two. They state that the leadership role must also rotate. Pienaar and Raymond (2013) specify that it is important that teachers are not overburdened by administrative work and that there should be some reward for creative work.

The SBST also has to report to the DBST who plays a very important role. The DBST forms a key constituent in the successful implementation of an inclusive education support system (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The policy includes support staff in the DBST such as curriculum and school managers, human resource planners, development coordinators, social workers, therapists, psychologists and other health professionals who work within the school system. Cameron (2016) stipulates that the responsibilities of district leaders include management of educational resources, supervision of public school personnel, and ensuring that education is provided in accordance with national laws and local policy. The DBST is also responsible for special schools and must ensure that there is collaboration between special schools and mainstream schools (Cameron, 2016). The latter author sites DeMathews and Mawhinney (2013) who state that one challenge the DBST faces is the ongoing fight to understand and apply national policy in a manner that successfully meets the requirements of local teachers, learners and families. Accordingly, the perceptions and beliefs of these leaders are likely to play a crucial role with regard to both the occurrence and organisation of special education services provided to learners with disabilities and their peers (Cameron, 2016). According to Ladsberg et al. (2016), the role of the DBST is to manage inclusive education in

the district. They state that they provide a coordinated professional support service that draws on expertise from further and higher education and local communities. Ladsberg et al. (2016) also stipulate that the following are support services that are provided by the district office: support personnel who are employed by the Department of Education such as therapists, psychologists, teacher support specialists, experts on specific disabilities, as well as other health and welfare professionals; curriculum specialists who can provide curriculum support to teachers and school management teams; administrative experts who provide administrative and financial support to schools; specialists from special schools who support mainstream teachers; and other education institutions such as further education and training staff who offer support and advice. Assessors of barriers to learning and the needs of learners and educators and evaluators of resources and educational programs should also assist schools.

Other stakeholders that are also expected to help whenever they can are non-profit organisations, governing bodies, parents, learners, as well as different government departments such as the Department of Health, the Department of Social Affairs, Early Childhood Development experts and special school resource centre staff (Department of Basic Education, 2014). According to UNESCO (1994), external support by various agencies, departments and institutions (such as advisory teachers, educational psychologists, speech and occupational therapists) should be coordinated at local level. School clusters are regarded to be very important and useful by UNESCO (1994).

Pienaar and Raymond (2013) stipulate that, surprising as it may sound, another source of support is the teacher. They state that it is important that the teacher knows that he/she is part of the professional team who can support learners and one another. Pienaar and Raymond (2013) explain that if a teacher knows his role as a supporter, he may even change the way he speaks; for example, he may find that a learner needs help and will find another professional to help him instead of just saying that the learner needs professional help. When the latter occurs, it means that he does not view himself as part of the professional team. It is very important that the power of peer support is not underestimated (Pienaar & Raymond, 2013). Vygotsky argued that a child needs an adult or a more capable peer to learn. Pienaar and Raymomd (2013) state that peers are more readily friendly than authority figures and that they help in a more natural and informal way. However, they caution that teachers must guard against learners being over helpful as this may result in them being overburdened by the continuous support they render to their classmates with learning barriers. But it is a good idea that teachers train learners who are

capable of helping to prevent uncorrected errors by their less able peers (Pienaar & Raymond, 2013).

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory was used as a theoretical framework for this study. "Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge in sociology and a communication theory that examines the knowledge and understandings of the worlds that are developed jointly by individuals" (Amineh & Asl, 2015, p. 13). As the study focused on FP teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and its implementation, the socio-constructivist theory was regarded as a suitable theory to frame my study. The socio-constructivist theory of learning as a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978) is a strong feature of inclusive education. Vygotsky believed that we develop to ourselves through others and that development proceeds towards the change of social relations into mental functions and not towards socialization (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Thus, teachers in the FP have to be knowledgeable about how young learners and their social and cultural worlds are connected.

According to Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006), Vygotsky claimed that higher mental processes in the individual have their roots in social developments. He also believed that mental growth can be understood only if we first understand the social and semiotic instruments that mediate them. Steiner and Mahn (1996) describe semiotic mediation as the process of acquiring all aspects of knowledge. For Vygotsky, semiotic mechanisms mediate social and individual functioning and connect the external and internal, the social and the individual. Vygotsky believed that young learners construct their knowledge of the world through interaction with other young ones and adults using language to make meaning of their surroundings and their place within it (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016). As children interact with each other and the teacher, the teacher gains insights into the child's level of understanding and is able to use that knowledge to advance the child's understanding (Kühne, Lombard, & Moodley, 2013). It is therefore important that learners be encouraged to interact with one another, and learners must function in groups in order to promote their use of language and stimulate social interaction.

According to Conkbayir and Pascal (2016), Vygotsky believed that children develop language first as external speech through social interactions with those around them. This starts from

birth. When a child is about three years old, he or she then develops monologue skills by speaking alone or to himself or herself out loud. Conkbayir and Pascal (2016) mention that at about seven years the child uses internal speech; this means that a child thinks silently to him- or herself when reflecting on recent events or when making plans.

According to the social constructivist theory, the aim of learning is to become aware of the realities of others and their relationship with and to one's own (Adams, 2006). Social constructivism adopts the notion that understanding, significance and meaning are developed in coordination with other human beings (Amineh & Asl, 2015). This theory is about the idea that learners shape their own minds through their own actions within given sociocultural settings and in orientation learning as construction (Adams, 2006). According to Berger and Luckmann (1996), the most important contribution of socio-constructivism is that it reveals ways in which individuals and groups relate to their social setting. According to Vygotsky, if one wants to understand a child's development, one needs to know where that child comes from and what his or her environment is like. In the latter study, participating learners had experienced diverse challenges. Some had been neglected and abused, they came from different backgrounds and had different home languages that were not the same as the LoLT. Some had been promoted to the next grade because policy does not allow learners to repeat a grade more than once in a phase, but they still had not grasped what was expected of them. Some learners were raised by foster parents who seemed indifferent to them. Against this background, it is important that teachers have enough knowledge of their learners and their background if inclusive practices are to be successful.

Knowledge is first constructed in a social context and is then internalised and used by individuals (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Churcher, Downs, & Tewksbury, 2014; Dimitriadis & Kamerelis, 2006; Adams, 2007. Social constructivists view learning as an active process in which learners should learn to discover principles, concepts and facts for themselves as this promotes instinctive thinking in learners (Amineh & Asl, 2015). According to Adams (2006), social constructivism requires attention to learning as a mindful activity, which means that learning happens in the mind and is a mental activity.

The 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) is a concept that was introduced by Vygotsky. It encapsulates the belief that learning is a continual movement from a current intellectual level

to a higher level which more closely approximates the learner's potential (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Churcher et al., 2014; Tewksbury, 2014; Dimitriadis & Kamerelis, 2006; Adams, 2007). This movement is from one developmental level to the next is the result of social interaction. The ZPD is thus defined as the distance between an actual developmental level that is determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or with capable peers. Schunk (2012) explains Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD as a teacher and a learner or an adult and a child or tutor and a tutee or a model and an observer who work together on a task that the learner (or a child or a tutee or an observer) could not perform independently because of the difficulty level. The ZPD is also the level where one or more skilled persons share a skill and knowledge with one who is less skilled. Woolfolk (n,d.) stated that learners need one another to make meaning of of knowledge. Thus the ZPD concept resonates with inclusive education because the learner with barriers to learning depends on other capable learners and the teacher to move from a place of not being able to a place of being able to do things independently.

Schunk (2012) is against the idea that learners are passive in the process of attaining their ZPD. Like Vygotsky, he acknowledges that children or learners bring their own knowledge and understanding to social interactions and construct meaning by integrating those understandings with their experiences. Woolfolk (n,d.) mentioned that learners learn best when they participate actively while learning. Churcher et al. (2014) report that learning, according to socio-constructivism, occurs at the individual level and is a product of knowledge creation through collaboration, whereas knowledge is co-created in the environment. Adams (2006) points out that learning shapes a school into something tangible rather than something that is temporary and doubtful. According to Schunk (2012), schools are not just physical structures or words, but they are institutions that seeks to promote learning and citizenship. In inclusive schools, learners learn communication skills that are important because they are life-long skills. All learners benefit, not only learners with disabilities. Moreover, understanding and coping with learners with mixed abilities when grouping learners are also important. Earlier, learners tended to be grouped according to their abilities, but now the Department of Basic Education (2014) wants teachers to mix learners so that those with disabilities can benefit from those without disabilities. According to Bui et al. (2010), when this is done both groups of learners benefit: those with challenges and those who are able to learn without experiencing challenges.

Social constructivism views teaching as encouraging learners to examine thought processes and not just accept facts. They should use thinking which is important in the learning process. Social constructivism allows teachers to move beyond standards and performance and to concentrate on learning and the learnings, which should be at the heart of the educational process (Adams, 2006). He also states that each learner will acquire knowledge differently and that those differences stem from the various ways that individuals acquire, select, interpret and organise information. Thus teachers need to be flexible, alert and quick thinkers. They need to change their methods of teaching and assessment so that their methods suit the needs of every learner. In this context a differentiated curriculum is important. According to Schunk (2000), teaching means peer teamwork, cognitive education, problem based teaching, web searches, fixed instructions and other methods that involve working with peers or others. So, according to social constructivism, it is not ideal to learn alone, and that is why social constructivism argues that 'no man is an island'. According to social constructivism, teachers should be aware of their learners' social **organization and political economy in order for effective learning to occur (Amineh & Asl, 2015).** Warren (2009) **argues that,** to master new knowledge and skills, newcomers are required to move towards full participation in the socio-cultural practices of the community.

According to social constructivism, a learner is viewed as an integral part of learning and a unique and complex being (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Schunk (2012, p. 244) argues that "the way that learners interact with their worlds − with the persons, objects and institutions in it − transforms their thinking", which means thinking is changed after the learner has communicated with others or after a learner has learnt from others. According to Amineh and Asl (2015), a learner's version of the truth that is influenced by his or her own background is highly encouraged. They also elaborate that it is vital that one takes into account the background and culture of a learner during the learning process because background and culture help to shape the knowledge and the truth that the learner creates, discovers, and attains in the learning process. Conkbayir and Pascal (2016) state that Vygotsky's theory first refers to playing and exploring when children explore and practise things, and secondly to active learning when children ponder and keep on trying if they come across difficulties and enjoy accomplishments or success. Therefore, an 'inclusive teacher' must be able to plan thoroughly and make sure that all learners are catered for and that the planned activities will be learner centred. In the FP it is of particular importance that lessons are interesting and that there are enough concrete objects to play with and explore so that these young learners will not lose interest.

Social constructivists view teachers not as instructors who give a didactic lecture, or expect learners to be passive listeners, or tell or lecture from the front and give answers to questions according to the stipulated curriculum, but as facilitators who help learners to gain understanding of the content that they teach (Amineh & Asl, 2015). According to socio-constructivists, a facilitator allows learners to be active role players. While facilitating l e a r n i n g , the emphasis is not on the teacher or the content but it is about the learner. They also state that a facilitator asks questions, uses different sets of skills, and supports from the back while providing guidelines and creating an appropriate environment for the learner to arrive at his or her own answer and conclusions. Adams (2006) asserts that the teacher as a social constructivist analyses education from the point of view of the learner while observing and listening how learners describe their work and their reasoning through the use of suitably phrased open ended questions. The teacher sets tasks that allow learners to utilise skills and apply ideas. They also employ a variety of communicative methods such as role play, concept mapping, drawing, and the use of objects.

Churcher et al. (2014) point out that the role of the socio-constructivist teacher is to moderate the route of the learner by generating content and encouraging knowledge sharing. Conkbayir and Pascal 2016 mention the following roles of the teacher: carrying out regular observations in order to identify each child's ZPD; providing sensitive support during their play; giving children plenty of opportunities to engage in symbolic play; providing tasks that are familiar but just beyond what they already know; being mindful of possible cultural mismatches; planning and implementing activities that acknowledge and utilise children's different cultural and linguistic backgrounds; working closely with parents and guardians to support constant learning; and assessing children when they are in a social context and taking part in collective play-based activities where they are likely to accomplish at the edge of their capacity and thus demonstrate their true developmental level. According to Adams (2006), the role of the teacher is essentially that of a listener.

Language plays a crucial role in the social constructivist theory. Vygotsky believed in the role of language so much that he emphasised that children construct their understanding of the world through interactions with other children and adults using language to make sense of their environment and their place in it (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016). Vygotsky believed that language develops first in children as external speech through interacting with those around them. Inner speech or monologue develops when a child speaks to itself at about three years of age, and the

last stage develops when a child is about seven years and is using internal speech or thinking silently (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016). According to Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006), Vygotsky proposed the idea of semiotic mediation and viewed language as the most important semiotic system in human activity. Semiotic mediation, as explained by Dimitiadis and Kimberelis (2006), is a form of mediation by linguistic signs. Vygotsky stressed the importance of the nature and effectiveness of social interaction through the idea of semiotic mediation, which is the mediation of activity through semiotic tools such as language (Dimitriadis & Kimberelis, 2006). Vygotsky also believed that only language is capable of being reflexive, of classifying reality, of interpreting communicable human experience, and of uttering the many voices of culture with equal capacity (Dimitriadis & Kimberelis, 2006). The latter authors maintain that language is used to steer social situations, to improve ideas, and to order thinking. Churcher et al. (2014) report that, according to Vygotsky, knowledge is constructed in a social environment and that, in the process of social interaction, people use language as a tool to construct meaning. The use of language by individuals in an environment as an inter-psychological tool is central to the social constructivist theory. Successful learning is thus said to be the result of an internal dialogue which is an intra-psychological tool that can be used in the future across varying situations (Churcher et al., 2014). This is very helpful in inclusive education because, as Bui et al. (2010) argue, there is evidence that language enhances the acquisition of literacy and adaptive skills as well as students' social relationships.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2011), learners who experience learning problems may need much help at the beginning. Scaffolding is viewed as one of the means that assist learners to reach the goals that are expected of them. Scaffolding is when a teacher initially does most of the work, after which the teacher and the learners share responsibility and, as soon as the learners have become more competent, the teacher gradually removes the scaffolding so learners can perform independently (Schunk, 2006). Schunk (2006) believes that instructional scaffolding helps learners acquire cognitive mediators through the social environment. Scaffolding is perceived as the personal assistance and support that can be provided by a capable peer or an adult to a learner (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Instrumental scaffolding means the process of controlling task elements that are beyond the learners' capabilities so that they can focus on and master those features of the task that they can grasp (Schunk, 2012). Citing Brunning et al. (2004), Puntambekar and Hubscher, 2005. He asserts that instructional scaffolding has five major purposes: to give support, to work as a tool, to extend the range of the learner, to permit the accomplishment of tasks not otherwise possible,

and to be used as selectively as needed. “Scaffolding is appropriate when a teacher wants to provide students with some information or to complete part of tasks for them so that they can concentrate on the part of the task they are attempting to master” (Schunk, 2006, p. 246). So when using scaffolding, a teacher does not spoon feed a learner but gives support and removes this support when it is no longer needed. Adams (2006) sees scaffolding as something that happens both ways. He states that the learners and teachers scaffold one another and learners can scaffold their own understanding. Even though scaffolding seems to be uncommon in classrooms generally, proponents of the social constructivist theory such as Schunk (2012) still believe it is useful if it is used in the correct way and resonates well within the ZPD.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented excerpts and insights from the literature that I reviewed in order to explore FP teachers’ knowledge and implementation of inclusive education. The discourse gave insight into inclusion by explaining what IE is and giving a historical overview of IE. I explained inclusive pedagogy and clarified the roles played by professional learning communities (PLC). I also explored the challenges in implementing IE and stated the support structures that are available for this educational philosophy. In conclusion, I discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned this study in some detail. In the following chapter I shall discuss the research methodology that I employed to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is the discussion of the research approach and methodology that were used to conduct the research. The research paradigm and then the research approach was discussed. The decision to employ a case study design was also mentioned and then the sampling technique. The researcher also discuss the data collection methods that she employed, namely interviews and document analysis. On conclusion of this chapter is the discussion of the trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

3.2 The Research Design

The qualitative research approach was used. This approach requires objectivity and involves efforts to assure the accuracy and inclusiveness of the data as well as efforts to test the truthfulness of the analytic claims that are made about the data recordings. Check and Schutt (2012) maintain that the most important feature of the qualitative approach is verbal data, and not numbers. They note that the texts that a qualitative researcher analyses are usually transcripts of interviews or notes from participant observation sessions, but they can also be pictures or other images.

