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Perceptions of Inclusion and Exclusion in a South African Primary School

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that I have acknowledged all sources used in the form of citations and references. *Teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school* is submitted by Amanda Mpanza for a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

SIGNATURE

MRS A. N. MPANZA

SIGNATURE

Dr P. Mweli

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Sphamandla Christian Mpanza, my son, Ntandoyenkosi Mpanza, and my late sister, Nonkululeko Mbatha. Thank you for your love, patience and support during the long hours that I spent working on this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

A qualitative study was conducted at a selected South African primary school with the aim of exploring teachers' perceptions of the principle of inclusive education, with particular focus on the possible exclusion of learners with disabilities and/or special needs. The objectives of the study were to gather information about the underlying perceptions that teachers had with regards to inclusion and exclusion and to establish how these participating teachers perceived the inclusion and exclusion of learners in the selected study site. In essence, the study attempted to understand primary school teachers' perceptions and how these perceptions might either promote or hinder acknowledgement of inclusion and exclusion in a South African school. The study was informed by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning which was the lens through which the data and findings were viewed. Participating teachers' authentic written narratives were used as the data collection tool and the data were thematically analysed. This analysis process was underpinned by findings in the literature as well as Vygotsky's theory. Formulated research questions gave impetus to the study and guided the analysis of the data. The findings indicated that some negatively held perceptions of the inclusion principle in the study site still existed and that these perceptions would need to be addressed at school, district and national levels for a successful inclusion process. However, on a positive note it was found that the teachers demonstrated willingness to promote inclusive schooling. The study unveiled that teacher training is lacking in promoting an understanding of inclusive education, that the principle of inclusivity needs to be more actively supported by all relevant education structures, and that funding needs to be directed towards the implementation of inclusive education. The thesis is concluded by linking the findings with the research questions. In essence, it is argued that knowledge and understanding of disability still need to be promoted among all teachers and that policies need to be simplified for effective implementation. The teachers' efforts to understand the principle of inclusion in the school under study, regardless of the factors that hindered the implementation of this educational policy, are acknowledged. However, an important conclusion is that intensive training on inclusive education needs to be conducted both pre-service and in-service for all parties involved. Recommendations are offered for future studies to further explore and address teachers' perceptions of inclusivity in an attempt to eradicate any barriers that might hinder the inclusivity of learners with disabilities or special needs in the South African education system. It is acknowledged that, due to the limited

scope and exploratory nature of the study, the results cannot be generalised to the entire South African teacher population. However, the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings pave the way for future studies to investigate policies and practices that will address the needs of the vast range of learners who have to navigate the education system, with particular reference to those learners who have disabilities and who encounter learning difficulties.

Key terms: teachers' perceptions, inclusion and exclusion, disabilities, learning difficulties, primary school

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ACRONYMS

SDWs	Students with disabilities
OBE	Outcomes-based education
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
FSS	Full Service School
DBST	District Based Support teams
ILTS	Institution learner teacher support
SMT	School Management Team
DOE	Department of Education and Culture
EWP	Education White Paper
IBST	Institution based support team
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
HIV	Human Immune Virus
SSRC	Special Schools as Resource Centres
NDoE	National Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
SSRC	Special Schools as Resource Centres

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CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

South African teachers seem to have varying perceptions about the principles guiding the inclusion and exclusion of learners, especially of those learners who experience diverse learning needs or who may have disabilities. The terms 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' have become South African buzzwords as this country works towards achieving education for all. The startling fact is that it has been more than a few decades since the call to develop inclusive schools yet, according to the Department of Education (DOE), this ideal has not yet been achieved in many schools in South Africa (DOE, 2001; (Rymond Lang, 2017). This inequality in establishing schools that are fully inclusive is due to a number of factors, including teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion and the manner in which the principle of inclusion is implemented in their classrooms. It is a travesty that more than 60% of children with disabilities of school going age are still not attending school (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2014; J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; McClean & Grey, 2012). The current study was therefore conducted in an attempt to unlock any hidden or overt perceptions that teachers might have education and to expose any barriers that might prevent the full participation of all children of school going age in education.

Even in a democratic South Africa, imbalances exist in the education system regardless of continuing attempts to address this phenomenon. The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 refers to education as a social justice issue (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Goele Bossaert, 2013; Jorge Luiz da & Lisliane dos Santos, 2011; Moloto, Nel, & Brink, 2014); (Le Roux, Hankela, & McDonald, 2018; McInerney, Walker, & Liem, 2011). Education White Paper 6 (South Africa. Department of, 2001), which is a document that addresses special needs education, states that it is pivotal that all learners, including learners with learning difficulties, access school and receive basic education with peers of their age without being discriminated against. This mandates both teachers and education authorities to positively influence and implement inclusive schools in South

Africa. This is not a call for the inclusion of learners who encounter learning difficulties only, but it is a call for the inclusion of all learners experiencing any difficulty, be it physical, emotional or cognitive.

South Africa's future and economic freedom is vested in a young generation that is not only literate, but who is also compassionate and tolerant of those with special needs and disabilities and who have the right to equal opportunities and quality education, as is entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996). It was against this background that the current study explored teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the principles that guide inclusive education, with a view to exposing any possible barriers that might promote exclusion and thus mitigate against the implementation of this policy.

In this chapter I shall discuss the purpose and background of the study, present the statement of the problem as well as the rationale and study focus, and list the objectives and research questions that guided the study. I shall also reflect on what significance the study might have in the education fraternity and what limitations impacted the study. Operational terms are also briefly explained and an outline of the study is presented that specifies the content of each chapter. The chapter will be concluded with a brief chapter summary.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The study was prompted by the need to determine why inclusive education has not been fully implemented in South African schools. The scope of the study was limited to a single case and it was conducted as an exploratory investigation that could pave the way towards more comprehensive studies on this topic. The study thus aimed to investigate a case of one primary school where teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion were explored, with particular focus on these teachers' understanding of the inclusion and exclusion of learners who encounter learning difficulties. My interest to investigate this phenomenon developed when I was afforded the opportunity to serve on the admissions team of a school where I was stationed. I often had to deal with teachers who complained about a child who they felt did not belong in that school or in the environment that the school represented. I felt trapped, as I had to make an effort to assess such

children for placement in an environment that I felt was not conducive to their full participation. However, legislation determines that any child belongs in a school and has the right to be taught alongside other learners in the same class as his or her peers. Enrolling learners with special needs in the schools served as a wakeup call for the entire school community, as the mandate was clear that any child with a special need or disability had to be treated without any prejudice or bias. All children have to be considered as human beings who have the right to belong to a school community.

It was envisaged that the outcomes of the study would not only satisfy the researcher's academic endeavour, but that they would benefit teachers as well as they were the primary data sources for the study and would thus determine its success or failure. Moreover, the findings ought to inform lower and higher levels of education legislation as the results should be considered by policy makers. It is acknowledged that the small scope of the study precludes the findings from being generalised and that they will also not be a panacea for the problems experienced in the education sector, but taking cognisance of the recommendations can limit existing problems created by exclusion practices and may even curb similar problems that may occur in the future.

The value of the study is vested in its potential to create a skeleton structure for moving forward and minimising barriers to learning. My concerns for learners experiencing challenges kept me on my toes and left me wondering what exactly it is that teachers perceive about teaching a child with either minor, moderate or severe disability traits. I became driven by my ordeals to ensure placement of these children and my growing passion for their well-being and feelings as they experienced a sense of rejection and loss. Their situation exposed in particular three threatening territories, namely their fellow students, parents and teachers. My compassion was genuine and encompassed all the parties involved, but as a teacher I felt very strongly that the child's needs came first. At the same time, I could relate to the teachers' struggle to deal with special needs children who often seemed to misbehave on purpose to get everyone's attention. This dichotomy created tension and conflict, and I was inspired to understand the struggle and perceptions of teachers in my quest to alleviate situations that are often untenable.

Through close observation, I understood that experiences of both including and then excluding special needs children created barriers to teaching and learning. For instance, anecdotal evidence and observation revealed that teachers who found it difficult to teach and assess children who exhibited these barriers blamed the education system for their inability to achieve successful teaching and learning outcomes. They blamed in particular the performance based assessment policy which they felt hindered and slowed down inclusion (Grace Chirenda, Tandlich, & Srinivas, 2013; Mafora, 2013; Nel, 2016; Ogina & Dladla, 2018; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

In my experience, the importance of pre-service education cannot be over-emphasised as this is a crucial point where positive attitudes towards the inclusion of all leaners need to be developed. According to Donohue and Bornman (2015), Lang (2017), (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013), the type of teacher education and academic preparation teachers obtain influence their attitude and perceptions.

1.3 Background

This study was conducted against the backdrop of my experiences of teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards the inclusion and exclusion of learners with special needs. More specifically, I noted the successes as well as the failures that teachers experienced when dealing with such learners, and I was inspired to conduct a scholarly investigation to determine why these perceptions exist and to find measures to address the barriers that prevent the full inclusion of all learners in mainstream education. The study is designed to gather teachers' perceptions by employing the qualitative methods to interpretively analyse teachers 'perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South Africa primary school. The emphasis was on narrative stories as the main tool to gather data that was later thematically analysed using teachers' verbatim responses. Having perused relevant literature, I became aware that a lot has been done but, even more importantly, that a lot still has to be done in order to eradicate the imbalances that still prevent us from achieving fully inclusive schools.

Imbalances exist due to poor policy implementation, limited budgets, and inadequate training of and support for teachers (Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Lang, 2017; (Hanass-Hancock, Chappell, Johns, & Nene, 2018). All the authors referred to indicate that

policies should genuinely address the needs of people with disabilities, that education authorities should allocate budgets to meet such learners' specific requirements, and that monitoring and evaluation frameworks need to be put in place for policy implementation. The literature is adamant that there is a disconnection between policy formulation and implementation, and this results in the fact that many South African teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion are slightly different from those of teachers globally, particularly in developed countries (Mafora, 2013; Nel, 2016; A. D. Williams, Banerjee, Lozada-Smith, Lambouths, & Rowley, 2017). However, most scholars agree that there has been a great improvement in the implementation of inclusion policies in South Africa and globally as the practice of inclusive education has been widely embraced as an ideal model. Scholars have found that there is significant support for learners with disabilities, but that there are still gaps that need to be filled, particularly in South Africa (Panther, 2011; (Nel, 2016); (Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010; Reicher, 2010). For example, Morton (2013), Bornman and Donohue (2014) and (Herman, Meltz, & Pillay, 2014) acknowledge that inclusive education as an ideal practice has not yet translated into what should be occurring in the classroom, as inclusive education implementation is slow and teachers still perceive the inclusion of learners as a challenge due to a lack of training. Teachers also claim that the screening process of learners leads to the exclusion of some learners as well as difficulties in applying assessment policies.

Furthermore, teachers perceive that curriculum differentiation fails to impact learners with learning difficulties positively. Globally, teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion processes as being enhanced by teacher training that involves actual interaction with learners who exhibit learning difficulties (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Mortier et al., 2010) and that the practices associated with the inclusion or exclusion of learners are highly influenced by teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of learners with disabilities (Goele Bossaert, 2013; Walton, 2015; (Donohue & Bornman, 2015); (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; A. D. Williams et al., 2017).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The problem that was addressed by this study is that large numbers of children are still exempt from school because of learning difficulties and even disabilities. Such children are often barred from attending school or certain classes as teachers feel inadequately trained to teach learners with

different abilities. Moreover, even well trained teachers require support to change the learning conditions in their classrooms for inclusive purposes. Their plea is that education authorities should be vigilant and offer services such as appropriate infrastructure and teaching methodologies. They should also have the political will and leadership to provide efficient services through the allocation of sufficient funds. Many teachers find it hard to deal with learners with learning difficulties because they are hampered by a lack of policy clarity, poor infrastructure, inadequate training, and a lack of support from all spheres of the education system. According to the Department of Education's (DOE) Education White Paper 6 (EWP6), every child has the right to learn, to develop, and even to play with their peers (DOE, 2001). South Africa became a true democracy in 1994 and the country's Constitution states that *all* children have the right to learn and receive an appropriate and equitable education (South Africa, 1996a). However, after more than two decades, the monster of education imbalances still lurks in the corridors of many of these institutions. These imbalances have resulted in a number of campaigns to redress educational issues. As much as study herein focuses on primary school there has been evidence in South Africa literature that even in tertiary education there is still exclusion of students that exists especially those who cannot afford due to lack of funds. One such campaign was the #FeesMustFall initiative to ensure free tertiary education up to graduation level (Dreyer, 2017; Flores, 2016). For this particular campaign it is quite evident that inequality of funds leads to exclusion in the same way disability does. However, there is still a large group of South African children of school going age for whom the doors to a sound education remain closed because of their disabilities.

According to Donohue and Bornman (2015), (Kruger, 2015) and Lang (2017), the percentage of children with disabilities within the school going age range is about 70%. This is due to a number of reasons such as parents' cultural belief that children with disabilities are a curse and should be hidden from society, while others believe that such children will never earn an income and therefore they deserve to be locked indoors without being educated (Ibid.). Many scholars have urged that disability awareness programmes be launched worldwide to address the stigma attached to children with disabilities. South African legislation addresses free education for all (Dreyer, 2017), but this has not been successful in some schools in South Africa. Educating their children is expensive for most parents, but it is even worse for parents who have children with disabilities and special needs. I have worked closely with such parents and their children in a school

environment and the problems they experienced prompted me to explore teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and the reasons for excluding some learners to a certain extent in a South African primary school. In essence, the study aimed to explore teachers' involvement in inclusion processes and to understand what made them so reluctant and uncomfortable when they were required to include children with disabilities in teaching and learning practices.

This was a qualitative study and thus teachers' written narratives were scrutinised to gather data about their perceptions and experiences. The selected teachers were required to write their stories and reveal their perceptions about inclusive education and the fact that some learners were still excluded from the teaching and learning processes. These narratives were transcribed and analysed to reveal the real picture at the school under study as far as the inclusion and exclusion of leaners with disabilities was concerned. The analysed results were referred back to the teachers so that they could confirm the correctness of the transcriptions and declare whether the meanings attached to their stories were authentic. As qualitative studies are used to understand unique and flexible phenomena that evolve through the entire research process, such studies focus on human actions and experiences at the site of work (Atkins et al., 2012; George Mwangi & Bettencourt, 2017; (Andrea, 2017) and therefore the study was conducted on site at the selected school. The qualitative approach was selected for this study because the data that would be generated would enable me to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences of inclusive education in the selected school (Atkins et al., 2012). I discussed ownership with the participants as some wanted to have their contributions acknowledged and some wished to remain anonymous. Underpinned by the literature review and Vygotsky's theory, the selected teachers' cases formed the basis for my analyses, conclusions and the recommendations.

After the topic for the study had been clarified, I proceeded by identifying and recruiting the study sample at the primary school of interest. The school that I selected was a primary school that accommodated learners from the first to the seventh grade. Sample selection was purposive as my purpose was to obtain the narratives of teachers from all the grades, as each grade differs from the rest in terms of teaching and learning content and processes.

1.5 Focus and Rationale

The study focused on a South African primary school to elicit the perceptions of teachers regarding the inclusion and/or exclusion of learners, with particular reference to learners with disabilities or learning challenges. My engagement with a number of teachers affirmed various authors' argument that disability is a core factor that leads to the exclusion of learners not only from schooling, but also from certain classroom activities. This exclusion and also marginalisation of necessity exacerbates the challenges that such learners experience.

At the school where I was employed at the time of the study, various teachers had expressed in so many words that they could not teach a child who displayed signs of disability even if no proper assessment of the child had been done. In conversations with teachers from neighbouring schools, especially those in the district where I taught and who were from 'fully inclusive' schools, they made it clear that their efforts to teach some learners effectively were derailed by the characteristics of disability that these children displayed. These conversations, coupled with the admission of a child to my school who all the teachers felt did not belong there, intensified my interest in conducting this study.

By utilising a written narrative format of the teachers' stories and transcribing and analysing these narratives, I was able to remain objective. I also obtained rich data based on the teachers' narrated stories. Throughout the analysis process, I was cognisant of earlier findings such as that teachers can teach a disabled child but that some have disability preferences and that some withdraw when a learner displays disruptive behaviour. Moreover, (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Mafora, 2013; Nel, 2016) found that teachers had no confidence in teaching children with language and speech difficulties. They also found that positive teachers were generally willing to include pupils with physical or sensory impairments, but were unwilling to deal with learners with mild or severe emotional and mental problems.

The study informants provided information that not only referred to learners with disabilities, but they also included information of learners who were marginalised because of culture, race, religion, social origin and financial status. Investigating teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion highlighted some points why disabled children are still vulnerable and caught up in the

exclusion phenomenon. The study addressed social grouping, curriculum differentiation, disability, assessment and special schools as common factors that contributed to learners' inclusion or exclusion in the school. As a teacher, I shared the sentiment of other teachers that we often exclude learners while we think that we are including them. To remain within the parameters of a scholarly investigation, however, my analyses focused on the narratives that the teachers provided. My investigation was also informed by the National Strategy for the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support survey (Walton & Lloyd, 2012; Walton, 2015; (Grace Chirenda et al., 2013; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

1.6 Objectives and Research Questions of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- Establish what the prevailing perceptions of teachers were at a South African primary school regarding the inclusion and exclusion of learners;
- Explore how the teachers perceptions of inclusion and exclusion range at the South African primary school;
- Understand teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school.

The research questions were:

- What are teachers' prevailing perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school?
- How do teachers perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school range ?
- Why do primary school teachers display such perceptions of inclusion and exclusion the way they do?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The main aim of the study was to explore teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a primary school. To achieve this aim, the study focused on teachers' prevailing perceptions of inclusion and exclusion and attempted to identify the perceptions that the teachers had that promoted either the inclusion or exclusion of learners with disabilities and learning challenges at the school. Armed with this knowledge, positive approaches towards inclusive education for all can be enhanced and negatives that encourage exclusion can be curbed.

At a personal level, the study contributed to my knowledge and understanding of the inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities at the school under study, while at the same time sensitising my colleagues and I to the occurrence of this phenomenon in our district and even beyond. The teachers themselves were enthused by the knowledge they had gained by participating in the study, and this knowledge and their insights will be disseminated to colleagues from other schools due to an active networking system in the district. In this manner many teachers will develop new and effective strategies to eliminate the challenges associated with exclusion and they will adopt the principle of inclusion more comprehensively. Teachers may thus plan and develop strategies that will enrich the lives of previously marginalised learners.

It is envisaged that the findings will be disseminated even wider than the district through workshops and seminars. The essence of the study will also be published in academic journals and in this manner the results will be shared with a wide academic audience. In this manner the study may also serve as a springboard for future, more extensive studies on the topic of children with disabilities.

The study will also benefit the community as parents who have learners with disabilities will be reached by means of an awareness campaigns and they (and even friends and acquaintances) may be encouraged to entrust their children with disabilities to this or other schools. The learners with disabilities in the school will also benefit from improved teaching and learning strategies.

By means of appropriate dissemination of the findings in educational publications, policy makers and curriculum designers will also be informed of the findings so that a curriculum that addresses *all* learners' needs can be designed. Policy makers will be in a position to use this knowledge to

assist them in designing assessment policies in accordance with learners' abilities and not merely for grading purposes.

I also envisage that the findings will inform the screening, identification, assessment and support of learners with disabilities and challenges (Edelsbrunner & Iglesias-Ham) for improvement. The study should also contribute to curriculum differentiation in mainstream schools, thus reducing the need for special schools in the country.

Finally, when disseminated to education authorities, it is envisaged that the findings will inform teacher education institutions so that teacher training curricula will be adapted to include a compulsory component on learners with disabilities.

1.8 Limitations, Threats and Ethical Considerations

In South Africa where language diversity is a reality, language limitations call for careful consideration in a study. Participants need to be free to use a language of their choice to produce genuine narrative stories. Transcribing and translating from one language to another may limit a study as, for example, a regional dialect may make no meaning or may be misinterpreted by a translation (Nasheeda, Abdullah, Krauss, & Ahmed, 2019; Phoenix et al., 2016; Wertz, 2011). I thus ensured that a person who is proficient in IsiZulu (the language used by the teachers) and English did the transcriptions and translations to ensure the authenticity of the data.

The most impactful limitation of the study was its small scope. Only seven (7) teachers at one school were sampled, and the findings may therefore not be generalised to the entire school population in the province and beyond. However, although a small sample of teachers was used, this is encouraged in qualitative research as rich data of their lived experiences could be elicited from these purposively selected participants (Atkins, Wallace, & British Educational Research, 2012; Goldberg & Allen, 2015).

For ethical reasons, the participants were advised that they could withdraw at any point during the study should they feel uncomfortable. This called for a good understanding and relationship

between the researcher and the participants. They were also required to read and sign a voluntary consent form.

The possible threat that the participants might be reluctant to reveal certain information existed, as the topic was sensitive. This was addressed by explaining the purpose of the study to the participants in a sensitive manner and creating rapport with them.

It was also important to mention to the participants that no incentives would be provided for their participation, which would be voluntary. I also explained to them that the study would not harm them in any way.

I knew the participants and thus, on face value, there was no distinction between the researched and the researcher, which means that the researcher was 'an insider' (Wertz, 2011; (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gioia Chilton Ma, 2013; Wertz, 2011). This could have created problems such as reluctance by the participants to reveal certain information that would reveal something about themselves or the community or they could have provided responses that they believed would please the researcher. These threats were overcome by the positive rapport that existed between myself and the participants and the intensive information I provided about the purpose of the study.

A perceived limitation was that the teachers could have searched for information related to the topic under study to please the researcher, while the purpose was to gather authentic information about the school under study. They were thus requested to refrain from doing so.

Another threat was that uninvolved teachers might have resented the participation of the selected participants. This could have caused friction amongst the teachers at the school and impacted the responses of the participants who wrote their narratives in their own time and without the guiding presence of the researcher. They could also have collaborated, resulting in the same or 'negotiated' responses. I thus had to tread carefully during participant selection to choose participants who had earlier been exposed to inclusion and exclusion education. I also discussed the importance of presenting their own insights and understandings with the participants and thus the outcomes of this study were heavily reliant on their integrity and commitment. However, my engagement with

each was based on trust and professionality and I was confident that they would respond as frankly and honestly as possible. The reliability of the data was also determined by cross-referencing the responses and the themes and determining if any untoward duplications occurred. No such significant incidences were detected.

