

**The Experiences of Mainstream Intermediate Phase Educators in  
Implementing Inclusive Education Practices in the Western Cape**

by

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## DECLARATION

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## **Abstract**

This study explored the experiences of mainstream Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape, with particular focus on supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream classrooms and highlighting educators' role in promoting inclusive school environments and quality education for all.

A qualitative research approach, grounded in an interpretivist phenomenological design, was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select ten Intermediate Phase educators from five mainstream public primary schools in the Western Cape. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with educators who taught learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream classrooms. The interview data were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to educators' experiences of Inclusive Education implementation.

The findings indicate a conscious shift within mainstream public schools in the Western Cape towards Inclusive Education, with educators independently implementing strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs. However, many participants reported feeling underprepared and uncertain when supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers, citing limited training, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, and inadequate support structures as key challenges. The study highlights the need for greater systemic commitment to ongoing professional development, practical training, mentorship, and stronger collaboration among educators, parents, support staff, and the Department of Basic Education to support effective Inclusive Education implementation.

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

| <b>Abbreviation</b> | <b>Meaning</b>                                                       |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADHD                | Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder                             |
| BEd                 | Bachelor's Degree in Education                                       |
| CAPS                | National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement                  |
| CPD                 | Continuous Professional Development                                  |
| CPTD                | Continuing Professional Teacher Development                          |
| DBE                 | Department of Basic Education                                        |
| DBST                | District-Based Support Team                                          |
| EWP6                | Education White Paper 6                                              |
| ILST                | Institutional-Level Support Team                                     |
| ISPs                | Individual Support Plans                                             |
| OTs                 | Occupational Therapists                                              |
| REC                 | Review Ethics Committee                                              |
| SASA                | South African Schools Act                                            |
| SACE                | South African Council for Educators                                  |
| SBST                | School-Based Support Team                                            |
| SIAS                | Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support                    |
| SMTs                | School Management Teams                                              |
| TAs                 | Teaching Assistants                                                  |
| UN                  | United Nations                                                       |
| UNCRPD              | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| UNESCO              | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization     |
| Unisa               | University of South Africa                                           |
| WCED                | Western Cape Department of Education                                 |

## **Chapter 1:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*This chapter introduces the study and provides the context for the research. The chapter begins with a discussion of Inclusive Education within the international and South African educational context, with particular focus on the implementation of Inclusive Education practices for learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream Intermediate Phase classrooms. The chapter further presents the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, rationale, and significance of the study. In addition, key concepts relevant to the study are briefly discussed to provide a foundation for the research.*

#### **1.1. Introduction and Background of the study**

In the past 30 years, there has been a global transition toward more inclusive educational practices (Ydo, 2023). Inclusive education is defined as an education system whereby each learner is equally accepted and included in school environments, both socially and educationally (Mpu & Adu, 2021). This requires identifying and removing barriers, and accommodating each learner's needs, to allow all learners to participate in mainstream classrooms (United Nations, 2016). In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All emphasised that education is a fundamental right for every person, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, ability and economic status (UNESCO, 1990). In 2000, Inclusive Education aimed to achieve universal access to basic education. This was followed by the Salamanca Statement, an international policy initiative, which indicates that mainstream schools that adopt an inclusive approach are the most powerful tool in building an inclusive society, addressing discriminatory attitudes, fostering inclusive communities and realising education for all (Gunnlaugar, 2019). In the past few years, inclusive education has been widely recognised as an ideal educational system (Mpu & Adu, 2021). While Inclusive Education encompasses the participation and support of all learners, including gifted learners, learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and learners experiencing social or emotional barriers, this study specifically focuses on learners with intrinsic learning barriers and disabilities within mainstream Intermediate Phase

classrooms. The study therefore examines educators' experiences in supporting learners who require additional educational support within the broader framework of Inclusive Education.

The Inclusive Education Policy acknowledges that every learner is a unique individual with their own range of learning needs (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2015). The DBE (2015) released a report in 2015, stating that there were about 14.6 million learners between the ages of 5 and 18, of which almost 1,000,000 were disabled. Highlighting the demand for inclusive education implementation in all mainstream schools is a necessity. South Africa also faces diverse contextual factors related to access to educational support, leaving educators in certain communities with many challenges (Reimers, 2021).

It is clear that South Africa has a unique social history and from the start, needed an approach to provide a broader democratisation process. The previous South African education system was racially segregated and characterised by differences in the level and quality of educator training, vast differences in financial allocation and unequal distribution of resources. Furthermore, the education system was divided into mainstream and special schools (Modisi, 2019). Therefore, the current South African education system has been largely influenced by the education policies that were initiated to combat apartheid laws. They focused on addressing the racially desegregated schooling systems by introducing school integration. However, Inclusive Education espoused beyond racial integration. Furthermore, Inclusive practices in South Africa are rather a moral issue, embodying human values and rights, and play an important role in creating a just society (National Planning Commission, Republic of South Africa, 2011). It recognises that the individual needs of each learner should be addressed, especially those who could be marginalised. Learners who are most vulnerable to learning barriers and exclusion are those with disabilities and impairments; this is owing to the historical extent of the educational support provided (Department of Education (DoE), 2001).

Inclusive Education in the South African context, as stated in the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6), has its own definition contextually as it refers to an educational

environment whereby all realms of development are promoted regardless of race, disability, gender, class, religion, sexual preference, culture, language and learning style. The South African government provides the opportunity for each learner to actualise their potential, and the EWP6 is a symbol of their commitment towards this (Pattman, 2018). Inclusive Education therefore aims to accommodate learner diversity broadly, including differences in ability, language, socioeconomic background, learning style and academic performance.

Literature (Ydo, 2023; United Nations, 2016; Gunnlaugar, 2019; Pattman, 2018; United Nations (UN), 2016; DoE, 2001) so far makes it evident that South Africa has been strongly influenced by the international movement towards Inclusive Education and has established the appropriate policies in support of it. However, policies and practices must respond congruently; legislation cannot be solely relied on to bring about the desired inclusive change (Walton, 2018). The undertaking of inclusion is evidently more challenging in South Africa, a developing country that embraced it later than developed countries (Mpu & Adu, 2021).

Although apartheid government policy in South Africa has entrenched an unequal education system in our schools today, it is evident that the reconstruction of the system can be successful when it is performed by people and a government that is committed to equal education for all in South Africa. Hodgson (2019) indicates that a new way of thinking regarding specialised education has resulted in the inclusion policies. However, the commitment to these policies within mainstream schools is questionable. By educating learners with diverse learning needs alongside their peers, we create communities that respect and appreciate members with diverse needs. The shift in education from mainstream to inclusive indicates an exceptional philosophical change and is, therefore, a necessity.

The inclusive policies within the South African education system, as well as the incorporation of Inclusive Education courses at a university level, further indicate the efforts towards inclusion in schools. However, regardless of the policies that specify that each learner should be provided with an equal opportunity to participate in all classroom activities, Inclusive Education implementation in

South Africa is still hindered owing to both the lack of resources and the actions and attitudes of the educators in the classroom. Changes in educational approaches have resulted in new demands on educators, as classrooms now include learners with varying levels of ability and disability and diverse backgrounds (Adewumi, Mosito & Agosto, 2019).

The National Planning Commission in the Republic of South Africa (2011) emphasised the relationship between educators' equality and the quality of an educational system. A study by Fish Hodgson (2019) lamented that Inclusive Education was not being implemented as originally anticipated in the EWP6. The findings revealed inaccessibility to resources for learners needing support as well as a lack of confidence and incompetence experienced by the educators. This study focused on the experiences of Intermediate Phase educators implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape mainstream schools to explore whether there is strong knowledge of the support systems available to them and whether educators have the necessary skills and confidence to teach learners with learning difficulties.