Check and Schutt (2012) note that the things that a researcher can learn from a text are twofold. First, the researcher needs to understand what the participants really thought, felt, or did in some situation or at some point in time. The text then becomes a way to get behind the numbers that are recorded in quantitative analysis to see the richness of real educational experience by interviewing or doing field studies which illuminate what survey respondents really meant by their answers. Secondly, it is a hermeneutic perspective on text, which means viewing interpretations as never totally true or false. The meaning of text is negotiated among a community of interpreters to the extent that some agreement is reached about meaning at a particular time and place. That meaning can only be based on consensual community validation. This approach was chosen because of the advantage that it afforded me to understand people in terms of their own definition of the world and to understand the participants' personal

experiences. By employing a qualitative approach, I sought to explore foundation phase (FP) teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education. I also tried to understand how this knowledge helped them to deal with learners who experienced learning difficulties. I chose this approach because it allowed me to construct the social reality of the participants. It also attached cultural meaning to what the FP teachers knew about inclusion and what they did to overcome the problems that they faced each day. Neuman (2000) explains that the qualitative approach focuses on interactive processes and events and that authenticity is key. He states that values are present and explicit and the researcher is involved as well.

3.2.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a particular world view that defines what is acceptable in research and how a project should be approached (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). They state that working within a specific paradigm determines choices such as what kind of questions are supposed to be asked, what can be observed and investigated, how to collect the data, and how to interpret the findings. This research was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm.

According to Check and Schutt (2012), an interpretivist researcher believes that educational reality is socially constructed and that the objective of educational research is to understand what meanings people give to reality, and not to determine how reality works apart from these clarifications. Neuman (2000) states that the aim of interpretive explanation is to raise understanding by making an attempt to learn the meaning of an event or practice by placing it within a specific social context. Such a researcher thus tries to see the world through the eyes of the participant and tries to understand or mentally grasp the operation of the social world. Neuman (2000) notes that each person's subjective world view shapes how that person acts. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2007) explain the interpretive paradigm as the internal reality of subjective experience. The researcher needs to be empathetic and a subjective observer. The usual methods used by the interpretive researcher are interactional, interpretative and qualitative (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). They state that an interpretive paradigm involves taking people's subjective experiences seriously, as the essence of what is real for them makes sense of their experiences. Thus, by interacting with participants and listening carefully to what they tell us, we can collect and analyse information that addresses the research questions. This approach focuses on harnessing and extending the power of ordinary language and expression to help us understand the social world we live in.

Check and Schutt (2012) mention that interpretivists believe that people construct an image of reality based on their own preferences and prejudices and their interactions with others. This statement is supported by Bertram and Christiansen (2015), who note that, when using the interpretive paradigm, the researcher does not aim to predict what people will do, but rather to describe and understand how people make sense of their worlds and how they make meaning of their particular actions. They argue that the purpose is to develop a greater understanding of how people make sense of the contexts in which they live and work. Bertram and Christiansen (2015) also mention that there are many possible interpretations of events and situations, so the researcher makes interpretations with the aim of understanding human agencies, behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. For the researcher to make meaning of the data, there should be interaction between him or her and the person interviewed in a subjective but unbiased manner (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015).

This paradigm was chosen because I wanted to know what FP teachers knew about inclusive education and I also wanted to find out if they implemented their knowledge in their interaction with their learners. I wanted the findings to be trustworthy and therefore elicited authentic data from participants who had experience of the topic under investigation. Bertram and Christiansen (2015) state that trustworthiness, subjectivity and authenticity are key when this paradigm is used, and I thus set out to acquire real and authentic results to address the following research questions:

- What do FP teachers know and understand about Inclusive Education?
- How has the knowledge of IE helped FP teachers to address the needs of learners who experience difficulties?

As a researcher I managed to interpret what the teachers said without letting my own feelings and perceptions interfere with the data.

3.2.2 The qualitative research approach

To collect, analyze and interpret the respondents' authentic views, a case study approach was followed. Yin (2009) states that a case study is a logical plan for getting from the initial set of questions to be answered to some questions that will allow conclusion in a case. Terre Blanche

et al. (2007) describe the case study as an ideographic research method; this means that the method studies persons as persons rather than as members of a population. They state that a case study is a thorough study of specific individuals' views and perceptions. A case study also allows the researcher the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the complete and meaningful characteristics of a real-life situation (Yin, 2009). He states that case studies can be both qualitative and quantitative and that there are single and multiple case studies. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a case study can be naturalistic or ethnographic, which means that a researcher may want to know about the customs and culture of the participants. Creswell (2012), like Bertram and Christiansen (2014), state that ethnographic designs allow qualitative researchers to describe, analyze and interpret the behaviors and beliefs of people who have a similar culture in detail.

I chose a single case study design. A single case study is a specific study form that is based on difficult elements of design, careful descriptions, and the operationalization of dependent and independent variables (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). A single case study was used because the study focused on a specific context, namely an exploration of the knowledge of FP teachers of IE and the manner in which they implemented it in the FP. Six teachers from two different schools were recruited and interviewed. I concentrated on the same context in detail and there was no generalization of any information.

Cohen et al. (2009) state that the case study has various advantages, such as the following: It portrays what it is like to be in a particular situation and this elicits thick descriptive data of the phenomenon, and a case study allows the participants to speak for themselves without being interrupted, weighed or judged. Terre Blanche et al. (2007) state that a case study is usually expressive in nature and provides rich information about personalities or specific circumstances. They point out that a case study allows new ideas to emerge from careful and detailed observation.

3.2.3 Research Methodology

3.2.3.1 Sampling

Sampling techniques tell us how to select cases that can lead to valid generalizations about a population, or the entire group you wish to learn about (Check & Schutt, 2012). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2015), sampling is about coming to a decision about which people, setting, events or behaviors you wish to include in the study and it is also about how to decide how many individuals, groups or objects will be observed. There are two types of sampling, namely random and purposive sampling, and this research utilized a purposive sampling technique. According to this sampling technique, each sample element is chosen for a particular reason, usually because of the unique position of the sample elements (Check & Schutt, 2012; Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). Bertram and Christiansen (2015) specify that a case can be chosen because it is considered to be representative of a group of people and it can also be selected because it captures a number of concerns that exist in the population but that may not all be found together. Babbie (1995) views purposive sampling as the sampling technique that is selected because the researcher knows the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims, and thus selects participants purposively as they will address the objectives of the study.

Check and Schutt (2012) state that purposive sampling is a key informant survey tool that targets individuals who are particularly knowledgeable about the issue under investigation. According to Rubin (1995, cited in Check & Schutt, 2012), purposive sampling has three important requirements: (1) Informants must be knowledgeable about the cultural arena or situation or experience being studied; (2) Informants must be willing to talk; and (3) Informant must be representative of a range of points of view. Bertram and Christiansen (2015) mention that such sampling can also be called criterion sampling because it picks a study site that meets a particular criterion. I thus selected two primary schools (one was a full service school as described in Chapter One) and I interviewed six selected teachers, three from each school. All the teachers were female, members of the SBST, and Foundation Phase teachers. They differed in age and years of experience. I wrote a letter to the Department of Education to request access to the teachers and I visited both schools to obtain information on teachers who were members of the SBSTs. I sent letters to all the teachers as well as the principals to request access and the participation of the selected sample.

3.2.4 Data generation

Neuman (2000) states that there are two techniques of collecting data, namely a quantitative method that requires collecting data in the form of numbers and a qualitative method that requires collecting data in the form of words or pictures. He specifies that it takes skill, practice and creativity to match a researcher's question to an appropriate data collection technique. Terre Blanche et al. (2007) state that qualitative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations, or phenomena as they occur in the real world and therefore they want to study them in their natural setting. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2007), interpretive researchers believe that one should not disturb the study environment excessively, but should try to become a natural part of the environment in which the phenomenon happens by engaging with research participants in an open and empathetic manner. They stress that social constructionist qualitative researchers, as interpretive researchers, value data collected in context and with minimal disturbance to the natural setting. I thus used interviews as a data collection tool and I also analyzed relevant documents in the two schools that I had selected. These documents included policies on inclusive education, SIAS forms, and Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001).

3.2.4.1 Interviews

Bertram and Christiansen (2015) state that an interview is a good data collection tool for finding out what a person knows, what a person likes or dislikes, and what a person thinks. They also state that interviews could be used to determine what knowledge people possess. Terre Blanche et al. (2007) specify that interviews give a researcher the opportunity to get to know the participants quite intimately so that they can really understand how they think and feel. Maree (2012) explains interviews as discussion between an interviewer and the participants where the researcher asks questions in order to gain insight into the participants' thoughts, convictions, understandings, feelings and the way the participants do things.

The teachers were interviewed using a structured and focused interview schedule because I wanted to determine what knowledge they had about IE and how they applied this knowledge. This interview schedule was underpinned by findings in the literature and it was thus prepared before the interviews commenced. The questions were mostly open ended with a few requiring closed responses. The respondents allowed the participants the opportunity to tell exactly how

they felt but I probed deeper to get clarity when discussing certain issues with them. They were not told what to say or how to respond so no leading questions were asked. All the participants were asked the same questions and in the same order. They were told that they could use any language they were comfortable with because the aim was to create an environment of openness and trust within which the interviewees would be able to express themselves authentically.

Before interviewing them, I summarized what the interview would be about and then asked a non-threatening question that would get the participants talking. Terre Blanche et al. (2007) state that such a question helps to put them at ease. I did not start with difficult or sensitive questions because I did not know them that well; I wanted to establish a relationship of trust and for them to be very comfortable. I listened more and talked little, only asking for clarification when I did not understand the answer. I probed deeper only when required and kept the participants focused by asking for concrete details and examples. I tolerated silence and allowed the participants to be thoughtful when necessary. I sometimes asked them to rephrase or reconstruct their statements. I jotted down all those things that could not be picked up by the audio recorder, for example their facial expressions and body language. Towards the end of each interview I asked the participant if there was something else she wanted to add or say. In this manner I was able to explore and describe FP teachers' perceptions and understandings of inclusive teaching that were unique to them.

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2015), interpretivist researchers use interviews extensively. The advantages are that the researcher is always present during the interview so the researcher can clarify questions in case the need arises; a researcher can ask more questions to get more detailed information if the respondent has not given sufficient detail at first; some participants find it easier to talk freely than to write long responses to questions in a questionnaire; the researcher may obtain more detailed and descriptive data through an interview than by means of a questionnaire; and an interview is a good method to use for getting in-depth information from a small number of people (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015).

3.2.4.2 Document analysis

According to Maree (2012), there are many types of documents that scholars may peruse such as published and unpublished documents, company reports, memoranda, agendas,

administrative documents, letters, reports, email messages, faxes, newspaper articles, or any other documents that are relevant to a study. The following document was used:

- the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy and forms.

This document was used primarily to compare my literature findings with the participants' views and they were used exclusively for this study. This document also provided a clear picture of the requirements for IE at school level.

3.3 Data Analysis

Terre Blanche et al. (2007) declare that the key to doing a good interpretive analysis is to stay close to the data and to interpret the data from a position of sympathetic understanding. I used deductive reasoning as a way of interpreting the data. According to Babbie (1998), observations and analysis are interwoven. He states that when analyzing the data, the researcher looks for similarities and dissimilarities in data obtained from different participants; for example, commonalities and differences are highlighted and norms are identified. Babbie stresses that it is important to look for the following when analyzing data: frequencies, magnitude, structure, process, causes and consequences. Neuman (2000) views qualitative data analysis as helpful in verifying a sequence of events or the steps of a process. He states that a qualitative researcher forms new concepts or refines ideas that are grounded in the data. I thus analyzed the data by first organising the responses into categories on the basis of themes, and then I developed conceptual definitions. I then examined the relationships among the concepts and linked the concepts to one another in sequence (Neuman, 2000).

Neuman (2000) states that, in qualitative research, ideas and evidence are mutually codependent, especially in case study analysis. When I was creating a case (which is also called 'casing'), I brought the data and theory together and determined what to treat as a case. Neuman states that casing is a methodological step that can occur at any phase of the research process, but it occurs especially at the beginning and at the end of a project. Terre Blanche et al. (2007) state that when interpreting data, the researcher goes back and forth to capture the essence of the data.

3.4 Credibility and Trustworthiness

It is important that trustworthiness is achieved in the data collection process (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). According to Vithal and Jansen (2010), data are valid when the meaning and explanations of an event are sound or when a particular measure is a precise reflection of what the researcher intended to find out. Babbie (1995) explains reliability as a technique that is used repeatedly for the same objective to obtain the same result each time. Babbie (1995) further views validity as "the extent to which the participants measure sufficiently repeats the real meaning of the idea of what is explored.

I made it a point to obtain and analyse the data in a trustworthy manner. I ensured that my findings would reflect the truth and the reality as the participants viewed it and that the analyses would be truthfully transferred (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). When I collected the data, I realised that the participants were sometimes telling me what they thought I wanted to hear and not the truth, so I used triangulation to gather information from a number of different sources so that the information would be genuine (Terre Blanche et al., 2007; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Although I used a single case study, I could still triangulate within a single data collection interview by asking the same question in different ways so as to make sure that the answer was real and true. I thus wanted to check if the participants would answer the same question with the same answer. I used an audio recorder with the participants' permission to make sure that I captured all the information, and I also jotted down some actions that could not be captured by the audio recorder. I made it clear to the teachers that they could use whatever language they were comfortable with.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The essential purposes of insisting on research ethics, according to Terre Blanche et al. (2007), are to protect the welfare of the research participants and to minimize scientific misconduct and plagiarism. Babbie (1995) urges that research should not injure the people being studied, nor should it embarrass the participants by revealing information about their lives, friendships or jobs if it is not relevant to the study. Moreover, participants should not be harmed psychologically or physically during a research project. They note four ethical principles, and two of these are *autonomy* and *respect for the dignity of persons.* Terre Blanche et al. (2007)

state that the protection of individual and institutional confidentiality is an important operational expression of this principle and that the identity of communities should also be protected in particular circumstances. I thus do not refer to the schools or teachers by their real names but I use pseudonyms. Another principle that Terre Blanche et al. (2007) highlight is *no maleficence*. They state that the researcher must make sure that the participants are not harmed in any way during and after the interviews. The other principles that should be adhered to are *beneficence* and *justice,* which means that the participants must be treated fairly and equally throughout the research. It also means that participants are chosen fairly and that their rights are considered all the time.

I also sought and obtained ethical clearance to conduct the study in an educational setting from all stakeholders and gatekeepers. This authority was granted by the Ethical Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, The Department of Basic Education, the principals of the two schools, and the participating teachers. Appendix A is letter authorising me to change a research topic, Appendix B is an interview Schedule, Appendix C is the Documents to be analysed, Appendix D is a letter to the Head of Department, Appendix E are letters to the principals of schools and Appendix F are letters to the participants, Appendix G is a turnitin report, Appendix H is a permission to conduct a research, Appendix I is a letter of approval to conduct a study. I thus gave all the participants an informed consent form that explained the purpose of the study and the usefulness of their participation. I also discussed the ethical issues with them before they completed the consent forms. These forms were read and signed.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

No matter how hard one tries to avoid mistakes or omissions, interpretivism does leave a room for limitations. For instance, I endeavoured to remain unbiased and not to generalise the findings, as the scope of the study was limited and generalisations would be inappropriate. The main limitation of the study was thus its limited scope as only six participants from two schools contributed their insights and views. However, by utilising an appropriate study paradigm and methodology, this limitation was overcome as thick and in-depth data were obtained to the point of saturation, and this contributed to the validity and reliability of the study.

Another limitation was that the data were generated from female teachers only. It needs to be acknowledged that male FP teachers' views might have contribute enormously to the insights

generated by this study, but this possibility was confined due the fact that no male teachers were appointed in the FP in the study area at the time.

The possibility exists that the participants may have offered some information that they thought might put them in a good light and they may thus have avoided or bent the truth a bit. I report exactly what I was told, so any untruths may have skewed the information slightly. However, this may have occurred only to an insignificant extent as I believe that I established a relationship of trust and rapport with each of the participants and that they would thus have contributed only what they perceived to be the truth.