Lack of time could also have been a limitation when the teachers had to write the narratives as teachers are always burdened with teaching, preparation and administrative tasks. After consultation, timing was planned so that it did not interfere with the teachers' contact times.

Another and final limitation was that the study elicited the perceptions of teachers only, and not those of learners with disabilities or learning problems and their parents. This is addressed in the recommendations section.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Perceptions: The term 'perception' is used in the study to explain the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted. The Cambridge English Dictionary (2011; 2015) explains perception as a belief, opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem (Cambridge University, 2011; McIntosh, 2015). According to (James & Hamlyn, 1981; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; A. D. Williams et al., 2017), perception is regarded as "the process of interpreting sensory stimuli and interpreting and recognizing it while responding to sensory information. It includes how we respond to sensory information and using the information in order to interact with our environment".

Inclusion: Inclusion in the context of this study is understood as taking part in school life. Inclusion is defined as a practice regarding people as having 'complex' multiple identities to be valued and accepted in diverse contexts (Michal Razer, 2013; (Koller, Pouesard, & Rummens, 2018).

Exclusion: Exclusion in the context of this study refers to the fact that an individual lacks effective participation in the activities or benefits of society in which he/she lives. The latter may result from

socioeconomic status, or attitudes inherent in the society in which one lives (Walsh, Scharf, & Keating, 2017).

Disability: Disability for the purpose of this study is defined as a human rights issue that interferes with the social aspects that a person may engage in. Another version of disability is that it is a social construct involving a shift in the responsibility of mainstreaming provision of education to all children falling on the system rather than on the individual (Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; Donohue & Bornman, 2015).

1.10 Outline of the Study Report

The study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one introduces the study by clarifying all the aspects that were involved. It expounds the rationale of the study, its orientation, as well as the background, threats, ethical considerations and study limitations. In this chapter functional terms are explained in relation to the purpose of the study, as they may have different meanings in the outside world. A brief summary of the structure of the study is also provided.

Chapter two presents the literature review. Earlier literature is discussed and gaps that need to be addressed are exposed. This chapter also refers to various policies that guide the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. It is explained that some policies fail to recognise inclusive education and that the exclusion of learners with disabilities therefore still occurs in many schools.

Chapter three explores the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Theories that assisted in understanding the findings and presenting the arguments are explored. This chapter provides a window through which the teachers' perceptions were viewed and it facilitates an overall understanding of the forces that lead to unusual perceptions that inform possible responses to a problem experienced in the social context of a primary school (Garud et al., 2011; (Nel, 2016).

Chapter four presents the research methodology and design. The research site and context as well as sample selection are discussed. Selecting an appropriate methodology for a study is important as it shows exactly which path the study followed and the manner in which the results were achieved. The research procedures that were followed are therefore clearly indicated in this chapter. Choosing the methodology is intricately linked to the theoretical framework that guides a study. I therefore clearly indicate the procedures that I followed and provide reasons why they were used. I explain what benefit the procedures I employed had, especially in terms of data gathering, data analysis, reaching the conclusions and offering recommendations.

Chapter five presents the data and discusses the findings. Reference is also made to the literature and the theoretical framework. Teachers' perceptions about the inclusion and exclusion of learners, especially of those experiencing a range of learning disabilities, are discussed. The data revealed that the varied perceptions of the teachers related to the education they received as well as their teaching experience.

Chapter six presents the conclusions and the recommendations. The conclusions are presented with reference to the study objectives and it is explained how the research questions, that were a guide to the study, were addressed. The chapter is concluded with salient recommendations.

1.11 Chapter Summary and Transition

This chapter presented a brief orientation of the entire study. The chapter addressed the purpose of the study, the study background, the statement of the problem, the study focus and rationale, the objectives, and the research questions. The importance of the study, the study limitations, operational terms used and the study outline were also presented. Definitions for the terms inclusion, exclusion, perception and disability as they apply to the study were also provided.

The rationale for the study and what prompted me to conduct it were discussed. It was explained that, as much as the study was primarily for educational purposes, it will also be beneficial as a scholarly work that may guide future studies in the field of learners with disabilities and enrich teachers' practices. It was explained that the findings of the study may not be generalised as they

apply primarily to the study site. However, school teachers and policy makers will be informed of the findings which may guide them towards making the right decisions about children with learning difficulties so as to include them in the system and avoid their exclusion from educational practices.

The next chapter will look at available literature on the inclusion and exclusion of learners in educational contexts. A review of the literature was conducted to determine to what extent the ideal of fully including all learners in teaching and learning practices has been achieved, and what gaps exist in policy implementation that still need to be addressed.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the literature review that was conducted to determine what earlier researcher had uncovered about the concepts of inclusive and exclusive education, with particular reference to teachers' perceptions in the South African context. This review exposed some gaps in acknowledging the inclusion and exclusion of learners as well as factors that either promote or hinder inclusive educational practices. The chapter is a link to the first chapter that introduced the study by highlighting its purpose, background, problem statement, rationale, objectives, research questions, and the importance of the study, study limitations, and the operational terms that were used in the study. The operational expressions explained disability as this is a term that is closely associated with the concept of inclusive education. In the process of exploring teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the educational context, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory was used, as proposed by Alexseev (2015), (Butin, 2005; Li, 2010; Moloto et al., 2014). The sociocultural theory explores the order of mental processes that develop and explains human behaviour in relation to physical conditions and the environment (Li, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Mills, 2010; Vygotsky, 2017). My argument is that, in South Africa, inclusive education is still misunderstood by teachers, learners and parents, especially when learners exhibit learning difficulties. It is a known fact that many children are kept at home by their parents due to the cultural belief that children with disabilities cannot attend schools as they are thought to be disruptive, and that they cannot learn (Bornman & Donohue, 2013; 2014). This phenomenon was explored by studies in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape provinces, and these studies showed that children with disabilities are often ostracised, while an intolerant attitude towards their condition elicits the perception that these children are safer in special schools for

children with disabilities than in mainstream schools (Bornman & Donohue, 2014) highlight two contrasting views that are held about disability, namely the biomedical and the traditional view of disability. The latter views disability as a family sin, a result of witchcraft or a form of revenge by angry ancestors and the mothers of children with disabilities are then blamed for their children's condition. The administration of traditional medicines, which are sometimes harmful, leaves families with the hope that the disability will be cured (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; McClean & Grey, 2012).

Teachers often do not understand these learners' condition and argue that behaviour management and strict discipline are required to deal with learners who exhibit learning difficulties. However, scholars argue that interventions that address individual profile needs are required (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Walton, 2015). Through appropriate interventions, the challenging behaviour of learners should thus not result in their exclusion from educational practices. Studies have also found that learners themselves tend to ostracise leaners with learning difficulties as they are intolerant of their peers who are 'different'.

According to Vygotsky, learners learn from their significant others by modelling them (Brozek, 1994; Eun, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Vygotsky, 2017). The successful implementation of inclusive education is thus dependent on effective teaching and learning practices, positive attitudes at home and at school, and adequate teacher knowledge of inclusive educational practices (Nel, 2016; Reicher, 2010; Ronelle Carolissen, 2015). However, the literature revealed that teachers' perceptions of peer grouping, curriculum differentiation, assessment, disability and special schools are often still entrenched in the traditional practice of separating 'normal' and 'different' learners regardless of the ideal of a fully inclusive South African education system. Against this background, perceptions about disability and learning in the South African and international contexts will be compared and discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Grouping Learners

For the purpose of this study, 'grouping' refers to the manner in which teachers categorise learners according to their abilities. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2014), this

method can assist schools to identify learners' needs and will allow them to deal with these learners in a proper manner. Amongst the grouping types there is whole class grouping, where sharing of information, discussions and mutual experiences occur. However, physical inclusion does not guarantee instructional inclusion. Another type of grouping is to divide a large group into small groups. Instruction is then either facilitated by the teacher or the learners in the group. This grouping, according to Vygotsky, is needed in order to mediate and scaffold information to learners while there must also be a significant other (e.g., a teacher) to assist learners in the learning process (Brozek, 1994; Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010; Mills, 2010; Moll, 1990). This form of grouping assists teachers to use a range of grouping techniques such as same ability or skill groups as this allows the group to focus on developing a particular skill. While using this grouping method, it shouldn't be permanent so as to avoid labelling and isolation Department of Basic Education, Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (DBE, 2014).

Paired groups are also formed on the basis of same or mixed interests. The teacher could also pair learners according to disability and non-disability conditions. Pairing interest groups mainly focuses on learners sharing the same interests and this is seen by teachers as highly motivational. In co-operative expert groups, each member is responsible for learning on his or her part while the teacher's role is to support them and make sure that each member of the group gets his or her work done. Cluster grouping should be used for no other reason than for instructional purposes so as to avoid negative labelling (Walton & Lloyd, 2012; Walton & Rusznyak, 2016; DBE, 2014).

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, physical or other conditions. Thus no children with disabilities, gifted children, working or street children, children from remote or nomadic populations, ethnic or cultural minorities, or children from disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups should be excluded from quality education (UNESCO, 1994; 2003). When utilising grouping strategies, teachers can use the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support toolkit that was released by the Department of Basic Education in 2014 (Edelsbrunner & Iglesias-Ham, 2018). SIAS guidelines suggest that teachers should gain background information on the learner to create a learner profile. Such a form is used to help teachers identify learners who may be at risk or vulnerable. Profiling involves the accumulation of evidence from a learner's performance as well as from the Learner Profile of

Health and Disability Assessment to identify areas of need. Assessment is then done based on the available information. The teacher needs to assess what level of support is required as well as the nature of the support that is required that would best serve the needs of the learner. The teacher may sometimes need the services of professionals or other individuals to assists in this regard. It may involve changing the child's classroom or even moving the child to another more appropriate environment such as the teacher introducing the child to an appropriate environment by adapting his or her teaching methods according to the child's needs. Support should be provided in the form of a detailed program that involves curriculum differentiation and even the assistance of professionals. Specific training, devices and concessions may also apply (DBE, 2014).

Teachers claim that the SIAS process is viable if both the teachers and the school based support teams work in collaboration with district based support teams (DBE, 2014). Parents must also be informed about SIAS. Teachers' role in the SIAS program is to screen learners and identify those at risk of school dropout or even learning breakdowns, while support teams have to respond to teachers' requests and to school based support teams' (SBSTs') requests in the interest of inclusive education.

2.3 Curriculum Differentiation

Curriculum differentiation is explained by the DBE (2014) as the main strategy to respond to the learning styles and needs of learners who experience diverse challenges and who thus have special needs. Curriculum differentiation requires that teachers change, adapt and revise their methodologies of teaching, assessment and content presentation while it remains important to note leaners' interests as well as their capabilities. Content differentiation should take cognisance of the level of abstractness, complexity and variety within the topic under study, while environmental differentiation ought to look at the psychosocial and physical aspects of learners. Teaching methods thus should be differentiated to cater for learners' needs. In this process diverse learning material, presentation methods, activities and the organisation of a lesson have to be considered. This is important because an inaccessible curriculum is one of the chief obstacles in developing a teaching and learning system that is inclusive. The curriculum thus has to be flexible enough for teachers to try new approaches and to experiment to ensure full inclusivity.

According to UNESCO (2005), there could be an improvement in the development of inclusive surroundings if it leaves room for the centre of learning or the individual teacher to make adaptations that will make sense for individual learners. Parallel to curriculum adaptation is the language of instruction that poses challenges to all or some learners (Menken & García, 2010; Moll, 1990; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; Vygotsky, 2017). In South Africa, schools are allowed to select a language of instruction that may be either English or Afrikaans, or a combination in double or parallel medium schools. Ideally, a learner's home language should also be the language of instruction, but in South Africa this is not the case as the vast majority of learners whose home language is an African language are educated in English. Choosing a language of instruction is thus not an option for many learners. This begs the question whether assessment that occurs in the language of instruction (usually English) and not in the home language (such as IsiZulu or IsiXhosa) is fair. On an even more serious note, it is questionable whether the language policy that applies to all South African schools adheres to the principle of inclusive education, or whether it entrenches traditional exclusivity.

2.4 Assessment

Assessment is one amongst many factors that lead to marginalisation and exclusion. Various exclusionary factors exist in the South African context such as the requirement to pay fees, ethnicity and religion, and when learners are assessed these factors need to be considered. Ambiguous and poorly crafted policies that may be said to be the result of a lack of political will to operationalize inclusivity also lead to the inclusion or exclusion of learners (Grace Chirenda et al., 2013; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

Learners' progress and academic success are considered primarily as functions of their intellectual fitness and motivation to learn, irrespective of their intellectual aptitude (UNESCO, 2005). Learners coming from deprived contexts may thus display poor motivation to learn, whatever their intellectual ability might be. In this context, rigid assessments may be disadvantageous. According to Bornman and Donohue (2014), Donohue and Bornman (2015) and Dreyer (2017), knowledge based examinations have limitations as such formal standardised tests may have paradoxical

effects such as promoting rote learning and the recall of disjointed and decontextualized facts and skills. School assessment results and learners' ranking lead to curriculum thinning as teachers tend to concentrate on the requirements of formal exams and tests rather than on skills development. A focus on ranking also causes social favouritism and gender and social class distinctions (Grace Chirenda et al., 2013; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). However, a flexible curriculum results in successful learning as teachers then utilise different evaluation, examination and assessment means. According to Poehner and Lantolf (2010), assessment has to focus on curriculum aims as well as learners' biography, experiences and culture.

Prior to 2011, the National Department of Education considered an outcomes-based curriculum that was portfolio assessment based as an inclusive approach to assessment and evaluation (M. Williams & Burden, 1997). According to the OBE approach, learner progress had to be measured in relation to broadly expected results of skills and abilities at the end of each learning process. The approach required gathering feedback about learners' learning and teachers' methods while fine-tuning the stages of learning and learning styles. Thus learners were evaluated against their achievements instead of comparing them with others. In an ordinary classroom, after teaching a teacher ought to assess if a learner has acquired new knowledge, competencies, and positive attitudes and values (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; Carolissen, 2015; Lang, 2017). In the OBE system, portfolios were required that contained the 'best work' of a learner such as various tasks, tests completed, certificates earned, self-evaluations as well as teacher observation forms.

However, the OBE education system has been replaced with the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, which is generally referred to as the CAPS policy. This National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is a single, comprehensive and concise policy document that replaced the earlier Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 (DOE, 2010). It is a revision of the previous NCS (National Curriculum Statement) and gives teachers detailed guidelines of what to teach and assessed on a grade-by- grade and subject-by-subject. The main aim of CAPS is to lessen the administrative burden on teachers and ensure consistency and guidance for teachers when teaching. The teaching and learning of the subjects have specific aims, skills, focus of content areas and weighting of

content. What were called Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards in the NCS are now called Content and Skills in CAPS.

According to the CAPS document (DBE, 2019), all educators are mandated to respond to the diversity of learners' needs in the classroom, and it is important to ensure differentiation in curriculum delivery to enable access to subject content. This requires variations in modes of delivery and assessment processes to accommodate all learners. Acknowledging and respecting diversity require the belief that all learners have the potential to learn. CAPS gives guidelines to teachers, subject advisors, administrators and school governors regarding educational considerations and strategies and how to respond to learners' diversity, especially in the classroom, through an inclusive curriculum.

When we as teachers respond to diversity in the application of the curriculum, we have the responsibility to make sure that the needs of all learners from different backgrounds are affirmed in the classroom. This can be made possible by teachers monitoring their behaviour, beliefs and attitudes. Amongst other factors, CAPS mentions that teachers need to treat each learner as an individual and respect them. Teachers need to avoid the use of biased language that undermines certain groups of learners. While designing learning programs and lessons, teachers need to consider the unique needs of learners through re-evaluating their approaches, teaching methods and assessment strategies, while also considering different methodologies to address the needs of all learners (Ibid.).

2.5 Disability

Disability is a human rights issue that negatively impacts the social aspect of the affected person's life if it is considered a 'curse' or 'punishment' and not a condition. Defining disability and characterising impairment is therefore a challenge that needs to be addressed if children afflicted with various conditions are to be considered worthy human beings who have the same rights as others. Policy makers should make an effort to work hand in hand with people with disabilities to get a feel and ideas of what is going on in their lives.

(Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Hanass-Hancock et al., 2018; Rymond Lang, 2017) argue that there is always a disconnection between policy formulation and implementation when disability is disregarded. Moreover, statistics of people with disabilities are vague and incorrect and this leads to improper planning and budget provision for people with disabilities. In general, ability and disability are socially and culturally defined as who can and who cannot. According to (Allman, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Kruger, 2015), disability is somehow an example of an exclusionary hierarchy as such people are often contained in gated communities. This means that people with disabilities are secluded in areas where they adopt exclusive characteristics and are viewed as 'outsiders'.

Recent considerations of disability have created a shift in how this concept is viewed, particularly as policies now mandate the provision of mainstream education for all children on an equitable basis. Disability rights also require that disability is defined as a social construct (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2014; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014). As a result, this promotes an education system that is cohesive and inclusive. For inclusive education purposes, teachers thus need to have skills and knowledge in support of managing the special needs of children in the classroom so as to minimise factors that might cause their exclusion (Nederlof, van Rooij, & van Dijk, 2014; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; Vanderstraeten, 2015). However, disability is not the only reason why some learners are being either included or excluded in educational contexts, according to (Goele Bossaert, 2013; Koller et al., 2018; Ronelle Carolissen, 2015). For example, in higher education there is still inequitable access to opportunities for students and staff with regards to race, gender, class and geography. This came under attack through the #FeesMustFall initiative (Dreyer, 2017; Flores, 2016) .

Digital competency has become crucial in the 21st century and this can only be achieved under equitable inclusion policies in academic settings where inclusion, exclusion and ethnicity play important roles (Grajcevci, 2017). This means that not only the disability status of a person, but also a flexible curriculum impacts inclusion and exclusion practices.

The perception persists among teachers and parents that students with disabilities (SWDs) need to be taught by special education teachers (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman,

2015). There is also a feeling that SWDs are 'misfits' in general education classrooms. The above studies have also found that teachers had limited knowledge of inclusive education policies and that they had conflicting perceptions regarding inclusion. On the other hand, learners themselves felt that they were humiliated by their peers as well as some teachers. The belief that SWDs cannot defend themselves when bullied also prevailed (Donohue & Bornman, 2015).

(Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015) concur that teachers feel that learners with disabilities require sympathy and kindness which is only possible in special schools. They found that educators perceived the education of the learners with disabilities as an exclusive function of special education services. These views persist owing to the fact that many teachers still misunderstand the potential of students with disabilities. This is possibly due to their narrow view of physical and social characteristics that persists based on their limited engagement with learners with disabilities (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018). Teachers in mainstream schools generally fail to identify 'special needs' learners' needs and their perception persists that learners with disabilities require supervision by medical doctors (Lang, 2017; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; Walton & Lloyd, 2012). The latter studies also found that teachers had a lack of institutional support and a limited knowledge of classroom practices to deal with learners with disabilities. It is undeniable that adopting inclusive schooling runs parallel with the provision of resources and all that is deemed necessary to support teachers and leaners to their full potential and participation. South Africa thus has to fully commit and consider addressing persistent inequalities in the distribution of support services for all learners, regardless of their disability status.

Cultural attitudes towards the education of learners with disabilities determine whether parents decide to send their children to school. Many parents in developing countries hold the cultural belief that disabled children should not attend school as they are unable to learn (Bornman, 2014; Walton, 2015; (Adrienne, 2010; Daniels, Lauder, Porter, & Lauder, 2009; Das, 2014). Because of cultural barriers to learning, parents often look at their financial status before sending a disabled child to school. They feel it is better to send children without a disability to school as their chance of earning an income later in life is much better than that of disabled children (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Daniels et al., 2009; Das, 2014).

Various studies have been conducted to determine teachers', parents', children's and caregivers' views on the extent to which inclusive education for children with a range of difficulties had been implemented in their communities. It was demonstrated that these children were still ostracised and mistreated while intolerant attitudes prevailed. The belief that children are safe in special schools for children with disabilities thus still persists (Das, 2014; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Flores, 2016; Ronelle Carolissen, 2015). Moreover, owing to contrasting biomedical and traditional views on disability, contradictory perceptions of disability still exist. For example, cultural views hold that children are born with disabilities as punishment by the ancestors or due to witchcraft, and mothers are often blamed for their children's disability by the community and their families (.McClean, 2012; Hanass-Hancock et al., 2018; Kruger, 2015). Traditional practices also often delay parents' decision to access medical interventions for their children; rather, they focus on traditional cures. In some communities cultural beliefs about disability force such children to stay at home rather than go to schools. Because parents are often blamed for giving birth to a disabled child, they keep their children indoors, thus infringing on their right to learn and to grow together with their peers.

The wielding of social, economic and political power that is unevenly distributed also results in forms of oppression and in many cases mistreatment (Allman, 2013; Michal Razer, 2013). An example is gated communities for people with disabilities. Such spaces are built within fences with gates and walls to protect those who reside inside from the external community. A form of 'social cleansing' is thus practised by creating territorial spaces that serve to separate the 'chosen' from the 'destitute' and the 'clean' from the 'muddy'. This occurs to some extent in the educational context when children with disabilities are separated from those who are perceived to be 'normal'. (Flores, 2016; Nederlof et al., 2014; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014). The onus is thus on individuals with impairments to adapt when they are incorporated into typically mainstream education, or they need to receive training in a separate, isolated and specially adapted education setting, which often infringes on their right to equity.

Against the backdrop of the above discourse, inclusive education has to aim at overcoming the barriers that bar learners with disabilities from obtaining an equitable education. Many scholars

are in agreement that, through a realistic range of adaptations and support systems in the classroom, inclusive education can be a success (Das, 2014; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Flores, 2016; Ronelle Carolissen, 2015). However, some South African teachers feel that they are not well equipped to respond to learning difficulties as they believe these learners' needs can only be met in separate classrooms (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Nel, 2016; Nonis, 2011). Most teachers and parents who are confronted with the reality of disability do not want to deal with it but shove it under the carpet. They thus believe that the only remedy is to place the afflicted child in a special school. However, placing such children in 'special schools' often perpetuates the condition and makes it irreversible. Conversely, studies in Australia have shown that giftedness and learning disabilities are mutually exclusive as students afflicted with a disability may also be gifted cognitively ((J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Panther, 2011; Walton, 2015).