This study explored the challenges and experiences of mainstream school educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in schools in the Western Cape, focusing on intrinsic learning barriers in the Intermediate Phase. The results will indicate whether schools in the Western Cape are equipped with the skills and resources needed to support learners with these learning barriers. It will also provide feedback on how District-Based Support Teams (DBST) and School-Based Support Teams (SBST) could assist Western Cape educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in schools.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

The South African government has established many policies since 1994 that promote inclusivity and equality in education as well as educator support (DBE, 2015). Particularly, since the introduction of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), South Africa has committed itself to creating an inclusive education system in which all learners are accommodated within mainstream schools wherever

possible. Policies promoting equality, inclusion, and educational support have placed increased responsibility on mainstream educators to support learners with diverse learning needs. Despite these policy commitments, the practical implementation of Inclusive Education in many South African mainstream schools remains challenging. Studies have shown that educators often experience difficulties in supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers due to overcrowded classrooms, insufficient training, limited access to specialised resources, inadequate support structures, and increased administrative demands. These challenges negatively affect educators' confidence and ability to effectively implement inclusive teaching practices. As a result, many learners requiring additional educational support continue to experience exclusion, academic difficulties, and limited participation within mainstream classrooms. The gap between policy expectations and classroom realities raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of Inclusive Education implementation within the South African education system. The challenges regarding inclusion differ according to a range of factors such as school size, lack of time, available resources, financial support, staff knowledge, training and facilities. As many schools in South Africa have a class size of over 80 learners owing to a lack of infrastructure, Inclusive Education approaches such as curriculum differentiated cooperative learning, flexible response opinions and learning accommodations become necessary for effective learning.

Although research has been conducted on Inclusive Education in South Africa, limited attention has been given to the experiences of Intermediate Phase mainstream educators within the Western Cape context, particularly regarding the support of learners with intrinsic learning barriers. Understanding educators' experiences is important because educators are directly responsible for translating inclusive policies into classroom practice.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of mainstream Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape, with the aim of identifying factors that support or hinder effective inclusion.



### **1.3. Rationale for the study**

Inclusive Education remains a significant priority within the South African education system. However, despite progressive policies, many mainstream schools continue to experience difficulties in implementing inclusive practices effectively. Educators play a central role in ensuring successful inclusion, yet many are expected to accommodate diverse learning needs without sufficient training, support, or resources.

The Intermediate Phase represents an important stage in learners' academic and social development, where foundational literacy, numeracy, and cognitive skills are strengthened. Learners with intrinsic learning barriers may experience increasing academic challenges during this phase, placing additional pressure on educators to provide differentiated support within mainstream classrooms.

This study is important because it contributes to understanding the lived experiences of mainstream educators implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape context. The findings may provide insight into the challenges educators experience, the support systems available to them, and the areas in which additional training and resources may be required.

The study may further assist schools, School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs), District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs), policymakers, and teacher education institutions in strengthening support strategies for Inclusive Education implementation. In addition, the study contributes to existing literature on Inclusive Education within South Africa by focusing specifically on Intermediate Phase educators' experiences in mainstream classrooms.

### **1.4. Purpose of the Study**

This study explored the experiences of mainstream Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape, with particular focus on supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream classrooms. The study aimed to identify the challenges educators

experience, the support available to them, and the factors influencing the effective implementation of Inclusive Education practices.

#### **1.4.1. Research Question and Sub Questions**

*What are the experiences of mainstream school Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape?*

- *What are the main challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream classrooms?*
- *How do Intermediate Phase educators perceive the effectiveness of support structures for learners with barriers to learning?*
- *How do Intermediate Phase educators implement strategies to support learners with barriers to learning in inclusive classrooms?*
- *What improvements do educators suggest for enhancing Inclusive Education implementation in schools?*

#### **1.4.2. Aim and Objective**

This study explored the experiences of mainstream Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices for learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream schools in the Western Cape.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To explore the experiences and perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education practices in mainstream classrooms.
2. To identify the challenges experienced by educators in supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream schools.
3. To examine the availability of resources and support systems for Inclusive Education implementation in mainstream schools.
4. To explore educators' perceptions regarding their preparedness, knowledge, and skills to implement Inclusive Education practices effectively.

5. To identify factors that may support or hinder the successful implementation of Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape.

### **1.5. Research approach**

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of Intermediate Phase educators' experiences regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education practices in mainstream schools. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the study explored educators' lived experiences, perceptions, challenges, and meanings attached to implementing Inclusive Education within their classroom contexts. Since the research aimed to understand participants' subjective experiences rather than measure variables statistically, a qualitative approach allowed for rich, descriptive, and detailed data to be collected (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). This study used an interpretive phenomenological approach, data collection by means of interviews, a purposive sampling method and data documentation through thematic analysis (Nembamula, 2022).

An interpretive phenomenological approach was used because the study focused on understanding how educators experience and make meaning of Inclusive Education implementation in their everyday teaching environments. Phenomenology was considered suitable as it allows the researcher to explore participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to a particular phenomenon (Mpu & Adu, 2021). Since educators may experience Inclusive Education differently depending on their school context, available support, training, and classroom realities, this approach allowed the researcher to gain deeper insight into their individual experiences and perspectives. To achieve this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten Intermediate Phase educators, comprising two educators from each of five mainstream public primary schools in the Western Cape.

### **1.5.1. Data collection method**

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the nature and explanation of phenomena (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). In qualitative research, interviews are vastly utilised as a data collection tool as they gather information regarding the participants' experiences, beliefs and views on a specific research topic (Titus, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were selected as the most suitable data collection method because they allowed participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in detail while still providing the researcher with flexibility to probe for further clarification where necessary. This method aligned with the exploratory nature of the study, as it enabled the researcher to obtain rich and in-depth information regarding educators' experiences of implementing Inclusive Education practices in mainstream classrooms.

Once the participants have been selected, a semi-structured interview was scheduled. Semi-structured interviews result in a more flexible approach which allows the researcher to elicit more responses and gain descriptive information from the participants on their experiences with implementing Inclusive Education practices (Molekoa, 2019).

This interview took place on a virtual platform or face-to-face and took 30 to 45 minutes. This approach was selected as it eliminated potential geographical challenges. It encompassed questions regarding the educator's educational background, their attitude towards learners with barriers to learning, the support being received from the school, their awareness of support structures, the resources available, how they feel that they could be better supported and their experiences regarding implementation of Inclusive Education in their classroom. Data capturing was achieved by using a voice recording device during the interview process, after which the data were captured through verbatim transcription.

### **1.5.2. Population and Sample**

This study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling bases participant selection on the study's purpose. This sampling method was considered appropriate because the study required participants who had direct experience with implementing Inclusive Education practices and supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, it is in the researcher's best interest to purposefully select participants who can provide rich insight into the phenomenon being studied (Molekoa, 2019). The participants in this study were a total of ten Intermediate Phase educators from five different mainstream public primary schools in the Western Cape. They met the following criteria::

- Must be Intermediate Phase educators.
- Must have learners with intrinsic barriers to learning within their classroom.
- Must be teaching at a public school in the Western Cape.
- The school must be a mainstream primary school.

These participants were selected based on their having learners with intrinsic barriers in their classroom. Educators were asked for their reasons for identifying the learners with barriers to learning as well as the process they followed to do so to ensure an accurate participant selection took place. Permission to use the information obtained was requested before the interview.

## **1.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The qualitative data analysis for this study was enriched by the interpretive philosophy. Therefore, interviews were used to gain an understanding of the experiences of the educators towards Inclusive Education in their schools. It also indicated the amount of support that the educators are receiving and their confidence in supporting learners with intrinsic learning barriers. Owing to the nature of this study, factual accuracy is not significant as the aim is to understand the lived experiences of the participants and their attitude towards teaching inclusively (Mpu & Adu, 2021). This study used thematic analysis, as introduced by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark (Caulfield, 2022). The first step of the analysis process was to transcribe each interview and become familiar with it. The next step was to code the data by highlighting important phrases and

describing the feeling expressed in that sentence. For example, "Personally, I'm not sure how to handle the learners with learning barriers in my class." This could be coded as 'uncertainty'. Each important sentence would be highlighted and linked with a corresponding colour and code. This assisted in identifying patterns. Following this, these codes were reviewed, and common and recurring themes were identified (Caulfield, 2022). At this point, the themes were then reviewed to ensure they accurately and usefully represent the data. Terminology was then adjusted to ensure that each theme can be defined adequately. After reviewing each theme, its meaning was elaborated on to indicate how it assisted in understanding the data. These findings were then incorporated to the final report of the study.

### **1.7. Demarcation of the study**

The study was demarcated geographically as the participants in this study were ten Intermediate Phase educators from five different mainstream public primary schools in the Western Cape. These participants were selected based on their having at least three learners with intrinsic learning barriers in their classroom.

### **1.8. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Limitations of a study refer to the potential weaknesses that are not usually in the researcher's control (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020). These are often linked to the research design, funding limitations, statistical model restrictions, or other influencing factors. A limitation can, therefore, be referred to as an 'imposed' limitation that is out of the researcher's control. The limitations must be acknowledged as they may affect the study results, design and conclusions (Theofanidis & Fountouk, 2019).