I also assessed the teachers' classroom practices by what they told me and not by what I had actually observed. Again, the honesty and frankness that shone from their words and demeanour convinced me of their genuine efforts to support and accommodate their learners who experienced learning challenges. Future studies should thus explore the classroom practices of FP teachers to determine whether theory and practice meet in the FP classroom in terms of IE.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the research design and methodology were discussed in detail. I acknowledged the tools that were used to collect and analyse the data and I also discussed the ethical considerations that I adhered to as an ethical researcher. The limitations of the study were also highlighted. The next chapter will present and discuss the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTING THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This qualitative research explored foundation phase (FP) teachers' knowledge of inclusive education (IE) and how they implemented this knowledge in the classroom. It also details the data that were obtained and presents the findings based on the analyses. The data were generated by means of interviews and document analysis and are presented as excerpts from the interview transcripts. After I had been granted permission to conduct the study, I interviewed six purposively selected teachers three from each school. All the teachers whom I interviewed were members of the School Based Support Team (SBST). As discussed in Chapter Two, the SBST is responsible for studying teachers' reports regarding learners with barriers and the support they have provided. Both these schools had learners from diverse backgrounds and a high number of learners who experienced barriers to learning.

To validate the findings, I also broaden the discourse to include and compare findings that stemmed from my examination of relevant documents in relation to the implementation of IE in the FP, as well as the insights on IE that I had explored in the literature.

4.2 Research Findings

This study was prompted by my experiences as a Foundation Phase teacher and co-ordinator of the SBST of my school. Working with learners who experience difficulties in the attainment of education is close to my heart and this encouraged me to seek more knowledge on how IE may help all learners, but especially those who need more time and attention. I anticipated that the teacher participants would find IE time consuming and that they would resist anything that had to do with it. Astoundingly, the findings revealed the absolute opposite. I was amazed by their willingness to be creative in all situations and that they were willing to engage with individual learners to address their needs. They appeared flexible in their teaching methods and expressed willingness to address the needs of all their learners. However, they all encountered similar problems such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of time to deal with individuals' needs, and poor infrastructure. A lack of basic resources was also experienced by the majority of the

teachers. Three key themes in terms of IE emerged from the data, namely: Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge of inclusive education; difficulties in implementing inclusive education; and support structures for inclusive education. These themes could be further divided into subthemes that highlight how important it is that FP teachers should know about and implement inclusive education. The themes also emphasise the vital role that teachers' knowledge of IE plays in the FP for the optimal development of their learners.

4.2.1 *Profiling of the participating FP teachers*

The teachers who were interviewed were all members of the School Based Support Teams. They had various qualifications, as is reflected in Table 3.1. Pseudonyms are used in this study report for ethical reasons. The participants are thus referred to as teacher Noma, Nono, Nozipho, Thuli, Thando, and Kwanele.

Table 4.1: Profile of the participants

Participants	**Gender**	**Post level**	**Teaching experience**	**Qualifications**	**Grade**
Noma	Female	1	Two years and six months	B.Ed	3
Nono	Female	1	Seven years	Still studying	3
Nozipho	Female	2	Ten years	B. Ed Hons	3
Thuli	Female	2	Thirty eight years	B. Ed	1
Thando	Female	2	Twenty years	Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (SPTD)	3
Kwanele	Female	2	Fifteen years	Not known	3

Foundation Phase Teacher 1 (Noma)

Teacher Noma had been teaching for two and half years. She was still very young. She had taught Grade 1 and was currently teaching Grade 3. Her school was in a rural area and she had

44 learners in her class. She held a Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) in Early Childhood Development that she obtained from the University of Zululand. She majored in Mathematics, Science and languages. She was also studying Law through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). She said she had never wanted to be a teacher. The only thing that made her become a teacher was that she was awarded a bursary that would pay only for a qualification in education. She still did not want to be a teacher and that was why she was studying Law. She said:

> *"I am now just ok with teaching but I feel it is really not what I was called to do. I love children though, that is why I am such a good teacher."*

She had been a member of the school based support team (SBST) ever since she was employed. The interview took place in her classroom and it lasted for an hour.

Foundation Phase Teacher 2 (Nono)

Nono had been teaching Grade 2 for seven years and recently changed to Grade 3. She had 42 learners in her class. She was not qualified yet, but was studying through the University of South Africa (UNISA). She only had 6 modules left before she would be a suitably qualified teacher. She was studying a Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) in the Foundation Phase. Her school was in a rural area. She had earlier received a bursary but was now paying for her studies herself. She was very happy to be interviewed. She was very excited and she had a very neat and well organised classroom. She used very good English:

> *"I have been looking forward to this interview ever since you gave me that letter. I hope I can be of some help in some way. I have always wanted to be a teacher. The reason why I wanted to be a teacher is because I was poor at school and could not afford to have books. So one teacher was very mean to me and all those learners without books. We were always told to go outside because we had no books. I used to miss out on a lot of work, so I made a vow that when I become a teacher I will treat poor learners with love and respect. That is why I am so blessed to be on the SBST because I get to love and care for poor learners. I love children; my dream is to see all of them smiling and succeeding. I just love my work. I can gladly say my work defines me."*

I interviewed her in her classroom and the interview lasted for about one hour and ten minutes. She had been a member of the SBST for two years at the time of the interview and she said she loved it.

Foundation Phase Teacher 3 (Nozipho)

Nozipho taught Grade 3. She taught Mathematics and had been a Gr 3 HOD since December 2017. She had been teaching for 10 years and held a B.Ed. Honours that she obtained at the University of Zululand. Her majors were Accounting and Economics. She stated:

> *"The only reason I became a teacher is that when I was in high school and also when I was working part time as a waitress, people I talked to thought that a teaching profession was only for those who were 'slow'. I wanted to be the first and maybe the only teacher who was intelligent. To my amazement when I join this family I met a lot of intelligent people. My deepest regret is that I am not studying this year."*

I interviewed Nozipho in one of the other teacher's classrooms because she did not have one. The interview lasted for almost an hour. She was the co-ordinator of the SBST at her school and she had been a member of the committee since 2016.

Foundation Phase Teacher 4 (Thuli)

Thuli had been teaching for 38 years. She taught a Grade 1 class of 67 learners. She said she had taught other classes too but she had predominantly taught Grade 1 learners. She held a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) qualification that she obtained at the University of Zululand. She was the Foundation Phase Head of Department. She was teaching in a full service school that was well funded with the money to conduct workshops but with limited teaching aids. All the workshops on inclusive education were conducted at her school and the office of the District Based Support Team was also located at her school. She was very excited to be interviewed. I conducted the interview at 14h30 at her school so we were not interrupted or rushed. She stated:

> *"I can teach other grades too but give me Grade 1 any time of the day, I am happy. They have a way of getting into my heart. I am very sad today because one of my learners got hurt as she was walking in the the passages. It was overcrowded so as she walked her leg got stuck on someone's bag and she fell. I had to take her to the clinic. Fortunately, the clinic is right here."*

Foundation Phase Teacher 5 (Thando)

Thando had been teaching for the past 20 years. She was teaching in a rural area and her school was a full service school. She taught Grade 3 and she had 64 learners in her class. She was an HOD in her school which had adequate resources and was well funded for conducting workshops for incusive education (IE) that will help all the teachers in the neighbouring schools. However she is worried about the lack of infrastructure. Her class was adequately resourced and it was very neat and well organised to the extent that I could not believe that 64 learners could sit comfortably in that space. She told me that most of the resources in her class are donations since they do not have enough resources suitable for learners with needs. She had a special way of arranging her desks. She studied for her Senior Primary Teacher's diploma at Mbumbulu College of Education and she specialised in English, History and Geography; however, she had never worked in a senior primary school. She was very happy to be a FP teacher. She obtained a B.Ed. Hons at UNISA. She said:

> "*I did not want to be a teacher but right now I wouldn't change it for the world."*

Foundation Phase Teacher 6 (Kwanele)

Kwanele taught a Grade 2 class in a full service school and was an HOD. I went to interview her in her classroom. She had not been looking forward to this interview as she thought it was going to be too difficult. She must have anticipated difficult questions judging by her sigh of relief and the expression "praise God" when I told her that the interview was over. She had 71 learners in her class that was well arranged and contained many teaching aids and concrete objects. She told me she was very proud of her work. She was not comfortable discussing her qualifications and I respected that. She stated:

> *"I love my work very much but it took me some time to get used to inclusion. I have always believed in referring the learners but now I have learned to love the learners with barriers even more*."

The interview took place in her classroom and lasted for about 45 minutes as she was not a lady of many words.

4.2.2 Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge of inclusive education

4.2.2.1 Understanding what inclusive education entails

All the participants acknowledged the importance of understanding inclusive education. It was evident that they had a good grasp of inclusive education, even though some found it hard to articulate clearly what it meant. It is very important for Foundation Phase teachers to know what inclusive education is and to grasp the important concepts associated with IE. There are important documents such as White Paper 6, the one dealing with curriculum differentiation, and the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (i.e., the SIAS document) form for learners that every inclusive education practitioner should understand.

Four out of six participants were hesitant to explain the term. Thuli used gestures extensively while trying to think of the words to use. She then said:

> "*Eh, you know that we know this term. I always see you at all the workshops that I attend on inclusive education…All learners are accommodated; no one is excluded, as it is stated in White Paper 6."*

This response revealed that Thuli understood that IE is totally against the exclusion of any learner and that all learners should be taught in their neighbourhood schools. It is therefore important that school management teams and the custodians of education put appropriate mechanisms in place for the maximum preparation of learners through different learning activities in class.

Nozipho described IE as follows:

> "*Learners are given equal chance to learn according to their abilities since they are on different levels. Some excel in talking and some in writing and there are those who are good in everything. They can write, read, count and comprehend. A learner is taught according to his or her abilities and there must be no one-size-fits-all teaching and assessment. It also means that as a teacher I simplify the language to suit my learners for example, when I give the work on synonyms, I will only give the words that only need the learners to add an "S" at the end of the word to the learners who are struggling for example "boy > boys, girl > girls and give more advanced words such as strawberry > strawberries to learners who have acquired more in a language. "*

Nono explained IE as follows:

> "*It is about learners with barriers, what you do as a teacher to include them and not exclude them in school. It about understanding that there are different ways of teaching learners for example using games while teaching so that learners may understand you even better and they can even enjoy the lessons since learners like to play. "*

According to Hodge (2017), inclusive education is a driver of social justice, which means that learners have the right to be human and they have a right to be in the world unfiltered by the impairments of poverty, illness and segregation. Social exclusion and negative stereotyping must thus be eliminated.

Nokwazi echoed this sentiment when she highlighted important aspects of inclusive education and social justice. She stated:

> "*It means that no learner should be turned down simply because she cannot speak the language of instruction of the school. Whether a learner is old, sick, or belong to a different religion from that of the school, it does not matter."*

She asserted that education policy affirms that all learners must be included in public schools in South Africa, irrespective of the fact that some are unable to walk or talk. She also referred to the fact that inclusion is not only about disability:

> *"Whether a learner is known to be rude or naughty or even if the previous school has written a report that the learner misbehaves, the school is obliged to enrol him or her."*

Nokwazi showed extensive knowledge of inclusive education which was in agreement with White Paper 6 that states that no learner should be excluded because of age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, or any other sicknesses. If the child speaks a different language than the LoLT of the school, it is the duty of the school to make sure that the child feels at home by giving that learner activities to do that will make him/her use the target language or that will encourage interaction with other learners. Vygotsky believes that language facilitates higher order thinking and the development of more difficult thoughts or ideas and theories; so teachers must make sure that learners acquire the target language as it helps to speed up the process of learning. This confirms that language is very important in the learning process and it plays a crucial part in thinking as well. Without language there can be no learning.

The participants in this study used words like *diversity, non- exclusion* and *differentiation* in their explanations of inclusive education. Thando stated that parents used to hide the fact that their children were on anti-retroviral treatment (ARVs) or that they had the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) because they thought that these learners would be ill-treated or even excluded from school. She stated:

> *"We, as the SBST, asked the permission of the principal to explain to the parents that every learner has a right to basic education even if that learner has full blown AIDS. We explained that it is a right of the parent not to share that with anyone but it is advisable to share that information with a class teacher. We assured the parents that all the teachers in our school are understanding because we have all been taught about it and we assured the parents that no teacher will make a joke of a sick learner as they [teachers] all understand. The parents were hesitant at the beginning but now they discuss that with the class teachers and the class teachers know that they must never divulge that information to anyone without the parents' consent."*

UNESCO (1994), White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), and Nel et al. (2016) mention that every learner has a right to basic education. Differences should be respected whether they relate to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV/AIDS status or any other afflictions such as a disability. The participants seemed to have extensive knowledge of and respect for this statement.

4.2.2.2 Knowledge of inclusive education policies

White Paper 6, which is a policy document, is 'the mother' of inclusive education in South Africa as it contains in-depth information about IE. The policy was developed in 1994 when the democratic government came to power. It was crucial for the new government to address past mistakes such as those related to education and its implementation. White Paper 6 was developed specifically for Special Needs Education and for building an inclusive education and training system. It is very important for inclusive schools to understand its contents as it is the key component of change and inclusion in South Africa. The teachers were asked if they knew what White Paper 6 was. I included this question to find out if they had insight into inclusive education.

Kwanele explained what she understood about White Paper 6 as follows:

> *"The basis of IE. I have just read it because it is mentioned all the time at workshops but no one goes into detail about it during workshops since the DBST always says the schools have some copies and all the teachers must know about it."*

Her statement that the District Based Support Team (DBST) attached to her school did not go into detail about White Paper 6 suggests that many teachers are uninformed about its contents. The role of the DBST is to manage SIAS and to make decisions about referring learners who need special help (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Newly appointed teachers, teachers who may not have attended workshops and those who have been unemployed for years may have no idea what White Paper 6 is all about. I thus realised that the DBST might no longer explain what it is because they assume that teachers have adequate knowledge of it.

When I posed the same question to Nozipho, she just laughed and said:

> *"Yes, I do. For years it was collecting dust in our files up until an SMT member conducted a workshop on it. I did not even know that I had it in my resource file. Before that workshop we used to deny that we had it when they told us at workshops that every school should have a copy."*

It was clear that most of the respondents did not have a working understanding of White Paper 6. Nozipho had it in her file but she did not even know that she had it. This suggests that there may be many teachers who also know nothing about White Paper 6, especially those who work in schools where the SMT has not embraced IE. However, Nono, Nozipho and Noma seemed to have a deeper understanding of White Paper 6 as their SMT had recently organised a workshop to explain its content. Nono explained White Paper 6 as follows:

> "*Something that teaches the teachers that all children have a right to basic education and they must be included."*

Noma said:

> *"They [the government] wants to include all learners. They want disabled learners to feel safe in schools and since there were very few disabled children in South Africa who received basic education [in the past], they want to make sure that every South African*

child does receive basic education. The SMT member was very thorough in explaining it."

On probing her about how knowledge of White Paper 6 had helped her, teacher Noma was very political and honest in her answer:

"I am even more interested in inclusion now as I have learned that it is my government who initiated it. It makes sense after learning about it that it is about correcting past mistakes and making sure that all learners do receive an education. Learners from our neighbourhood could not attend our local special school because it was far and there was only just one bus, but it was always full and, from what I heard, that bus did not even come to our neighbourhood before, so I love IE more now because it is our thing."

Teacher Noma became interested in IE after she had heard that the ruling party supported it. This statement suggests that politics can play a critical role in changing or shaping teachers' attitudes.

Conversely, Nozipho had a different political insight. She said:

"White Paper 6 has made me understand that the ruling party is trying to run away from building more special schools."

Nono also supported this idea. As a matter of fact, all the teachers except Noma said they would have preferred it if there had been more special schools, at least for the learners who were severely disabled. De Boer et al. (2011) agree when they state that teachers seem to welcome IE but do not like to be involved when it comes to changing their teaching methods. According to Pather (2011), mainstream schools have failed to provide in the psychological, social and academic needs of learners with disabilities compared to special schools. However, Sants Study Guide (2019) states that a learner who is in a wheel chair may be helped by being pushed around by a learner who is physically able, while the learner without a physical barrier may gain knowledge from a learner who has a physical barrier.