2.6 Special Schools

Special schools were traditionally used to separate 'normal' or mainstream learners from their peers who had disabilities. Such schools were often referred to as 'institutions', which relates to the medical model of disability that considers disability as a purely medical issue. The introduction of special needs education (EWP6) promoted the exclusion of learners with disabilities and special needs rather than focusing on their inclusion. Various authors argue that special schools infringe on children's right to learn, play and socialise with any peer of their choice. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory argues that learning is mediated action whereby a child learns from a significant other (Brozek, 1994; Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Mills, 2010).

However, many teachers feel that they do not have the training, knowledge or skills to respond to learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms (Nel, 2016; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; Tiwari, Das, & Sharma, 2015). Many argue that they lack formal qualifications that will enable them to respond positively to the needs of disabled learners or learners with learning challenges in mainstream schools and many are convinced that these needs can only be met in highly specialised and discrete classrooms (Nel, 2016; Otukile-Mongwaketse, Mangope, & Kuyini, 2016). However, many scholars and educationists disagree, arguing that inclusive education requires the integration

of children with disabilities into general education classrooms (Das, 2014; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014). Children with special needs have to be allowed the opportunity to enrol in local mainstream schools and be given appropriate support so that they will achieve their academic and social potential ((Edelsbrunner & Iglesias-Ham, 2018; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014) points out that any learner's presence in a classroom does not ensure his or her participation in learning, and thus the provision of appropriate support is vital. This speaks to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which requires that learning should occur in the presence of more informed others who then scaffold information into units with some assistance offered. This assistance is gradually withdrawn until no help is required and the learner has reached a level of receiving and processing knowledge independently. This level is referred to by Vygotsky as "the zone of proximal development" (ZPD) (M. Williams & Burden, 1997). Such a learning process is called 'true learning' which assures that what has been attained can be reproduced with little probing. Therefore, opting for special schools requires that similarly challenged children are grouped together all the time which, according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, results in the absence of significant others and this suppresses development patterns. Thus a lot has to be done by all education stakeholders to provide the necessary support in order for inclusive 'mainstream' schools to prevail and attend to the needs of *all* learners.

2.7 International Perspectives on Disability

Internationally, students with disabilities are generally absorbed in mainstream, regular education classrooms where the focus is on the provision of all the necessary support services (Friend & Cook, 2013; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; Tiwari et al., 2015). In these schools there is access for all to the general education curriculum that allows for the development of the full learning potential of each learner. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) suggests that learners with disabilities can be socially and academically successful when participating in general education classroom activities. The success of these learners is possible when they partake in activities set for general education classrooms which allows for their social and academic progress. Moreover, addressing and responding to the diverse needs of learners through increasing participation and encouraging a learning culture and learning communities can assist in reducing exclusion traits, thus opening learning opportunities. An initiative was launched

that led to a shift in the world view of the education of learners with disabilities. Some countries have been trying to implement inclusive education and legislative policies to promote social justice within the framework of human rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has been successfully implemented in various countries by means of the social justice framework, policies and legislative policies (UNCRPD, n.d.), while some countries have failed dismally in this venture.

For example, in India attempts to transform exclusive education practices and initiate inclusive education for all has failed owing to negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities. This occurred despite initiatives to create policy frameworks and appropriate legislation (Friend & Cook, 2013; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; Tiwari et al., 2015). The shortage of resources, trained staff and a lack of collaboration among professionals have mitigated against efforts to introduce inclusive education in this country. Moreover, research has suggested that teacher resistance to inclusive education policies, coupled with a lack of support systems to promote a broader understanding of inclusion and a lack of clarity on policy provisions, exacerbates this problem (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Nel, 2016; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014).

In Australia, it was found that teachers' course experiences and site-based programs yielded positive attitudes and support for inclusive education (Borman, 2014; D. D. a. J. Bornman, 2014; Das, 2014; Nonis, 2011). However, research in this country has also revealed that educators felt that working with learners with disabilities increased their stress levels and that learners with some types of disability were more difficult to deal with than others. In this country there is a strong focus on gifted students with the argument that learning disabilities and giftedness are mutually excluding (Goele Bossaert, 2013; Panther, 2011; Rymond Lang, 2017; Walton, 2015). Australian scholars have also acknowledged that, many barriers are encountered in inclusive schooling endeavours. A lack of strong policy, the large numbers of students in mainstream classrooms, and a low teacher to learners' ratio have been mentioned as the causes of the challenges experienced in inclusive education (Ibid). Other barriers mentioned in the Australian context are the distant location of some schools, poor building accessibility, poor inclusive education methods, and a lack of collaboration between special education teachers and their mainstream colleagues (Allman, 2013; Ronelle Carolissen, 2015; Rymond Lang, 2017). A lack of additional classroom support

such as teaching assistants and learning aids , prejudicial attitudes towards persons with disabilities among parents and teachers, the negative perception of enrolling children with diverse educational needs together with high flyers in mainstream classrooms and poverty have been cited by (Nel, 2016; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014) as barriers to fully inclusive schools in Australia.

In international countries with socio-political educational variables such as Sri Lanka, investigators found that educators' positive attitudes strengthened the implementation of inclusive policies. For example, (Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014) argues that contact with a disabled child during pre-service education elicited positivity towards inclusive education practices in Sri Lanka. As a result, teachers identified the barriers to inclusive education as a lack of training and policy implementation on inclusion. Qualitative studies done in Sri Lanka also showed that educators with negative attitudes towards inclusive practices tended to employ less effective instructional strategies resulting to poor performance for students with disabilities in a regular classroom. These negative attitudes also affected children's self-efficacy and self-concept (Morton, 2013; Shymani Hettiarchchi, 2014; Walton, 2015). A lack of knowledge of inclusion procedures, policies and programs for students with disabilities also impacted the efficacy of educational practices in mainstream schools in this country (Ibid).

2.8 Systemic Support Structures

In any education institution, all levels of the system may experience rejection in one way or another. Every participant in the system perpetuates the problem, and each individual attributes agency to others, which raises the blame discourse (Dreyer, 2017; Michal Razer, 2013; Mortier et al., 2010; Walton, 2013). For example, a principal attending to the issue of vandalism and violence may blame the teachers for not doing their job.

The blame discourse is continually increasing among staff members and magnifies feelings of isolation, exclusion and threat. To break the cycle of exclusion, (Michal Razer, 2013) argues that it requires innovative strategies to forge inclusive relationships, address learners' needs and mobilise the school's resources to meet them. Amongst such strategies the Department of

Education introduced is the SIAS policy referred to earlier. Like any other policy, it has been critiqued and challenged for political reasons. One tool this policy proposes is a screening process in the form of a profile that has to be kept in the school. As the learner's progresses, the next teacher gets to know what support is needed for a specific child. This system has been challenged but this was beneficial in discovering shortages or loopholes. For example, teachers have criticised it as it requires too much paper work and does not give guidelines on how to deal with the areas that require help. In instances where the learner has to move to another school, the SNA1 and SNA2 forms are just pieces of paper. This is also the case when the former teacher is transferred. The analysis remains a piece of paper that says little or nothing about the child's overall well-being and needs. Instead, teachers argue that diagnostic analysis needs to be done by medical doctors who teachers regard as the rightful supervisors of learners seeking disability support.

Given the fact that communities and children differ greatly poses the need to discover what works for particular learners in a particular classroom situation and school context. According to (Goele Bossaert, 2013; Nel, 2016; Walton, 2015), inclusive education is an evolutionary process. This requires that schools need to integrate human and capital resources in order to offer integrated improvement to cater for all their learners. As long as there is political will, good leadership, the preparation of knowledgeable teachers, and informed parents and community support, inclusive education will be successful (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Nel, 2016). According to education policies as located in the mesosystem, schools require a district based support team (DBST), institution level support team (ILTS), full service schools (FSS), and special schools as resource centres (SSRC) (education, 2001; Goele Bossaert, 2013; Nel, 2016) argue that education authorities need to offer coordinated professional support services that come from higher education and further education as well as local communities to support specialised services at primary as well as secondary institutions.

As stated in the Education White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001), teachers' and learners' primary support comes from the institution level support team (ILST) that is comprised of teachers, volunteers, members of the school management support team (SMT), the DBST, community stakeholders, other governmental departments, and NGOs. According to Das (2014) and Nel (2016), the ILST has to coordinate support facilities in a school while identifying and addressing teachers' and

learners' needs. Thus learner development programs as well as coordinated teacher training and support initiatives are required. If the ILST fails, the DBST is the next to take over school, teacher and learner support as well as school monitoring provision.

According to (Nel, 2016), there have been role modifications that DBSTs have not been able to address successfully. Impediments have thus occurred due to disjointedness or cracks in responsibility. Other barriers have been a lack of mobile resources for officials to visit schools, limited human resources, and heavy workloads. All the systemic levels of support have to work in harmony to entrench inclusive education which is all about learner and teacher support to meet the full range of learning needs. Teachers are also in the spotlight as they need to develop good teaching strategies that will be beneficial to all their learners (education, 2001).

2.9 Chapter Summary

The literature has revealed that inclusive education is not 'a one man show'; it requires all stakeholders to participate and play a significant role in order for successful teaching and learning to occur. It is more vital than ever that the ethos of collaboration underpins the inclusion of all learners in mainstream education. Parents, learners, teachers, the community and education support teams need to pull up their sleeves and work hard towards the inclusive education goal. If they do not, they will fail numerous learners who will remain excluded from equitable education opportunities, especially those who encounter learning challenges.

Learners who encounter learning difficulties do not do so by choice, but they have to live with a disability for the rest of their lives. It is society's responsibility to help these learners grow and develop into responsible citizens, as it is their right. Without a basic education none of this will be possible and these children will be marginalised and ostracised unfairly.

Many children are challenged physically, emotionally and/or financially and persistent historic imbalances in this country contribute to their exclusion from equitable education opportunities. A number of schools and teachers are working unstintingly to adhere to special needs education policies such as the EWP6 and to recognise the fact that every learner should have the privilege to learn and even to play with their peers, regardless of the trials they experience (education, 2001).

The next chapter will elucidate Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory, which is the lens that this study utilised to view social classroom organisation and instruction. Learning requires collaborative understanding between a child and an adult, but this does not mean merely transmitting knowledge from a grown-up into the head of a child (Charlesworth, 2000; Davidson, 2010; Moll, 1990). The application of Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory allows dedicated teachers to put emphasis on adding structure to children's knowledge and awareness. Teachers are therefore expected to enhance learning by making use of flexible questions and providing materials that facilitate participation in specific kinds of engagement. Vygotsky argues that play is a major factor if learning is to occur (Charlesworth, 2000; Moll, 1990), as play does not only develop language skills, but cultural awareness as well. These points will be explicated in greater detail in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall discuss the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory was deemed the most appropriate theoretical lens as it would illuminate salient elements of teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school. The theory argues that learning occurs through interaction with other people and that children need the social world they were born into to learn (Follari, 2007; (Davidson, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011). From birth, people interact with one another in their day-to-day activities. Through these interactions we learn to view the world and make sense of it. The social interaction theory states that we learn to use verbal signals effectively and apply linguistic signals to interact in a meaningful way with other people (Moll, 1990; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Follari, 2007). Against this background, I shall explain the key elements of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of education and explain how it influenced the study. Finally, I shall give an indication of how the key elements of Vygotsky's theory applied to teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and the tendency to exclude special needs learners from mainstream education.

3.2 The Sociocultural Theory

3.2.1 Origin and essence of the sociocultural theory

The sociocultural theory originated in the 1920s and 1930s. The father of this theory is Vygotsky who disputed the earlier posited behaviourist theory that was concerned with exploring stimulus responses that explained the order of mental process development (Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011). His premise for rejecting the behaviourist theory was that he felt the approach reduced social phenomena to a set of psychological atoms (McInerney et al., 2011; (Moll, 1990). His philosophy was developed from earlier Marxists theories. Vygotsky's theory interprets

changing processes and explains human behaviours in relation to their environment and physical conditions.

As a qualitative researcher, I was enthused by this approach as it is naturalistic and based upon understanding human activity and mental functioning that emerge because people interact and do not exist in isolation. I am also of the belief that social environmental elements impact operations, which later have an indirect impact on educational outcomes. This underpinned my endeavours to explore inclusive and exclusive learning in a selected primary school.

McInerney et al. (2011) argue that the sociocultural theory is concerned with how contextual and individual issues affect behaviour and learning as human activities. Sociocultural theorists acknowledge the social and reflexive nature of human thought, which can be altered by difficulties encountered in the social world. According to Vygotsky, learning is considered as an external process that is not actively involved with development, but that builds on the outcomes of development (Vygotskiĭ, 1978; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). Therefore, the development process is independent of learning and is viewed as a precondition of learning and never a result of it. Further learning is defined as a way beyond acquiring (Follari, 2007)thinking ability rather than the acquisition of a number of specific aptitudes of intelligence. In fact, it is the acquisition of a number of specialised abilities to think about a number of things (Mills, 2010; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L.S Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, according to Vygotsky's way of thinking, learning develops numerous abilities to focus attention on a variety of things, but it in no way alters our overall ability to focus.

The sociocultural theory provides teachers with a viable framework for both understanding children's developing thoughts and creating learning environments to support that development (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; (Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010). The theory promotes critical analysis of new information in relation to prior understanding. Therefore, teachers have to carefully consider and reflect on the theory and apply its elements in their teaching. (Follari, 2007) and (McInerney et al., 2011) refer to Vygotsky as a social cultural constructivist theorists in that he puts emphasis on the significance of linguistic and socio-cultural interactions and on how learners interact with people and materials, which are processes that shape knowledge construction.

According to Vygotsky, educators should scaffold learning experiences by providing a variety of increasingly challenging activities and supporting children as they engage with these tasks. Moreover, teachers need to guide their learners within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). (This will be explained in more detail in a subsequent section.) Language remains a primary vehicle for both communication and organisation of individual thought and is emphasised by Vygotsky as a major factor in both social and cognitive development. The sociocultural theory embraces how the world and people in it shape learners' knowledge and skills development through meaningful interactions and the use of language and signals.

According to this theory, knowledge is influenced by culture and environmental constructs and is shaped by people's interactions. Moreover, expert partners purposefully guide the exploration of ideas while learning leads to development through the use of language, which strongly influences thought (Moll, 1990; (Davidson, 2010); Follari, 2007). This implies that children must get interactively involved in the creation and acquisition of knowledge. He recognises the innate and social influences on thought and knowledge as a subjective, constructed reality and validates the child's core inspiration as important in exploring and manipulating his or her world as a means of understanding it (Moll, 1990; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Follari, 2007). However, as is true of all theories, the sociocultural theory also has some drawbacks when it is implemented in educational processes.

3.2.2 Challenges and features associated with the sociocultural theory

A major challenge associated with the sociocultural theory is its implementation, as it requires teachers to thoroughly find a balance between learners initiated activities and teacher directed activities. According to Follari (2007), to deal with these challenges teachers need to ensure that learners are exposed to core knowledge content as well as competency standards while providing enough opportunities for interest-based projects. These activities demand that teachers are active collaborators with their students in the learning process and that they are curious observers of students' knowledge development (D'Amant, 2012; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017).

Teachers need to be able to structure learning experiences that are meaningful and dependable. Teachers also need to meaningfully asses the learning process and its outcomes and progress towards set goals. Teachers themselves need to make use of portfolios, work samples, performances, assessments and observations to overcome any challenges during the implementation of the sociocultural theory in their teaching. The main features of the sociocultural theory, according to Vygotsky (1978), are that it helps teachers shape their teaching and ensures that child development is evident. These features include holistic analysis, the zone of proximal development, mediation, and scaffolding.

3.2.2.1 Holistic analysis

Holistic analysis acknowledges the fact that a child is born into the world with knowledge; therefore the social world does not create what is already present (Davidson, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). It is therefore not advisable to separate a child from his or her social environment as holistic development will then not occur (Moll, 1990; Follari, 2007; (Mills, 2010). In his earlier work, Vygotsky emphasises the significance of language, signs and symbols in interactions among people. He believes that, through language, thinking is developed and learning occurs and, in this manner, culture is transmitted (Eun, 2010). Holistic analysis thus dismisses the idea of teaching discrete items and skills following the breakdown of what is to be learnt into small subcomponents (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). Instead, Vygotsky's argument is that the central aspect of any unit of study must establish meaning. Furthermore, a unit of study should be presented in all its intricacies instead of in the form of isolated presentations of knowledge and skills. In contradicting the reduction of phenomena of interest into discrete elements, Vygotsky uses the analogy of the decomposition of water by arguing that, as water decomposes, oxygen and hydrogen are the products that do not have the same characteristics as the original water (Moll, 1990; (Charlesworth, 2000); (Davidson, 2010).

Vygotsky thus proposes partitioning 'the whole' into what he calls units. He overrules synthetic division and abstractions and insists on what he terms a 'holistic approach', meaning that the product or outcome contains basic characteristics of the whole. Therefore, word meaning is necessary for the development of both thinking and speech through mediation.

3.2.2.2 Mediation

Mediation is understood as the role played by a significant other (or others) in a child's life and that it is important to enhance learning. According to Follari (2007), (Davidson, 2010) and (Eun, 2010), mediation refers to tools such as symbolic language that could be used to achieve a goal and solve a problem. This allows learners to reach the point of the ZPD. The role of the significant other (or others) is to select and shape learning, which solely depends on the kind of social interactions among people of different skill levels and knowledge.

In essence, Vygotsky suggests that a teacher or peer with more knowledge will help others (i.e., children) to learn. Such a person is referred to as the mediator in a child's life. According to Moll (1990), (Davidson, 2010; Mills, 2010) and (McInerney et al., 2011), mediation occurs between a child and an adult in any educational context and in this manner knowledge is transferred to a child in a 'definite system'. This 'definite system' refers to a special arrangement of instruction and how it delivers a distinct specialisation of a child's thinking. Through this method, two types of instruction emerge, namely 'growth of conscious awareness' and 'controlled acquisition of knowledge' (Mills, 2010; Moll, 1990;. Vygotsky, 2017). Vygotsky argues that the power of a systematic concept lies in the child's aptitude to use a concept voluntarily; Vygotsky terms this as 'readiness for action'. The child's weakness lies in its incapacity to manipulate concepts in an intended manner.

Daily acquired and scientific concepts are interlocked and co-dependent and are conjointly influential (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). Vygotsky states that "scientific concepts propagate down into each day into the domain of personal experience ,acquiring meaning and significance and in so doing blaze the trail for the development of everyday concepts" upward towards the scientific and facilitate mastery of the higher characteristic of everyday concept (Moll, 1990). Mediation later leads the child to his or her zone of proximal development.

3.2.2.3 The zone of proximal development (ZPD)

Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as "a layer beyond that which a learner is currently capable of coping with [in terms of] current knowledge and skills" (M. Williams & Burden, 1997). The argument is thus that learning occurs when working with a person who is more competent or just above the level of a learner's capabilities. Such learning yields the best results in aiming to move a learner from one level to the next. Understanding the goal of reaching a learner's ZPD is important for teachers as it will assist them to know what they can do to help children learn. By assisting learners to move towards the ZPD, teachers can figure out how to help learners who are stuck in their learning, as it gives direction to mediation practices that teachers can employ to assist learners to reach beyond the current level at which they are functioning (McInerney et al., 2011).

Teachers thus serve as guides who lead learners to the next level of achievement. However, although Vygotsky introduces teachers to the concept of the ZPD, he fails to guide them towards its application in classroom situations. Therefore, it is important to understand that moving a child towards the ZPD does not mean that learning levels are hierarchically ordered or sequenced, as he clearly states that they are not (Moll, 1990; Follari, 2007; (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). The ZPD is regarded as the next level of understanding in terms of learners' inter language, while the mediation theory tells us that a teachers' role is to help learners find ways to move to the next level of understanding. Language is pivotal in this process.

Follari (2007) and (McInerney et al., 2011) describe the ZPD as the level within which the child can be supported to develop and function in order to attain higher levels than would have been possible if they were functioning on their own. It requires an awareness of a child's independent capabilities and the guidance by a teacher or coach to prompt the child's intelligence and develop his/her skills. This proposition was relevant to the current study as it does not only argue that any child can learn, but that all children need an unbiased and supportive adult to guide them towards independent learning. The theory clearly states that separating a child from his or her society will not promote thinking and development but will only encourage exclusion and thus result in a lack of appropriate development.

3.2.2.4 Scaffolding

The support referred to above is what Vygotsky terms 'scaffolding'. Scaffolding means achieving a balance between too much and too little help for learning to occur. In this context, the roles of society and culture are important for a child's development as they underscore the social and group nature of education. In consideration of the inclusion or exclusion of learners in the educational context, it is important to consider scaffolding as it emphasises the fact that children's learning is embedded in their culture (Moll, 1990; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Follari, 2007; (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). While children learn from their families and the community, the culture they imbibe influences the way they grow, reason and develop, while the norms and values they acquire significantly influence their path of development in all spheres of life. Scaffolding is also a means that experts use to give a child oral cues and prompts and to ask questions. Scaffolding requires a teacher to know how children are capable of thinking or what their progression level is at any particular moment. Thus, if a child gains competency, assistance must be reduced (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Follari, 2007; (Eun, 2010). When this is practised, true learning will occur.

3.2.3 Vygotsky's views on learning

According to Vygotsky's (1978) reasoning, learning is not merely related to cognitive development but is also a sociocultural human activity. In the learning process, the involvement of an adult is basic. The ZPD of a child can be accomplished with or without help. However, during this process adults need to ask questions, give hints and clues, and establish an environment that will support practising various skills (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010).

Vygotsky suggests that development happens if a child is assisted; therefore, teachers should devise tasks that are beyond a child's independent level of functioning but in the vicinity of the child's ZPD. Therefore, a teacher needs to offer amplification, which is the provision of greater challenges within the ZPD. According to Charlesworth (2000) and (Davidson, 2010), amplification is vital in that it builds on a child's strengths and thus enhances development within the attained ZPD.

According to Vygotsky, learning is the association between the cognitive and social arrangement that occurs through classroom tutoring and social interaction (Charlesworth, 2000; Follari, 2007). Therefore learning is a mutual involvement between a child and a more mature or knowledgeable other and not just the transferral of information from a mature mind into the mind of the child (Moll, 1990; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). Vygotsky embraces learning not only as a way of developing thinking, but as a sociocultural action. He deliberates on the ability to teach and to benefit from instruction as a central capacity of human beings. Vygotsky argues that a gap still exists between social origins or cultural biases and individual development and that this gap has to be filled (Moll, 1990). He further argues that advanced emotional practices develop through enculturation through practices, signs and the tools used by society.