Conversely, delimitations refer to the limitations that are consciously set by the researchers (Akanle, et al., 2020). These delimitations are in the researcher's control to ensure that the objectives and aims of the study are easier to achieve. The limitations that occurred during this study are that educators may have been reluctant to participate, which could have resulted in a limited number of

participants and inaccurate results as well as if the results do not meet the criteria of reliability and validity. It is also important as the researcher to establish the true value and believability of the findings. As this is a qualitative study, a limitation could arise if the researcher does not take the time to understand each participant's lived experience. A final limitation may be the vast differences in schools' approach to Inclusive Education and therefore, mixed findings which may result in an uncertain conclusion. The delimitation of this study is the small number of participants. By interviewing only 20 Intermediate Phase educators, the findings may not accurately represent all mainstream schools in the Western Cape.

### 1.9. Definitions and Key Concepts

- **Inclusive Education:** An education system whereby all learners are equally accepted and included, both socially and educationally (Mpu & Adu, 2021).
- **Learning Disability:** The intrinsic and extrinsic factors causing barriers to development and learning for learners (Nel, 2016).
- **Intrinsic Learning Barriers:** Barriers that exist within the learner, including emotional disturbances, developmental and neurological impairments, and differing intellectual ability as well as Autism Spectrum Disorders, Down Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Vlok, 2016).
- **Extrinsic Learning Barriers:** Socio-economic factors such as poor living conditions, poverty and underdevelopment, systematic factors owing to inadequate and inaccessible resources, as well as pedagogical factors such as an inflexible curriculum and non-inclusive learning environment (Walton & Rusznyak, 2014).

### 1.10. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the study by contextualising Inclusive Education within both the global and South African landscape. Drawing on

international developments such as the United Nations declarations on Education for All and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, as well as national policy frameworks including Education White Paper 6 and the Department of Basic Education guidelines, the chapter highlighted South Africa's commitment to building an equitable and inclusive education system. Despite strong legislative foundations, the discussion revealed persistent gaps between policy intentions and classroom practice.

The historical legacy of apartheid, unequal resource distribution, and disparities in educator training continue to influence the implementation of Inclusive Education in mainstream schools. While the policy framework promotes equality, social justice, and respect for diversity, the practical realities faced by educators—such as overcrowded classrooms, limited support services, and insufficient training—pose significant challenges to meaningful inclusion.

This chapter further outlined the problem statement, purpose, research question, aims, and objectives of the study, which sought to explore the lived experiences of Intermediate Phase educators implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream schools in the Western Cape. The qualitative, interpretive phenomenological approach was justified as appropriate for gaining in-depth insight into educators' perceptions, challenges, and support needs. The chapter also clarified the study's scope, limitations, delimitations, and key concepts to ensure conceptual clarity and focus.

In conclusion, although South Africa has made substantial progress in developing inclusive policies, the effective realisation of Inclusive Education requires ongoing systemic support, adequate resources, and strengthened educator capacity. The following chapters build on this foundation by presenting the empirical findings and examining how Intermediate Phase educators experience and navigate the complexities of implementing Inclusive Education within mainstream classrooms in the Western Cape.



## **Chapter 2:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction to Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education is founded on the principle that all learners have the right to access quality education, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds or learning needs. The Salamanca Statement, adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education, emphasises that education systems should accommodate learner diversity within mainstream schooling and promote inclusive societies (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2020). Inclusive Education therefore extends beyond disability and includes accommodating learners from diverse linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as learners with differing learning styles and academic abilities. Inclusion is thus understood as a rights-based approach that values diversity and seeks to remove barriers to learning and participation (UNESCO, 2020).

Internationally, Inclusive Education has increasingly shifted from a medical model focused on disability towards a broader social justice framework that recognises learner diversity and participation as central to quality education (Ainscow, 2020). In the South African context, Inclusive Education is particularly significant owing to historical inequalities within the education system. The transition to democracy necessitated reforms to promote equity, access and redress. Inclusive Education has emerged as a mechanism to address past exclusion and ensure that all learners are provided with meaningful learning opportunities (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Educators play a pivotal role in translating the principles of inclusion into classroom practice, highlighting the importance of preparedness, training and systemic support (Adewumi, Mosito, & Agosto, 2019).

This section provides a foundation for understanding Inclusive Education by outlining its conceptual and policy context. The following sections critically examine existing literature on educators' roles, systemic barriers and support structures to explore how Inclusive Education is implemented in practice and where challenges persist (OECD, 2021).

## **2.2 Policy and Legislative Framework for Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education in South Africa is underpinned by a strong policy and legislative framework that promotes the right to education for all learners, regardless of their needs and abilities (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education, introduced in 1994 at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Salamanca Conference, articulates that each learner has the right to quality education irrespective of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2020). This statement secured inclusion as a universal right and identified inclusive schools as a crucial component of an inclusive society (Ainscow, 2020).

In the South African context, Inclusive Education is embedded within key legislative frameworks, including the South African Constitution (1996), the South African Schools Act (1996), and Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001). These policies collectively emphasise the right to basic education for all learners and the responsibility of the education system to address barriers to learning and participation (OECD, 2021). Education White Paper 6 has been instrumental in establishing guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive Education and highlighting the importance of support structures required to facilitate inclusion within schools (Madiba, 2023).

To support the implementation of Inclusive Education, various structures have been established at national, provincial, district and school levels. These include the National Department of Education, provincial education departments, district-based support teams, institutional-level support teams, special schools, full-service schools and ordinary schools (UNESCO, 2020). These structures are intended to provide educators and schools with guidance, training and support in implementing inclusive practices effectively (Ainscow, 2020).

The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) strategy, introduced in 2008, further outlines the roles and responsibilities of educators and support structures in identifying and supporting learners with barriers to learning (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022). According to the SIAS process, educators are

expected to screen learners, identify learners' performance levels and provide appropriate support through individual support plans (ISPs). If the educator's support is ineffective, the learner is referred to the institutional-level support team (ILST), which may then liaise with the district-based support team (DBST) for further intervention (Adewumi, et al. 2019). Although South Africa's Inclusive Education policies are widely regarded as progressive, several scholars argue that policy implementation has remained inconsistent owing to inadequate funding, insufficient educator training, and unequal resource distribution between schools (OECD, 2021). Consequently, the existence of policy does not necessarily translate into effective classroom inclusion.

Thus, despite the introduction of Inclusive Education policies and strategies, there remain limited guidelines on how these policies should be implemented in practice to ensure the effective inclusion of learners with special needs within South Africa (UNESCO, 2020). The DBE (2015) asserts that all schools must ensure access to education for all learners and that districts are required to provide adequate support. However, challenges in policy implementation persist, indicating a gap between legislative intentions and classroom realities (Ainscow, 2020).

This policy and legislative framework provides the foundation upon which Inclusive Education is implemented in South African schools. However, the effectiveness of these policies largely depends on educator preparedness, institutional support and resource availability (UNESCO, 2020), which are explored further in the sections that follow.

### **2.3 Educators' Roles, Attitudes and Preparedness in Inclusive Education**

Educators play a central role in the successful implementation of Inclusive Education, as they are directly responsible for accommodating learner diversity within the classroom. Inclusive Education policies place significant expectations on educators to identify learners with barriers to learning, adapt teaching strategies, differentiate curricula and provide appropriate support to ensure meaningful participation for all learners (Madiba, 2023). However, research consistently indicates that many educators feel inadequately prepared to fulfil

these responsibilities, particularly in contexts where systemic support is limited (Florian, 2021).

The Intermediate Phase represents a critical stage in learners' academic, emotional and cognitive development. During this phase, learners transition from foundational learning to more complex, abstract and independent forms of thinking, while literacy, numeracy and problem-solving demands increase significantly. More recent research on child development indicates that between the ages of approximately 8–12 years, children experience significant growth in executive functioning, working memory and cognitive control, which supports increasingly advanced academic performance and independent learning (Demetriou, Spanoudis & Makris, 2022). As curriculum expectations become more demanding during middle childhood, intrinsic learning barriers often become more visible, particularly where cognitive load and academic expectations exceed learners' developmental readiness, making this phase critical for early identification and intervention (UNESCO, 2021). Learners who do not receive adequate support during this stage may experience ongoing academic difficulties, reduced self-esteem and limited participation in classroom activities, which can have long-term effects on educational progression and social inclusion (Save the Children, 2022). Therefore, understanding how educators implement Inclusive Education practices during this developmental stage is essential for supporting equitable learning outcomes.