I noticed an obvious contradiction when the teachers stated that they supported IE and particularly White Paper 6. Some said they practised inclusion because they loved all the learners and they realised that all learners had a right to basic education, but they also said if there were a choice they would have preferred that learners with disabilities be placed in special

schools. Therefore, they treated all their learners with love and respect, but felt that special schools would be better for learners with barriers to learning. It was clear that they knew exactly what White Paper 6 entailed and the fact that they were so opinionated about it made it clear that they knew more about it than they realised. They also had different views about IE. Some supported it simply because it was policy and would have preferred it if special needs learners could be placed in special schools. However, Noma highlighted that some school are passionate about it and try to embrace this policy:

> *"I may not know a clear definite term for IE, but I clearly know what it is all about and I am familiar with inclusion as they are all very passionate about it in my school."*

The screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) policy was introduced in 2014 by the Department of Basic Education as an incremental way of improving inclusion. This policy aims to respond to the needs of all leaners in South Africa, particularly of those who are vulnerable and most likely to be marginalised, disregarded or excluded (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Mahlo (2017) asserts that SIAS offers guidelines and information on procedures to support learners who experience learning problems and outlines the role of teachers (especially in the FP), parents, and all stakeholders on how this support should be implemented. This policy allows learners, especially those who experience problems in basic education, to access support in their local schools as far as possible (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Noma described it as follows:

> *"SIAS is a way of finding where the learner is so as to know where to start teaching. It is a way a teacher assesses that help is needed for which learner. All learners need to be screened so that a teacher can know which group a learner belongs to."*

This response made me realise how much information she had and that she knew exactly what SIAS was. When I asked Teacher Nozipho if she had any knowledge of SIAS, she said:

> *"Ufike ekhaya [IsiZulu for 'exactly']; we have learned from workshops organised by the DBST and also by us (the SBST). It is about knowing all the learners and knowing where they are and knowing what help they will need and who you are going to ask help from. It is also about continuous support that a teacher needs to give an individual learner. This is a bit hard to do but I have realised that as it is policy, I have no choice but to comply. I do all I can and I always try more ways of making myself a better teacher."*

This response showed me how dedicated she was. It also showed me that she had confidence in her knowledge of inclusive education and how to deal with the learners in her care. She did not hesitate to answer and was very bold in her response to this question. It was as if she had been waiting for me to ask it.

Thuli said:

> *"I know what SIAS is and it is very helpful. It is surprising how easy it is to screen all the learners even though there are so many. The difficult part is attending to their individual needs, but screening them is so easy because I spend all day every day with them so I know them individually."*

The above statement revealed that it is not difficult for FP teachers to screen all their learners. The difficult part seemed to be to teach according to each learner's needs. According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), it is important that teachers assess the strategies that they are going to use and know what help they can seek from whom in order for effective learning to take place.

4.2.2.3 How knowledge of inclusive education was acquired

The participants were asked how they had acquired the knowledge they had of inclusive education. Five said they had acquired this knowledge at workshops conducted by the Department of Basic Education, while one indicated that she had gained her knowledge at the institution where she had been studying for a Bachelor in Education degree, as one of the modules focused on IE. This was a noteworthy finding as it revealed that at least one teacher education institution now includes inclusive education in its curriculum. Noma said:

> *"I learned about IE from the feedback workshops that are always conducted at my school by whoever attended the workshop and I also learned about it when I was studying for my degree."*

What emerged from the above comment is the importance of including IE in the curriculum at higher education institutions so that prospective teachers are empowered to tackle this issue when they start teaching. Noma was a novice teacher who had been teaching for only two and half years, and she had been capacitated with valuable knowledge even before she started teaching. The workshops that are conducted by the DBE should then build on that knowledge.

What also emerged from the data was that the teachers tended to cascade valuable information to other teachers who had not attended workshops. Because the teachers I interviewed were members of the SBST, it was evident that they ensured that all teachers in their schools understood what IE is by cascading the information and thus strengthening teacher support. They explained that they were always given time during staff meetings to share what they had learnt at workshops. They suggested that all staff meetings should allow at least five minutes to motivate teachers.

When asked how often they engaged their colleagues in discussions about inclusive education, the responses were varied. Thuli said:

> *"My principal is passionate about all learners and I must give feedback to the SMT about the work that I do. I have to attend every grade meeting just to make sure that teachers are up to speed about the latest developments in IE. As the co-coordinator in my school, I have to make sure that no teacher will be without information."*

This was a commendable finding as it indicated that there are principals who make sure that IE is actively encouraged in their schools.

Noma, who was not from the same school as Thuli, said:

> *"I pleaded with the principal that the SBST should be given a slot each time there is a staff meeting. However, we are always given only few minutes as our principal forgets to give us a slot. We as a team decided to conduct some workshops as one of us is studying IE just to make sure that teachers understand what IE is all about."*

This comment again focused attention on teachers who take time to teach and capacitate other teachers about IE. They go the extra mile to ensure that all teachers are on a par as far as the concept of inclusive education is concerned. This statement corroborates what Florian (2008) suggests, which is that teachers must learn from and through one another and that it is easy to win even those teachers who have negative opinions about IE as long as other teachers are working hard to encourage and introduce IE in their classes.

The workshops conducted by the Department of Basic Education seemed to be a major source of knowledge acquisition for in-service teachers. When asked if the workshops were helpful, Thuli responded as follows:

"*Before I did not have any idea how to cater for learners with barriers. I still am not perfect but I have learned a lot from these workshops. Before all I used to think was why these learners can't be put in special schools, but since attending the workshops they have taught us some strategies of dealing with learners with special needs. I no longer view them as 'these learners' anymore but they are my special learners whom I love dearly. I must say again I am not perfect but I try my best. I wish there are a lot of other workshops because I don't think they are enough but I am grateful for what I know now."*

Nozipho also felt equipped:

"They have helped us in a big way. There are a lot of things that I did not know but during workshops we were told to leave no stone unturned. We were taught to teach all learners according to their abilities and not to blame the teacher of the previous grade. They taught us to screen all the learners and know where the learners' levels are and teach the learners according to their level. For example, if a learner is in Grade 3 and all she can do is to draw only two circles, we must not blame the Grade 2 teachers that they did not do their work; we should just teach that learner to draw a third circle and be proud if she draws the third circle. What I do in my class is I divide them into different groups of development."

These responses indicated that workshops played a big role in teachers' acquisition of knowledge of IE. Conversely, Pather (2011) discovered that teachers felt that workshops were not fruitful. Pather (2011) suggests that teachers who attend workshops do not learn strategies to support learners with barriers. However, in my study some of the participants articulated what they had learnt at workshops in terms of learning barriers and how to deal with these challenges. For instance, Nono said:

"*I had no clue what to do if a learner is epileptic. I did not know that the memory of a learner who had an attack may be wiped out each time he or she has an epileptic attack so I need to re-teach that learner what I already taught. We used to pray and pour water on the learner when he fainted, but in workshops we were taught how to handle an epileptic learner and what to do when the learner faints. I used to be very scared of an epileptic learner but, hey, knowledge is power! Now I know exactly what to do. When I gave feedback to my colleagues, we all laughed at the fact that we do not really need to pray over a child when the epileptic attack starts."*

Nono also reported the value of workshops:

> *"I have learned at workshops about how to treat a partially blind learner. I have to use big writing or print something bigger for that learner. There is a learner in my class who needs me to give him only fewer words to write because he is slow when writing because he is partially blind. Before the workshops I would not have been this understanding. I would have shouted at a learner to hurry up, but now I know that it is not this young boy's fault and he did not choose to be this way."*

It is noteworthy that the teachers had learnt how to deal with the special needs of learners and that much of this knowledge had been acquired during workshops and not during their initial training. However, they felt that the workshops were not enough. Nokwazi stated:

> *"I have learned a lot at each workshop I attended. Each time I am sent to a workshop I come back with a lot of knowledge, but the problem is there are very few workshops. For the whole of 2017 no workshops were organised but the DBST for us. They said they were going to concentrate on the intermediate phase teachers. I feel that there is a lot that she still needs to learn because learners' needs are diverse. But I am happy for what I know so long."*

The lack of adequate workshops was emphasised. The teachers felt that they obtained valuable skills and information at workshops. However, if this programme is not sustained they will not be adequately equipped and supported in the future. There were other issues that the teachers felt had not yet been dealt with, but they were very happy about what they had already learned. It was clear that they utilised the information that they had obtained to the benefit of their learners. They appeared to be pro-active and positive instead of disgruntled and inactive.

4.2.2.4 Understanding learners' needs

Teachers should acknowledge the fact that all children have the ability to learn and that they need support. According to Nel et al. (2016), it is crucial to understand the different ways in which learners learn. Acknowledging and accepting the differences in learners will assist teachers in implementing an inclusive approach to meet the learning needs of all their learners. In accordance with the socio-constructivist theory, knowledge is acquired through social interaction. This means that a teacher does not merely impart knowledge, but there should be

active interaction among learners in the class (Churcher et al., 2014). Conkbayir and Pascal (2016) explain that creating an effective climate for learning in which learners and teachers learn from one another does not happen by chance; instead, the teacher must prepare carefully and thoroughly while considering the interest of the learners. The teacher can then create optimum conditions for supporting each child in its individual ZPD (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016). White Paper 6 states that teachers should acknowledge the fact that all children can learn and that they need support.

Conkbayir and Pascal (2016) emphasise that what differentiates people from any other creation is their ability to communicate through language. It is this ability that forms the basis of the cultural tools that are exclusively used by humans. Nel et al. (2016) state that teachers must know that most learners in South Africa may experience barriers to learning because they may have to learn in a foreign language, or they may have specific communication and verbal difficulties that can hinder their intellectual growth.

The teacher participants showed a remarkable knowledge of the different problems that their learners faced. I did not even ask them to explain these problems, but all of them wanted to say something about how diverse their learners' problems were. I was astonished by how much attention they paid to the learners who experienced challenges and that they found the SIAS method very useful. Thuli stated:

> *"There is a boy in my Grade 1 class who will not write no matter what. I have tried everything to help but he just will not write. The sad part is that it is not because he cannot write but it is because he just chooses not to. If he sits next to me and I nag him, he would write a few words correctly, but then he would start crying."*

When I asked teacher Thuli what she understood about the issue, she said:

> *"I called the parents and I found out that a child's grandfather sells dagga. The grandfather's customers are sometimes rude to this boy as he is forced to sell when he is at home. I reported the matter to the DBST. As you know, we are supposed to tell them and not ask what they have done about it."*

I was gratified by this response as policy stipulates that when a teacher has reported a case of abuse, the matter is then in the hands of the DBST who will deal with the matter. In this manner the DBST protects teachers from any repercussions. Thuli also said:

"*I realised that the learner behaved that way because of extrinsic factors. It is because of anger; because of what is going on at home. He is even rude to other learners and he does not want to play with them. He only fights with everyone and he is always angry."*

The above response demonstrated that the teacher possessed adequate knowledge of extrinsic factors that might impact a learner's behaviour and that learners may show deviant behaviour because of what is going on at home.

Teacher Kwanele mentioned that not all learners who misbehave do so because they are rude; rather, they face a lot of problems at home. She mentioned problems like poverty, neglect and abuse. She said:

"*At workshops we were taught that these are extrinsic problems*."

When I asked her to elaborate, she said that such problems came from outside the learner. She stated that the learner was not born *with* but *in* those problems. This view is supported by Nel et al. (2016), who assert that extrinsic barriers are circumstances outside the individual, which is a phenomenon that is prevalent in South Africa. Socio-economic problems include aspects such as severe lack of support; a dysfunctional family system; abuse; lawlessness; viciousness in the community and at home; gangsterism; a lack of basic needs such as water, electricity, proper housing and toilets; gender issues; ethnic groupings; and a home language that differs from the language of learning and teaching (Nel et al., 2016). Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006) state that, in order for teachers to understand a learner's mental growth, they first have to understand the social and semiotic instruments that intercede them. The socio-constructivist theory thus suggests that, in order for teachers to understand a learner's level of development, they first have to understand where the learner comes from or why he/she is misbehaving.

In corroboration, Nono mentioned that she used to be cross when learners misbehaved, but lately she had earned that there was usually a reason for misbehaviour. She mentioned she took notice of the learners in her class who had behavioural problems. She would sit down with them and try to get to the bottom of the problem. She usually found that the learner was angry because or rape, poverty, neglect and all sorts of other problems. She also said:

"There was this girl in my class who was very rude and she bullied everyone. One day her mother came and told me that her stepfather had been molesting her for years."

When she said this she was in tears. She said:

> "*The sad part is I was always shouting at her not knowing that my poor girl was angry because of what was happening to her. But the good thing is that this man is in jail now."*

Her tears showed how much love this teacher had for her learners. I was also emotionally stirred and we both needed some time to compose ourselves before I could continue with the interview. Nono stated:

> *"The difference between Foundation Phase teachers and other teachers is that we do not just teach the learners but we pour our hearts into them. We sometimes even forget that they are not our biological children. We love the learners so much."*

Noma said:

> *"Some of the learners' problems are both extrinsic and intrinsic. It is sad that we cannot see all the learners' problems and we can end up labelling them wrongly. It took me a long time to understand the learners. One may be very angry up until one understands why the learner is doing what she does. A lot of the learners in my class did not do well, but when I screened them I realised that this learner cannot see properly so she has to sit in the front desk so that she or he can see better on the board and I have to print the work bigger for such a child."*

She also stated:

> *"The difference between Foundation Phase and other teachers is that the Foundation Phase get the entire day to spend with the learners. We have all the time to get to know them closer and we can't help but love them. I get the opportunity to be a mother since I am still so young and do not have children of my own. They have given me the opportunity of being a mother, because if someone comes to this class and tries to hurt them, that person must first have to go through me."*

Nel et al. (2016) and the Department of Basic Education (2014) state that intrinsic problems are those problems that a learner was born with or that are *inside* the learner. Vygotsky's theory argues that if teachers want to understand learners' development, they first have to understand their environment or where they come from (Burger & Luckmann, 1996). The teacher participants clearly understood this because they tried hard to understand where their learners came from.

The data thus reflected that the participants had learned a lot about their learners even though they felt that it was not enough. Moreover, the participants mainly used knowledge that they had acquired at workshops to address IE requirements and to support their learners.

4.2.3 Implementation of inclusive education

4.2.3.1 Addressing learners' problems

When they were asked how they addressed their learners' problems, all the participants gave positive feedback and described the different strategies that they used. It was clear that the teachers with more experience were better able to find solutions to the problems that they encountered, but that wisdom may also be found in very young teachers. Thuli said:

> *"I mix their seating arrangement. I do not want to put the highly gifted ones in a special group and the slow ones in a group. Through my years of teaching I have learned that they learn better when they learn from one another, even if it means that they will copy because some cannot even copy what is on the board. Do you see the way I have arranged the desks? It allows them to talk and communicate and learn from one another. I become very happy when I walk around and hear them say 'Ma'm did not say we must do that'. That shows me that they teach one another."*

Noma addressed this question in the same vein:

> *"I sometimes give them some projects to do as a group to promote communication. That helps especially those who cannot cope alone and they do well when they get help from others. Some projects demand creativity so even those who write cannot can feel happy when they realise that they are good at some of the things; for example, sometimes I tell them to draw. There is a boy in my class who cannot write, not even his name, but he does extremely well in math and drawing. His group needs him during math period and when they are supposed to draw and he needs them when he is supposed to write. Is that not real life? That we all need each other?"*

Noma provided evidence that learners learn best when they communicate. The social constructivism way of thinking is that learners learn best when they socialise and when they participate actively while learning from one another (Woolfolk, n.d.). Nel et al. (2016) affirm

this idea when they state that learning flows best through communication; so it is best that teachers give learners a chance to communicate and discuss the work in groups. It is thus best if lessons are learner centred rather than teacher centred (Nel et al., 2016). What Thuli did in her class was proof that this works. Vygotsky stressed the importance of language and communication when learning. To Vygotsky, knowledge was independently constructed and socially brought together; so even though a learner should learn individually, that learner also needs another person to make meaning of that particular knowledge (Woolfolk, n.d.). Vygotsky emphasised the importance of learners acquiring knowledge by using language to talk to other learners and adults (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016).

The teachers consciously and subconsciously knew how important it was to teach their learners life skills. Noma promoted the importance of communication in her class and she also taught her learners that no man is an island, but that we all need one another and need to help one another. The knowledge that Noma had was amazing as she had only been teaching for two and a half years.

Nozipho's concern was the language issue. She stated that most learners were not native speakers of the LoLT because they came from various countries. She said:

> *"Some of them speak IsiZulu fairly well, but when they write they tend to write what is spoken at home. Some of my learners are from the Eastern Cape, so some words may be the same in IsiZulu and IsiXhosa, but they mean totally different things. This is usually a problem for me. Some learners come from Mozambique, so it is very difficult to teach them. But I try all I can to give them activities that will promote the speaking of IsiZulu as it is our medium of instruction. I give them some activities to write too to promote good use of the language."*

Vygotsky (1978) stressed that language is a tool for the mind that mediates relations among people. In other words, in order for people to communicate they use language. Nozipho's problem was that her learners had difficulty expressing themselves in the medium of instruction of the school. However, when her learners became socially active and socialised with the native speakers of the language, they would end up learning to read and write the target language. Inclusion is all about not excluding someone because of language; instead, teachers should be conscious of what Vygotsky termed the 'zone of proximal development', which means that the learners who have not fully acquired the language may learn from those learners who have done

so and thus advance to their ZPD. If learners who cannot speak IsiZulu are excluded from classroom and socialising opportunities, they may not acquire the language because they may not be given the opportunity to use it. This is the same for learners with any other disability. If learners are excluded because of their disability, they may be robbed of the opportunity to learn from their more capable peers.