Vygotsky puts emphasis on the social 'organisability' of instruction, which is a distinctive form of collaboration between the young and the mature as an essential component of educational processes. As Vygotsky focuses on the social background of cognitive development, he believes that instructive adjustment relies on theoretical and methodological approaches. These approaches represent reorganisation related modes of discourse and the social system, with possible circumstances for growing new cognitive forms (Moll, 1990). Vygotsky's proposition of the ZPD follows his critique of individual IQ testing which he believes has matured and is thus no longer relevant. He claims that growing or rising intellectual functions have to be fostered and assessed during cooperative activities and not as isolated or independent 'tests' (Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010).

In essence, what Vygotsky argues as that what children can do today with a bit of help they will be able to do freely and independently tomorrow. Vygotsky also believes in sign- and tool-mediated behaviours, which means that sign and tool mediation leads to an understanding of human learning and development (Davidson, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2018; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). This underscores his argument that there is a cognitive gap that has to be filled through social origins and cultural bases of individual development. As was stated earlier, he believes that a child is born into the world with knowledge; therefore the social world does not create what already exists (Eun, 2010; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). This argument was relevant to the current study in that it enlightened my understanding of the distinctive form of assistance that occurs between a

youngster and a mature person, who is a significant other person in possession of more information than the child. As the study explored teachers' perceptions of the inclusion and exclusion of learners in a primary school, this concept was used to enlighten the factors that promoted either the inclusion or exclusion of learners. It was understood that the adult teachers' role was to mediate and scaffold learning to the point of the ZPD, and therefore change had to be observed in the learners as they developed and grew.

Throughout the study I remained cognisant of the fact that exclusion would discourage learning and that it would not be acceptable to encourage placement of a child with a learning disability in a special school where he or she would be separated from more knowledgeable or skilled peers or adults. By means of inclusive education, such children are capacitated to learn from one another while guided by adults with more knowledge. When a child is able to function independently within the ZPD, change and development have occurred, which is what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as 'true learning'.

3.3 Application of the Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky urges that scaffolding occurs in the learning process during which an adult supports a child or reinforces a child's language development, efforts and verbal expressions. This may for example occur during storybook sharing, by asking questions, or by relating a story to a child's personal life. As inclusive education implies a promise to teach every child to its appropriate highest level in the school environment, relevant support services are required to ensure that all learners will benefit from their classroom experiences (Moll, 1990; (Grajcevci, 2017). According to the sociocultural theory, systematically organised classrooms have the ability to change and develop the skills and knowledge of children with special needs. Thus specialised services need to be focused to deal with each learners' unique educational requirements.

According to 'inclusionists', children with special needs need to develop friendships and relationships with typical growing children, but this is only possible with full time placement in regular classroom settings where permanency will create a sense of comfort and belonging. This will also ensure that teachers cultivate responsive teaching methods in receptive classrooms where

every child with special needs feels welcome. According to Charlesworth (2000), statistics have indicated that special schools are a dead-end for such children. Therefore, when special needs children are included in mainstream classrooms where a teacher offers selective activities, children can engage with their peers and attain increasingly higher levels of social and cognitive interaction. Here children are afforded opportunities to work in small groups where they interact with their peers. Mixed-group placement also provides social opportunities for special needs children. The sociocultural theory views play as a blend of community and interpersonal influences. Play is also entrenched in cultural practices and is thus important for scaffolding. Vygotsky emphasises realistic play and cautions against 'unreal play' as a barrier to mental and social development.

The application of the sociocultural theory in the current study underscored the fact that learners need the social life they were born into in order to learn. This suggests that placing special needs children in special schools deprives them of their right to develop and to make sense of the world in their own way and among their peers. According to Vygotsky, units of learning need to be presented in all their complexity instead of in the form of isolated presentations of knowledge and skills. The theory also underscores the relevance of social interactions that enhance language development. Through language, thinking develops that later transcends to cultural awareness and associations (Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010). In this context, placing children in special schools does not allow them to develop language, thinking skills and cultural awareness.

The importance of language development is underscored by the literature as all forms of language encourage social interaction. The language referred to in the study thus included verbal as well as symbolic and sign language (Moll, 1990), as it was argued that a child who is deaf or dumb ought to be included in a class of learners who are able to hear and speak.

Cognisance was also taken of the principle of mediation, particularly as I wanted to explore teachers' earlier comment that they were unable to teach learners with special needs in mixed ability classrooms. In my experience, teachers felt that learners with disabilities lacked capability and ability and this created barriers in teaching them. By applying my knowledge of the mediation theory, I was thus able to assess whether the teachers saw themselves as significant others with more knowledge and skills who were able to teach learners with disabilities. Teachers ought to

regard themselves as tools when they guide their learners towards their zone of proximal development (ZPD). In this manner, children are transformed through the help they receive from knowledgeable others and they eventually use these same means of management to direct their problem resolving behaviours, which means if a child has reached its ZPD it will engage in collaborative activities with others as part of its social development. Children learn in and about their social system in collaboration with learners of their age. True learning can thus not occur if a learner is secluded from others and labelled in accordance with their ability or disability. Therefore, attaining the ZPD supports the inclusion of all learners rather than encourages their exclusion. In multicultural classrooms, learners also learn about different cultures and this enhances bilingualism and cultural sensitivity. By learning together, children mediate relationships within their society. Conversely, placing learners in so-called special schools deprives them of their right to mediate relationships within their society which may define them as 'disabled' in the future. According to (Butin, 2005; Li, 2010), Vygotsky argues that [mainstream] schooling creates social contexts for mastery and conscious awareness through the use of cultural tools.

3.4 Implications of the Sociocultural Theory for Classroom Practice

Based on the premise of ZPD, there should be an adult or a more competent peer to aid learners' development in each classroom. Collaboration among peers is vital in any classroom situation where children need to work in groups where they disentangle problems with appropriate or limited adult guidance. In such groups, some children act as tutors to assist less competent learners to learn straightforward skills. Collaboration is thus an important aspect of learning that should not be ignored in teaching and learning processes (Davidson, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Moll, 1990).

Vygotsky supports the idea that supplying information that is age-appropriate for children's ZPD is highly beneficial as it results in development within culturally driven and appropriate models. According to Vygotsky, each child in any domain has the capacity to attain its actual development potential. School-based instruction should thus take cognisance of learner interactions within the ZPD.

Vygotsky points out that, regardless of a physical or mental handicap, children may exhibit positive developmental consequences if they are exposed to appropriate teaching and learning processes (Li, 2010) (Eun, 2010). He thus argues for the mainstreaming of all learners in support of their mental or physical development. Vygotsky believes that special needs children's development is retarded if they are taught separately from 'normal 'children (Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011). Moreover, if mentally challenged children are not introduced to abstract thoughts, their education is stunted and their development is compromised (Butin, 2005; McInerney et al., 2011). Therefore, the separation of special needs learners traumatises these children as all their attention is fixed on their condition rather than on developing as a normal person with a disability in society (Davidson, 2010; Vygotsky, 2017).

Vygotsky does not view the development process of children as unidirectional, especially in as far as handicapped children are concerned. He regards such children as merely being in some way less developed on a continuum of development, and his view is that the development of these children could proceed along entirely separate lines (Butin, 2005; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). Vygotsky believes this is true for children who are differently treated because of how they are labelled. "Once brand-named as a fool or handicapped, the child is placed in a completely new societal circumstance and his or her complete development proceeds on a completely different path" (Moll, 1990) Vygotsky, 2017:158) . This line of thought assisted the current study as it emphasises the separation (i.e., exclusion) of learners if they are placed in special schools instead of being included in schools where they can develop along with their peers.

Although a child's collaboration with peers is vital for reaching its ZPD, Vygotsky argues that it is not guaranteed that a child will attain meaning when interacting with his or her peers only, even if one child is more competent than the other. Thus the role of a knowledgeable adult is vital in the development process of all children.

3.5 Conclusion

The chapter explored the sociocultural theory and explained to what extent it served as a window or lens through which the findings of the study would be illuminated. This theory thus formed the

foundation of the study. The challenges associated with this theory were discussed. A holistic analysis of the theory was presented and its application and implications for classroom practices were highlighted. This theory thus premised the methodology and research design of the study. In summary, the sociocultural theory of learning provided insight into how learning occurs and what the necessary requirements for learning are. The theory highlights the importance of social relationships that promote development and it discourages the separation of children based on mental or physical challenges and placing them in special schools.

The following chapter presents the research methodology that was employed to explore teachers' perceptions of inclusive education as well as the tendency to exclude special needs children from mainstream education.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH DESIGN AND MEHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This section describes the investigation processes that were followed during the course of the study. The investigation paradigm, the qualitative research approach, the case study approach that was used to gather the data, narrative story analysis, the selection of the participants, and a description of the study site as the research setting are presented. Moreover, data analysis, informed consent and voluntary participation and the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants are also addressed. I discuss the purposeful sampling technique that I used and the reason for using this method as proposed by Singh (2014), (Andrea, 2017) and (Judd & Kennedy, 2008). Achieving trustworthiness as required by the research paradigm is also discussed and the limitations that impacted the study are elucidated. The ethical considerations that I adhered to in executing this study are also referred to. The chapter is concluded with a brief summary.

In this study I explored and tried to make sense of the real life experiences of teachers with specific reference to their perceptions of the inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities and special needs in a South African primary school. I employed a narrative case study research design which is explained in detail. The participants were required to write the stories of their actual experiences and perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the primary school where they were located. Thus a journal (or written narrative) approach was preferred over the interview or questionnaire approach as the data collection tool. By using the journal technique, I envisaged that concrete data about the participants and their perceptions of the phenomenon under study would be obtained to the point of saturation.

4.2 The Research Paradigm

As alluded to above, the investigation followed a narrative interpretive research paradigm and was qualitative in nature. The conceptual framework that was employed provided in-depth guidelines

on the study design and processes. The qualitative nature of the study aimed to gather teachers' perceptions of the phenomenon of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school. Data were collected using narrative stories that the participants wrote in journal format. According to Garud et al. (2011:48) "the narrative paradigm offers a method for people to share their professional knowledge with one another and to create a mutual ground for endorsing coordinated action within establishments". The rationale for using the narrative paradigm was that narratives help participants respond to and learn from their experiences while making sense of these experiences in a number of ways. Nel (2016) and (Anfara & Mertz, 2006) concur that the interpretive paradigm is premised on social phenomena that occur in contexts in which they are constructed and produced through occurrences. The study was thus located in the interpretive paradigm (Yeni, 2012) by utilising the storytelling methodology. According to (Li, 2010; Wertz, 2011), narrative stories help to make sense of proceedings and activities in people's lives. I thus selected the interpretive paradigm to assist me in answering the why and how parts of the phenomenon under study. Singh (2014), (Anne, Rosanne, Laurene, Anita, & Kara, 2016; Atkins et al., 2012) describe the interpretive paradigm as an approach that aims to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study by exploring its background, and in this case it was teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities at a primary school. Although narrative stories may not be understood as they are by readers, they actively contextualise the narrative within the broader knowledge and experiences of the writers. This means that the writers apply their own borders of reference to be evaluated by the reader (Garud et al., 2011; Jorge Luiz Da & Dos Santos, (Jorge Luiz da & Lisliane dos Santos, 2011).

Singh (2014) advocates that the interpretive paradigm investigates how the participants make sense of their experiences and thus create realities that are typically personal and subjective. The participants thus relate to the topic in their own way when they narrate their authentic experiences and perceptions. According to Garud et al. (2011) and (Phoenix et al., 2016), narratives offer a way for teachers to share their professional experiences with one another and create common ground for promoting coordinate action to address a particular topic.

The application of this paradigm affiliates a number of theoretical frames that are grounded in the postmodernists and social construction of the truth. In this study, this resulted in varying narratives

of events pertaining to the topic, as proposed by Singh (2014). The postmodernist theory emphasises that knowledge is value laden and truth is based on multiple standpoints that are grounded in everyday life and that involve social collaborations among individuals (Garud et al., 2011; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). The postmodernist theory criticises the modernist or positivist theory based on the concept of social representation. The qualitative methods of research are thus explained below to show how the study was planned and how it proceeded.

4.3 The Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach is a systemic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. The phenomena can include how people behave and how they perceive certain aspects in their lives so as to gather information on how individuals or groups behave as well as how interactions will shape their relationships (Atkins et al., 2012). Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to gather what meaning a phenomenon holds for participants. This qualitative research aimed to draw on the post-positivist or constructivist beliefs of the selected participants.

According to Garud et al. (2011), narratives are qualitative enquiries as they capture rich data within stories. The process of this study was thus qualitative in nature. Wheeldon (2010), Atkins et al. (2012), Yeni (2012) and George Mwangi and Bettencourt (2017) define qualitative research as a genius approach to social research taking its departure point as the inside perspective on social action. Qualitative methodology is used to understand the phenomenon that is flexible and unique and that evolves throughout the research process as the study focuses on humans' actions and their thinking. According to Bettencourt (2017), qualitative methodology involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach, which was the approach that was employed in this study. The process is supported by the zest for enquiring about a particular occurrence in an ordinary setting. This enables the investigator to use the case study systematically to inquire into an action or events and to describe the phenomenon of interest (Phoenix et al., 2016).

Cohen et al. (2011), Atkins et al. (2012), Yeni (2012), Singh (2014) and George Mwangi and Bettencourt (2017) explain that qualitative research enables the researcher to become an insider in the field of study. I thus took this stance to be able to describe and understand teachers' actions

and perceptions pertaining to the position of learners with learning challenges at the school where they taught. However, instead of generating data in a face-to-face manner with the participants in their place of work, they were required to narrate their authentic experiences in the form of a written narrative in seclusion and in their own time. By analysing the data that emerged for the purpose of qualitative inquiry, I was able to understand the participants' perceptions, beliefs and opinions regarding the inclusion and exclusion of learners with various disabilities at their school. As I was an insider researcher, I was able to bridge the gap between the 'researched' and the 'researcher' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012; Wertz, 2011).

Qualitative studies focus on how groups or individuals make sense of events and actions in their lives through examining their stories and the linguistic and structural properties thereof (Garud et al., 2011). Language is seen as deeply constitutive of truth and not merely as a device for rhetorical and interpretive purposes (Atkins et al., 2012). Yeni (2012) and George Mwangi and Bettencourt (2017) concur that qualitative research is largely presented through language and is about the meaning constructed from the written (textual) data. Using the participants' narrative stories thus prevented me from interfering in their normal teaching times or in their thought processes. I was also able to remain neutral by not influencing the respondents' narratives in any way. As the case study involved the lived experiences of the respondents, this enabled them to express themselves freely in words on paper and to honestly record their perceptions and experiences of the inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities and learning challenges in their place of work.

4.4 The Qualitative Case Study

According to Cohen et al. (2011) and (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), a case study is an inquiry that includes an experimental study of modern occurrences and it relies on the compilation of substantial knowledge regarding what participants perceive as impacting the phenomenon under study. A case study inquiry enables the researcher to examine and describe lived experiences specific to individual situations (Atkins et al., 2012; Barbara & Jordi, 2008). According to Garud et al. (2011) and Wertz (2011), narrative case studies in the form of structural studies demonstrate how narratives can be used to effect ethnic change, transfer multifaceted knowledge through

implicit communication, construct uniqueness, aid education, contribute to sense making, act as a source of understanding, and impact study decision making.

This case study investigated teacher participants' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion and focused on the situation of disabled learners and their diverse needs in the study site (Castro et al., 2010; Wheeldon, 2010; Wertz, 2011; Singh, 2014). In narrative case studies, stories are used to influence cultural change, transfer complex tacit knowledge through understood communication, contract uniqueness in education, contribute to sense making, and act as a source of understanding and study decision making (Wertz, 2011; Andrews et al., 2013). Castro et al. (2010), Wheeldon (2010), Singh (2014) and (George Mwangi & Bettencourt, 2017) concur that case studies have a step-like design that generate, analyses, interprets and disseminates data. Moreover, case studies provide diagnostic descriptions and summaries of the case under study (Castro et al., 2010; Wheeldon, 2010; Check & Schutt, 2012; Singh, 2014). Such a study focuses on a single phenomenon which, in this case, was the inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities who exhibited diverse needs in a primary school setting.

This case study involved seven respondents (one teacher per grade from Grade 1 to Grade 7) at the selected primary school. Once the data had been generated in the form of written narratives, they were transcribed and analysed. These seven purposively selected teachers were requested to write the story of their experiences and perceptions of their encounters with learners with special needs. Narratives or stories are qualitative inquiries that allow a researcher to capture rich data (Garud et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2013). The main purpose of a case study, according to Castro et al. (2010), Wheeldon (2010), Luo (2011) and Singh (2014), is to obtain the essence of events and actions using investigative as well as academic analysis. In this manner I was allowed to explore teachers' narrated stories and to address any instances of ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity and dynamism in this primary school (Garud et al., 2011; Luo, 2011; Wertz, 2011).

4.4.1 Narratives in qualitative research

Garud et al. (2011) and Andrews et al. (2013) describe narratives as an interpretive approach in social sciences that involve the story telling method. These stories help to make sense of

proceedings and actions in the lives of participants. However, according to Andrews et al. (2013), narrative stories are not understood as is by readers; instead, they actively contextualise the narrative to their broader knowledge and experiences. This means they apply their own frames of reference to assess and elaborate on the meaning of narratives. Stories thus serve as a recollection device that others can access and use over time.

Narratives also serve as triggers for action that set in motion responses to unusual practices. By using narratives, participants arouse memories of prior rare experiences and how they were dealt with, and they produce new decisions for developing rare experiences and build a memory that is generative (Andrea, 2017; Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013) .Collaboration is inevitable as the reader is an agent of making meaning of the text (Defence, Technology Organization Edinburgh Land Operations, Mitchell, & Egudo, 2003). (Morley, 2012) states that a narrative text links the reader and the author. Furthermore, Defence et al. (2003:32) mention that narrative text is "plurivocal, open to some readings and to several reforms".

The development process of narratives provides a method for participants to review and communicate their explanations to one another and, in the process, to jointly produce meaning around an unusual experience (Riessman, 1993 cited in Defence et al., 2003). It is argued that attending to specific surfaces of an experience marks the beginning of the process through which people make sense of the events they come across. Riessman's framework (Ibid.) is about telling others about an experience.

As the researcher I decided to gather data using this approach as it would offer no automatic starting or finishing points. This decision was based on my belief that narratives contain different and inconsistent layers of meaning that would help me to comprehend individuals' perceptions about the phenomenon under study (Defence et al., 2003; Andrews et al., 2013; (Phoenix et al., 2016). I was also able to discover not just how these stories were prearranged and the ways in which they were consumed, but also who produced them and by what means, the mechanism by which they would be consumed or silenced, contracted or captured, and if they might have any effects (Andrews et al., 2013). In this process, the originality of the narratives and the theoretical

division that impacted them were unfolded. I believe that narratives give vent to truthful experiences and actions and carry the meaning of human lives that we want to understand.

4.4.2 Theoretical division of narratives

The focus or orientation of the study was on the narration of past events and experiences. The study took the route of narrative stories which, according to the Labovian approach, are event and experience centred (Defence, Technology Organization Edinburgh Land Operations, Mitchell, & Egudo, 2003; Denzin, 2008). According to this approach, narrative enquiry raises the issue of language and time. As the study aimed to explore the truth of events, it was important that they were presented in the narrators' language as the most appropriate mode to ensure comfort and freedom of speech. Language is constitutive of reality and not merely a device for rhetoric and interpretation (Garud et al., 2011;(Jorge Luiz da & Lisliane dos Santos, 2011) .

Andrews et al. (2013) concur that narratives are defined as a kind of language. Narratives are also about time; not the succession in time but change through time. Time is thought to make us into subjects through its articulation (Andrews et al., 2013). Narrative analysis and the limitations of narratives require that data analysis is based on the language used. According to Labov's personal experiences (Andrews et al., 2013), narratives are formulated to yield a structural analysis of specific verbal and personal experience narratives. Thus to analyse transcripts, Labov numbered clauses in his six-part model. The model comprises the following elements: abstract (A), orientation (O), complicating action (CA), results (R), evaluation (E) and coda (C). The abstract in a narrative introduces the story. Orientation provides the background in which the events of the story will be expressed. Complicating action is the backbone or the skeleton plot. Labov defines evaluation as "revealing a narrator's perspective on events being told" (Defence, Technology Organization Edinburgh Land Operations, Mitchell, & Egudo, 2003; Denzin, 2008). Three main types of evaluation emerge. The first is external evaluation whereby the narrator tells the listener what the point is. The second evaluation method is when the narrator gives his or her feelings at the time. The third is when the narrator reports actions revealing emotions without use of speech. Results (or resolution) are the ending to the story while the coda occurs at the end when the narrator returns to the present time to clearly indicate that the story is over.

In selecting the sample of a narrative inquiry, consideration should be given to selecting participants who would have been exposed to and experienced the phenomenon under study. This minimises limitations that may arise. However, limitations may occur in the Labovian model when the data that refer to traumatic experiences are transcribed (Andrews et al. 2013;(Ann et al., 2016).

4.5 Selection of the Study Site and the Participants

4.5.1 Sampling

The study focused on teachers' perceptions of the inclusion and exclusion of children with learning difficulties in a primary school setting. According to Garud et al. (2011) and Singh (2014), purposive sampling is used because traditional scientific theory adopts a rational and experimental approach to achieve an impartial description of the forces in the world.

The study was premised on the understanding that learners with disabilities are still ostracised from society and equitable education opportunities because the perception persists that they are unable to learn in the same manner that 'normal' children can. To investigate teachers' perception of this thesis, a sample was purposefully selected at a primary school. Seven teachers from each grade (grades 1 – 7) who had served in the school for some time were selected. The selection was based on the assumption that they would produce unambiguous data as they were in close contact with learners on a daily basis. The decision to select a teacher from each grade was made based on the understanding that each grade represents a different phase in a learner's life at a different age, and thus the level of teaching would vary. The sample did not include pre-service teachers but in-service teachers only.

The school that served as the study site was selected as it was one of a number of full service schools in the area and therefore a number of leaners who had learning difficulties had been enrolled at the school. The teachers were thus required to engage with these special needs learners on a regular basis.