Several studies highlight that educators' attitudes towards Inclusive Education are strongly influenced by their level of training, perceived competence and access to institutional support (Florian, 2021). For example, Adewumi et al. (2019) found that although educators demonstrated willingness to accommodate learners with special needs, they experienced significant challenges that affected their confidence and effectiveness. These challenges included insufficient training, limited resources, heavy workloads and minimal parental involvement. As a result, some educators expressed frustration and incompetence, which negatively affected their attitudes towards inclusion.

Similarly, Dube et al. (2021) reported that while Inclusive Education policies had been formally adopted in many contexts, inadequate educator training hindered

effective implementation. Educators in their study struggled to adapt instructional methods and assessments to meet diverse learner needs, particularly in overcrowded classrooms. These findings suggest that policy compliance alone does not translate into effective inclusive practice, especially when educators are not sufficiently equipped with the necessary skills and support (OECD, 2021).

The lack of ongoing professional development further highlights these challenges. Lepheana and Chisango (2022) found that educators faced significant time constraints owing to administrative demands, limiting opportunities for reflective practice and skills development related to Inclusive Education. Therefore, educators often relied on improvised strategies rather than structured, evidence-based inclusive approaches. This then resulted in raised concerns about the consistency and sustainability of inclusive practices within mainstream classrooms.

Despite these challenges, some studies indicate that educators demonstrate resilience and commitment to Inclusive Education when support structures are available. For example, Adewumi, et al (2019) reported that educators employed inclusive strategies such as remedial teaching, individualised tasks and collaboration with parents, even in resource-constrained environments. These findings suggest that educators' attitudes towards inclusion can be positively influenced when adequate training, resources and institutional support are provided (Florian, 2021).

Conversely, international literature suggests that while some educators report negative attitudes towards Inclusive Education, this is often context-dependent and strongly linked to structural constraints rather than ideological opposition to inclusion itself (Florian, 2021). This suggests that resistance to inclusion may not stem from opposition to inclusive principles themselves, but rather from systemic constraints that limit effective implementation.

Overall, the literature suggests that educators' roles in Inclusive Education are complex and demanding, requiring not only policy awareness but also practical competence and emotional readiness. Negative or indifferent attitudes towards Inclusive Education are often rooted in systemic challenges rather than

resistance to inclusion itself. This highlights the need for comprehensive educator training, continuous professional development and strengthened support structures to enhance educators' capacity to implement Inclusive Education effectively (Ainscow, 2020).

## **2.4 Training and Professional Development for Inclusive Education**

Educators' training and professional development play a critical role in the effective implementation of Inclusive Education. Research indicates that many mainstream educators have historically lacked the necessary skills to accommodate learners with diverse needs. Although the movement towards Inclusive Education has emphasised educators' responsibilities to include all learners in the classroom, insufficient training continues to hinder effective practice (Madiba, 2023). This challenge is particularly evident in education systems where initial teacher education has not fully integrated inclusive pedagogical approaches (Ainscow, 2020).

Several studies highlight that inadequate professional development negatively impacts educators' ability to implement inclusive policies. For example, Dube et al. (2021) found that educators often struggled to adapt assessments and instructional methods to support learners with learning barriers. Similarly, Lepheana and Chisango (2022) report that limited training, combined with time constraints and administrative burdens, made it challenging for educators to provide the individualised attention learners with special needs require. As a result, educators frequently relied on improvisation rather than structured, evidence-based inclusive practices, which raises concerns about consistency and quality of implementation (OECD, 2021).

The SIAS strategy introduced in 2008 further underscores the importance of training. Educators are expected to screen learners, identify those with learning barriers and provide appropriate support through ISPs (DBE, 2015). However, educators often feel underprepared to fulfil these roles effectively (Adewumi, Mosito, & Agosto, 2019). Where ISP interventions are not successful, cases are referred to ILSTs and DBSTs, highlighting the reliance on structured professional guidance and continuous development within the system (UNESCO, 2020).

Research conducted in various South African contexts further emphasises the need for continuous professional development (CPD). Adewumi et al. (2019) found that, even after training in Inclusive Education, educators faced challenges such as lack of resources, heavy workloads and insufficient support. These challenges impacted their confidence and attitudes toward inclusion. Despite these obstacles, educators demonstrated commitment by implementing inclusive practices such as remedial work, individualised tasks and collaboration with parents, reflecting the complex interplay between training, systemic support and classroom realities (Ainscow, 2020).

International literature similarly highlights that CPD is most effective when it is ongoing, school-based, and supported by collaborative professional learning communities rather than one-off workshops (Florian, 2021). Where CPD is fragmented or theoretical, its impact on classroom practice is limited, particularly in contexts with high learner diversity and limited resources (OECD, 2021).

Overall, the literature indicates that effective training and CPD are essential for equipping educators with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to implement Inclusive Education successfully. However, training alone is insufficient without systemic support, mentoring, and adequate resources. Addressing training gaps therefore not only enhances educators' competence but also supports the broader objective of creating inclusive, equitable and supportive learning environments for all learners (OECD, 2021).

## **2.5 Institutional and Systemic Barriers to Inclusive Education**

Despite the existence of Inclusive Education policies and professional development initiatives, many systemic and institutional barriers continue to hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices in South African schools (OECD, 2021). Many schools face challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate resources, limited infrastructure and insufficient support structures, limiting the educators' ability to offer personalised attention to learners with learning barriers (Mpu & Adu, 2021).

Oversized classrooms, sometimes with more than 80 learners, undermine the quality of teaching and learning. Educators often experience heavy workloads

and stressful working conditions, particularly in multi-grade classes, which limit their ability to apply Inclusive Education strategies such as curriculum differentiation, cooperative learning and flexible response options (OECD, 2021). The lack of adequate classroom support heightens these challenges, leaving educators struggling to meet the diverse needs of their learners (Ainscow, 2020).

Limited availability of teaching and learning materials also presents a significant barrier. Some schools report a scarcity of specialised resources for learners with special needs, while others rely on improvised adaptations of general materials (Adewumi et al., 2019). This inconsistency highlights gaps in resource allocation and indicates that policy intentions are not always matched by practical implementation (Walton, 2018).

Institutional support structures, such as school management teams (SMTs), ILSTs and DBSTs, are intended to provide guidance and assistance to educators. However, studies show conflicting experiences regarding the effectiveness of these supports as in some cases, workshops and school visits provide practical advice and encouragement; in others, educators perceive the support as inadequate or inconsistent, leaving them underprepared to address learners' needs (OECD, 2021).

Additionally, parental involvement is often limited, which can restrict collaborative efforts essential for Inclusive Education. Lepheana and Chisango (2022) note that some parents resorted to private education owing to inflexible mainstream curricula, lack of differentiated assessments and inadequate school-based support for learners with learning barriers. This indicates that systemic challenges extend beyond schools and reflect broader societal and structural limitations within the education system (UNESCO, 2021).

Overall, the literature suggests that Inclusive Education is constrained not solely by educator capability but by interconnected systemic and institutional barriers. These include overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, heavy administrative workloads, inconsistent support structures and insufficient parental engagement. Addressing these barriers requires efforts across all levels of the education



system, highlighting the need for systemic interventions in addition to individual educator training (Ainscow, 2020).

Although the literature consistently identifies systemic barriers such as overcrowding, inadequate training and limited resources as challenges to Inclusive Education, findings regarding the effectiveness of support structures remain inconsistent across contexts (Walton, 2018). Furthermore, limited research has explored how Intermediate Phase educators in the Western Cape experience and navigate these interconnected challenges within mainstream classrooms. This highlights the need for further context-specific research focusing on educators' lived experiences of Inclusive Education implementation (UNESCO, 2020).

Research on Inclusive Education implementation in South Africa highlights persistent challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient educator training and lack of resources, which affect educators' confidence and effectiveness. For example, Mpu and Adu (2021) found that large class sizes, heavy workloads and limited learning materials make it difficult for educators to provide individualised attention to learners with barriers, necessitating inclusive approaches such as curriculum differentiation and flexible response strategies to facilitate learning (OECD, 2021).