Even though Thando's interview was short, she offered a valuable insight when she said:

> *"What I do in my class is that I am very wise in arranging my learners. I make sure that all the slow learners are not facing the windows. I have learned at workshops that it is very easy for learners with problems to be distracted and that is why I do not like the learners with problems to face the windows…There is a boy in class who is very old. He has been a 'street kid' for several years so the social workers came and asked for him to be enrolled in this school. He is not really supposed to be in Grade 3 because we are in the Foundation Phase. The problem with him is he beats up all the learners for no reason. Another child would look at him he will be annoyed and that child will get a slap. All the learners are afraid of him as he is very tall and is sixteen years old. I went to look for a desk for him and put his desk in the front so he sits alone. Now he has no one to beat up and because he is very tall, he hates to leave his desk because it is far away from the others so the situation is under control with him."*

The above discussions revealed that Thando understood that a particular learner needed special attention and she was able to defuse a potentially volatile situation by simply making a new seating arrangement.

4.2.3.2 Curriculum differentiation

Curriculum differentiation is one of the key strategies that drives inclusion. Nel et al. (2016) point out that curriculum differentiation acknowledges that learners come to class with different levels of readiness, interests and learning profiles and that, to maximise learning, teachers need to modify the curriculum, their teaching methods, the resources, activities and assessment to be relevant for individuals. According to the Department of Basic Education (2012), curriculum differentiation means that teachers should differentiate by content, process and also by assessment. I have personally found differentiating the curriculum very useful in the Foundation

Phase and was curious to learn how my colleagues addressed this challenge. Even though I did not particularly use the term 'curriculum differentiation', they all referred to this practice in their responses when I asked them to explain SIAS. One participant stated that it was important that they should understand their learners and know where they were as far as the curriculum was concerned because one should consider the level of the learner. She said.

> *"I then teach according to the learners' needs because it is now different from before. We used to teach the class as a whole but now we have learned that there is no one-size-fits-all way of teaching. So what I do in my class is I prepare two different lessons for two different groups. After teaching the whole class as the green group, I then call my red group and explain their activity with them that looks the same as the activity of the green group, but it is at their level. I know I am supposed to teach four different groups but because of the class size I can only teach two groups."*

Taylor (2014) states that a constructivist practitioner should exercise the right to be creative in making sure that learners learn by using multiple creative ways of problem solving. The teacher may use this authority as long as it is going to benefit the learners. It is evident that curriculum differentiation is still a challenge and not practical for most teachers due to large class sizes, but if teachers use their authority and creativity to make sure that learners communicate, share their ideas and negotiate using language, they go a long way towards addressing the needs of all their learners.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2012), all teachers are supposed to use the differentiated curriculum when they teach. There are four levels that each teacher should cater for and those levels are: the Green group, which is the majority group; the Yellow group, which is also known as the scaffold group because they need extra help from the teacher or the most capable peer to move to the next group; the Red group, which is also known as the straddlers; and the Blue group. The red group is made up of those learners who usually get from 0 to 29%. They need special help and sometimes, no matter how hard a teacher tries, they do not move to another level. However, after being helped by the teacher or more capable peers, some move to the Yellow group. The Yellow group is also called the scaffolds because all they need is help from the teacher or the most capable peers to move to the next level. Usually the members of this group join the Green group in the third term and the teacher removes the 'scaffolds' because by that time they do not need extra help. When they are still in this group, they usually get from 30% to 49%. Most of the learners in class usually fall into the Green group. That is the middle

group learners who usually achieve from 50% to 69%. The last group, which is the Blue group, is made up of the high flyers. These learners usually get from 70% to 100%. They hardly need any scaffolding but they do need their own special activities because they get bored when given activities that are suitable for the Green group. However, they are usually neglected. They finish their tasks quickly and some cause chaos in class if they are not challenged. Some teachers use them to help other learners who are still struggling. In this regard, Thando mentioned the following:

> *"I try very hard to consider all levels of the learners even though it is very hard because of the number of learners in my class. But I know that it is important to teach and assess learners according to their level of development."*

Kwanele said:

> *"Curriculum differentiation is easier said than done. On paper it is a very good policy but implementation is another issue."*

All the participants said something about curriculum differentiation so it was clear that they knew that they had to apply differentiated tasks. This resonates with Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory and the 'zone of proximal development', as learners move from the level of not knowing to the level of knowing with the help of an adult (in this case a teacher) or a more capable peer (Schunk, 2012). That is exactly what happens when IE is applied.

Teacher Kwanele said she used her own colours and not the ones mentioned in the guideline document when working with the four different groups. She said:

> *"I have forgotten the four colours that we were taught at a workshop but all I remember is that there are four groups so I decided to use colours that I shall remember."*

She thus knew of ability grouping according to colours in the teaching and assessment processes. She may have forgotten the colours mentioned in the departmental document but she knew that there are supposed to be four groups and four levels of development. Taylor (2014) states that constructivist teachers are dynamic professionals and are always trying to find strategies that are creative in solving problems.

Thuli raised the point of learners who had severe challenges. She stated:

"There are two learners who cannot even scribble. They fail even to draw a circle. They are really supposed to be in a special school but because of IE we have to accommodate them. I have realised that they like colouring in so I looked for colouring books so all they do is colour in. I have already completed the SNA1 and SNA2 forms for them because they do not even understand instructions. The only thing they like to do is colour in or look at the pictures. One of them even speaks like a two-year-old child but now I understand his language. I sometimes even open a book and point at the pictures and ask him what the pictures are. He loves that a lot but as soon as he loses interest you cannot force him to concentrate."

Nono stated that she preferred to use the names of animals for her different groups and when I asked her if she used slow running animals for her slow learners she smiled and said, *"Not anymore!"*. She admitted that what she had done until she had been taught at workshops was embarrassing, so there were no tortoises in her class anymore. Noma said that she used a differentiated curriculum but she only set two papers: one that catered for both high flyers and the green group and another one for the straddlers.

"*I always write a big S on the paper for the straddlers. That will help me when the departmental officials come. They will know that I do cater for all learners. I always tell my straddlers that the S stands for 'Super Strikers'. The Super Strikers are characters in a cartoon who play soccer well, so I always tell them that they are my Super Strikers because I don't want them to feel bad that they are writing a special paper. I guess they are not fooled by that because they do not want to write a special paper even though I tell them that they are special to me. That makes me feel bad, but I have no choice because they will not cope if I let them write the more difficult paper."*

When listening to this teacher it was very clear that she cared deeply for her learners and their needs. She did everything in her power to make sure that all her learners were catered for and she showed high knowledge of the need for a differentiated curriculum because she made sure that her question papers catered for the needs and abilities of her learners. The term that she used for under achievers was 'The Straddles' as suggested by the Department of Basic Education at a workshop. It means that a learner may be in Grade 3 but does the work of a Grade R learners, so they chose the word 'straddle' to indicate one foot in Grade R and the other foot in Grade 3.

Clearly, the teachers had sufficient knowledge of differentiated teaching practices and the need for a differentiated curriculum. They may have used words like ‘different stages’ or ‘different levels’, but it was clear that they had been informed of a differentiated curriculum.

4.2.3.3 Scaffolding

According to Schunk (2012), there are many ways of assisting learners to reach the desired outcomes. Scaffolding is one of the important tools that can be used. Schunk (2012, p. page) defines scaffolding as “the process of monitoring the learners’ work in order to make sure that they reach what is expected of them. Conkbayir and Pascal (2016) explain that scaffolding is a process where the teacher helps a learner to reach a certain competence level and then slowly removes the help when he/she can accomplish the task individually. Nel et al. (2016) state that scaffolding is when a teacher demonstrates data without directly dominating the lesson while ensuring that the learners have a deep understanding of the concept. The teacher helps to drive the learners to the next level of knowledge while making sure that the learners have mastered that knowledge. Schunk (2012) states that scaffolding resonates well with the ZPD because a teacher gives support and progressively decreases help as learners develop the ability to cope and apply that knowledge. Nel et al. (2016) concur, stating that teachers should slowly reduce the help they provide as the learners become more competent.

Some participants forgot the word ‘scaffolding’ but it was clear that they understood the concept. Thando stated:

> *“I would call them to my table and teach them separately when they need help and as soon as they do not need my help I always know that I should change their groups.”*

According to Schunk (2006), when a teacher applies scaffolding it does not mean that the teacher spoon feeds a learner; instead, she gives support and removes support when it is no longer needed. That is exactly what Thando meant when she said she called the learners to the table to help them and when they no longer needed her help she changed the groups of those learners.

Kwanele said:

> *“There was a learner in my class who had a problem with reading and writing. He was now very chaotic in such a way that he ended up disturbing the whole class. I then realised that he could not read or write so he wanted the whole class to stop reading. I*

then called his parents. I gave them a chart with very easy words to read that would help him. I told them to teach him to write at least two words every afternoon. There was a great improvement in him after that."

Thuli mentioned the following:

"There is a group in my class who found it very difficult to count. It did not matter how easy the sum was. So what I did, after teaching the entire class I called that group and I gave those counters. We went through all the sums together and when they got them right, I give them stars. We did the sums together every day and I paid attention to each and every one of them. I started with a group of 11 but now there are only 3 who still need help. Others are now able to work without my help."

Kwanele had a similar experience:

"One learner used to write only a date and a topic and then he would stop writing and disturbed other learners who were busy with their work. What I did was I used to call that learner every day to sit next to me when it was time to work. He was able to write on his own but he just liked to play more than he liked school work. I guess he hated to sit next to me because now each time I give him work he writes and finishes his work before I even need to call him to sit next to me."

Nono stated:

"Most of my learners are not native speakers of IsiZulu. They are doing well when it comes to speaking it but they battle to write. I have some frequency words that I write and paste on their desks so whenever I have time I go through those words with them."

Nokwazi mentioned the following:

"Since all our learners are not native speakers of English, they all seem to battle to express themselves in English so I wrote everyday expressions on a chart. So each time when a learner wants to say something to me during the English period, they go to the chart first and read what they want to say to me. That chart has helped me a lot because most of them do not need to even read the chart; they are able to express themselves in English."

Nono stated:

"I mixed them in groups. Sometimes I am not the one helping them as they help each other. Some learners know more than others and they are always very happy when they help others."

Kwanele stated:

"There is a learner in my class who is very, very active. He is also good with his class work. The problem is he finishes very quickly in such a way that his work ends up untidily done. He does not even use good hand writing anymore because he finishes everything I give him very quickly so that he can start playing. As soon as he is done with his work, he starts to disturb others who are still busy with their work and if other learners ignore him, he starts pinching them or even hitting them. I put his desk in the front of the class. I wanted him to sit alone so that he will not have anyone to play with, but he would still leave his desk as soon as he has done with his work and play with the others. I then put his chair next mine as well during writing time so that we will pay more attention to his work. So this is his chair, he is very active."

The above excerpts demonstrate clearly that the teachers used various but different strategies to help their learners. Some used other more capable peers as part of scaffolding as suggested by Vygotsky in order to achieve the next ZPD. When teachers implement IE, they are forced to act as scaffolds as long as help is needed, and they then gradually remove the scaffolding as the learners become more proficient (Schunk 2006). Clearly, scaffolding can be used as a useful tool in the FP to assist learners who struggle and to enrich high flyers.

4.2.3.4 Referring learners to special schools

Referring learners is something that is not done overnight. Even after considerable support from a mainstream school, some learners will need special support and attention. It is then that a SBST needs to refer a learner. There are some very important procedures that need to be followed, of which one is the SIAS assessment. Documentation needs to be completed meticulously. I thus enquired if the participating FP teachers were aware of this and whether they followed these requirements. Thuli said:

"Before we used to just refer the learners to special schools, but right now what we do is we try a lot of strategies and if we have tried many strategies and they all did not work, we then refer the learner to a special school."

Nozipho stated:

"Before we did not even admit learners with barriers. We used to tell the parents that this school is not a special school and we used to point parents in the direction of a special school…[But] *after being taught we developed tolerance to learners with barriers which later developed into love. We do not just tolerate them but we love them. We try to use different methods and we teach according to their ability. Unfortunately, that does not always help and that is when we refer the leaners. We do not do it to shift the responsibility as before, but we do it out of love. When we realise that a child is not benefiting in our school but can learn better in a special school [we refer him/her]."*

Thando stated:

"This is a long process. There is a learner in my class who was supposed to be enrolled in a special school last year when she was in Grade 2, but she is here in Grade 3 this year. There is no space in a special school. I was informed by the DBST at the beginning of the year that she was leaving but she is here even now. I do what I can for her while we wait so that she won't feel useless, but she knows she will leave anytime as soon as the call from the special school comes."

The teachers clearly did whatever they could to involve learners with barriers. They developed a love and understanding for these learners and were willing and trying to be very creative in their teaching. They used various methods that would benefit the learners, but even these special efforts were sometimes not enough to keep struggling learners in a mainstream school.

Nono said:

"We have taught even the parents of the learners about the importance of special schools because some parents used to get very furious when we told them that there was something not right with a child. We work very closely with parents and they inform us about everything going on with the learner and all the support that the learner is getting. Informing parents helps a lot because if a time comes for a child to be referred, a parent is usually at peace and ready to accept that the school has tried everything possible to help a learner."

Noma referred to the process of referral:

> *"It is too much work and a long process to refer a learner. It wastes the time that I do not have. It is not just something that happens overnight. A parent has to take a learner to a psychologist and after the assessment by the psychologist there are long and confusing forms that need to be filled in by the teacher such as the SNA1 and SNA2 that are filled in by the SBST. Those forms take months to be completed because there are observations that are needed to be done and after filling in those forms the SBST has to submit them to the DBST and it usually takes years for a learner to be admitted to a special school."*

While she was talking, it was evident that she knew exactly what she was talking about and she was really speaking knowledgeably. But even though she knew what she was talking about and appeared to have tried to implement this knowledge, it was a bureaucratic nightmare and she openly stated that it was time consuming. It was clear that she would rather teach the learner in a mainstream school than to refer the learner to a special school.

The SNA1 and SNA2 forms that the teachers referred to are Support Needs Assessment (SNA) forms that are filled in by the teacher and the SBST. SNA1 is filled in by the teacher as soon as the parent admits that a learner has any barrier or when a teacher screened all learners and realises that a learner has a problem (Department of Basic Education, 2014). This document states that not all learners who have barriers have to be referred, but all such learners need to be assessed using SNA1. SNA2 will be filled in by the SBST only if they have tried everything they can to help a learner but nothing seems to work. The SNA2 form means that the team, together with the teacher, sees the need for a referral (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The responses revealed that the teachers worked with parents and implemented the knowledge they had to assist learners experiencing barriers. It is noteworthy that these teachers did not merely refer learners at the drop of a hat or to shift their responsibility, but they would refer a learner only after careful consideration and when it was absolutely necessary. Kuffman et al. (2016) also mention that leaving learners in mainstream schools can do more damage than good and that special schools can be very beneficial for some learners. The important point that was raised here is that teachers should use different methods to teach and assess their learners. They should give it everything they have but, if the learner is not benefiting, they should then make

the effort to refer that learner to a special school − not because they do not want to teach that learner, but because the learner will benefit more in a special school. Based on Thando's response, it is clear that there are not enough special schools in the area as one of her learners was supposed to leave the previous year but she was still in her class.

4.2.3.5 Challenges experienced with the implementation of inclusive education

Challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education have been experienced since its inception. All the teachers I interviewed raised concerns regarding the high number of learners per class, lack of resources, lack of infrastructure, and lack of time. Thuli noted that:

> *"IE is not really that practical here in South Africa because most schools have high numbers of learners. I have a very high number of leaners and one day one learner in my class tripped and fell because the walking space is so narrow as there are so many desks."*

At that point Nozipho said:

> *"This year I have 45 learners and I feel very blessed, but it is not usual for me. Usually I have 60 learners and above, which makes it very difficult for me to really take care of all my learners' needs. I try all I can but I feel that if there can fewer learners I can work even better."*

Nono stated:

> *"This year I am very blessed to have only 42 learners. Usually I have about 65 learners in my class, which makes it very difficult for me to cater for the individual needs of the learners."*

Noma and Nokwazi also complained about the high number of learners that they had. Therefore, regardless of their enthusiasm for and knowledge of IE, the teachers felt that inclusive education would be more effective with smaller numbers of learners in a class. This view is supported by Swart et al. (2002), who assert that teachers are strained and have to manage large classes with low teacher/learner ratios, and this hampers the successful implementation of inclusive education. Pather (2011) shares the same view, stating that schools still have very high numbers of learners. De Boer et al. (2011) concur, arguing that teachers who have fewer learners in their classes are well able to implement IE strategies.