In qualitative research, academic scholars attempt to place themselves outside the realm of a study to observe and gather unbiased information of individuals' experiences (Atkins et al., 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I thus positioned myself as an unbiased observer of the participating teachers' written narratives. I used purposive sampling to ensure that each grade in the primary school under study was represented. According to Garud et al. (2011) and Yeni (2012), purposive sampling is typical in case studies while Singh (2014) confirms that purposive sampling is done to facilitate the collection of thick data from small samples. According to Wertz (2011), Singh (2014) (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000), a sample is representative of the larger population. The sample that was selected for this study was not based on age, gender or race, but the main inclusion criteria focused on participants who were currently teaching at the selected primary school as in-service teachers. Moreover, the participants represented different teaching experiences (Grade 1 to Grade 7). This selection reflected a wide range of teaching experiences, attitudes and methods as these teachers would have been exposed to learners of varying ages and degrees of development over time. According to Lang (2017) and (Donohue & Bornman, 2015), experience, training and the nature of learners' disabilities impact teachers' attitudes.

The transcriptions of the narratives presented in this manuscript are identified by pseudonyms to guarantee the anonymity of the teachers who participated voluntarily in the study.

4.5.2 The research site

The study was conducted in a South African primary school in the Umhlathuzana circuit near Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal province. The school was selected on the merits of its functionality and location as well as the fact that it enrolled learners of various abilities and needs. The school was run by the South African government's Department of Basic Education but was also compelled to abide by Methodist doctrines as it was erected on the premises of the Methodist church.

The school has been functional for a number of years and is situated in an informal settlement and serves learners from low income as well as deprived backgrounds. Historically, issues of race, gender, language, ethnic groupings and cultural diversity played a role in enrolment policies.

Community members in the area are representative of a diversity of cultures and origins. Incidences of violence, poverty, unemployment as well as substance abuse prevail in the area. At the time of the study, the school had an enrolment of 1 700 learners, which was high in relation to many other schools in the Durban area. The staff comprised of only 35 teachers of both genders as well as a principal, two deputy principals and heads of department. This translated to about 50 learners per teacher. Although located in an informal settlement, the school had running water and electricity, but it still had pit latrines with only a few flushable toilets. A number of children-headed families lived in the area due the HIV-related deaths of their parents. Written approval to conduct the study at the school was granted, but this letter, which is in the possession of the author, is not attached to the manuscript so as not to compromise confidentiality and anonymity.

The school was selected based on its history of adhering to the policy of inclusion and was considered as one of the full service schools in the district. The school management team had been alerted to the study and were ready to be involved in the research project upon my arrival. Cooperation was voluntary and unstinting.

4.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data involved inductive methods in order to investigate common themes that emerged from the individual stories. In this case study, text was used to detach experience and events from personal bias (Atkins et al., 2012) (Ann et al., 2016). The participants' responses were thematically analysed to extract exactly what they were revealing about their perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a particular primary school setting (Ann et al., 2016; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012; Morley, 2012).

The analysis of the data will be discussed in relation to findings that were extracted from the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework that was used as the lens through which the data would be viewed. The reason for choosing a text-based investigation was that texts are narratives of actual situations that can inform others, especially those who have not been part of the actual activity and have not experienced the situation under study (Jorge Luiz da & Lisliane dos Santos,

2011; Li, 2010). Texts are also easily stored for future reference and can even be published so as to record unusual experiences.

The data that were gathered from the written narratives were analysed and treated as in-depth knowledge and insights that were shared as authentic experiences by the narrators (Andrea, 2017; Hogan, Hinrichs, & Hornecker, 2016; Wertz, 2011). According to Garud et al. (2011), Holstein and Gubrium (2012) and Andrews et al. (2013), the analysis of narratives requires a reinterpretation of actual activities and reshaping original texts according to particular, analytical aims. Therefore, text analysis offers a distinctive flow of ideas and gives clarity to what has been lacking in the original telling of the story (Aishath, Haslinda Binti, Steven Eric, & Nobaya Binti, 2019; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012).

I thus analysed the data to provide a reflexive layer in terms of my position as the researcher. My data analysis thus focused on the content and meaning contained in the stories that I had gathered. Garud et al. (2011), (Wertz, 2011) and (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012) explain that the analysis of texts promotes learning and prompts action while it can also elicit different interpretations and versions of similar experiences and can eventually result in a more nuanced viewpoint that informs subsequent action.

By analysing the data, a window through which the experiences of the participants could be viewed was provided and this facilitated explanations of the broader social context and promoted an overall understanding of the forces that resulted in the unusual experiences of the participants so as to inform possible responses. The data analysis process concentrated on the deliberate construction of meaning with the goal of identifying what caused the unusual experiences. Thus text reading and analysis located me in a position I had never been I before and illuminated inferences that I could apply to current and other contexts (Aishath et al., 2019; Bradbury & Miller, 2010). This being said, however, I was cognisant of the fact that the data and findings could not be generalised to the entire school population in the district or province as the scope of the study was too limited.

Stories are embedded in language as the vehicle that illuminates meaning. Adams et al. (2012) argue that narrative analysis helps to focus on how individuals in their own settings relate to or interpret events and actions in relation to their lives as they utilise linguistic and structural properties when they tell a story. Language thus remains an important constructive tool that elicits reality (Andrea, 2017; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Menken & García, 2010).

In this context, language could be deemed a limitation to the study, but essentially it also ensured the trustworthiness of the study as the participants were allowed to express themselves in a language they understood. Socio-linguistic analysis was thus administered to see what made the participants' stories coherent (Andrea, 2017; Ann et al., 2016).

4.7 Trustworthiness

The study results depended solely on the data gathered from the participants and there were no right or wrong answers to the research questions. It was therefore important to accurately reflect the participants' comments in order to achieve the trustworthiness of the entire study. It was thus important to double-check or triangulate the data to authenticate the results (Judd & Kennedy, 2008; Morley, 2012; Wertz, 2011). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Andrews, squire and (2013), the researcher looks at trends, narrative threads, strains and themes either inside or through the individual experiences and social setting under study. The researcher thus has no right to alter a participant's responses but needs to present the text as received and to remain within formalistic and reductionist boundaries. The participants were required to reflect on their experiences, connect with their feelings and draw on their knowledge of theoretical models and frameworks. It was therefore essential that the researcher developed understandings of the participants' actions in situations as they unfolded according to the reflection-in-action and the reflection-on-action theory (Adams et al., 2012; (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012).

To assure trustworthiness, the participants needed to adhere to their mandate by reflecting on the phenomenon under study beforehand and to draw from their prior understandings that guided their behaviour (Hamilton, 2015; Porter, 2007; Shenton, 2004; Sibley, 1959). By exploring and analysing their narratives, I was thus able to generate new understanding of the phenomenon under

study (Porter, 2007). This was possible because, in the words of (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) ,"No amount of evidence can prove me right, and any amount of evidence can prove me wrong
As the nature of this research was qualitative, it aimed to elicit the truth by investigating teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion as practised at a primary school in South African. According to Singh (2014), George Mwangi and Bettencourt (2017) and Aishath et al. (2019), this truth could be extracted from participants' stories. Guba's model of assuring trustworthiness (cited by Singh, 2014) presents four facets that need to be considered. The first refers to research satisfaction and the authenticity of the information imparted by the participants (also referred to as the 'truth value'). The second facet is individual-to-individual as stories differ from participant to participant and this makes reference to the results of the study that may be functional to other groups. Neutrality was another facet that was required of myself as the researcher as I could in no way influence the respondents' subjective interpretations of the topic under study (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, & Morrison, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Qualitative research requires consistency of data which enables the researcher to understand participants' perceptions and experiences. According to Wertz (2011), Yeni (2012) and Singh (2014), consistency is one aspect that ensures the exclusiveness of a study and makes it stand out from other studies. Moreover, the perceptions of the teachers regarding the inclusion and exclusion of learners who had diverse learning needs provided the in-depth insights that I expected, and this contributed to the trustworthiness of the study (Macartney & Morton, 2013; Nel, 2016; Ojwang, Chireshe, & Rutondoki, 2010). Trustworthiness was also ensured by storing the narratives of the participants in a safe but retrievable format. The participants were given the opportunity to read the analysis of their stories and were therefore able to authenticate the truth thereof (Ann et al., 2016; Anne et al., 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This collaboration between the researcher and the participants partly achieved trustworthiness in the study while other measures also achieved this requirement. For instance, the sample was comprised of teachers at the school who interacted with special needs learners on a daily basis. This ensured the authenticity of their responses. Also, the fact that the researcher was a trusted colleague and insider in the field of study who wished to understand the participants' perceptions and describe their actions minimised the study limitations while ensuring its trustworthiness (Atkins et al., 2012; Denzin, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

4.8 Threats and Limitations

Limitations that impact a study are the perceived challenges that are considered by the researcher before administering the actual study. Language was perceived as a possible limitation as the stories would be told in the language that the participants would be most comfortable in, but they had to be transcribed and constructed in the English language to reflect reality for the researcher (Aishath et al., 2019; Andrea, 2017; Andrews et al., 2013). Thus the narratives were carefully transcribed with the assistance of a language expert who was proficient in both English and IsiZulu. Other perceived limitations were that a participant could withdraw at any point or that they might be shifting and changing their position in the narrative as they might want to 'please' the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; (Andrea, 2017).

It was also perceived that limited training and knowledge on the part of the respondents could impact the results. Moreover, the participants might have collaborated or done some research before or during the narrative writing process to gather information and this could have skewed the data. The participants' teaching experience could also have been limited which could have impacted the richness of the data. For this reason more experienced teachers were selected.

The most important limitation of the study is its lack of generalizability due to its small scope. However, the trustworthiness of the findings will render to outcomes worthy of consideration in future studies in the field of special needs and inclusive education. Moreover, the dissemination of the findings to academics and teachers by means of workshops and seminars may sensitise them to the issue of inclusive education and the plight of learners with disabilities and special needs who are marginalised in mainstream schools.

As was mentioned in the sample selection section, a diverse group of teachers was recruited in terms of grade exposure to represent all seven of the grades in the primary school under study. However, upon close scrutiny the data did not reveal any significant deviations in the participants' perceptions of inclusive education, and thus my original idea of comparisons based on grade differentiation was abolished.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

All the necessary ethical considerations were adhered to from conception to completion as proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and (Anne et al., 2016; Barbara & Jordi, 2008). The study proposal was sent to the College of Humanities in the Educational Psychology discipline to request approval for the study. Letters requesting authorisation from gatekeepers, namely the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Department of Basic Education, were sent and permission was granted to conduct the study (refer to Appendices A and C). The Declaration of Intent indicating all the procedures for the investigation, the study aims and the research questions was also approved. The participants were informed of their rights and they provided written voluntary consent (see Appendix D). The participants also agreed to write narrative stories regarding their perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the primary school (see Appendix E). The school principal and the school management team were also requested to grant permission to conduct the investigation at the school and it was clearly stated in the letter that the study would not interfere with teaching contact times (see Appendix B). Ethical clearance was applied for to conduct the study and permission was granted (see Appendix H). The letter from the editor is also attached (see Appendix F) and the Turnitin report is attached as Appendix G.

Participants are very important in a qualitative study and thus their consent needs to be obtained before the commencement of the field phase of the project. Information about the study was therefore shared with them and all the procedures to avoid unnecessary withdrawal were explained meticulously. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable. Prior to the commencement of the study, the participants were given consent forms to sign stating their voluntary decision to participate in the study. The letter of consent also indicated that the study would not cause any harm to the participants.

The participants were made aware that feelings of doubt or uncertainty might arise and it was clearly stated that, should they request to remain anonymous throughout the study, pseudonyms would be used to guarantee their privacy, as proposed by (Barbara & Jordi, 2008; Bradbury & Miller, 2010; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They were assured that their stories would be used

solely for the purposes of the study and that information could be made available to the school on request for future reference. They could also claim ownership of their responses in writing as proposed by (Andrea, 2017; Andrews et al., 2013; Ann et al., 2016).

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the design and methodology of the investigation that followed a qualitative path of inquiry and used narrative stories to gather the data. The participants' selection method was discussed and the purposive sampling method was explained. This was necessary as the study aimed to obtain teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in all the grades in a primary school in order to present a balanced and inclusive view of the phenomenon at the school under study.

Another reason for the purposive nature of the sample selection was to elicit data from teachers at the same school but from different grades. No comparison was conducted, however, as their perceptions did not deviate significantly and thus did not warrant comparative scrutiny. The nature of the study site was also discussed while the thematic method of data analysis was referred to. The manner in which the trustworthiness of the study was achieved was discussed while the threats and limitations that might have impacted the study were elucidated. The participants were informed that their responses would be analysed and referred back to them for confirmation that their stories were reflected accurately. They understood that the data emerging from the narratives would be categorised into themes.

The ethical issues that were adhered to were also discussed in detail. The anonymity of the participants was assured and it was explained that the participants signed a consent form to confirm their voluntary participation in the study. They were informed that the study was for educational purposes only and that they would not be harmed in any way.

Conclusions were drawn from the findings that had been elicited as described above. The next chapter will present the data and discuss these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the data that were collected using standardised measures and procedures as were referred to in the methodology chapter. This chapter illuminates and interprets the phenomenon under study from teachers' perspectives and explores their views on the inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities and learning difficulties in a South African primary school. The data were gathered using teachers' written narratives. The reason for using these stories was that they would assist me in interpreting events and people's actions in real life situations pertaining to the phenomenon under study (Defence et al., 2003). It has been argued that narratives expose diverse and contradictory layers of meaning, and my purpose was to convert these to useful dialogue to understand individuals' and social change, as proposed by Andrews et al. (2013), (Jorge Luiz da & Lisliane dos Santos, 2011) and (Li, 2010). According to Garud et al. (2011) and Singh (2014), narrative stories are not understood by the reader so, as the reader and the researcher, I actively contextualised these stories to a broader knowledge and experience by applying my own frames of reference to assess and to elaborate on their meanings. I utilised inductive methods to investigate common themes that emerged from the individual stories. To proceed with the study, the following questions guided the generation of the data:

- What are teachers' prevailing perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school?
- How do teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school?
- Why do primary school teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion the way they do?

To address the above research questions, I decided to use the narrative stories of seven participants (one from each grade) at the primary school. The participants were guided to write their stories about how they perceived the inclusion and exclusion of students, especially those experiencing learning difficulties in their school. Their narratives could be presented in the form of free writing. These stories elicited a number of themes, namely:

- Training and support for knowledge of inclusion and exclusion;
- Conflicting perceptions of inclusion and exclusion;
- A disregard for policies guiding inclusive education due to a lack of institutional information about application at classroom level;
- Misunderstanding of students with disabilities; and
- Parental involvement and support (or lack thereof).

The participants are referred to by pseudonym and their responses are presented verbatim.

5.2 Themes that Emerged from the Narratives

5.2.1 Training and support for knowledge of inclusion and exclusion

All the teachers were of the opinion that they had limited knowledge of the policy of inclusive education. They shared strong feelings that they could have been in a better position if only they had been formerly exposed to inclusive practices as well as to learners with disabilities, particularly during pre-service training. They all concurred that some of the things they had to do in order to include learners with learning challenges required intensive and specialised knowledge of the inclusion phenomenon, which they did not have. Whereas the majority felt that the Department of Basic Education was not doing enough to support their mandate to teach children with learning challenges, two participants mentioned that concerted efforts were made to offer in-service training in the form of workshops. They expressed the following ideas in this regard:

Pseudonyms	Participants' responses (verbatim)
Meyiwa	*"I was not trained to teach these kids. All I know is to be in class and deliver information to 'normal' kids. It is really difficult, as some of them are struggling even with hearing what I am saying, let alone understanding what I am saying."*
Mchunu	*"In my entire teaching experience I have never had to deal with a disabled child, and I never was introduced to it during my training, so I cannot be expected to teach them now. I really have no idea how to deal with them."*
Zondi	*"Apart from the workshops we seldom have [that are] arranged by the department, I was introduced to inclusive education when was doing Bachelor of Honours degree that leaves me with no practical or classroom application, just an introduction. This gave me little insight of how inclusive education and learning should be administered in the school situation. It is a different story all together now that I have to be inclusive in my class."*
Khathi	*"I have never been introduced to inclusive education and learning during my pre- training process. I am only learning along the way and that is really not fair, as well as attending workshops that are rarely arranged by the department which are hardly enough*

	to last the whole year of teaching since they take about two hours at the most."
Ngidi	*"I would say the department is doing a lot as far as arranging workshops which work perfectly with weekly meetings we have every Thursday with grade educators. These are followed by phase meetings which have to report back to the management team in the school and further to the Institution Based Support Team that further reports to the district who will then, out of the reports arrange, workshops based on the report that they have received."*
Sthole	*"A lot has been done in acknowledging inclusivity and shying away from exclusion. We ought to have a change of mind set as teachers, we also have teacher assistants who are sent to our schools by the department. Teacher assistants really come in handy for our rescue though they themselves have no idea of dealing with these kids."*
Khomo	*"This is just other methods from the department to frustrate us, we are ready to leave the system but expected to learn new methods which we might not even get a chance to practice, little training we get is not enough effort for the confidence I need in order to include children with difficulties".*

In general, the above responses revealed that the participants found it difficult to teach learners teaching a learner with a disability. It is also evident that the teachers felt that their age group and teaching experience had a great impact on how inclusion and exclusion was perceived. Some referred to a lack in their training, for example: "*In my training I was never introduced to teaching of learners with disabilities",* while only some indicated that they had been introduced to teaching learners with disabilities during their training.

The participants clearly felt a need for educators to be informed of inclusive policies to support their schemas about best practices for the inclusive education of children with challenges. They even proposed assistance for teachers who tend to shy away from the policy of inclusivity in order to take the load off their shoulders. The participants were generally in agreement that both basic and in-service training was required to teach learners displaying learning difficulties or who have disabilities. According to the literature, among the factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education are the apparent lack of policy clarity and a lack of or limited training (D. D. a. J. Bornman, 2014; Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Macartney & Morton, 2013; Nel, 2016; Ogina & Dladla, 2018). Scholars have argued that the division between inclusive policy and practice will ultimately be sealed through the implementation and enforcement of education policy by the Department of Basic Education. On the other hand, (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Rymond Lang, 2017; Walton & Rusznyak, 2016) posit that teacher training education is the most effective time to develop affirmative attitudes towards inclusive education and that the training of teachers is subjective to the amount and type of education and academic preparation obtained. Therefore, for the successful implementation of inclusive learning, teachers require the maximum amount of training which will result in positive attitudes as well as confidence to include learners of all abilities in their teaching practices.

The Special Needs Education policy (EWP6) stipulates that every child has a right to play and develop with its peers (DOE, 2001). However, the lack of specificity and clear guidance in this policy mitigates against its effective implementation (Menken & García, 2010; Rymond Lang, 2017). This was corroborated by the respondents whose narrative stories revealed a lack of confidence in implementing inclusive education. Teacher Sthole specifically referred to teacher assistants who are appointed at schools without the necessary training to assist learners with

learning challenges. In my experience, it is common practice to allow these assistants to work with learners without a qualified teacher's presence in the classroom, and the problem is exacerbated as they do not only have limited training, but also limited teaching experience to fall back on when they deal with learners who experience challenges.

The literature clearly supports the argument that appropriate pre-service training will lead to positive teacher attitudes and teaching practices (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; J. Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Donohue & Bornman, 2015). Some respondents acknowledged that they had been introduced to inclusive education and learning, but the majority only encountered this mandate for the first time in the work place. Some felt that many years of teaching experience did not support their knowledge of teaching learners with special needs. One participant stated: "*I have taught for more than twenty years but have never taught severely physically challenged children. This is too much stress on me*".

Misconceptions about disability are really taking a toll on teachers and exacerbate their lack of confidence at some point. The participants seemed to fear the unknown and tended to ignore diversity, even though the phenomenon of disability might have existed in their classrooms. However, on a positive note, teacher Sthole argued that teachers require a change of attitude. Others also demonstrated a positive attitude towards adaptation and change. This is reflected in the words of one participant: "*With thorough preparation, networking within the school and with neighbouring schools and even doing research, it will help a lot*".

According to the sociocultural theory, true and worthwhile education is vested in the nature of the social contact that occurs between two or more people with diverse levels of abilities and awareness. The sociocultural theory of learning dismisses the concept of special schools and supports inclusive schools by arguing that learning should occur when learners of different competencies work together to achieve the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Davidson, 2010; Eun, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Menken & García, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). It is thus vital that teachers are trained and encouraged to embrace inclusive education, as this will give them the insight that their responsibility is to guide learners to their next level of understanding, namely the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Understanding the need for development towards the zone of proximal development will position teachers to set tasks beyond the learners' current level of understanding with the aim of leading them to the next level of development. Teachers' main responsibility is to guide learners to this next level while offering some help until the leaners are able to move without guidance. This was expounded in the outcomes based education approach (M. Williams & Burden) as it encouraged teachers to shift from a teacher-centred towards a learner-centred approach by acknowledging that all children can learn; but they do so at their own diverse levels and pace. This has not changed in the current CAPS approach, which also mandates learner-centeredness and inclusivity (DBE, 2011).

The sociocultural theory of learning underpins mediation, which encourages teachers to abolish the perception that is often expressed in words such as "I cannot teach these learners". The fact that this attitude prevails in classrooms was underscored by the current study as some respondents acknowledged that they would find it impossible to teach learners with learning challenges. According to (Brozek, 1994; Davidson, 2010; McInerney et al., 2011; Moll, 1990; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017), the mediation theory posits that learners need a significant other with more knowledge and skills to help them learn. Teachers are thus required to regard themselves as the tools that learners should use to guide them to the zone of proximal development. They will do so effectively by considering that knowledge has to be imparted in small and meaningful units that are learner-centred and age appropriate.

According to (Butin, 2005; Moll, 1990; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017; Walton, 2015; Walton & Lloyd, 2012), it is till challenging in South Africa to provide academic excellence without conceptual clarity and scholastically appropriate initial teacher education courses for an all-encompassing schooling system. Internationally and in South Africa, it is agreed that the skills development of teachers needs to be dynamic so as to enable them to be scholastically responsive to the various needs of learners in numerous teaching environments (L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). These are the means that are put in place so as to address the issue of support and training required in order for teachers to acknowledge the call for inclusive education .It is also through teacher's perception that training and education is mainly what they see as hindering them from fully including all learners.