Similarly, findings from broader South African studies indicate that inadequate training and support structures affect educators' capacity to implement inclusive practices. In a study focusing on schools in Buffalo City Metro, overcrowding and insufficient training were identified as overarching themes that contributed to educators feeling underprepared for inclusive classrooms (Chisango & Lepheana, 2022).

Although these insights are valuable, few studies explicitly analyse how these challenges play out in the Western Cape, highlighting a need for focused research in the province. National-level research emphasises that systemic barriers such as limited DBSTs, inconsistent professional development opportunities and inadequate policy guidance continue to hinder inclusive

practices, suggesting similar patterns may exist in the Western Cape (OECD, 2021).

This research gap is intensified by evidence that policy implementation outcomes vary across regions. While national Inclusive Education policies such as White Paper 6 and the SIAS strategy articulate comprehensive frameworks, the reality in practice often reflects uneven support, with educators in some provinces experiencing greater difficulty in accessing necessary training and institutional resources than others (UNESCO, 2020).

Therefore, although national studies provide important insights into barriers and educator experiences, there is a distinct lack of empirical research specifically addressing the Western Cape, how educators in that province interpret policy, and how systemic and contextual factors influence Inclusive Education implementation there. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding provincial dynamics and for informing targeted strategies that enhance support, training, and resource allocation for educators in the Western Cape.

While research on Inclusive Education in South Africa has examined a range of systemic and educator factors influencing implementation, there is relatively limited empirical evidence that focuses specifically on the Western Cape context. Provincial differences in resources, administrative practices, and socio-economic conditions may significantly shape how inclusive policies are enacted in practice and thus we cannot generalise across provinces ( UNESCO, 2020).

Studies conducted within the Western Cape highlight several localised challenges. For example, Karimupfumbi and Dwarika's (2022) research involving learning support educators in the Metropole East Education District found that educators faced psychological and social challenges when implementing Inclusive Education, with many educators reporting stress, burnout, insufficient support, and a lack of parental involvement that complicates the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) process. Although some support was provided by district officials, it was generally perceived as insufficient to enable full implementation of inclusive practices (Walton, 2018).

Similarly, empirical work in the Western Cape has shown that the needs of learners on waiting lists for support are often neglected in mainstream classrooms, and that many educators feel ill-equipped to provide adequate support to learners with high-level support needs. These findings suggest that the implementation of Inclusive Education at the school level may not fully align with policy ideals, despite the existence of comprehensive legislative frameworks (Maree, Condry & Meda, 2023).

Other research within the province has explored specific aspects of inclusive practice, such as inclusive assessment methods used by educators to support learners with diverse needs in primary schools. Shabalala (2023) examined inclusive assessment practices in Western Cape primary schools and highlighted inconsistencies in educators' understanding and implementation of inclusive assessment methods. Although the study provided valuable insight into assessment practices, it did not focus specifically on educators' broader experiences of implementing Inclusive Education within mainstream Intermediate Phase classrooms.

Regardless, literature still lacks depth in how Inclusive Education policies are experienced and implemented by classroom educators across different Western Cape settings, including how systemic barriers, training opportunities, and institutional support impact practice in both urban and rural schools (Ainscow, 2020). Additionally, few studies have investigated how contextual factors unique to the Western Cape, such as district support structures and socio-economic disparities, shape educators' approaches to inclusion.

Given this limited and emerging evidence base, there is a clear need for further research that explores the lived experiences of educators and the contextual realities of Inclusive Education implementation within the Western Cape. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of how national and provincial policies translate into classroom practice and would help identify strategies to strengthen support for Inclusive Education in this specific provincial context (UNESCO, 2021).

In addition to systemic and institutional barriers, learners may experience intrinsic barriers that affect their ability to engage effectively with the curriculum. Intrinsic barriers refer to factors internal to the learner, such as cognitive, emotional, behavioural, or physical challenges, including learning disabilities, attention difficulties, language delays, or chronic health conditions (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022). These barriers can limit learners' capacity to access learning opportunities, participate in classroom activities, and achieve educational outcomes even when external support, resources, and inclusive teaching strategies are in place (UNESCO, 2020). Educators must therefore be able to identify intrinsic barriers early and develop individual support plans (ISPs) tailored to the learner's unique needs. Research suggests that intrinsic barriers often interact with systemic constraints—such as large class sizes or insufficient support—exacerbating educational challenges and highlighting the importance of both learner-focused interventions and robust institutional support (Adewumi et al., 2019). Recognising intrinsic barriers is crucial for creating truly inclusive classrooms where all learners are provided equal opportunities to succeed.

Although previous studies in the Western Cape have explored aspects of Inclusive Education such as assessment practices and school-based support structures, limited research has focused specifically on the lived experiences of Intermediate Phase educators implementing Inclusive Education across multiple mainstream school contexts (Shabalala, 2023). Furthermore, existing research tends to focus on isolated aspects of Inclusive Education implementation, such as assessment strategies or support systems, rather than examining how educators navigate the interaction between systemic constraints, classroom realities and learner support needs in a holistic and contextualised manner (Ainscow, 2020). This indicates that while Inclusive Education research is growing, there remains a fragmented understanding of how policy and practice intersect at classroom level within the Western Cape context.

## **2.6 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

This study is influenced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (see Figure 2.1), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding Inclusive Education as a phenomenon founded on multiple, interconnected

environmental systems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that human development does not occur in isolation but is shaped by interactions between individuals and the various systems within which they function. When applied to Inclusive Education, this theory highlights that learners' educational experiences, as well as educators' inclusive practices, are influenced not only by individual characteristics but also by broader structural, institutional and societal factors.

At the microsystem level, the theory focuses on the immediate environments in which learners and educators interact, such as the classroom and school setting. Within inclusive classrooms, educators are expected to identify barriers to learning, differentiate instruction, adapt assessments and provide individualised support to learners with diverse needs. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited resources and insufficient classroom support can negatively affect these interactions, thereby constraining educators' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively.

Recent research also highlights that classroom-level constraints such as high learner-to-teacher ratios and limited assistive resources significantly reduce the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and learner support ( UNESCO, 2021).

The mesosystem refers to the relationships between different microsystems, such as interactions between educators, parents, SMTs and ILSTs. Effective collaboration within the mesosystem is important for Inclusive Education, as coordinated support and communication contribute to the successful identification and addressing of learners' learning barriers. The literature suggests that weak collaboration, limited parental involvement and inconsistent support from school-based structures often hinder the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Studies have shown that ineffective participation in school and home collaboration and weak institutional coordination are the biggest barriers to effective inclusion, particularly in under-resourced schooling contexts (Ainscow & Messiou, 2020).

At the exosystem level, educators and learners are influenced by systems that do not involve them directly but still impact their educational experiences. These

include DBSTs, provincial education departments, and professional development initiatives. Inadequate training opportunities, insufficient district support and limited access to specialised services within this system have been identified as significant barriers to the effective implementation of Inclusive Education in South African schools.

International comparative research similarly indicates that limited district-level capacity and inconsistent teacher training frameworks contribute to uneven implementation of Inclusive Education across schools and regions (Florian, 2019).

The macrosystem encompasses the broader societal, cultural and policy contexts that shape Inclusive Education. This includes national education policies such as the South African Constitution, the South African Schools Act (SASA), Education White Paper 6 and SIAS policy. While these policies promote Inclusive Education as a fundamental right, gaps between policy intentions and practical implementation persist. Societal attitudes towards disability, resource allocation and historical inequalities within the education system further influence how inclusion is understood and enacted at school level.

Inclusive Education frameworks often reflect a “policy–practice gap”, where progressive legislation does not automatically translate into classroom transformation due to structural inequality and resource constraints (Walton, 2018).

The chronosystem acknowledges the influence of time and change on educational practices. In the context of Inclusive Education, this includes shifts in education policy, evolving understandings of learner diversity and ongoing reforms aimed at addressing historical exclusions. Despite these changes, the literature indicates that implementation challenges have remained persistent over time, suggesting the need for sustained systemic support and CPD for educators.

Studies in Inclusive Education suggest that despite policy evolution over decades, classroom-level implementation challenges remain consistent, particularly in developing education systems where inequality is persistent (Ainscow, 2020).

By applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this study recognises that challenges associated with Inclusive Education are not solely the result of individual educator limitations but are embedded within broader systemic structures. The theory is relevant in how interactions across multiple systems influence educators' experiences and the implementation of inclusive practices within mainstream classrooms. This framework supports the study's aim of exploring Inclusive Education holistically, emphasising the interconnected roles of educators, institutions and policy environments in fostering effective inclusion.