Another issue that was raised by the teachers was the lack of a proper school infrastructure. It was a surprising finding that the teachers from the full service school complained about the infrastructure. The Department of Basic Education in 2014 promised that full service schools would be equipped with an infrastructure that would be suitable for learners with special needs. However, the teachers from the full service school were concerned that leaners in wheelchairs could not access the school grounds or the classrooms without being helped. It was difficult to enter and leave classrooms using a wheelchair. Toilet facilities for learners in wheelchairs were available and the school grounds are all flat, but these were the only concessions for learners with disabilities. They all said there were no rails on walls for learners who might need them. Clearly, the full service schools in the study area were not suitable for inclusive education. Nokwazi's, Nono's and Noma's complaints were even worse. They stated that their school grounds were uneven and very dangerous for learners who struggled to walk and that their schools were inaccessible for learners in wheelchairs.

Nono said:

> *"There is a learner in Grade R who is disabled and she cannot walk like other learners. She was very sick when she was young and that caused her to lose her mobility. She trips very easily and she hates it when people try to help her. She wants to be independent but it is hard as she keeps falling. There is another learner in Grade 1 too who is also disabled and he walks with difficulty in our school grounds in such a way that he hardly plays with other learners."*

Nokwazi mentioned that there were only a few classrooms in their school, thus they had to teach two classes in one room. She said it was better this year because she had fewer learners, but should she and her colleague each have 65 learners again, there would be 130 learners in one room, which will be huge problem. She said it was even worse when it was hot and the learners were very noisy. It is undeniable that when one wants to address all learners' needs, it is impossible to have so many learners in one classroom. Nel et al. (2011) also refer to the issue of a lack of infrastructure, especially where it concerns learners with disabilities.

All the teachers in this study complained about the availability of resources regardless of my cursory observation that detected the presence of resources in the classrooms. It was expected that the full service school would have all the necessary resources, but this was apparently not

the case. What worried the participants most was the insufficiency of their teaching resources. They complained about not having IsiZulu readers, charts, and real objects to teach things like shapes in mathematics and colours.

Kwanele said:

> *"I wish every learner, especially the ones with special needs, could have objects that they can touch and sometimes smell when I teach. At the college we were taught something called 'learning by association' which means if a learner associates something with a particular object, it may be hard for that learner to forget the concept, but sometimes we are forced to teach without those objects. But what we do is we bring whatever we find or whatever we have to class. I may not be able to give you examples right now, but the learners are forced to use their imagination."*

Lack of time was also a huge concern. They indicated that it was impossible to do the many activities that they wanted to do with their learners due to time constraints. Some of the participants pointed out that they sometimes wished they could stay after school to assist their learners. However, this was not practical as many of the learners were transported to and from school.

The participants raised an issue related to departmental officials, as they felt that some officials reprimanded teachers by blaming them for using inclusion as an excuse for not finishing the curriculum on time. Some officials had even stated that they had not been informed about inclusion. The participants stated that it felt as if they were serving different departments.

Thuli said:

> *"What is difficult is it seems there is no communication within the educational department. For example, when the circuit managers come they seem to be unclear about inclusion. The subject advisors as well do not care that much about IE; all they want is for us to finish the prescribed curriculum. When we try to explain that we are now supposed to teach according to the needs of the learners, they accuse us of not wanting to do our job on time. They claim that we are using IE as an excuse."*

This statement highlights the requirement for change even at District level as all officials need to be informed of policies and educational requirements that impact learners. In my view, IE should become a focus area as a matter of urgency.

The data revealed that the participating teachers were teaching under difficult conditions. Their classrooms were overcrowded, the infrastructure was not conducive towards inclusive teaching strategies, there was not enough time to give special attention to individual learners, and suitable resources were very limited. However, unlike other studies that found teachers generally negative in terms of change, the findings of this study revealed that the teachers were optimistic and tried creative and productive ways to assist their learners.

4.2.3.6 Positive aspects about inclusive education

I asked the participants to reflect on the positive aspects of inclusion. The following responses emerged:

Nozipho stated:

> *"Inclusive education has taught me to be understanding, especially towards learners with barriers. I have also learned that there should be no name calling, for example 'Islima' which in English means 'stupid'. Even if a learner is misbehaving a teacher must ask herself as well as the learner why that learner is behaving that way. I have learned to understand and treat learners with respect in spite of their differences."*

Kwanele said:

> *"The good thing about implementing IE is that the teachers use all kinds of assessments. There are those learners who cannot write. Before we used to call them stupid but now, even if they cannot write, we call them and give them oral tests."*

Nono stated:

> *"All learners are benefiting from the different methods of teaching we apply, therefore there is a lower rate of school dropouts. Before, there used to be high number of learners*

who left school early, but now all learners feel loved and understood and no one calls them bad names."

Thuli raised the following point:

"Through IE all learners get help and all learners get to attend schools in their neighbourhoods, which makes it easier for them to call their parents whenever they need to talk to them. Learners get to learn at their levels."

Nokwazi said:

"One of the good things about IE is teachers have learned to work together. They share solutions to learners' problems. I have learned not to gossip about learners because I used to gossip about learners before, now I see it as a challenge for me to solve. I feel embarrassed at how I used to treat learners before I learned about IE, especially those with behavioural problems."

Kwanele stated:

"Learners in inclusive education do not feel inferior; they feel like they also belong and they look like all the other learners. There are very few special schools in the area so inclusion makes it easier for every learner to get the opportunity to learn."

These responses show that the teachers knew that differentiated learning was important and that it would encourage teachers to embrace all learners, if only there were fewer learners in their classes. Bui et al. (2010) state that inclusive education has resulted in great improvement for learners with both severe and less severe disabilities. They note that, in mainstream schools, learners with barriers to learning also depend on their more capable peers for help instead of relying only on their teachers. So, if learners who need special care and attention are shifted to special schools, the only help they will get is the help of their teachers. Inclusion allows communication among learners as they associate with one another; this is what socio-constructivism advocates and what Vygotsky desired (Amneh & Asl, 2015). It was apparent that the participating teachers had grown in as far as inclusive education was concerned, and they were thus more understanding of their learners and their needs.

4.2.4 Support structures in inclusive education

White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) emphasises that the key to reducing barriers to learning within the education system lies at the heart of strengthened education support services. As explained in Chapter Two, one of the roles of the SBST is to evaluate programs, diagnose their effectiveness, and suggest modifications. In response to the question whether they received support from different structures, Nono stated that in her school they worked with various stakeholders. She said:

> "*We were taught to use all the people that we need, so in our school we involve almost everyone and the support we get is amazing. I remember one day a member of the community called one of the teachers and told her that there were children in the community who had been left by their mother three months before. The eldest was in Grade 3 in our school. We did not know, but all we knew about that learner was that she stole everything that she could find. We were all very sad, so we quickly called the social workers and they were in our school within an hour. Before the end of that day, those children were placed in a home because there are a lot of homes for orphans in our area."*

Nono also stated that

> *"Our learners do not want to listen to us when we tell them about the safety of using the correct side of the road. So what we do each year is during the learner safety day we call the traffic police who always bring gifts while teaching them about the safety ways of crossing the roads. We do not only call the traffic police only during that day but we also call the South African Police Services spoke person as well as well to teach the learners what to do when they are abused."*

Nokwazi said

> *"We have a special day at school where we call different departments such as department of safety and security, the department of health and the District Based Support Team and the traffic police to come and address the learners on different issues such as reporting abuse, using the roads wisely and making sure that they are safe even at school. The learners on this day are given the number 10111 which they are supposed to report any form of abuse. We sometimes even call the fire department but they are usually too busy to come to school but we really hope one day they will have some time to spend with us."*

Thuli stated that

> *"The nurses come more than four times a year. They give the learners some pills for immunisation as per government order and they also come for circumcising the boys and for various reasons but we also call them to talk to the learners when there are outbreaks such as skin diseases and other illnesses. They also come to educate the teachers as well in what to do and what not to do when learners are sick. They give us some advice such as the learners must not wash their hands in a bucket but rather in running water in order to prevent the illnesses from spreading and the teachers must make sure not to share any information that she was given in confidence."*

The teachers testified to using the police, traffic police, nurses, social workers, and even leaders of the community. Landsberg et al. (2016) condone outreach practices such as these as they state that teachers need to work with different stakeholders such as therapists, psychologists, community members, health workers and people employed by the Department of Basic Education.

In this regard, Thuli said:

> *"The support we get from the district is amazing. The DBST is based at our school. Since we are a full service school, the DBST has offices at our school. They workshop us on new developments and they love all learners, especially the ones with disabilities."*

Nozipho stated:

> *"The district officials come to support us at least twice a quarter and they have taught us that we are more than welcome to call whenever a need arises. And whenever we call they are always there to help. Even if there is an emergency, they drop whatever they do and come, especially if they report an alleged rape."*

Nono supported this view:

> *"The district officials do support us and they do not leave us in the deep end. They come whenever we call them."*

I interviewed teachers who were members of the SBST and it was clear that they gave other teachers all the support they needed. For instance, Thuli stated:

> *"We conduct workshops in my school. I like reading and solving problems so whatever knowledge I get I share it with the staff. When teachers come to us with problems, we listen and give them methods they can try but if they try all the methods and still cannot help the learner, we then refer the learner using the forms called 001."*

Supporting this statement, Kwanele stipulated that even when the SBST did not know everything, they tried. She said:

> *"Sometimes all the teachers need is someone who will say 'I understand and I know how difficult it is'. So we were taught to ask the most important question which is, 'How can I help you?'"*

Pienaar and Raymond (2013) note that a powerful source of support is the teacher him/herself. They mention that it is important that teachers realise that they are professionals so they may help learners and one another. In this case study it was evident that the teachers had grown and were doing just that. In relation to this, Nono noted the following:

> *"In my school we as the SBST organise people who know how to handle learners with problems. One day we went to a nearby special school and asked one of the teachers to teach us how to deal with learners with barriers."*

What Nono and her team did was what is stipulated in the SIAS document, which is that special schools are supposed to be used as sources of knowledge and information (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

All the teachers in this study were very happy about the support they received from the SMT. Kwanele noted this as follows:

> *"We used to be very angry with our principal. We used to say it was easy for her to love learners with barriers this way because she was not the one teaching them, but now that we have been taught we all love learners with barriers and we no longer even refer to them as 'these learners' anymore."*

Thuli stated:

"One of the SMT members stands out by showing love and care for learners with needs. She is always willing to go the extra mile. She loves even the ones that are rude and disrespectful. She always speaks from the heart and with passion in such a way that no matter how angry we may be, we end up feeling guilty for despising the learners and we end up loving them as well. She has a way of reasoning with you."

It emerged from the data that the teachers received help and support from various stakeholders. It was evident that these teachers understood that they did not need to work alone but that they needed to embrace other people's support. It was made clear from the point of view of the teachers that they were keen to solicit the help of people who could be involved. It was also clear that they understood that they did not need to work alone, but that teamwork strengthened their hands. I was inspired by the idea that if all teachers asked for help, a lot of different stakeholders would gladly become involved. Schools no longer need to function as islands, as even community members are willing to help as long as teachers know what help they need and who they can ask. It was also clear that the teachers supported Pienaar and Raymond's (2013) idea that teachers need to change the way they speak; so, and instead of saying, "This learner needs professional help", teachers must learn to say, "Sipho needs help so I shall find a professional to help him".

I only asked teachers about the help that they received from the DBST, SMT and SBST, but they were happy to discuss the help that they received from other departments and people as well. This suggests that the teachers were committed and willing to help all learners in spite of the difficulties they experienced.

4.4 Other Issues that Emerged from the Data

The participants made very important and thought-provoking points regarding inclusion. It was as if they had been waiting to voice their opinions; so when they were asked to say whatever they wanted to say about inclusion, they jumped at the opportunity.

Thuli stated:

"*Oh, yes! (smiling and excited) I would like to see change in the curriculum. Right now there is Jika imfundo. I wish they will provide us with activities that are suitable for*

straddles, especially their readers, so that I will not have to waste too much of my time preparing and having to think too much about what to do next. You see, Gugu, I am old now, I am not your age. There is too much work. They must design graded readers for the straddles."

Thuli's comment suggests that too much planning stresses teachers. Some participants suggested that the Department should employ more teachers so that it would be easier to do their work properly.

Nono stated the following:

"*I feel the lecturers should be very strict at tertiary institutions. When a student teacher is demonstrating in front of the class, the lecturers must demand to see curriculum differentiation in the lesson. The student teacher should indicate what she has prepared for all four groups of learners so that teachers can really practise inclusion."*

Thando raised the following point:

"*The Department of Education must make sure that they are not only interested in the tasks that are supposed to be finished because that makes it hard for the teachers to do inclusive education correctly while they try to finish the syllabus. They must be interested in the fact that the learners have gained knowledge."*

She also mentioned the following:

"*They have taught us about inclusive education. The DBST comes to our schools and preaches about IE and we try to implement that. But at the same time the subject advisors and circuit inspectors come and demand that we finish the tasks. They call learners to the office and give them books to read and when you tell them that the learner is not at that level yet, they accuse you of not doing your job. It seems as if we serve two very different departments. Why can't they sit together and teach us one and the same thing? As teachers we end up really not knowing who to please and we end up feeling as if we are morons and that we do not do our work at all. That is discouraging."*

The points these teachers raised showed that they took inclusive education seriously but that they were to some degree hampered in executing it in the FP.

4.5 Document Analysis

Document analysis is an important sources for data collection. I perused the SIAS documents and school policies on inclusive education and analysed the requirements for IE. The SIAS documents were designed to inform the DBST about learners with problems. They are supposed to be filled in by the teacher and the educational psychologist with the help of the parents to give direction to the process of referral. These SIAS documents were introduced in 2017 in KwaZulu-Natal. Prior to that the teachers completed a shorter document referred to as '001'. The new documents (SNA1 and SNA2) are very long and require complex answers related to observations and actions by the teacher. Some of the questions read as follows: "Comment on how the physical environment has been modified/adapted" and "What interventions have you as a teacher implemented in the learning environment (classroom/school) to address your observations and concerns about a learner?" (Department of Basic Education, 2014. p. 5). Some of the questions appear similar but confused the participants, with the result that some of the forms I perused had blank spaces.

These are undeniably very important documents because they elicit a clear understanding of the learner and his/her problems. Whoever reads these documents get enough information which may be helpful in order to help a learner. The teachers told me that these documents were highly confidential and I could only peruse them with permission for the purpose of my study. They were stored in the principal's office with other confidential files. The teachers of both schools told me that they were not allowed to record the HIV status of the learner in those documents even if a parent told them what it was. These document relate to White Paper 6 and all other departmental documents on learner behaviour. However, questions such as: "What has the school done to promote curriculum differentiation?" and "What has the teacher done to make sure that the learner's individual needs are met?" indicate that the SIAS document really promotes inclusion.

None of the teachers who were interviewed were keen on filling in these forms. They all said that it took too long and that the effort was useless because most referrals were declined anyway.

4.6 Reflection on the Theoretical Framework

The theory that framed this study was the socio-constructivist theory that has its roots in the writings of a Russian psychologist, Vygotsky. This framework was useful because it elucidated salient areas for investigation. By utilising Vygotsky's socio-constructivist lens, I was guided to observe whether the teachers were doing what was required by IE, which is an educational concept that is underpinned by Vygotsky's theory. For instance, I was able to recognise that the teachers promoted the use of language, which is central to learning, because their learners were arranged in groups where interaction occurred verbally. Moreover, the teachers seemed to respect the culture and background of the learners which is a high priority of social constructivism. This theory also opened my eyes to scaffolding strategies and the value of this approach in teaching and learning processes, particularly in situations where mixed ability learners are taught in the same class. The participants also utilised practices to ensure that their learners would develop to their ZPD. This occurred because they allowed their learners to communicate freely when possible and they used capable peers to teach other learners. This theory thus gave direction to the study and illuminated the findings to create a deep and insightful understanding of the topic under investigation.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed the three themes that emerged from the data, namely: Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge of IE; implementation of IE; and structures that support IE. It emerged that the teachers who participated in the study had adequate knowledge of inclusive education and that they endeavoured to implement it. However many challenges they faced, they did not sit back but they tried everything they could to do their part. In a nutshell, the teachers took inclusion very seriously and they were passionate about supporting each learner in their care. They agreed that it was not easy, but they worked in teams in their schools and received a lot of help from different stakeholders. It was evident that they knew where to go to ask for help and many stakeholders were willing to help.