5.2.2 Conflicting inclusion and exclusion perceptions

Pseudonyms	Participants' responses (verbatim)
Zondi	*"I understand if the department requires us to include learners of different intellectual abilities, but not learners who have physical disabilities… those are a lot of work. We even have to teach them toilet routines and even take them to the toilets. This is so because at a political level education laws are passed and later imposed on the education system without any consultation. … It is too much work for a person who is a teacher to nurse and to be expected to teach these kids."*
Khathi	*"We have huge numbers in our classes that one teacher has to control, they seem so be disruptive and uncontrollable."*
Mchunu	*"These kids really do not belong to school, they have to be supervised by medical doctors for their own sake."*
Ngidi	*"Gone are those days when disability was used to deprive children of their right to learn. I grew up with a number of disabled children and as a result none of them work like me. It's high time as teachers that we learn to accommodate all learners of all abilities and disabilities, they come from us and they are our families."*
Meyiwa	*"We really cannot teach them both at the same time. Some must be given medical supervision or rather be in special schools."*

Most of the teachers' respondents had conflicting opinions and understandings of inclusive exclusion by another educator, regardless of the fact that they were teaching at the same school. Some statements that emerged under this theme are the following:

The above comments revealed conflicting perceptions and understanding of inclusion and exclusion. It was evident that some teachers felt that some learners could not be taught in their school and thus suggested transferrals to special schools. This view obviously supports a form of excluding learners, especially those with even moderate learning difficulties. The teachers did not necessarily consider the causes of these learning difficulties – whether it was the system or even the environment − nor did they look at factors within the child. The teachers understood that inclusion applied to learners of different intellectual levels but not to learners with physical disabilities. The expression that "*these kids must be supervised by medical doctors*" clearly suggests conflicting ideas of inclusion and exclusion based on the perception that disability is a sickness that needs medical interventions only. According to the literature, inclusion means that there should be behaviour management and support for learners who exhibit challenges and that means that there should be interventions so that learners become responsive to education and that teachers address the individual profile and needs of learners (B.McClean, 2012; Rymond Lang, 2017; Walton, 2015; Walton & Lloyd, 2012). According to (Das, 2014; Walton, 2015; Waugh & Peskin, 2015) challenging behaviour should be addressed and need not result in the exclusion of learners. Furthermore, (Walton, 2015; Walton & Rusznyak, 2016) mention that an all-encompassing schooling system requires that teachers obtain knowledge and understanding of exclusion by looking at it from the perspective of those who are marginalised by the dominant culture of a regular school. In my view, such excluded learners are devalued and even dehumanised.

When the participants' views were scrutinised against the theoretical framework, a clear dichotomy emerged. The theory posits that handicapped children are merely less developed on the same continuum of development as their counterparts (B.McClean, 2012; Mills, 2010; Moll, 1990), whereas the participants generally disregarded this view by arguing that such children exist on a continuum that is separate from that of their peers.

Vygotsky criticises this latter view that the development of challenged learners should proceed along entirely separate lines, arguing that such children are treated differently because of how they

are labelled. The Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning argues that "once brand-named a fool or handicapped, children are located in completely new social conditions [and] then his or her entire development proceeds in a totally new direction" (Vygotsky, 2017:158). Thus Vygotsky puts emphasis on abolishing the separation of learners by placing them in special schools instead of including them in mainstream schools for social interaction and learning development. The sociocultural theory disputes the behaviourist theory which was concerned with exploring stimulus response relationships and substitutes it with the ideology of exploring the order of mental processes and development. This rejection was grounded in his argument that the approaches were reducing occurrences to a set of psychological atoms (McInerney et al., 2011). Marxist philosophy made a profound impact on Vygotsky who explains human behaviour in relation to their environment and physical conditions. I also came to the belief that social and environmental elements impact behaviours and thus have a direct impact on education outcomes. It was against this backdrop that the study investigated teachers' perceptions of inclusive and exclusive schooling in a primary school.

It is mentioned in the South African Journal of Education (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2014) that the success of inclusive schooling does not only depend on equitable education provision for all learners, but on systemic curriculum accommodation as well. However, cultural beliefs in developing countries and in South Africa often causes students with disabilities to be barred from mainstream schooling because they are believed to be disruptive and unable learn. This sentiment was also expressed by some of the respondents. The South African Journal of Education (Ibid.) states that the gap between inclusive policy and practice can ultimately be closed through clarification of relevant goals and the enforcement of the inclusive education policy by the Department of Basic Education. Therefore, in light of the majority of the participants' perceptions, the enforcement of inclusive education policies seems urgent.

A novel suggestion by the participants was that there should be at least two teachers per class in the primary school in order to render these classrooms fully inclusive for curriculum as well as emotional support. The teachers felt that the stress of teaching learners with disabilities was excessively burdensome and should be alleviated in this manner. Considering the large number of learners in the classrooms in their school (probably in excess of 50 learners per class), their

suggestion makes sense. However, the South African Journal of Education highlights that a lack of political will poses a great challenge towards inclusive education in South Africa due to poor funding, vague guidelines, and ambiguity of incentives and directives (J. Bornman & Donohue, 2014).

5.2.3 Disregarding policies guiding inclusive education due to a lack of institutional information about application at classroom level

Some of the participants were of the opinion that, in order to survive the stresses of the classroom, they had to ignore policies that require the profiling of learners in order to see what support they need to address inclusive education for all. They argued that these profiles required a lot of work and were time consuming. More specifically, they referred to the support needs assessment forms (SNA1 and SNA2) which have to be completed at school level. It is the duty of the subject teacher as well as the class teacher to complete these forms that form the basis of learner diagnostic information. These forms are filed for current and future reference and are carried over from one year to the next. If neither of these forms are filled in properly, the child is as good as being excluded from learning. Only if these forms are properly completed will they result in appropriate support for a specific child. A factor that seemed to stunt this process was parents' angry response to profiling children with special needs, and the teachers seemed to want to avoid conflict with such parents. The teachers raised the following points:

Pseudonyms	Participants' responses (verbatim)

Sthole	*We do not get much help from the support team that is school based or from the institution based support team as they themselves have no idea what they have to do. The ISBT has the responsibility as the institution learner provision team to coordinate provision services within the school through recognising and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs, the progress of the programs for learners to provide training for teachers and to encourage collegial collaborative support and to eventually liaise with*
	the district based support teams. As a school we are all in limbo; as a result we tend to do away with the policy of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support."
Mchunu	*"No one wants to fight with parents; they get angry with screening, identification and support results. They are mostly in denial or don't understand that their children have special needs. They normally say, 'Mr Mchunu has issues with my child', therefore the child ends up as a victim of exclusion and drops out of school."*
Ngidi	*"I do not really want to lose my job. Filling in SNA1 and SNA2 forms is asking for trouble. Parents don't hesitate to go to the circuit office and say, 'My child has been expelled from school, and they say he is not normal. I am aware that Mrs Ngidi hates my child'."*
Zondi	*"After having identified the child's [profile] through the screening process, I am really not sure what to do with the child in my class. I do not know where to begin with sign language."*
Khomo	"*The only time we get people from the district office coming to our school is after a parent complained about false screening and assessing the child."*

Khathi	*"I cannot waste my time screening children while I have a lot to do to complete the learning program within the stipulated time."*
Meyiwa	*"I believe it is not my duty to identify a child; instead, the department should bring doctors to do it, not us."*

In the above quotations the participants voiced their perception that they had no choice but to overlook the Screening, Assessment, Identification and Support policy, particularly as parents whose children are identified with special needs are never happy with the result. It was also evident that even when a learner had been assessed as a special needs child, it was difficult to teach that child as they had no idea how to support the child's needs in a classroom situation. Teacher Zondi specifically referred to sign language, which suggests that she had to contend with teaching a deaf child or children along with those who could hear without having been trained in the rudiments of sign language.

The ((DoBE), 2014) recommends that any successful inclusion process begins when the subject teacher has identified learners' needs. This teacher then works together with the homeroom or class teacher and the IBST to determine support measures to assist individual learners with special needs. The use of the SNA1 and SNA2 tools is a way of identifying specific support for specific children's needs. Policies ((DoBE), 2010, 2014) require differentiation in terms of the curriculum, the learning environment, teaching methods as well as assessment methods to cater for learners' diverse needs. When these policies are ignored, the process of inclusion is disrupted. This often seems to happen following parents' threats when they dispute teachers' assessment of their child as a special needs learner. On the other hand, teachers' reluctance or inability to implement policies at classroom level leads to the failure to differentiate the curriculum, the teaching environment, learning content, and teaching and assessment methods to suit each learner's needs. A heavy work load and excessively large classes enhance teachers' unwillingness to screen, assess, identify and support learners according to SIAS tools. They shy away from contentious profiling to avoid the negative criticism of parents and reprimands by district officials who visit the school following parents' (often unreasonable) complaints.

The teachers' perceptions were in many instances in direct contravention of policies and in opposition to the sociocultural theory of learning. According to this theory, learning is made possible by grouping learners according to either their abilities or disabilities. Moreover, learners require significant others to mediate learning and to guide them to the next level in the zone proximal development. Learners learn by modelling what they see from more competent peers or learning facilitators who possess more knowledge and skills (Davidson, 2010; Mills, 2010; Moll, 1990; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). The fact that the teachers acknowledged that they lacked the knowledge and skills to teach learners with special needs suggests that they would have been unable to observe and witness the change occurring in a child's zone of proximal development and that their support of the child would then have been stunted. According to Vygotsky (2017), observing change in a child's learning is the opportunity to redirect and enhance learning to the next level. If a child does not display any signs of change, that child is considered incapable of learning and development is thus retarded. Hence, with a bit of assistance, change can be observed up to the time when no assistance is required at all. As a result, the child gets to change his or her thinking within his or her social conditions. The child's thinking is not in any way influenced by characteristics but only by his or her social activities with others. For positive change to occur, teachers need to provide structured cues, engage in investigative talk, and recognise social arbitrations when introducing everyday activities in the classroom to assists learners in appropriating and taking control of their learning (Brozek, 1994; Mills, 2010). These practices will assist children to apply their knowledge, reorganise their future experiences, and develop their problem solving strategies for successful negotiation of their future.

According to (Klein, Feldman, & Zarur, 2002), the humanistic approach to learning implies that teachers should identify and aim to meet individual learners' needs within the context of classroom groupings. This grouping of learners encourages inclusion but may also result in exclusion if these groups are not structured appropriately. This approach suggests that children must be helped and motivated to make decisions about how and what they want to learn. The theory disagrees with the notion that curriculum content for every child in the same age group must be cast in stone, as differentiated among groups may occur as well.

In a certain sense, the teachers seemed to lack empathy for children with special needs as the majority supported the notion that these learners were a burden in their classrooms. This viewpoint may be viewed with empathy as the workload and class sizes that they had to contend with were obviously a challenge. However, when teachers get to know their learners as individuals and understand how each one tries to make sense of the world rather than seeking to enforce their view points, it will benefit the learners' development. In acknowledging the fact that children are different, Marion (cited in Hamachek, 1997:149) states: "Humanistic education starts with the awareness that schoolchildren are not the same [and] by helping and supporting them to be more like themselves and less like others" .

5.2.4 Misunderstanding the condition of students with disabilities

By placing students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, they are allowed to be part of regular educational development processes. According to Shymani Hettiarchchi (2014) and Tiwari et al. (2015), inclusion ensures the complete participation of learners with disabilities in fixed classroom activities. (Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Tiwari et al., 2015) mention that students with disabilities will be fully included in regular classroom activities if they are provided with appropriate services. However, mainstreaming requires that a child meets the demands of general education classroom criteria, which is often quite a challenge. However, inclusive education guarantees complete participation of all learners in regular classrooms by allowing them access to the general education curriculum to reach their full potential. This can only be done successfully if the condition and background of learners with disabilities or learning challenges is fully understood. In this regard, the participants commented as follows:

Pseudonyms	Participants' responses (verbatim)
Zondi	*"With a lack of disability understanding amongst the parents, community as well as teachers, a number of learners end up being excluded in so many different ways."*

Sthole	*"Yes, grouping of learners according to the type of ability and even disability is the way to go about to include all learners, according to the department who first and foremost does know what is it like to teach a disabled child."*
Meyiwa	*"I find it better to teach a mentally disabled child than a physically challenged child."*
Ngidi	*"As a teacher I believe that children with disabilities are disadvantaged by teacher model and suggest a co-teaching*
	model may be used urging that at least expert teachers in a particular field, especially those who used to teach in special schools, to share their strategies with us so that they will be used to endorse inclusion of schoolchildren in systematic education classrooms."
Khomo	*"Putting together students with disabilities as a way of including them exposes them most of the time to humiliation directed at them by both their peers and teachers as they can't defend themselves. Students with disabilities require sympathy and kindness [which is] possible in special schools [but] not in this school."*

The teachers' ideas showed that a narrow construct of the disability framework still exists as physical and social features were highlighted based on the teachers' past experiences of students with disabilities. They implied that disability is what is portrayed by a child's behaviour rather than by viewing disability as a condition that should not be limiting to a learners' image and self-worth. Teachers as well as society should embrace disability as a condition and not a dehumanising affliction and they should advocate an open-minded view of disability.

Recent literature on disability argues that people are all different in one way or another and so are their abilities, but no person is less of a human being than another. According to Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) (DOE, 2001), all children have a right to play and to develop and learn along with their peers. However, according to (Macartney & Morton, 2013; Tiwari et al., 2015), few teachers recognise this fact as they perceive exclusion as a more favourable option for providing education to students with disabilities. According to (Tiwari et al., 2015), education requires the full participation of all learners with disabilities in regular classroom activities where they are exposed to appropriate services but the same opportunities as all other learners.

Responsive pedagogy requires that teachers base their thinking and practices on responsive, holistic and reflective teaching through which all children will become capable and lifelong learners. Although South African policies advocate full support for all children, incapacitated children are still exposed to deficit-based expectations and practices within their early childhood schooling where disabled children still experience low encounters with their able-bodied peers (Kruger, 2015; Macartney & Morton, 2013). As a result, children with disabilities are often labelled by their able-bodied peers as incompetent. Therefore assessment contexts should focus on methods and goals that foster the inclusion of all learners.

By using the sociocultural lens to view the theme of misunderstanding of children with disabilities and special needs, it became clear that such children require the help of others to direct their problem solving behaviours (Brozek, 1994; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). If this need is misunderstood and these children are raised in seclusion, their development is stunted. Thus all children need to engage collaboratively in activities for social and cognitive development. Children learn within a social system along with learners of their age rather than in seclusion where they are labelled in accordance with a disability. The concept of attaining the zone of proximal development thus supports inclusive rather than exclusive education (Mills, 2010; Moll, 1990; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017), which is a concept that teachers and parents need to understand if learners with disabilities are to be fully accommodated in the education system. According to inclusionists, children with special needs should develop friendships with typical other children (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010); only then will they reach their full potential as worthy human beings.

5.2.5 Parental involvement

Within the sociocultural context, inclusive education demands the support of parents and the siblings of learners with disabilities and special needs. Families need to commit to involvement with such children as well as a supportive relationship with the school where the child is enrolled.

Parents need to be involved in the learning processes of all their children and should embrace a positive outlook and block feelings of uncertainty about the future of their children who may have learning difficulties. Unfortunately, many parents still hold the belief that placing a disabled child in a mainstream school does not guarantee that the child will reach its full potential. Hence parents run away from the fact that inclusion of that child demands their involvement in all facets of the child's education. Moreover, many also still believe that sending a child to a mainstream school will be financially challenging and a waste of money and time as it will not guarantee that the child will be able to earn an income and support the family in the future. In my experience, a negative perception that is held by parents is that these children can only support the family through a disability grant. For this reason, children with disabilities are often kept at home and do not enjoy the benefits of life such as playing with other kids. If a child with a disability is sent to school, the parents are not really interested about the child's progress, but they are merely concerned about keeping the child under supervision while they are at work. These and other points were raised by the participants, such as in the following comments:

Pseudonyms	Participants' responses (verbatim)
Meyiwa	*"Parents need to be extra dedicated and committed so that a child can learn and adapt to an environment, but none of the parents ever visit the school after enrolling a 'normal ' child [and it is even] worse if the child is disabled.*"
Zondi	*"It is such a huge responsibility required from parents. Some never had a proper education themselves, it's*

	thus a lot of strain on them to try to help even if they want to."
Sthole	**"***Some parents claim that they are so busy working during the day and on weekends they just want to rest To save themselves from getting extra work they choose not to send a disabled children to school instead, as they believe these are too much work."*
Mchunu	*"Parents look at a disabled child as a burden so they can barely see the uniqueness in their child."*
Ngidi	*"It's really too much to expect from parents to get involved in the education of the child, especially one who is disabled. They believe they are cursed or bewitched or it's a spell on them to give birth to such a child."*
Khomo	*"As much as our children are in the school during the day, the fact remains that we are on our own with kids at home, as they cannot do anything for themselves; not even brush their teeth."*
Khathi	*"Teachers are fighting a losing battle without parents behind their backs to offer support in trying to include these children*."
Khomo	*"Teachers need to do what they are getting paid to do and let us continue with our chores."*
Ngidi	*"Disabled children are kept indoors as parents are ashamed of taking them outside."*

In the above comments the teachers described what they had witnessed about parents' involvement with their disabled children. It is really saddening that there is so little understanding by parents of their responsibility for their children. What is quite a shame is the distinction of kids according to their disabilities. What was clearly revealed was that poverty made parents act inhumanly towards their children with special needs. Surely parents need to take full responsibility for their children, whether a child has a disability or not.

The findings suggest that much still needs to be done by the South African government to assist parents with disabled children by providing the resources that they need to get by. For instance, wheelchairs should be provided at home and at school to help immobile learners move around more freely. Assisting learners with disabilities is a social justice issue. Moreover, education is required to inform parents and the community at large about disability conditions and to remove the stigma that is attached to children afflicted with a disability. People need to understand that these children never chose to be born with the conditions that they have, and it could have happened to anyone. All children have equitable rights and this needs to be recognised by society. According to Education White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001), *all* children have the right to learn and to play with their peers, and disabled children are not excluded from this right. For this reason education policies promote inclusive education and social justice for all learners. South African education policies promote equal participation, social integration, equal admittance to inclusive schools, access to a broad curriculum, equity and redress, and cost effective education for all ((DoBE), 2010). The Special Needs Education Policy (EWP6) further mandates education opportunities for all learners, including those who experience barriers to education and development or those who have dropped out of the education system because of the inability of the education system to accommodate their learning needs. EWP6 defines inclusive education as a system that recognises and regards differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status, or other infectious diseases ((DoBE), 2010).

Building an inclusive education and training system requires embracing inclusive education and trying to eliminate barriers to learning. Amongst the barriers identified is an inflexible curriculum.

Thus learning and teaching practices should be flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles ((DoBE), 2010). As the teachers mentioned, parents need to be more committed regardless of constraints such as poverty and social and emotional barriers. If parents have the means to visit shops, community centres or go to work as all of us have witnessed, they have the means to visit the school where their child is enrolled to enquire about progress and strengthen the teachers' hands in ensuring that discipline and academic progress are sustained.

However, according to (Carolissen, 2012), many parents cannot afford to pay for extra classes, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech therapists that are required as intervention agents by many learners. The perception that their children must manage without assistance seems to prevail. For example, the participants revealed that they were aware of many parents who kept their children at home regardless of calls for inclusion. I strongly believe that educational programs must be devised and rolled out into communities to educate parents and minimise the perception that a disabled child is a burden. Parents must see the uniqueness of each of their children and enrich their lives by affording them the opportunity to attend a mainstream school which, in the South African context, may be exempt from the necessity of paying school fees.

The sociocultural theory of learning was supported by the teachers as they embraced diversity within communities as well as the involvement of parents as significant others in their children's lives. However, they also referred to child-headed households, which exposed the absence of parental influence in many learners' lives and at the same time strengthened the importance of the role of teachers *in loco parentis*. In my view, we all need to acknowledge that we are different and are born with a purpose. No one has the right to deny another person, especially a child, the right to live a fulfilled life and become a worthy citizen. This view was in a sense corroborated by the anger evident in the teachers' implied criticism of parents who were not involved in their children's lives and who did not support their education. As posited by the sociocultural theory of learning, children need to develop and their development is influenced by their peers and significant others, who are also their parents (Mills, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). Children's development is made possible by modelling what they observe in the behaviours of their more competent peers, older persons and parents.

When change and development, even at a limited level, occur in children's educational context, they will continue to grow and learn, even if the pace is slow for those with special needs. Vygotsky (2017) believes that the separation of disabled children from their peers results in retarded development that blocks abstract thoughts. When this occurs, any abstract thoughts that such children may still have developed may be stunted (Brozek, 1994; Mills, 2010). Therefore, separation exacerbates a child's condition and traumatisation and any forces within the child that could have assisted development will be stunted. Thus teachers are required to note the nature and path of development of each child in their care and take cognisance of the social environment in which development occurs (Moll, 1990), which strongly suggests that teachers should forge collaborative bonds with parents.

The sociocultural theory points out that play is a blend of interpersonal and personal influences. According to (L. S. Vygotsky, 2017), culture influences play and parents should scaffold play activities to progress from simple and basic activities to more advanced ones. Figurative and imaginary play is also critical to cognitive and social development. For example, while children work together during a game they discuss solutions to a problem and thus share their mental functions. These shared activities, according to (Moll, 1990; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010) provide settings for meaningful learning. Playing and finding solutions to problems help children clarify what they have learnt and are learning about the world, and it is important that parents encourage their children to play. During such interactions children get to exchange and share various roles that help them make sense of the social world. When parents play with their children, the emphasis shifts to the social organisation of instruction which is a unique form of cooperation between the child and an adult as a central element of the education process.

Parental involvement in play is therefore vital for the development of a child as the child learns both social skills and the ability to understand social roles. Parents must make sure that they scaffold the skills the child has to learn and assist the child not as a teacher, but as a parent. Parents thus do not need teachers' level of education, but fulfilling the role of an adult can add to a child's learning and development.

5.3 A Holistic Perspective on the Teachers' Narratives

The teachers' stories revealed that they held various underlying perceptions that need to be explored and ironed out.

5.3.1 Training, education and support

It was quite evident from the teachers' narratives that they had been exposed to orientation sessions and workshops about inclusive education with possible reference to the plight of learners with disabilities and those with special needs, but it was evident that they did not possess comprehensive knowledge on the concept of inclusion and exclusion. However, they felt that the department had done a lot through workshops and other initiatives such as supplying teacher assistants, but not enough had been done to further assist teachers with the burdens associated with inclusive education. One suggestion was the establishment of learning centres staffed by official consultants to further assist teachers.