Therefore, this theoretical framework not only guides interpretation of educators' experiences but also enables a critical examination of how systemic inequalities, institutional capacity and policy implementation shape Inclusive Education outcomes in the Western Cape context.

### Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in Education

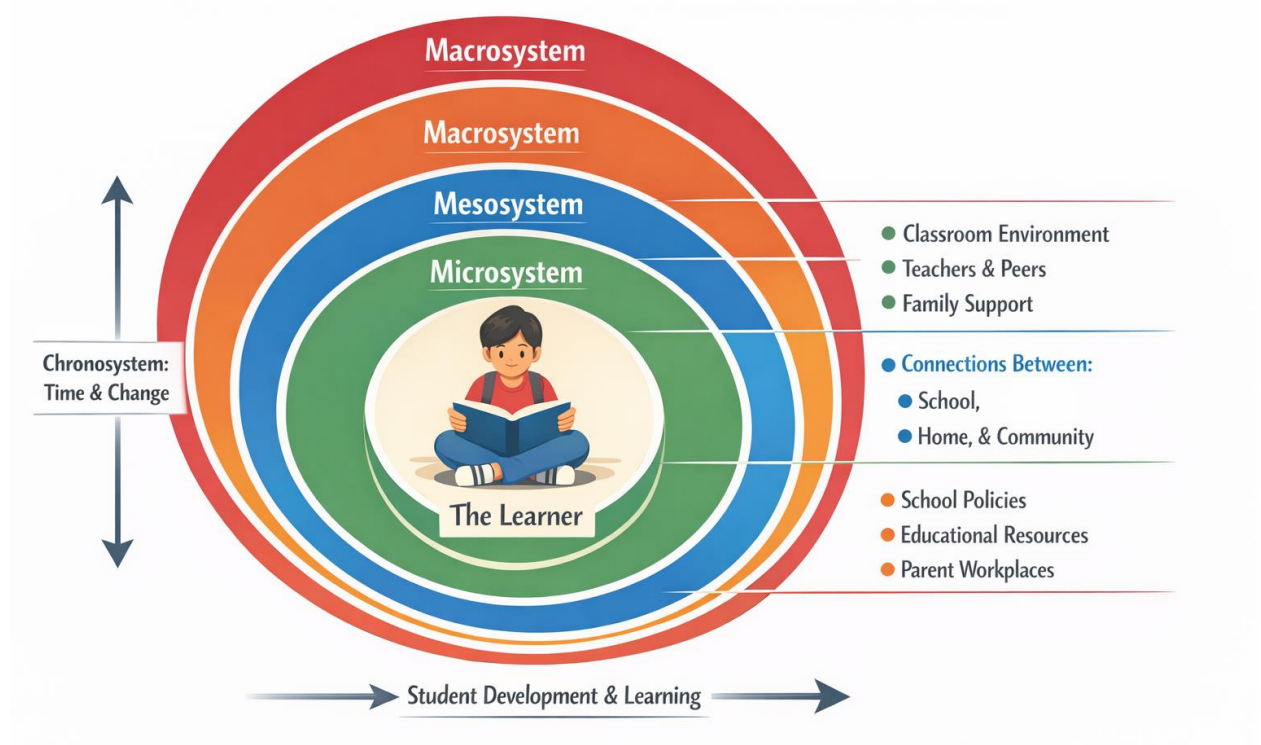


Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (OpenAI, 2026)

## **2.7 Linking the Theoretical Framework to the Research Questions**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers an analytical framework through which this study's research questions are examined. The theory enables an exploration of Inclusive Education by recognising that educators' experiences and practices are influenced by multiple, interconnected systems rather than by individual factors alone. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory highlights that Inclusive Education cannot be understood in isolation from broader contextual influences. While the microsystem focuses on classroom interactions, the effectiveness of inclusive practices is strongly influenced by external systems such as district support structures, policy frameworks and societal attitudes. In practice, however, these systems do not always function cohesively, which creates gaps between policy expectations and classroom realities. This suggests that challenges experienced by educators are not solely individual but are shaped by interconnected systemic factors ( OECD, 2021). The theory is therefore particularly relevant to this study as it allows for a multi-layered analysis of educators' experiences within the Western Cape context.

The research questions in the study that focus on Intermediate Phase educators' experiences of Inclusive Education practices are primarily situated within the microsystem, as they relate to daily classroom interactions, teaching strategies, learner diversity and the practical challenges Intermediate Phase educators face when accommodating learners with learning barriers. Factors such as class size, resource availability and educators' confidence in implementing inclusive practices are analysed within this system.

Research questions addressing support structures and collaboration are informed by the mesosystem, which examines the relationships between educators, SMTs, parents, ILSTs and DBSTs. This system allows the study to explore how communication, collaboration and shared responsibility either facilitate or hinder the effective implementation of Inclusive Education.

Questions related to training, professional development and external support are interpreted through the exosystem, as these elements are shaped by decisions and structures at district and provincial levels. This includes access to



professional development programmes, specialist services and policy guidance, all of which indirectly influence educators' classroom practices.

The study's questions on policy implementation and systemic challenges align with the macrosystem, which encompasses national education policies, legislative frameworks and broader societal attitudes towards inclusion and disability. This system enables the study to examine the gap between Inclusive Education policy intentions and actual classroom implementation.

Finally, any research questions that explore changes over time, such as evolving inclusive practices or shifts in educator preparedness, are linked to the chronosystem. This allows the study to consider how historical developments, policy reforms and ongoing educational changes impact Inclusive Education practices.

By mapping the research questions across the different ecological systems, Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a holistic understanding of Inclusive Education implementation. This theoretical framework, therefore, strengthens the study by guiding data analysis and interpretation, and by ensuring that findings are examined within their broader educational and systemic contexts.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the literature on Inclusive Education, focusing on its conceptual, policy and practical dimensions within the South African context. The introduction established the principles of Inclusive Education, highlighting that all learners have the right to quality education regardless of their needs or abilities (UNESCO, 2020). National policies, such as the South African Constitution, SASA (1996), and Education White Paper 6, were discussed as frameworks that support the implementation of Inclusive Education and identify the structures necessary to facilitate inclusion in schools.

Literature (DBE, 2020) mentions institutional and systemic barriers, including large class sizes, insufficient teaching and learning materials, heavy workloads, inconsistent support from institutional and district teams, and limited parental involvement, are some of the challenges that schooling systems grapple with.

These barriers compound educators' challenges and highlight the need for coordinated, systemic support alongside individual professional development.

There is, therefore, a clear research gap in the Western Cape, where limited studies have investigated how Inclusive Education policies are implemented in practice. The studies identified in the chapter indicate that educators face context-specific challenges and that systemic support and resources are often inadequate to fully enable inclusive practices. This gap emphasises the need for further research that explores the lived experiences of educators and the contextual realities of Inclusive Education in this province. Overall, the literature highlights a continuing gap between the intentions of Inclusive Education policies and what is experienced in classroom practice. While policies promote equal participation and support for all learners, educators continue to face systemic, institutional and contextual challenges that limit effective implementation. The literature further indicates that educator preparedness alone is not sufficient without adequate support from the broader education system, emphasising the interconnected nature of Inclusive Education implementation. These ongoing challenges therefore justify the need for further research into the lived experiences of educators within specific provincial contexts, such as the Western Cape.

## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This study utilised a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research refers to the meaning and symbolism that a group or an individual attributes to a human problem (Adewumi, et al. 2019). In this study, the phenomenon of interest was the experiences of primary school Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practice in the Western Cape.

#### **3.2. Research design**

Research design refers to the systematic and logical plan used by the researcher to gain knowledge of a specific phenomenon (Khanday & Khanam, 2023). It highlights the methodology used to answer the research questions. Research design is, therefore, the framework of techniques and methods chosen by the researcher. Singh (2020) asserts that a good research design must consist of a clear statement of the problem being researched, the techniques and procedures that were used for gathering the information, the methods that were used to process and analyse the data as well as the population being studied. There are three distinctively different approaches to conducting research: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Asenahabi, 2019). This qualitative study explored the experiences of Intermediate Phase educators in primary schools in the Western Cape in implementing Inclusive Education. A qualitative methodology was selected because the study seeks to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators rather than measure numerical outcomes. Qualitative research is appropriate when the aim is to understand meaning, context and subjective experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since Inclusive Education is implemented differently across classrooms, a qualitative approach allows for a deeper exploration of how educators interpret and respond to these challenges in real-world settings.