The teachers appeared very well organised even though they had very high numbers of learners in their classrooms. I was struck by their organisational capabilities given the small classroom spaces and the large number of learners each had to teach. In my view, requiring a teacher to

teach so many learners of mixed ability is unfair and prevents the application of sound educational principles. However, regardless of their learners' behavioural, physical and learning needs, they did not complain but presented themselves as good problem solvers. They worked well and passionately with the resources at their disposal. The love they had for their learners was wonderful and tangible and they seemed to be willing to go the extra mile for their learners. I was amazed at their skill of differentiating the curriculum so that it would suit all their learners' needs to a great extent. They evidently played a significant role in their learners' lives and embraced inclusion regardless of all the problems they faced.

Some of the problems the teachers faced were quite evident upon entering the school premises. The infrastructure of one of the schools in particular was in a very bad state of disrepair and affected all the learners, not only those with special needs. For instance, there was no space for the leaners to play. The interviews were conducted in the classrooms and I could see that there were far too many desks for the space even though they had tried to arrange them in a manageable way. The availability of tangible objects was limited but commendable, particularly as most had been made by the teachers which showed that they were pro-active. Nel et al. (2016) urge that teachers need to think about their classroom setting for teaching the syllabus and the classroom climate to make sure that it is conducive to learning. The teachers of these schools were indeed trying their best to adhere to these principles.

The teachers' understanding of their learners' problems was amazing. They showed that they tried their very best to understand why the learners acted and behaved the way they did. It was evident that the teachers tried very hard not to judge the learners. Instead, they listened to their problems and they tried everything they could to solve these issues. Socio-constructivism encourages teachers to move beyond set standards of performance and to concentrate on that which should be at the heart of the educational process, which is teaching (Adams, 2006). This means that teachers should pay attention to what is going to benefit their learners.

For about three decades since the emphasis was placed on inclusive education, many studies have been conducted to help teachers understand IE and to assist to work with diverse learners in their classrooms. Many programmes have been developed and tested in response to governmental policies for inclusive education, but the battle of implementation is still raging as teachers are still facing challenges that create a barrier to the smooth implementation of IE. However, this study has shown that some progress has been made by some teachers. They have

shown that one can try ones best even if faced with problems such as overpopulated classrooms, a limited and poorly maintained infrastructure, and lack of resources. They have demonstrated that a positive attitude is the most important weapon in teachers' arsenal when they fight for the right of every child to be educated equitably.

Although the teachers at both of these schools demonstrated a high level of inclusive knowledge and practices, the teachers at the full service school seemed to be receiving more help from both the DBST and the SMT, judging by the fact that the DBST is based at their school. The mainstream school also received support, but where the full service school had immediate access to the DBST, those at the other school had to phone and wait for a response. Moreover, the teachers from the full service school stated that their principal supported and encouraged inclusion in such a way that she allowed the SBST to attend all grade meetings. She also gave the SBST time during staff meetings to address the teachers and inform them of the latest developments, while the principal of the mainstream school had to be reminded of this need all the time. The latter team thus decided to conduct workshops to update teachers because they were not given enough opportunity to do so during staff meetings.

However, the teachers from the mainstream school seemed surprisingly motivated regardless of the fact that they did not get as much support as the teachers from the full service school. In support of this statement, one of the teachers from the mainstream school said that a member of the DBST once announced that she was very pleased with their work and that she had told the district that their school should be upgraded to a full service school. However, her request fell on deaf ears because the other school was new and close to a main road.

I also analysed relevant documents in order to add validity to the data that had been generated from the interviews. The documents that I analysed were the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) documents and school policies on inclusive education. It was clear that the teachers omitted to provide answers to some questions when they filled in the SIAS documents, probably because the questions were confusing and seemed similar. Most questions were too long. There were questions such as: "Comment on/explain how the curriculum content has been differentiated; e.g., taking into account that every learner should have access to the grade level teaching and assessment best suited to his/ her needs. Have the learners' needs been met by differentiated curriculum? Have the learners' abilities determined what is expected of him/her without discrimination?" Also: "Comment on how teaching

methods have been adapted/differentiated; e.g., how classroom management has been changed to accommodate learners working at different levels of knowledge; how activities have been modified to ensure that they are meaningful; how a range of graded materials has been used (how materials have been modified to allow for learners' disability, for instance); how the presentation has been modified (e.g., by using pictures with descriptions/explanations, etc.)".

The following figure is a summary of the challenges faced by teachers in their efforts to implement IE.

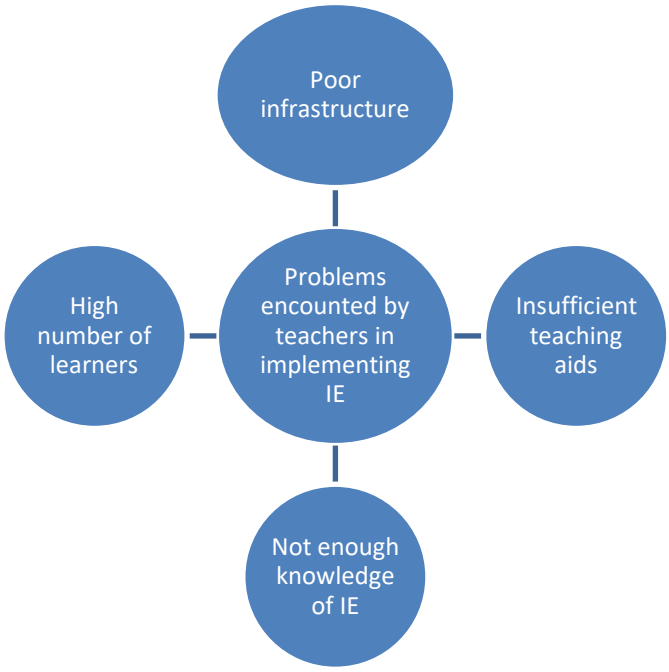

Figure 4.2: Challenges that impede the effective implementation of IE

The above diagram summarises the challenges that were mentioned by the participants that hindered the implementation of IE. Although these points emerged, the teachers still seemed to do remarkably well under the circumstances.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the findings of this study with reference to the literature review and the single case study that was conducted. By looking at crucial issues that were raised by the study, the reflections of the researcher are brought to the fore and further areas for research are proposed. The purpose of this study was to explore Foundation Phase (FP) teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education (IE) and to better understand how that knowledge helped them in dealing with learners who experienced difficulties. A qualitative method of study was used as was discussed in Chapter Three. This approach allowed me as the researcher to listen to the authentic and frank responses of FP teacher participants who had been purposively recruited for the study. Babbie and Mouton (2007) explain that, in a qualitative study, the researcher gives feedback regarding the viewpoint of the participants and always tries to study human action from their perspective. Brynard et al. (2014) describe qualitative research as a study that a researcher conducts to clearly describe [and interpret] the exact spoken words and experiences of the participants.

This chapter presents a summary of the findings. The entire research process is also summarised and conclusions are drawn. These conclusions emerged in response to the key research questions of the study:

- What do Foundation Phase teachers know and understand about Inclusive Education (IE)?
- How has the knowledge of IE helped FP teachers to address the needs of learners who experience learning difficulties?

My recommendations that are based on the findings are also proposed. An important limitation that impacted the study findings is highlighted and, to conclude, suggestions for further research are offered.

The data were generated by means of one-on-one interviews. The data generation strategies allowed the researcher to participate with the participants in an unassuming manner. The study involved six participants from two schools. The participants' ages and experiences varied, yet

they shared many concerns and successes. Some had been teaching for a short period and some were more experienced. All the participants were suitably qualified. Only one teacher was still studying further towards obtaining a degree.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

This section aims to synthesise the empirical findings and thus to provide answers to the two research questions that gave impetus to this study. These research questions were conjected in Chapter One and in section 5.1 above.

In response to the first question, I found that the teachers had extensive knowledge of IE which they shared enthusiastically and animatedly during the discussions. I found that they welcomed the changes in their teaching strategies required by IE. They referred to salient facts such as that learners should be given equal opportunities to learn and that none should be excluded for reasons such as age, gender, background, language, class, disability, HIV status, or any other disease and they were respectful of these requirements. Nel et al. (2016), UNESCO (1994), and White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) mention the importance of respecting all learners and the fact that no learner should be excluded from a South African School because of any of these issues. Some teachers referred to IE as a social justice issue when they expressed their understanding of this concept. This is indeed the case, as Hodge (2017) makes it clear that IE is a social justice issue because every learner has a right to education. It is therefore also a human rights issue.

The teachers understood that their learners were not all at the same level academically and developmentally and that they should be treated differently and with respect. What was clear in their discussions was the love they poured into their learners. Savolainen et al. (2012) state that learners who are loved and appreciated by their teachers can in turn try very hard to do better. It was clear that these teachers encountered various challenges but this did not stop them from trying harder to do what they were supposed to do. They shared a positive attitude which resonates with Savolainen et al. (2012), who argue that, even if teachers have limited knowledge, as long as they have a positive attitude they can do whatever it takes to apply inclusive practices effectively. Todorivic et al. (2011) also found that the primary school teachers who participated in their study had a positive attitude towards IE.

However, even though most teachers had some knowledge of important policies such as White Paper 6 and screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS), some battled to explain what White Paper 6 entails as this had not been taught in their teacher training curricula. During workshops some departmental officials referred peripherally to White Paper 6, but they probably assumed that the teachers had been informed of its content. Having some idea what it entailed, some teachers felt negatively about White Paper 6 as they argued that the government was using this policy of integration to run away from its responsibility to build new special schools. However, they believed in the principle of inclusion and implemented this as far as possible because of the love they had developed for their learners who experienced barriers. Conversely, they were well informed of the SIAS policy and had experience in completing the forms. They all agreed that it was a useful tool to screen and identify learners with barriers and that this policy had additionally equipped them with knowledge about working with learners with barriers. Mahlo (2017) mentions that SIAS helps to guide teachers and offers useful suggestions for supporting learners with barriers.

It was deemed important to explore teachers' knowledge of IE related policies. Many studies have been conducted on inclusive education, but this study particularly investigated whether policy and implementation went hand in hand. It was important to determine if teachers in the FP were accommodating learners with severe problems, whether they were aware of policy requirements, and if they were implementing these policies in their teaching strategies. The value of this study is that the findings will inform other scholars about the status of IE in the FP. However, due to the limited scope of this study the findings may not be generalised, but may be used as a springboard for future studies covering larger education areas in South Africa in as far as the implementation of IE policies is concerned. Agents of change in South Africa, such as the Department of Basic Educations, have endeavoured to improve educational practices by introducing new policies that will encourage and even enforce an inclusive education system based on human rights practices. The aim was to determine if FP teachers had been equipped with adequate information about IE and whether they, as the key players of change in the classroom, have embraced and implemented these policies to the benefit of their learners.

All the participants mentioned that they had been informed about IE at departmental workshops. It was evident that they found these workshops very helpful and informative even though they all agreed that more workshops were required. They particularly required workshops that would

address the diverse needs of learners as they felt that there was still more for them to learn. It was also revealed that some teacher training institutions are now including inclusive education in their curricula. It was also heartening to learn that teachers who attended workshops cascaded the information to those who had not been able to attend to make sure that everyone had sufficient knowledge. Moreover, informed teachers were given time slots during grade and staff meetings to inform other teachers. Some took the initiative to conduct workshops when insufficient time was available to allow them to address staff meetings.

In terms of the role of the school management teams (SMT) in implementing IE, the rate of support for this policy seemed to be roughly 50%, as one principle was enthusiastic and actively supported and encouraged IE, whereas the other principal had to be reminded of this policy and seemed to focus on other educational issues.

All the participants showed a high level of understanding of their learners. They mentioned that the enrolment policy had changed, as learners with difficulties who had been excluded before were now enrolled at their schools. This indicates that schools have started to embrace diversity in learners. The participants paid considerable attention to learners who experienced barriers and they worked collaboratively with parents to solve these learners' problems. They seemed to understand that learners sometimes act in a particular manner because of extrinsic factors such as domestic violence and poverty. They also understood that learners have both extrinsic and intrinsic problems but that they all have a right to education. Some of the participants had a clear understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic issues that affect learners' ability to function in a classroom.

In response to the second question that dealt with the implementation of IE, the teachers commented that they used different strategies. For example, appropriate seating arrangements and group activities were used that allowed the learners to communicate with one another. Social constructivism emphasises communication and socialising skills as the bedrock of learning (Woolfolk, n.d.). According to Vygotsky, learners learn best when they learn from one another (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2016), and this was practically applied by the FP teachers when appropriate.

All the participants showed high knowledge of curriculum differentiation and that they were using it as one of the tools to encourage effective learning. Teachers need to differentiate what

they teach, how they teach and what they assess (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The participants stated that they differentiated in all three spheres. They related how important it was for them to teach and assess their learners according to their individual abilities. However, it was also evident that no matter how hard they tried to differentiate, there were some barriers to effective IE implementation, such as large class sizes and the demands of departmental officials. They attempted to overcome these by devising creative ways of differentiating the curriculum. Conversely, Marshal (2016) criticises curriculum differentiation by stating that it tires the teacher and that there is no proof that it works.

The participants used different terms for scaffolding but understood the concept as it was evident that they applied it in their everyday teaching practices to avoid dominating teaching and learning processes. They stated that their teaching was not teacher centred and that they were well equipped to help learners while giving them the opportunity to be independent. Schunk (2006) stresses the importance of using scaffolding only when it is needed. According to Vygotsky, scaffolding should prevent the teacher from dominating and spoon feeding learners. However, it should only be applied if the teacher does it with understanding, which means it should support learning but should be removed as soon as help is no longer needed (Subban, 2006).

The teachers understood that referring learners to special schools was not a priority. They agreed that they first had to do their best to teach all learners, especially the ones with barriers, but if there was no change then referral was required. They also understood that they had to use different strategies to teach their learners. They were unanimous in criticising the SAIS forms, arguing that they were time consuming and confusing and sometimes useless because referrals were often declined. They seemed to tolerate learners with barriers more now than they had done before. The participants openly opposed referring learners as they saw it as a long process that resulted in nothing.

Referring learners is in contravention of the principles of inclusive education. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) makes it clear that IE means teaching learners with barriers in mainstream classrooms so that all learners may benefit. A learner who experiences challenges thus has to do whatever it takes to fit into the normal school but, only if the learner is not able to do what is expected, he/she is referred. It is evident that even though some schools function

as inclusive schools they are not fully inclusive, because they still refer learners to special schools.

The teachers shared similar concerns such as overcrowded classrooms, a lack of and poor infrastructure, a lack of resources, and a lack of time. Teachers from the full service school experienced similar problems to those of teachers from the mainstream school. This was surprising because the aim of full service schools is to provide more help to the learners who experience barriers to learning. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2015), full service schools were established to give strength to the implementation of IE by making sure that more learners have accesses to local schools, especially those learners who are poor. Engelbrecht et al. (2015) conclude that even though South African teachers are now in favour of IE, they still do not have the necessary resources to implement it. Ainscow and Sandill (2010) argue that, in most developing countries, various factors hinder the implementation of IE, such as a shortage of teachers, large numbers of learners in a classroom, a lack of support staff, more work that comes with IE, and the fact that some teachers claim to be more educated than others. In the United Kingdom it was noted that teachers in mainstream schools were not yet on board to teach learners with needs, and they thus quickly referred such learners to special schools (Kelly, Devitt, O'Keffee, & Donovan, 2014). Another conclusion was that teachers were more interested in finishing the curriculum than in diversifying education to meet the needs of their learners (Engelbrecht et al., 2015).