5.3.2 Shaping and shifting teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education

In general, the data revealed that the teachers had negative perceptions about including learners with disabilities and special needs in their classrooms. It was noteworthy that some would rather teach learners with learning difficulties than those with physical disabilities, perhaps as some of the latter require physical assistance such as using the toilet and being mobile. Conversely, Donohue and Bornman (2015) and Lang (2017) also found that teachers' attitudes towards teaching learners with disabilities and learning difficulties was negative, but they found a more positive attitude towards teaching children with physical or sensory impairments.

Vygotsky (2017) states that physically and mentally handicapped children may exhibit profound improvement in their development if assisted change occurs in their educational context. Thus separation might cascade deafness or mental retardation and further traumatise the child as his or her attention is fixed on the debilitating condition. This hinders the forces within the child as well as other external forces that could have assisted the child to enter life as a developed and

developing, worthy human being. The teachers' responses revealed that they had not yet embraced this concept and this suggests that they need to be guided to understand that disability is a condition and does not define the person's worth as a human being.

5.4.3 Support for teachers and learners

The teachers indicated that district officials visited the school only if something had gone wrong to ensure SIAS policy administration rather than supporting teachers. Thus teachers were underwhelmed by the execution of the department's mandate to encourage and support them; instead, they felt victimised and marginalised when parents' narrow views superseded their professional assessments. The negative consequence of this situation was that the teachers would rather abstain from a task than be the brunt of parents' and officials' ire.

Various teams should work together in support of teachers who are mandated to work towards implementing policies of inclusive education. These teams exist at departmental and school level. Departmental officials as members of the IBST need to work in a collaborative manner with the SBST and teachers to ensure that holistic support is provided and that the responsibility of developing inclusive schools is embraced by all role players, including parents and the community. Parents need to play their role by providing assistive help to enhance the education of their children, especially those who experience barriers to learning due to disabilities. The support given by parents must assist in minimising all available barriers to learning that can cause disabled and special needs children to reach a dead end in their lives. Instead, the teachers revealed that parents of children were in denial if they were identified as requiring special needs and blamed the teacher for unprofessional conduct rather than assume responsibility for their child's needs. At home, parents need to ensure that the environment is conducive for promoting learning regardless of the disability status of a child. Training does thus not necessarily apply to teachers only but is applicable to parents and even community members who all need to understand disability and acknowledge inclusive learning.

5.4.4 Understanding and embracing inclusive learning

Although the teachers were aware of the concept of inclusive education, their knowledge was marginal. Inclusive learning should not occur in schools only but should be embraced by families and community members as well. However, the breakdown in communication that the teachers referred to when they had identified a learner with special needs speaks to a clear gap between parents and teachers that need to be bridged if inclusive education is to be achieved at the school. Children with disabilities should no longer be secluded in hiding while other family members sit over dinner or engage in family activities. Families need to adopt and embrace the saying that 'charity begins at home'. What a child sees at home is what a child will practice in any environment where he or she functions. In fact, all parties need to play their roles and district officials must make sure that they are working towards providing infrastructure accessibility and make provisions for special rooms like libraries and multipurpose classrooms where the needs of all learners can be met.

5.4.5 Provisioning of resources and assessment

Schools need adequate resource provisioning to enhance the teaching and learning of all children. The respondents were unanimous in slating the department for not providing sufficient resources while requiring that they implement top-down policies that require specialised resources efficiently.

5.4.6 Assessment

According to the literature, assessment methodologies also need to be redirected in a manner that does not exclude some learners. Assessment has to serve the purpose of informing instructional planning. As is mentioned in by the DBE (2014), assessment has to evaluate teaching effectiveness so as to assess learning. The participants expressed the need for assessment redirection to help them accommodate all learners. Currently, assessment identifies learners' cognitive strength and to evaluates their achievement against predetermined criteria for the purpose of grading and

promotion (DBE, 2014). Assessment thus addresses what learners cannot do instead of focusing on what they can do and what their unique abilities are.

Clearly, it is of no use to send a child to school who will be excluded from the assessment program. In short, assessment policies for inclusive education have to be redesigned so that assessment will determine what all children can do in a focus area. This will require differentiated assessment strategies that are inclusive of learners with disabilities and learning challenges. This means that the current assessment policy will have to be redesigned in consultation with people with disabilities so as to get the feel of their needs and requirements. Assessment should thus not focus on grading and promotion purposes only, as this focus causes a large number of children to drop out of school. This means they are excluded from equitable education and opportunities when they do not meet any of the assessment requirements and they are not considered worthy of attaining academically. Grading, which is a focus of assessment currently, is not only detrimental to disabled learners, but even to 'normal' learners who do not meet promotion or 'pass' requirements and conditions.

5.4.7 Parental involvement

As was implied by the teachers, parental involvement at the school was minimal. Parents only seemed to want to visit the school when they were upset by a teacher's assessment and required a departmental official to step in to reprimand the teacher. This situation is untenable as parents and teachers need to forge partnerships and cooperate, especially with regards to assessment outcomes and the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support policy which serves as a diagnostic measure to identify learners with challenges who require support. It was a disconcerting finding that parents regarded these measured outcomes in a negative light and even thought that the teacher 'hated' their child instead of understanding that their child needed assistance. On an even more negative note, teachers' persistent tendency to ignore this policy to avoid conflict will seriously impact the well-being of children with special needs in the future as interventions to assist them will be withheld. The fact that officials visited the school only to reprimand a 'delinquent' teacher at the request of an irate parent also exposed a serious gap in the professional relationship between

the school and the district office of the Department of Basic Education − a gap that should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

5.4.8 Understanding disability and children with special needs

An analysis of the data revealed an urgent need to educate both teachers and parents in various aspects of educational outcomes. For instance, the above section revealed that parents have to understand the purpose and procedures that teachers administer to assess learners, while teachers need to understand that disability is a condition that does not impinge on the right of children to be treated as human beings with rights. If this happens, offensive comments such as "*Disabled children need to be supervised by doctors"* will be eradicated from teachers' language. Focused and sustained in-service training of teachers will purge erroneous perceptions such as the one above and others such as that "*…disabled children cannot learn; they are disruptive and deserve medical supervision"*. The latter part of the comment is indicative of a perception that disability is a health issue instead of a condition that needs to be embraced and accommodated by families, communities and in the school. The sociocultural theory of learning contributed to my understanding that the learning of a child is not merely related to cognitive development, but that it is also a sociocultural human activity that needs to be supported by significant and knowledgeable others (Charlesworth, 2000).

If perceptions such as those quoted above persist, many learners will not achieve their zone of proximal development. Everyone has a role to play in the child's life and, according to (Charlesworth, 2000), teachers need to challenge children with activities that go even beyond a learner's level of independence. This form of amplification is vital and teachers need to understand that it builds on children's strengths and enhances development. According to Vygotsky (2017), learning is a relationship between thinking and the social organisation of classroom instruction. Education as thus a mutual contract between the child and the adult and not just the transmission of knowledge from an adult to the child (Charlesworth, 2000; Moll, 1990; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017).

5.4.9 Creating an inclusive learning environment

It was evident from the teachers' responses that a lack of resources created learning environments that were not conducive to teaching and learning. Most of them lamented this fact, arguing: "*If only the school was under section 21 in terms of norms and standards, at least the school would have been in a position to get learner and teacher support materials"*. When the DBE provides schools with such materials, referred to as learner and teacher support material (LTSM), this budget is allocated per learner per school.

The range of the teachers' comments included the teaching environment and classroom settings, as they were frustrated by a lack of provisioning to accommodate inclusive education adequately. The literature also suggests that teachers need to create inclusive classrooms and sometimes even outdoor spaces that are conducive to learning (DBE, 2014; (Dessel, 2010). Children do not necessarily have to be taken away from their familiar environment, but differentiation will ensure that everyone is included in teaching and learning activities that are conducted at an appropriate level.

5.4.10 The legal framework

The participants' responses reflected a lack of knowledge of specific laws that guide inclusive education. Teachers need to be acquainted with laws pertaining to children with special needs to promote education for all. They thus need to be familiar with the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, the Handicapped Children's Act No. 94-142 of 1975, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act No. 20 of 1975. SMTs and district officials also have to ensure that teachers are informed and knowledgeable of these laws by conducting workshops and seminars.

5.4.11 Guidelines that underpin change

With reference to the literature, teachers need to consider task analysis procedures that allow knowledge to be broken down into smaller steps or units (Mills, 2010; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010). By applying Vygotsky's theory to add structure to children's experiences and knowledge, they

need to use open-ended questions and provide materials that encourage particular kinds of actions that will guide learning. Emphasis should be placed on play in the early years and even later, as this is a major driver of successful learning.

Not only must teachers be agents of change, but they must be in a position to observe change that occurs within a child's zone of proximal development. Change is significant as it creates a basis for redirecting a teacher's perceptions about a child's development. Thus, if a child does not portray any signs of change, learning has not occurred and that child needs to be redirected or re-taught in a different manner that will elicit change. Assistance for change can be provided until no assistance is required at all.

According to (Brozek, 1994; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010), for change to be observed teachers need to provide structured cues. Exploratory talks and social mediations such as importing everyday activities in the classroom to assist the learners in appropriating and taking control of their learning are also required. This will assist children to apply their knowledge and reorganise strategies for problem solving. When this is done in a focused manner, actual learning occurs which is observable when the child is able to solve whatever age appropriate problem is posed with or without any help provided by the teacher or any other person who is the child's significant other. Vygotsky (2017) proposes that the key elements of learning include cultural practices as a source of thinking, social activity, the importance of arbitration in human mental functioning, centrality of education in development, and the inseparability of individuals from their social context.

Therefore, teachers we must study current educational practices and limitations to facilitate thinking and they need to create more progressive and increasingly challenging activities until learners have become independent citizens, irrespective of their learning complications or challenges.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the data that were elicited from the participant teachers' authentic comments and explored the findings that emerged. The participants' responses were then discussed in relation

to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and relevant findings and proposals in the literature. Five main themes emerged from the data and these were discussed in depth. Conclusions were drawn in relation to the findings and discussions.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study was conducted to investigate teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion of learners with disabilities and special needs in a South African primary school. In light of the research questions that guided the study, qualitative data were obtained and the findings were categorised into five main themes that were discussed in relation to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as well as relevant information that emerged from the reviewed literature. The findings were presented in Chapter Five. A qualitative methodology was employed within the interpretevist paradigm to evaluate teachers' written narratives about the topic under investigation. The stories that had been presented in writing were analysed using the thematic approach. Five main themes emerged from the data.

In general, the participants revealed negative perceptions about their engagement with learners with disabilities and learning challenges at the school. However, they were conscious of the threat posed by this negativity and admitted that they should eradicate these perceptions, especially those that hindered positive engagement with learners with disabilities and special needs to address the requirements of inclusive education. The participants also offered suggestions for improving their practices to ensure inclusion and to discourage the exclusion of learners from educational opportunities in their school. They also indicated which measures should be employed in support of their efforts to adhere to inclusive education policies.

This chapter concludes the thesis by offering recommendations in relation to the findings.

6.2 Thesis Summary

The investigation focused on teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school that was the sole study site. The main concern of the investigation was to determine

what the teachers' experiences and perceptions were of inclusive education. I also attempted to determine what support these teachers were offered by the SBST as well as the IBST to assist them in implementing the policy of inclusive education.

The participants were assured that the data they provided in the form of narratives would be for research purposes only, but that the findings could inform educational policy and practices so as to offer support where necessary in terms of the inclusion or exclusion of learners. It was also envisaged that the findings would inform teachers of all learners' needs, but particularly those of disabled learners, in order to support them in reaching their zone of proximal development. The findings would also inform teachers of the importance of taking cognisance of the sociocultural learning theory as this would assist them in their efforts to holistically evaluate their learners. The findings, when appropriately disseminated, will also enlighten other teachers so that they become responsive to appropriate teaching approaches that will include all learners with special needs, as proposed by (Moll, 1990).

I envisage informing teachers at workshops and seminars that they need to understand their role as learning mediators (Brozek, 1994; Mills, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2007, 2017) and that they must be in a position to see change in a child as he or she moves to the zone of proximal development. To attain this goal, a significant other who could be a peer, an adult or a teacher who is at a competence level that is higher than that of the child should assist him or her. According to the sociocultural theory of learning, the role of the significant other is to categorise knowledge into units while offering help until no further help is needed due to developmental change. I shall inform teachers of their role in guiding learners, irrespective of their disability status, as all children are born with knowledge that needs to be developed at the child's zone of proximal development.

In light of the narrative stories that I perused and analysed, I could conclude that the teachers in the primary school under study were cognisant of inclusive education and were subsequently sensitised to understanding that learners with disabilities and those with special needs have the right to an equitable education.

There was evidence in the data that there should be consideration of teachers' perceptions and that their needs should be attended to order to minimise the exclusion of learners with special needs. It was evident that the teachers required in-service training, as the majority claimed that they had never been introduced to teaching learners with diverse needs. They felt that teaching learners with difficulties was adding to the stress caused by a heavy workload and over-full classrooms. There was also evidence that the teachers somehow were labelled according to the type of disabled child they were required to teach, which is a phenomenon that should be eradicated as soon as possible.

The issue of content differentiation was raised. The time allocated to teaching the various learning areas was also deemed too limited when special needs learners had to be taught in the same classroom as high flyers. The Life Skills learning area in particular was referred to by one participant as the "*mother of all learning areas*" and it was stated that it was loved by the learners as they did well in it, yet the time allocation was too limited on the time table. There was a feeling that the way learners were grouped did not help as it posed some challenges because dominant learners were compelled to share information with lower performing learners in the group, and this gave rise to conflict and false assessment results. Due to grouping practices, fights occurred and, due to the labelling of children with special needs, they were traumatised as they could not defend themselves. This in a way debunked the belief that learning occurs in the presence of more able others as proposed by Brozek (1994) and Lee and Smagorinsky (2000). However, the teachers stated that they used groups of either same or of mixed ability learners and attempted to contain any conflicts. Thus the Vygotskian sociocultural theory which proposes that a person of more knowledge is required for learning to take place was applied in the classrooms of the participating teachers as 'mediators' to varying degrees.

The unavailability of resources and the poor infrastructure of the school were common themes in the teachers' narratives. These limitations prompted a call for departmental and district support teams to supply funds for the modification of buildings to accommodate all learners and address their needs.

This study was limited to only seven teachers who narrated their experiences of inclusion and exclusion of learners with a disability or special needs in the primary school under study. Due to

the limited scope of the study, the findings cannot be generalised to all primary schools in the district, province or country.

The study was also limited by the fact that the teachers had to produce their stories in their own time and that this process was unsupervised. The narratives of the participants were in some instances very similar, and this led me to suspect that some of the information they referred to was researched or discussed and that events they narrated had not necessarily occurred in their school. Although these limitations may have compromised the trustworthiness of the data to a limited extent, the purposive sampling method that was used to make sure that knowledgeable, experienced teachers were selected who produced relevant, authentic data ensured the trustworthiness of the entire study.

The following section addresses the research questions and how the participants responded to them. In summary, the study found that the teachers in the school under investigation acknowledged the necessity for inclusive classroom practices and that the exclusion of any learner at the school should be avoided, but it was adequately demonstrated that the implementation of inclusive practices was still in its infancy as various factors created barriers to the full participation of all learners in the school. In essence, it was found that the participating teachers were enthused about the concept of inclusion, but that institutional support, parents' negative attitudes when their children were recommended for special needs education, a relatively rigid curriculum, heavy administrative and academic works loads and over-full classrooms made the comprehensive implementation of this policy almost impossible.

6.3 Addressing the Research Questions

The study aimed to answer three pivotal research questions that will be addressed in this section. The selected participants narrated their stories in writing and these texts were adequate in obtaining sufficient and thick data to address these questions. The qualitative methods of data collection and analysis assisted me in ensuring the findings are trustworthy and the participants confirmed that their authentic perceptions and insights had been captured for analysis and evaluation. The questions that were addressed were:

- What are primary school teachers' prevailing perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the South African context?
- How do teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school?
- Why do primary school teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion the way they do?

6.3.1 What are primary school teachers' prevailing perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in the South African context?

In answering this question, primary school participants teaching Grade 1 to 7 learners were requested to write their stories by focusing on their experiences and perceptions of inclusion and exclusion realities at the school under study. In my analysis of these narratives to address this research question, I was guided by the sociocultural theory of learning which, according to (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017), clearly indicate that, for effective teaching, educators must understand how learning occurs. Teaching and learning practices that are inclusive of all learners should thus be cognisant of learners' needs and learning styles. I must reiterate that I was not able to compare the teachers' comments by grade as the data did not reveal any noteworthy differences.

The data revealed that the main stumbling block for teachers in implementing inclusive classroom practices was that they felt that they had inadequate training. Their perception was that not only in-service training, which most had been exposed to, but in particular pre-service training focusing on the disability phenomenon would have better equipped them to implement inclusive practices and avoid the exclusion of learners, particularly those with disabilities and learning challenges. They understood that their education needed to guide them to bring their teaching practices to a level where they could effectively support all learners' development, especially that of learners who were marginalised due to a physical or learning disability. Training was deemed the panacea for putting them at ease and addressing any child's learning needs. Their stories also revealed that disability as a condition should be understood and that preferential treatment of learners with particular disabilities or the exclusion of others with different disabilities should be avoided at all costs.

Some teachers still had preferences as they mentioned that they preferred teaching a mentally disabled child to a physically challenged one. Moreover, bias unfortunately impacted the perceptions of the teachers who held that children with disabilities in their classrooms could not learn and that they were disruptive. Such children created stressful relationships in the class which, by implication, these teachers were unable to alleviate as they did not know how to address the needs of such learners.

A severe misconception was exposed as some teachers felt that learners with disabilities needed to be supervised by medical doctors. However, they were sensitive to the exclusion of learners with disabilities as they argued that such learners needed a teacher's sympathy as they were often marginalised or bullied and could not defend themselves.

The teachers also referred to the assessment policy which they felt had to be revised as it was deemed content based with the main purpose of grading and promoting leaners. According to the differentiation policy, each child needs to be assessed differently, yet the assessment policy requires standardised testing that is the same for all. They felt this marginalised learners with disabilities as they learn and achieve at a different pace and levels as their peers. The teachers argued that assessment requirements focused only on learning content and not on what individual learners can do. They also mentioned that, in terms of assessment, the inclusion policy was not clear as it was deemed to be top-down and thus exclusive of learners' special needs. They argued that policy thus requires clarity, especially for classroom application. The suggestion was offered that things could improve if policy makers worked hand in hand with people with disabilities when designing assessment policies that address the principle of inclusive education. The requirement referred to as the screening, identification and assessment strategy (Edelsbrunner & Iglesias-Ham) came under scrutiny and some teachers stated that they disregarded this policy as its application caused undue conflict with parents who did not understand special needs requirements and thus became irate when their children were identified as special needs learners. They also thought it was too much work to fill in the SNA1 and SNA2 tools for screening learners.

The participants also perceived the curriculum to be inadequate and stated that it needed to be reviewed if all learners' needs have to be addressed according to a differentiated curriculum.

Moreover, time was not on their side as the time allocated for learning programs was deemed inadequate in some instances. The participants required clarity on both curriculum and content differentiation.

The participants also questioned grouping strategies and argued that they often hindered inclusion and caused the marginalisation of special needs learners as the high flyers tended to ridicule and reject them. This debunks the sociocultural theory to some extent as it proposes that high flyers should work with special needs learners as their significant and more knowledgeable others. The theory is thus commendable in an ideal world, but it does not take cognisance of the classroom reality that learners are often highly competitive, intolerant of those who struggle, and do not see themselves as 'teachers'. Moreover, in the view of the teachers, grouping able and less able learners together resulted in skewed results as competent learners would produce the work which left the perception that all the learners contributed and mastered the task, which was often not the case.

The requirement for support of both institutional and school based support to implement the inclusive policy was high on the list of the teachers' needs. Inclusive education requires appropriate and sufficient resources, yet the teachers had to function in a setting where resources were scarce, infrastructural development retarded, and financial assistance limited.

The participants were also highly critical of a lack of support from parents. They acknowledged that this was due to a lack of knowledge and the influence of cultural beliefs that often caused parents to be ashamed of a child with a disability or learning challenge. They thus often preferred to seclude such children and exclude them from main stream educational opportunities. Moreover, when a child was sent to attend school but was identified as a learner with challenges, the parents became irate and reported teachers to the department, claiming that they were prejudiced against their children. Teachers thus rather avoided such conflict by not applying the evaluation process. In my view, the SMT should address such an issue with due diligence as the evaluation of learners will benefit them, and their interests should weigh heavier than a teacher's sense of being unfairly treated. Thus no teacher should be allowed to shirk such an important responsibility.

Some teachers also referred to the practice of specialisation in the school where specific teachers had the responsibility to teach special needs learners. Their comments implied that this specialisation caused undue stress because they had been 'stuck' and drained in these classrooms for more than ten years; even that some were labelled and mocked as behaving like the learners they taught. In my view, the SMT should be sensitised to this situation and ensure that an equitable dispensation is introduced for all teachers and learners as a matter of urgency. Moreover, the establishment of special needs classes or groups counteracts the sociocultural theory and inclusive policies because these classes might as well have been located in special schools as they enforced the segregation of learners with special needs from their more able counterparts anyway.

6.3.2 How do teachers in a South African primary school perceive inclusion and exclusion?

In addressing this question, the data revealed that the participants were critical of top-down policies that had to be implemented in classrooms without prior consultation. The feeling was mutual that although policies were well intended, they were drafted by people who were not functioning within classroom realities and who were unfamiliar with the actual situation at schools. They agreed that inclusive education was a worthy policy but argued that it required clarity in terms of classroom practices and learner realities. Moreover, the application of inclusive policies required extra work for already stretched teachers who had to contend with over-full classes and a heavy work load. Some tasks were therefore avoided, such as the learner screening process. At this point it must be reiterated that the SMT should step in to ensure the equitable and fair division of tasks and the application of practices, however challenging, that will serve the best interests of all learners.