### **3.2.1 Site**

The research site plays an important role in qualitative studies, providing the contextual foundation for data collection, analysis and interpretation. According to Tracy (2020), the selection of a research site must be guided by the study's objectives, accessibility, ethical considerations and potential to yield rich, meaningful data. Qualitative research emphasises the importance of gaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and fostering respectful engagement with participants, especially in socially or culturally sensitive contexts (Given, 2022). Recent guidelines also highlight the necessity of reflexivity, bringing awareness to how the researcher's presence and positionality might influence the dynamics of the site and the data generated (Nowell & Albrecht, 2021). These policies ensure that the research process is not only methodologically sound but also ethically responsible, ultimately contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings. The research site of this study refers to the five public mainstream primary schools selected around the Western Cape. This location was selected as there have been few studies on the implementation of Inclusive Education within public mainstream primary schools in the Western Cape

### **3.3. Research Paradigm**

Junjie and Yingxin (2022) describe a paradigm as a theoretical framework that shapes one's understanding of reality. It is a systematic means by which a phenomenon of interest, in an attempt to solve a problem and reach a conclusion, is investigated. The fundamental goal of any research is to contribute knowledge. Research is used by researchers to expand knowledge and solve societal problems. Therefore, the solutions that are provided would naturally be influenced by the paradigms adopted by the researcher (Ebohon, Ajayi & Ganiyu, 2021). Paradigms reflect the way the researcher views the world. A paradigm refers to a set of shared beliefs and assumptions within a discipline about how problems should be understood and addressed (Kuhn, 1962). It affects how we address a problem and influences how we approach investigating the problem (Ebohon, et al., 2021). Understanding research paradigms is important to reduce research method bias as they influence scientific discoveries and research

through their principles and assumptions (Yong, et al., 2023). In this study, the interpretivist paradigm was selected as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of how educators construct meaning from their experiences of Inclusive Education within their specific classroom contexts. The interpretivist paradigm aligns with the qualitative nature of this study because it acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and shaped by individual experiences and interactions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Since this study explored educators' lived experiences and perceptions of Inclusive Education implementation, interpretivism provided an appropriate framework for understanding how participants interpreted and responded to challenges within their educational environments. The paradigm further supports the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, as these methods allow for rich descriptions and contextual interpretation of participant experiences. This study followed an inductive qualitative research approach. An inductive approach involves generating patterns, themes and meanings from data rather than testing pre-existing hypotheses (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this study, data collected from Intermediate Phase educators was analysed to identify emerging themes related to their experiences of Inclusive Education implementation. The approach allowed the researcher to move from specific classroom experiences to broader interpretations about systemic, institutional and pedagogical challenges.

The inductive approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm as it supports the exploration of lived experiences without imposing predetermined categories.

### **3.3.1. Interpretivism**

In research, an interpretivist paradigm aims to understand individuals' subjective experiences and meanings within their own contexts. This approach emphasises the importance of understanding the motivations, beliefs and reasoning of people within a social setting, which can then be used to decode the meaning of data collected. Omodan (2022) explains that the interpretivist approach acknowledges that there is no absolute objective reality, rather that every reality is shaped by

personal perspectives. Knowledge is, therefore, constructed through our interactions with others rather than measured objectively (Krmac, 2022). Interpretivism recognises the complexity of every individual and the importance of not disregarding the complexity of social orders through generalisations about universal patterns (Alharahshe & Pius, 2020).

Interpretivism is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and that human behaviour cannot be understood through a single, objective truth. Instead, interpretivism holds that individuals experience the world in unique ways, shaped by their contexts, histories and interactions. This paradigm assumes that meaning must be interpreted rather than measured, thereby placing the researcher in a position to explore and understand participants' subjective experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Within this study, interpretivism provides the foundation for understanding how primary school Intermediate Phase educators in the Western Cape make sense of, respond to and enact Inclusive Education practices within their own classrooms.

### **3.4 Research Questions**

What are the experiences of mainstream Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape?

#### **3.4.1 Sub-research questions**

The sub-research questions were developed to ensure alignment between the main research question and the study objectives. The sub-research questions that originated from the main research question were as follows:

- What are the main challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream classrooms?
- How do Intermediate Phase educators perceive the effectiveness of support structures for learners with barriers to learning?

- How do Intermediate Phase educators implement strategies to support learners with barriers to learning in inclusive classrooms?
- What improvements do educators suggest for enhancing Inclusive Education implementation in schools?

### **3.4.2 Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to:

- Explore the experiences of Intermediate Phase educators implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream classrooms in the Western Cape.
- Identify the challenges faced by educators in implementing Inclusive Education.
- Examine the support structures available to educators in mainstream schools.
- Investigate strategies used by educators to accommodate learners with barriers to learning.
- Determine areas for improvement in the implementation of Inclusive Education.

The research objectives are directly aligned with the main research question and sub-research questions to ensure coherence and methodological consistency throughout the study.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

Data collection is one of the main stages in a research study as it allows the researcher to gain insight into the research questions selected for the study. In qualitative research, data needs to be rich, holistic and complex in order to generate findings and themes through thorough analysis (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). In this study, qualitative research is used as it relies on descriptive, non-numerical data derived from human experience and therefore, the findings cannot be displayed using numbers (Taherdoost, 2021). Contrary to quantitative research, where the instrument of research is usually in the form of a structured and organised questionnaire, during qualitative research, the researcher themselves would be the research instrument and be expected to rebuild their memory of the context during the data collection process (Dewi, 2021).

### **3.5.1 Sample**

Qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena by gaining insight into participants' perceptions and experiences. To identify relevant participants, purposive sampling was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that requires the researcher to rely on their judgment to select the members of the population to take part in the study (Dudovskiy, 2022). It is one of the most time-efficient and cost-effective methods available.

In this regard, two Intermediate Phase educators per school from the five different public mainstream primary schools in the Western Cape were sampled. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school principals, granting the researcher access to the research sites or the virtual option to schedule Zoom meetings to facilitate participant interviews and observations. After agreeing to participate in the research, participants were asked to sign consent forms or letters following a thorough explanation of the ethical measures involved. Educators were selected based on criteria including being Intermediate Phase educators with learners exhibiting different forms of barriers to learning, teaching at a public mainstream primary school in the Western Cape, holding a bachelor's degree in education (BEd), and possessing a minimum of five years of teaching experience. These participants were believed to be information-rich in the phenomenon under investigation (Molekoa, 2019).

### **3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Conversations are a useful tool to get to know people, gain insight into their feelings, experiences and hopes in order to understand their day-to-day world (Ruslin et al., 2022). As qualitative data relies on researching the human experience, interviews become the most straightforward and direct approach for gathering rich and detailed information regarding a specific phenomenon and unfolding the meaning of their experiences (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as an effective and appropriate way to collect data from the educators.

A semi-structured interview is defined as an exploratory interview which is focused on a specific topic that provides a pattern (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).



Unlike a more structured interview, which has a limited set of formalised questions, the semi-structured interview is more flexible, allowing the interviewer to build upon responses easily and immediately according to what is relevant to the study and conversation (Ruslin et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method because they allow participants to express their experiences in their own words while still guiding the discussion around key research topics (Ruslin et al., 2022). This method is particularly suitable for interpretivist studies as it enables flexibility, clarification of responses and deeper exploration of participant perspectives. The semi-interview consisted of a guideline of questions for exploring Intermediate Phase educators' experience implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream schools in the Western Cape. Each interview took between 30 and 40 minutes and was voice recorded with permission from each participant.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

#### **3.6.1 Data transcription**

Data analysis refers to the summarisation, description and analysis of large amounts of information gathered through research (Archer, 2018). The data were coded systematically focusing on the specific themes and concepts around the experiences of implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream schools (Adewumi et al, 2019). The recordings taken during the interview phase of this study were transcribed verbatim to uncover deeper and/or multiple meanings within the text. This kind of transcription was used by the researcher to accurately convey the speaker's intention and to meet the ethical requirements involved in making the transcription as similar to the conversation during the interview as possible (Hill et al. 2022). By focusing on how the interviewee speaks, the readers also gain a better understanding of the discussion.

In qualitative research, thematic analysis is widely used to identify meaningful patterns within the data by systematically coding segments of text and organising these codes into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding, therefore, allows the researcher to purposefully manage, identify, locate, sort and query data (Chun Tie Y, 2019). In contrast, creating themes involves clustering those

codes into groups that share similar characteristics to represent a pattern in the text (Archer, 2018).