The teachers who participated in the current study were very positive about IE. They claimed that they now understood their learners and their problems and embraced different types of assessment and processes of teaching. They supported the fact that the learners were taught in their neighbourhood schools where they were known, loved and understood. The participants also mentioned that inclusion had taught them not to ridicule learners or use derogatory names when they referred to the learners who were struggling. Parents had full access to the learning of their children because the schools were not too far from their homes. Another positive aspect that was mentioned by the participants was that struggling learners were educated in the same school as their siblings. The participants were also happy about the way they had learned to work together with other teachers to solve problems. Subban (2006) mentions that learners learn best if the teacher has their best interest at heart and understands their level of development. Savolainen et al. (2012) argue that learners who are loved and respected by their teachers in turn try their best to work hard and change their behaviour.

The participating teachers also indicated that they worked very well with different stakeholders such as the traffic police, nurses, social workers and community leaders. They also mentioned that they got enough help from their SMTs and from the district based support teams (DBST). Cameron (2016) stipulates that it is the duty of the DBST to ensure that IE is implemented by monitoring and supervising public schools as well as giving them guidance in terms of IE laws and policies. According to Ainscow and Sandill (2010), when there are enough leaders who are willing to help and understand inclusion, it is easy for schools to implement and practise it with ease. They state that it is important that local and national policies are respected so that inclusive practices may flourish. In this context, the participants in the current study indicated that they developed one another as they worked in teams, unlike before when teachers tended to work in isolation.

5.3 Implications of the Study

There are many positive aspects about IE but it is associated with some challenges as well. For example, socio-economic issues tend to impact the smooth implementation of IE negatively. Moreover, teachers are currently expected to take on the additional roles of nurses and counsellors because learners get sexually abused and neglected. Some learners come from poverty-stricken backgrounds and some are abandoned by their parents, as one participant testified. Other problems that are experienced are that teachers are more often than not expected to teach large numbers of learners in one classroom, learners come from different backgrounds, and many have a home language that is different from the LoTL. It is very important that the DBE makes sure that teachers are well equipped to deal with these problems. However, the findings revealed that both teachers and leaners gained knowledge through inclusive education and that teachers acquired useful information and support through workshops, even though more workshops were required. The support they got from different stakeholders is noteworthy, although a lot still needs to be done to strengthen this support. For instance, teachers require constant guidance and development to strengthen their knowledge and skills for the effective implementation of integration.

This study revealed that learners with barriers will be accepted when enrolled in normal classrooms and will be given the same education and love as other learners. The learners with barriers in the schools under study were supported and helped whenever the teachers felt they

needed it; however, there were many learners in these schools who made it difficult for teachers to cater for learners with barriers. There was evidence of a lack of teaching materials that were suitable for the learners with special needs, even in the full service school. It was also clear that the teachers were not monitored regularly to ensure that they applied appropriate strategies for dealing with learners with disabilities. The participants did not mention anything about the learners who were highly gifted, as their interests should also be considered and attended to in IE. It was mentioned that gifted learners were used to assist those who were struggling, but I was left with the impression that the highly gifted learners were neglected to some extent as the teachers' focus was on learners with barriers. This is a matter of concern, as the attitude that gifted learners will perform anyway will hinder their learning and they may end up under performing. I may only surmise that, due to the large numbers of learners in the classrooms, the learners with barriers were benefiting at the expense of learners who were highly gifted.

5.4 Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to explore FP teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and to determine how they implemented it in their classrooms. It appeared that the participants had adequate knowledge of IE and that they tried their best and worked hard towards the implementation of IE, even though they worked under difficult conditions. Based on the findings of this study, I would like to offer the following recommendations:

- In-depth and ongoing training is still needed. The teachers indicated that they had gained a lot of knowledge from workshops; however, there was a lot that they felt they still needed to learn.
- The content of training curricula should seriously focus on the issue of including IE in the curriculum rather than lesson plans. At the present moment the school curriculum does not cater for learners with barriers to learning.
- The school curriculum must be revised to accommodate both highly gifted learners as well as learners with barriers to learning.
- The DBE should ensure that there are enough experts to provide psychological and health services to schools because teachers are not trained as psychologists or nurses.
- Monitoring should be done on a regular basis. Subject advisors and other district officials should come on board, and so should the DBST. Currently it seems as if the different educational sectors are working in isolation as one teacher stated that subject advisors and other

district officials seemed not to care about IE; all they wanted was curriculum coverage.

- More learners need to benefit from IE. Thus schools must be equipped to accommodate all learners, especially those who experience barriers to learning. The infrastructure of schools as well as the curriculum must cater for the needs of all learners.

5.5 Limitation

It is reiterated that only six FP teachers from two schools were interviewed. The study was thus conducted on a very small scale and the findings do not represent the views of all FP teachers of Ilembe district. The findings may thus not be generalised or used as a definitive measure to determine the progress that has been made in the implementation of IE. However, this study uncovered answers to all the questions that gave impetus to the study, and thus the aim of the study was achieved.

5.6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and to better understand how this knowledge helped them to address the needs of their learners who experienced barriers to learning. The findings revealed that the teachers had adequate understanding of inclusive education and that they were therefore doing their best to implement inclusive teaching and learning strategies even though they were faced with a range of challenges. It was found that a significant shift had occurred in the attitude of the teachers towards learners experiencing learning challenges and that these teachers had developed high respect and genuine love for all their learners, including those who had special needs.

Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory was used as a framework for this study. This theory is learner centred and supports appropriate scaffolding practices. According to Vygotsky, interactive and learner-centred practices must be underpinned by a focus on language development. The scope of the study was limited to interviews and I thus did not observe actual lessons, but what I did observe when I visited the classrooms was that the classroom desks were arranged to encourage discussion and communication. This resonates strongly with Vygotsky's theoretical proposals, as confirmed by Subban (2006). The teachers participating in this study tried very hard to adhere to what they knew of IE principles and practices. By using Vygotsky's

theory as a lens to explore IE in the FP, the importance of guiding learners to achieve to their ZPD and to use scaffolding in this process was highlighted. In essence, the teachers understood that they needed to guide their learners, particularly those who experienced barriers, to move from the known (utilising their prior knowledge) to the unknown (acquiring new knowledge) with the help of a more competent peer and an adult (Subban, 2006). In support of this finding, I referred to policies such as SIAS, White Paper 6, and curriculum differentiation guidelines to triangulate the data.

What I have learnt is that inclusive educations is ideal, but that its implementation is not simply a done deal when it is promoted by policies; in fact, it is a process that allows new findings and data to emerge each year. An important fact is that teachers need to implement this concept in the classroom, and thus all other stakeholders (departmental officials, principals, learners and parents) should never cease to try to make teachers' task manageable and effective. This does not occur when a teacher is required to teach as many as 65 learners in one class. It is my contention that even if teachers have very little knowledge but passion for their task, and if they are well supported, inclusive classroom practices in the FP will prevail. In my experience, which has been supported by the findings, passionate and caring FP teachers will make sure that they extend their knowledge to achieve successful outcomes for *all* their learners. The study has shown that attitude is the most important factor that drives successful implementation of inclusion, because no matter how adequate the knowledge of the teacher may be, as long as she is not willing to change, inclusion will not succeed. Ainscow (2005) puts it aptly and succinctly when he states that inclusion is a process that has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity.

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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

06 November 2019

Mrs Nomagugu Mabaso (200400916)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Mabaso,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0225/018M
New project title: An exploration of Foundation Phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the Inclusive Education: Experiences of school-based support teams in Ilembe District

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 05 August 2019 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an 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.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/ms

cc Supervisor: Ms Makie Kortjass
cc. Academic Leader Research: Dr Ansurie Pillay
cc. School Administrator: Ms M Ngcobo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 **Facsimile:** +27 (0) 31 260 4609 **Email:** [redacted] / [redacted] / [redacted]
Website: [redacted]

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

1. What do you understand is your main role as a Foundation Phase teacher?
2. What makes teaching in the FP different from other phases?
3. What do you understand by the term Inclusive Education?
4. Which workshops of Inclusive Education have you attended in the past?
5. How many other teachers in your school have attended Inclusive Education workshop?
6. How is the information cascaded to other teachers who did not attend the workshop?
7. How well do you think the workshops on Inclusive Education prepared you to deal with the problems you experience in your classroom? Please give some examples from your classroom experience where they have or have not.
8. What support do you receive from the following structures in terms of Inclusive Education?

i) The district officials

ii) The school management team

iii) The school based support team

9. Does your school have a copy of White Paper 6?
10. What is your understanding of the White Paper 6? How did you gain this understanding?
11. What problems have you experienced in teaching FP learners? How do you deal with these problems?
12. What would you do if you have a child in your class that was not able to read or write, and does not participate in the class activities?
13. How and where did you learn about diagnosing learning difficulties?
14. Do you have any knowledge of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy?
15. How have the knowledge of Inclusive Education equipped you with essential tools to deal with learners with special needs or learning difficulties?
16. Do you think that learners with special needs should be included/excluded in mainstream schools? Why?
17. What challenges have you experienced in terms of understanding and implementing Inclusive Education?
18. What do you think are the positive aspects of Inclusive Education?
19. What do you think are the negative aspects of Inclusive Education?

20. Why do you think it is important to gain more knowledge about Inclusive Education? How can one acquire more knowledge about Inclusive Education?

21. To what extent do you think Inclusive Education is practical in South African primary schools considering the following?

i) The number of learners of learners in class.

ii) The lack of resources in schools.

iii) The lack of infrastructure.

22. Are there any other issues about Inclusive Education that you would like to mention?

APPENDIX C

Document analysis

1. The policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support,

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO REGIONAL HEAD OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

UKZN – Edgewood Campus
Private Bag x03
Ashwood
3605

SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER
Head of Department: Education
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
Private Bag x9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT THEMBENI PRIMARY AND DR B.W. VILAKAZI

I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal pursuing Masters in Educational Psychology. My study requires me to conduct a research so I am applying for a permission to conduct my research at the schools I mentioned above. The topic of my study is "**An exploration of Foundation Phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive education: The experiences of school based support teams".**
The purpose of my study is to investigate foundation phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive education. I will interview teachers and analyse the finding accurately. The participation will be voluntary and they will sign a consent form. The teachers will be notified that they are to withdraw at any time. The information given by the teachers will only be used for this study. Their names schools will never be disclosed under any circumstances but instead pseudonyms will be used. I hope that the result of my study will be useful to teachers' understanding of inclusive education. My contact details and those of my supervisor are provided below in case you need clarification of this study.

Yours faithfully
Nomagugu Mabaso

O83 456 6129. gugu.mafungwase1@gmail.com

Makie Kortjass :082 934 2621: Kortjassm@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

UKZN- Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
27 November 2017

The Principal
Dr B.W. Vilakazi
Private Bag
KwaDukuza
4450

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY

I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal pursuing Masters in Educational Psychology. My study requires me to conduct a research so I am applying for a permission to conduct my research at the schools I mentioned above. The topic of my study is **"An exploration of foundation phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive education: Experiences of school based support teams"**.

The purpose of my study is to investigate Foundation Phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive education. I will interview teachers and I will analyse the finding accurately. The participation will be voluntary and they will sign a consent form. The teachers will be notified that they are to withdraw at any time. The information given by the teachers will only be used for this study. The names of the schools will never be disclosed under any circumstances but instead pseudonyms will be used. I hope that the result of my study will be useful to teachers' understanding of inclusive education. My contact details and those of my supervisor are provided below in case you need clarification of this study.

Yours faithfully

Nomagugu Mabaso
Cell phone number: 083 456 6129
Email address: gugu.mafungwase1@gmail.com

Supervisor: Makie Kortjass
Telephone number: 082 934 2621

Email address :Kortjassm@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANT

UKZN- Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
27 November 2017

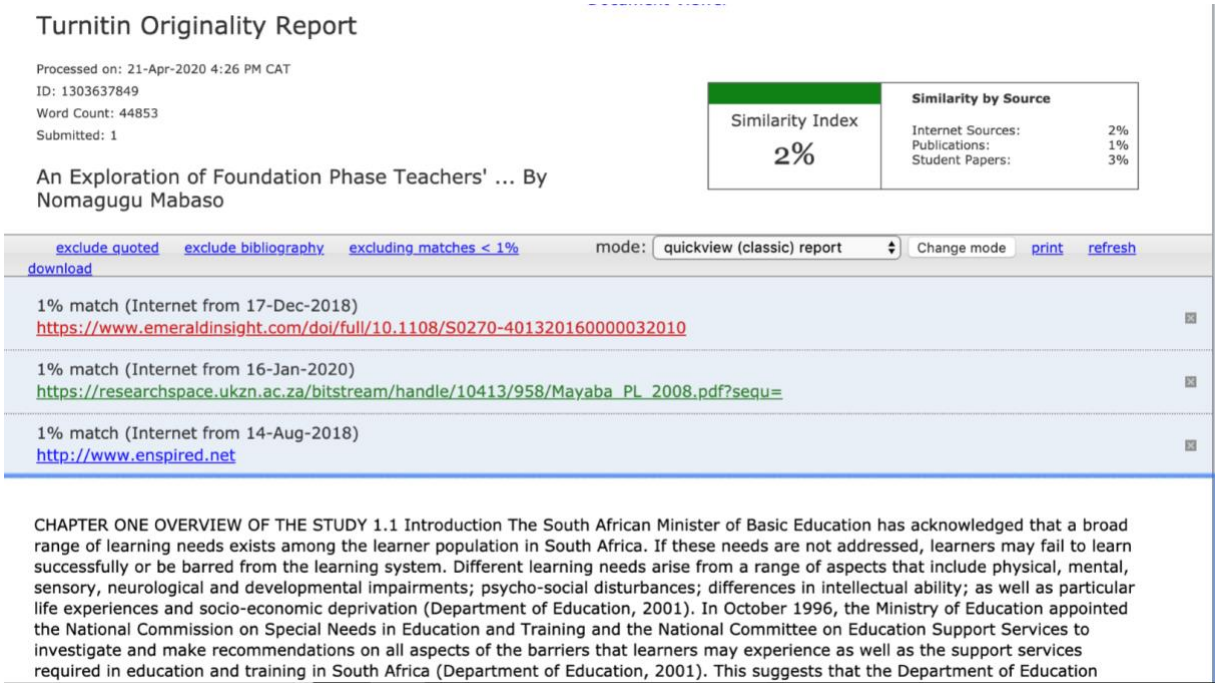
Dear participant

I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal pursuing Masters in Educational Psychology. My study requires me to conduct a research so I am applying for a permission to conduct my research at the schools I mentioned above. The topic of my study is **"An exploration of Foundation Phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive education: Experiences of school based support teams in Ilembe district."** The purpose of my study is to investigate foundation phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive education. I will interview teachers and I will analyse the finding accurately. The participation will be voluntary and they will sign a consent form. The teachers will be notified that they are to withdraw at any time. The information given by the teachers will only be used for this study. The names of the schools will never be disclosed under any circumstances but instead pseudonyms will be used. I hope that the result of my study will be useful to teachers' understanding of inclusive education. My contact details and those of my supervisor are provided below in case you need clarification of this study.

Yours faithfully
Nomagugu Mabaso
Cell phone number: 083 456 6129
Email address: gugu.mafungwase1@gmail.com

Supervisor: Makie Kortjass
Telephone number: 082 934 2621
Email address: Kortjassm@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX G



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An Exploration of Foundation Phase Teachers' ... By Nomagugu Mabaso

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CHAPTER ONE OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY 1.1 Introduction The South African Minister of Basic Education has acknowledged that a broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population in South Africa. If these needs are not addressed, learners may fail to learn successfully or be barred from the learning system. Different learning needs arise from a range of aspects that include physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments; psycho-social disturbances; differences in intellectual ability; as well as particular life experiences and socio-economic deprivation (Department of Education, 2001). In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of the barriers that learners may experience as well as the support services required in education and training in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). This suggests that the Department of Education

APPENDIX H

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma | Tel: 033 392 1063 | Ref.:2/4/8/1437

Miss N Mabaso
8 Aloe Crescent
Westbrook
Tongaat
4399

Dear Miss Mabaso

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"AN EXPLORATION OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 26 January 2018 to 09 July 2020.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below
9. Upon completion of the research, a 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.

Thembeni Primary School
Dr BW Vilakazi Primary School

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 31 January 2018

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

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Facebook: KZNDOE….Twitter: @DBE_KZN….Instagram: kzn_education….Youtube:kzndoe

APPENDIX I

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 June 2018

Mrs Nomagugu Mabaso 200400916
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Mabaso

Protocol reference number: HSS/0225/018M
Project Title: An exploration of Foundation Phase teachers' understanding and implementation of the inclusive Education.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 15 March 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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.

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

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

Yours faithfully

.....
Prof S Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Ms Makie Kortjass
cc. Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc. School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo, Ms M Ngcobo and Mr S Duma

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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