The teachers erroneously perceived that having to contend with learners with challenges was not really their concern and that such learners were the responsibility of medical doctors. This view corroborated a similar finding by (McInerney et al., 2011; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017). They based this comment on the fact that working with special needs learners creates 'unnecessary' extra work as teachers need to differentiate the curriculum without deviating from the National Curriculum Policy Statement (CAPS) requirements. Not only do teachers have to differentiate in terms of the curriculum, but content, environmental and even teaching method differentiation has to be applied.

Having stated all the above, in summary the teachers viewed inclusive education as a workable alternative to exclusion, but they argued that parental support at home and of teachers' practices was required to assist learners. The issue of support to make inclusive education feasible was strongly emphasised as not only learners, but teachers themselves need the support of school based staff and district based officials. Without the necessary support, inclusive education will stumble and remain a policy on paper only. Moreover, not only teachers' but also parents' and learners' attitude towards inclusive education should change and bullying and teasing should be addressed and eradicated.

Overall, the teachers were enthusiastic about inclusive education and the majority had applied some practices in this regard in their classrooms. They were in agreement that, to strengthen inclusive education, teachers needed to be trained in inclusive education practices and requirements. One stumbling block that was unanimously referred to was the assessment policy that focuses on the grading of learners and not on what learners can do. To achieve an inclusive assessment policy, they argued that it should be revised in collaboration with people with disabilities in order to understand how they think and feel about assessment. By implication, the teachers viewed inclusive education as different from mainstream education because of the many demands it places on teaching and learning practices. It demands, along with other issues, a change in attitude, especially towards children with disabilities and special needs as well as the provisioning of adequate resources and a functional infrastructure.

Inclusive education was viewed as "the way to go", especially in a democratic South Africa that acknowledges human rights and criminalises discrimination against anyone, regardless of disability status. It was stressed that all people are equal before God and deserve to be treated justly. All children are born with already existing knowledge that cannot be created but needs to be nourished and enhanced for further development.

6.3.3 Why do teachers at a primary school perceive inclusion and exclusion the way they do?

Various contradicting perceptions about inclusion and exclusion were noted, and this was due to a number of factors such as training, attitudes and teaching experiences. Some participants believed

that they had not been adequately trained to implement inclusion practices, and they felt they knew nothing about it yet they had to "be inclusive". All agreed that training was minimal at school level and that the in-service training they received at district level was also inadequate as it lasted less than a day, yet they had to apply appropriate practices for the whole year and for the rest of their teaching career.

The teachers experienced some frustration that impacted their attitudes. For example, a few claimed that learning about inclusive education was moot because they were about to leave the system as they had been teaching more than two decades. Not only did the respondents' attitudes revolve around their teaching experiences, but they were clouded by the thought of the plight of learners with disabilities. Some believed that disabled children can neither learn nor be taught. They blamed their stress on policy developers who were considerate in theory but who never thought of how they were going to support practicing teachers in the classroom.

The teachers' perceptions were also shaped by negligible or no provisions for inclusive practices at all. They perceived that the education department imposed policies in a top-down manner without understanding the issues at grassroots level. Adding to this perception was the fact that former special schools existed that would cater for learners exhibiting learning difficulties. They saw no point in teaching these learners in a mainstream school with 'normal' children where they experienced ridicule and rejection. They perceived learners with disabilities as disruptive and requiring more specialised attention than they could provide in classrooms filled beyond capacity.

In a nutshell, the teachers perceived inclusion in a negative light mainly because of the stress it caused related to a burdensome work load, lack of policy application guidelines, limited resources, disruptive learners, critical parents, lack of SBMT and institutional support, and inadequate training. Some misunderstood disability as a sickness or a disease, arguing that it was a medial issue that needed to be addressed by a doctor. Dealing with physical disabilities beyond their training also caused stress, as some learners had to be assisted with the most basic of their bodily functions. They felt that this was beyond the scope of their training and work. They acknowledged the fact that learners were unique, but argued that more able learners could not be assessed in the same manner as less able ones. This added to the stress they experienced as standardised tests

focus on grading and promotion which few learners with disabilities pass, and this causes early school drop-out rates. Dealing with learners' varied linguistic abilities also added to the stress of teaching and assessment in an equitable and fair manner. Moreover, grouping learners in same ability or different ability groups was never without stress. In same ability groups less able learners were separated from their more knowledgeable peers and learning was thus stunted, but in different ability groups the more able learners tended to mock and reject efforts by less able learners to learn. Group assessment also did not give a true reflection of the achievement of all learners in a group as learners who were below average received the same marks as the above average learners, which could have contributed to the false impression parents had of some children's ability. Although the sociocultural theory of learning urges that children learn in the presence of a significant other person who is more competent (Mills, 2010; Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; L. S. Vygotsky, 2017), the teachers argued that this form of scaffolding is not always successful. Less able learners working in groups are often labelled and teased and persistent bullying of this nature leads to less able children dropping out of school.

Conversely, the participants supported and encouraged inclusive education practices that would support the learning of special needs children. Their professionalism and empathy for struggling learners underpinned their sympathetic and supportive approach towards these learners in the classroom and they showed courage in their mission to protect those learners who they knew could not defend themselves. Moreover, the majority of the participants would persevere in addressing their many challenges. They showed willingness to undergo in-service training to enhance their classroom practices and understanding of learners experiencing learning difficulties. Therefore, with continued training, networking, adequate support, clearer assessment policies, financial provision, improved infrastructure and positive parental involvement, coupled with teachers' positive perceptions that will allow them to embrace inclusive education in this primary school, this educational policy has every chance of being successfully implemented in the future.

6.4 Recommendations

This chapter is concluded with some salient recommendations.

- As teachers are required to be life-long leaners, I would recommend that they engage in learning activity research which will enhance their teaching and further their knowledge as teachers in an inclusive education system.
- Teachers need to actively engage in in-service training so as to empower themselves and stay abreast of newly developed policies and practices in the education field.
- Teachers need to understand that disability is not something to label learners but that it is a condition that could have affected anyone. Teasing and rejection should therefore be nipped in the bud before they can rear their ugly heads.
- Teachers need to change their negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities and embrace inclusive teaching and learning practices to address the needs of learners with special needs as well as those of all other learners.
- Teachers should engage in partnerships and networking initiatives with teachers of other schools in the area to share and enhance their inclusive teaching strategies.
- Teachers need to adhere to the policy of differentiation by adapting areas in the curriculum to the learning needs of learners as revealed by the SNA1 and SNA2 forms. It is vital that these forms be completed and updated in the interest of all learners.
- As the study revealed that inclusive education is the mandate of all teachers but that there is a lack of correlation among education support structures to support the school and teachers, I recommend that further studies be done to investigate the position and mandate of support structures in the education system.
- I also recommend that the assessment policy statement be reviewed and that policy makers work in collaboration with people with disabilities to amend existing policies in the interest of inclusivity in all schools. People with disabilities understand what it feels like to be marginalised and negated they are best suited to devise assessment strategies that are not merely content based.

- I also recommend that further research be conducted to investigate whether inclusive education is adequately covered in pre- and in-service training curricula.
- Similar studies but of a much wider scope should be conducted. Thus a much larger sample should be utilised for data collection and the study site should not be limited to one specific context.
- Finally, learners' and parents' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion should also be elicited. This will assure the generalizability of the results.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the thesis conclusions and it also looked at how the questions directing the investigation were addressed. The theoretical framework that contributed to answering the research questions was Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning. The first question explored the perceptions of inclusion and exclusion that prevailed in a South African primary school. The data and findings pertaining to this question were discussed. The next question addressed how teachers in the South African primary school perceived inclusion and exclusion. The data that had been elicited from the teachers' narratives were also used to address this question. The last question looked at why teachers at a South African primary school perceived inclusion and exclusion in the way they did. The participants' responses were analysed and discussed and the findings addressed this question adequately by revealing both positive and negative reasons for the teachers' perceptions. Finally, the study report was concluded with recommendations that were aimed at the education sector as well as future scholarly endeavours in this field of study.

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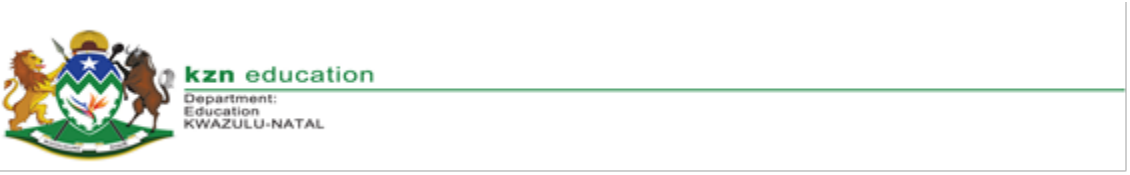
Lev Vygotsky Mind and Society Written: 1930; Source: Mind and Society. L. S. Vygotsky; Published by: Harvard University Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix: A

LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Application for Permission to Conduct Research in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions

I, Amanda Ntombifuthi Mpanza hereby apply for approval to do research in the Department of Education Institutions. The proposed study is part of my tertiary qualification to be conducted at the KwaZulu-Natal University for the fulfilment of a Master of Education Degree in the faculty of Humanities.

Proposed Research Title: **Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion and Exclusion in a South African Primary school.** The research background is going to take place in South Africa in a primary school; it is intended to establish how teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school. Furthermore, it is intended to explore teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school. The study will also attempt to understand teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school.

The research will add new knowledge from what will be gained in this study through teachers' perceptions to what already exists in the literature about inclusive education. It will also serve as an informant for stakeholders in the education system to be aware of the status of teachers' perceptions of inclusion and inclusion, so as to see what support can be offered to support teachers in acknowledging inclusive education.

The main research questions:

1. What perceptions of inclusion and exclusion are prevailing in a South African primary school?
2. How do teachers in a South African primary school perceive inclusion and exclusion?

3. Why do primary school teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion the way they do?

To answer these questions, qualitative methods will be employed. Teachers will be narrating their stories in the form of writing based on how they perceive inclusion and exclusion in the school. Questions will guide educators based on their experiences. In the school of concern, seven (7) teachers will be writing their stories. The teachers in the field are targeted as it is understood that they are actually involved with learners and not in-service training teachers. The sample will be chosen based the fact that, in a primary school, there are 7 grades from grade one up to grade seven. The sampling method is purposive.

It is hoped that the study will contribute to the education, health, safety, and welfare of learners and to the education system as a whole. The study will add new knowledge on teachers' perceptions in a South African primary school. It will also inform education stakeholders about the perceptions that teachers have and what support can offered to assist teachers in inclusive education practices.

The study will bring health to the school in a sense that, as teachers' will get to share their daily perceptions of inclusion and exclusion, in their stories, they will be sensitised to this phenomenon. That will awaken them in a way to check whether are they still in line with what education policy (Education White Paper 6) six requires for inclusive education practices, so therefore healthy teaching will develop. The study intends no harm to learners or teachers. The study will ensure participants' and the school's confidentiality and adhere to ethical considerations. Teachers' participation will be voluntary, and each participant will sign a consent form prior to participation and an information sheet will be included for participants. Participants' times will be scheduled so as not to interfere with their teaching sessions.

The research data collection instrument will be written narrative stories by the teachers. Procedures to obtain the consent of the participants will be followed. Confidentiality will be assured through the use of pseudonyms. The study will not use questions, therefore there are no intrusive questions, and hence no additional support is required. The study is intended to reach completion by November 2019.

I hereby agree to comply with the relevant ethical conduct to ensure that participants' privacy and the confidentiality of records and other critical information are ensured. I agree to provide the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application. I grant the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using print or electronic media.

I will be grateful if the Department of Basic Education sees it feet to grant me permission to conduct the research at the education institution, to fulfil my academic purpose in finding out about teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school.

I, Amanda Ntombifuthi Mpanza, declare that the above information is true and correct.

_____ _____

Signature of Applicant Date: 17 July 2015

Contact details are as follows: 0721098632

E-mail address: amandampanza3@gmail.com

Should you seek any further clarity and explanation, please contact my supervisor, Dr Patrick Mweli, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus),

On: 031 2603549

E-mail mwelip@ukzn.ac.za

Name of Supervisor: Signature_____

Appendix: B

THE LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal
P.O. BOX ---------
Hammarsdale
3700

Dear Sir/ Madam.

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Amanda Ntombifuthi Mpanza who is a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood campus). I am doing a study that requires me to complete a research based thesis and I am hoping to begin the research in August 2019. The topic of my intended research is: Teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African Primary school. With the study I intend to explore how teachers at the primary school are experiencing inclusion and exclusion of learners, especially those experiencing learning difficulties. My study proposes to gather views of teachers and their experiences of inclusive education implementation. I have chosen your school to participate in this study as it is one amongst a number of full service schools, and makes it suitable for the study. This letter is also a form of invitation to your teachers to participate in my study.

The drive to do the study is my personal interest to find out about teachers' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education. It is hoped that through the study teachers' perceptions can be identified. I further request that teachers write narrative stories to explain their perceptions of inclusion and exclusion.

Please be assured that during the study process, your school and the research participants will be fully respected. That means that the name of your school and the participants from your school will not be mentioned in any part of the thesis. Instead, pseudonyms will be used. As proof of the completion of the study, a copy of my MEd thesis can be sent to your school if required.

I would be grateful if you would reply to this letter to the above address. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are willing to give me permission to conduct this study at your school either telephonically or via email. If you require further verification regarding this research, you can contact my supervisor. The details are below.

Dr Patrick Mweli
Department of Education
College of Humanities
University of KZN (EDGEWOOD CAMPUS)
Telephone: 031 2603549
E-mail mwelip@ukzn.ac.za

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Amanda N. Mpanza
Master of Education Student
Phone: 0721098632
Email:amandampanza3@gmail.com

Appendix: C

LETTER TO THE GATEKEEPER

The Manager
Safety and Security Company
P.O. Box-------
Hammarsdale
3700

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: REQUESTING GATEKEEPER PERMISSION

My name is Amanda N. Mpanza, student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing a Master of Education degree in Educational Psychology.

I have written a letter to the school to ask for approval to undertake research at this school. I hereby request that you grant me permission to enter the school premises to do the research.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you grant me permission to enter the premises. If you require further verifications regarding this request, you can contact the principal of the school.

Yours faithfully
Amanda N. Mpanza
Master of Education student
Phone: 0721098632
Email:amandampanza3@gmail.com

Appendix: D

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

The Educator

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: DECLARATION OF CONSENT

My name is Amanda N. Mpanza, a Master of Education student of study you might be willingly to take part in. As a participant I wish to inform you that you have a right of withdrawal without any negative consequences. Do feel free to contact me for more clarity and do consult the participant information sheet provided.

I am looking forward to working with you in completion of my study.

Yours faithfully
Amanda Mpanza
Phone: 0721098632
Email:amandampanza3@gmail.com

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

My background information

Hi, my name is Amanda Mpanza. I am currently enrolled in a Master of Education program at the KwaZulu-Natal University. Prior to this study, I graduated from the KwaZulu-Natal University with B.ED honours in Educational Psychology in 2008. I have since developed a passion to study inclusive education and mainly focus on teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion. Personally, I have not had experience of teaching learners with learning difficulties.

The intended investigation is based on the following objectives:

1 .To understand how teachers' perceive inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school.

2 .To explore teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in a South African primary school.

3. To understand teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion at a South African primary school.

It is hoped and trusted that the study will add knowledge to the already existing knowledge evident in the literature. Secondly, it will serve as an informant in the stakeholders in our education system to be aware of the status of the teachers' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion.

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What perceptions of inclusion and exclusion are prevailing in a South African primary school?
2. How do teachers in a South African primary school perceive inclusion and exclusion?
3. Why do primary school teachers perceive inclusion and exclusion the way they do?

Your part in the study.

This is an opportunity for you to share your views and perceptions as a teacher implementing our government's policy of inclusive education. You will be asked to write your story of how you perceive inclusion and exclusion in your school. Your commitment to this study will be scheduled such that your teaching sessions will not be disrupted. You will be doing this in your own time unsupervised, and I shall collect you written story personally.

Confidentiality and ethical consideration

With your permission, I can declare the ownership of your story. Your participation is voluntary and permission is gained prior by you signing the consent form. You will be kindly asked not to disclose the identity or names of other members in the participant team or disclose any information discussed. Instead, all shared information should be kept confidential.

Publication

The final written report for this research will be submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a requirement for completion of my Masters of Education program. The findings may also be made available at your request, and a copy of the finished thesis will be sent to the principal of your school.

Supervisor

The supervisor for my research is Dr. Patrick Mweli at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Humanities. Feel free to contact him if you have any concerns about this project. His contact details are as follows:

Phone: 031 260 3549

E- Mail: mwelip@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix: E

INFORMED CONSENT

I----------, agree that I voluntarily participate in your study as one of the participants. I am informed and fully aware that I may withdraw at any time, and that my story will be kept anonymous unless I consent that it be published in writing.

Teacher ---------- Date----------

Appendix: F

LANGUAGE EDITOR'S REPORT

lindac@skytec.co.za | 083 344 0706

Research Skills Development Services CC

SARS Income Tax No. 9249355208; CC Founding Statement No. CK94/16841/23 SARS; Tax Clearance Certificate No. 1994/016841/23

SACE REGISTRATION NUMBER: N.D. COERTZE – 1082433 (2003)

DECLARATION OF PROOF-READING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Nicolina D. Coertze, declare that I meticulously perused the manuscript referred to below for language editing purposes. I endeavoured, to the best of my knowledge and ability, to identify linguistic and stylistic inaccuracies that may have been omitted during the initial editing stages by the author and the supervisor. Using the *Word* Tracking system, I kept track of any changes that I made and I also offered annotations as recommendations to the author for additional review of areas that I considered to be linguistically/stylistically flawed. I made specific suggestions for the review of citations and references as I was not in possession of the source documents.

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

Details:

TITLE	**PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN A SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

SURNAME	**MPANZA Student number: 974165805**
FULL NAMES	**AMANDA**
PROPOSED QUALIFICATION	**Master of Education**
DEPARTMENT	**Educational Psychology**
TERTIARY INSTITUTION	**University of KwaZulu-Natal**
NAME OF SUPERVISOR/S	**Dr P. Mweli**
REFERENCING STYLE	**Harvard**

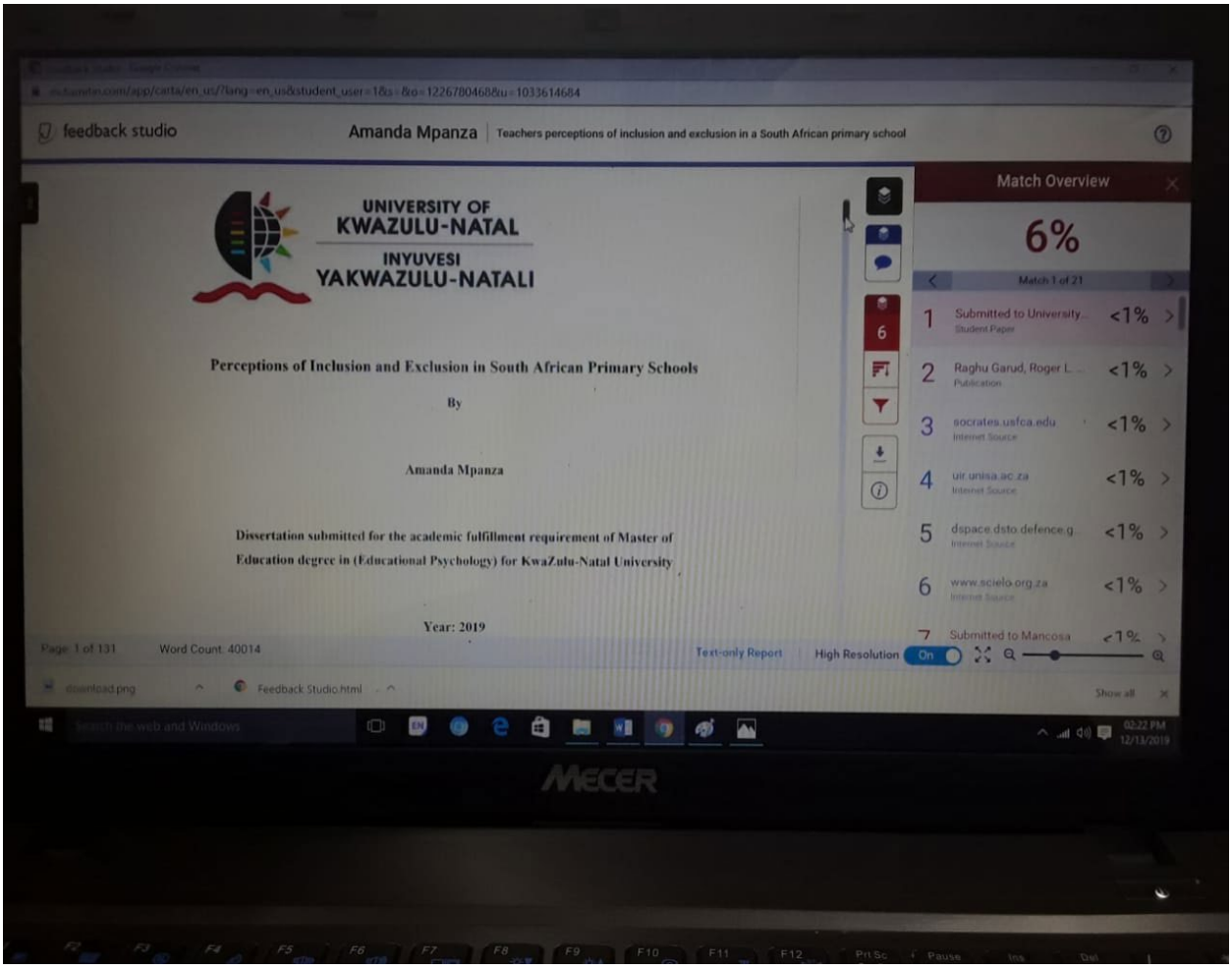
Respectfully submitted on: **30 December 2019**

(MRS) N.D. COERTZE

LANGUAGE EDITOR

Appendix: G

TURNITIN REPORT



Appendix: H

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

A

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

23 May 2019

Mrs AN Mpanza (974165805)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Mpanza,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0366/015M
New project title: Perceptions of inclusion and exclusion.

Approval Notification – Amendment / Recertification Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment and Recertification received on 26 April 2019 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title
- Change in Supervisor (Dr Sithabile Ntombela -> Dr Patrick Mweli)
- Recertification for 1 year

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.

Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Naidoo
.....
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

Co-Supervisor: Dr Patrick Mweli