Archer (2018) further explains that thematic analysis is a personal process in which the researcher takes a subjective approach. It is, therefore, important to become familiar with the text by reading or listening to the data repetitively, coding, using themes and revising. There is ongoing movement between analysis, data collection and sense-making. When analysing the interviews for meaning and language, a narrative approach was used. This approach focuses on participants' lived experiences from their perspective, acknowledging their personal life events as they are told (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021). This approach also generates themes by focusing on the analysis of empirically derived narratives. Thematic analysis was chosen as it provides a systematic yet flexible method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to interpret educators' narratives and identify recurring themes related to Inclusive Education implementation across different school contexts.

### **3.7. Ethical measures**

In research, ethics refers to the values and norms that direct the decisions during data collection, analysis and the dissemination of those findings (Mantzaris, 2022). Bos (2020) regards it as an inquiry into what is right and wrong, as well as what the researcher ought to do. It focuses on the moral issues related to the research process. Ethics highlights the researcher's moral responsibility towards the interests and rights of their audience, their participants and the academic community (Mirza, 2023). It was, , imperative to develop a framework for what the right and wrong criteria are being measured. All participants in this study were treated with the utmost respect and trust, regardless of their sex, age, religion, race, political beliefs and any other significant difference that is evident. They were, therefore, all treated equally. As researchers, we should not disempower or demean participants through academic or personal speech. The participants should feel comfortable communicating without hesitation, fear or intervention, by

using the language that they are most familiar and comfortable with. Moreover, the researcher should focus on not using discourse that could impact the ideas and emotions of the participants (Mirza, 2023).

We should avoid using any language, whether academic or personal, that could disempower or demean participants. Participants must be able to communicate freely, without interference, intimidation or fear. They should be encouraged to use the language they are most comfortable with, particularly in multilingual research contexts. Every effort should be made to employ discourse that minimises influence on participants' thoughts and emotions. During data collection, our interactions should prioritize eliciting information rather than conveying our own opinions or ideas. This study takes ethics into account by obtaining permission and consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity and ensuring the safety of participants.

### **3.7.1 Permission**

To maintain ethical standards, the researcher must submit a formal request to the applicable authorities to gain access to the research sites. This would entail providing a short statement explaining the purpose of the study, the research sites, the participants, as well as the activities involved, the protection in place for the subjects and the informed consent forms for the adults (Taherdoost, 2021).

To begin, an ethical clearance certificate number 2024/10/12/00000207/05/RB was obtained from the University of South Africa (Unisa) Review Ethics Committee (REC). An approval letter from the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) was also obtained to collect data after submitting proposals and all relevant documents. Permission was requested from the five public mainstream schools and the principals of the mainstream Western Cape schools participating in this study.

### **3.7.2 Informed Consent**

Informed consent involves participants voluntarily choosing to participate in a study, based on adequate information and sufficient understanding of the study and the implications of participating. It is one of the fundamentals of achieving ethical research (Xu, et al. 2020).

The main aim of informed consent is to safeguard participants from any potential harm. Wendler (2022) identifies four conditions that should be considered when asking for consent: firstly, the participant must be competent and secondly, sufficiently informed, thirdly the participant must decide to enrol in the study voluntarily and lastly, should communicate their decision to participate to the researcher.

In this study, the researcher met with each participant individually to explain the study's purpose. Each participant was informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time during the interviews. Participants were interviewed after providing signed consent and confidentiality forms.

### **3.7.3. Confidentiality**

In qualitative research, confidentiality refers to the ethical responsibility to protect participants' privacy. This involves ensuring that any personally identifiable information, such as names or specific details that could identify participants, remains confidential and cannot be accessed by the public (Guest et al., 2022). This study addressed confidentiality by ensuring that each participant's reports would not include any details that could endanger their situation or reveal their identity. Participants were assured that confidentiality would be strictly maintained as a fundamental research principle. The study ensured that all identifying information was removed during data collection and processing to protect participants' privacy.

### **3.7.4. Anonymity**

To maintain an ethical study, it is important to protect the participants from potential harm. This can be achieved by keeping the participants' information

confidential or anonymous and avoiding using self-identifying statements and information. This means that although the researcher knows the participant's identity, the data were de-identified to keep the participant's identity confidential (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). This is done to consider any potential harm to the participants, the wider community, the researcher and the institution. By maintaining participant anonymity, the study aims to create a secure environment where individuals can freely express their genuine thoughts and emotions. Participants were guaranteed anonymity, ensuring that their names would not be mentioned throughout the study and pseudonyms would be used instead.

### **3.7.5. Harm to participants**

Harm to participants in research refers to any negative consequences or adverse effects that participants may experience as a result of their involvement in a study. This can include physical, psychological, emotional, social, or financial harm (American Psychological Association, 2020). In this study, each participant's well-being was prioritised by informing them during the interviews that counselling would be available if they experienced emotional distress during or after the interview. More importantly, a counsellor was contacted beforehand to ensure their services may be needed if necessary.

## **3.8 Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research emphasises trustworthiness as a fundamental principle (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morse, 2019). This concept aligns with the traditional notions of reliability and validity in quantitative research. Establishing trustworthiness involves persuading readers that the findings are credible, significant and worthy of consideration (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Morse et al. (2016), the reliability and validity of a study should entail addressing aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These concepts are outlined as follows:

### **3.8.1. Credibility**

In qualitative research, credibility can be established by demonstrating confidence through accurate data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It

includes assessing whether the research findings are meaningful, authentically represent the phenomena of interest and sufficiently depict the participants involved (Morse, 2020). Achieving credibility involves interpreting and presenting the context, participants and settings. Researchers also gain credibility by using diverse data collection methods to validate the information gathered and ensure that the findings accurately reflect the observed, heard, discussed, interpreted and analysed aspects of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ahmed (2024) suggests three strategies for achieving credibility. First, it is to ensure prolonged engagement to build trust and rapport, which would result in rich data that may not be apparent during brief interactions. Secondly, he suggests that by acknowledging reflexivity, the researcher can bracket their own biases to maintain a more objective position during data collection. Lastly, Ahmed (2024) suggests triangulation i.e. multiple data collection techniques. This increases credibility and reduce potential bias if relying on a single method. During this study, the researcher could not preconceive the experiences by the educators in implementing Inclusive Education in public mainstream schools in the Western Cape and therefore, could not be shaped by the participants' feelings or experiences.

### **3.8.2. Transferability**

Transferability in qualitative research is the extent to which findings can be applied or generalised to other contexts and settings, and is evaluated by assessing their relevance and potential for broader application (Morse, 2020). Qualitative explanations of findings and contexts allow researchers to acknowledge the significance and applicability of study outcomes across diverse settings. While this research was limited to five public mainstream primary schools in the Western Cape, the findings may be applicable to similar educational settings across South Africa.

### **3.8.3. Dependability**

Dependability in qualitative research refers to both the consistency and reliability of findings over time and across different conditions. This emphasises the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's outcomes. This can be achieved

through systematic, replicable data collection, analysis and interpretation. Triangulation, member checking and detailed notes during data collection are techniques used to enhance the dependability by ensuring that the study's findings are based on solid and verifiable research (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2022).

During this study, the researcher maintained objectivity throughout data collection process and interpretation by being conscious of personal opinions and biases. This approach was crucial in investigating the experiences of Intermediate Phase educators implementing Inclusive Education in public mainstream schools in the Western Cape and providing authentic and valid findings.

#### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that their findings and interpretations are derived directly from the data by showing how they were developed (Nowell, 2017). It focuses on the degree to which the findings of a study are unbiased, objective and free from researcher influence. It emphasises the need for researchers to demonstrate that their interpretations and conclusions are rooted in the data collected rather than their personal beliefs or preferences. This is achieved through systematic data analysis techniques, such as coding and thematic analysis, that allow for transparency and traceability of the researcher's decision-making process. By documenting and justifying every step of the research journey, from data collection to analysis and interpretation, researchers enhance the confirmability of their findings, thereby ensuring the reliability and trustworthiness of their study (Nowell et al., 2017).

The researcher remained open-minded and curious about all that was experienced by the educators, and therefore, the conclusions could be supported by the data as relevant and accurate. Credibility was also achieved through prolonged interaction with each participant, member checks and validation of themes with participants' own words.

### **3.9 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity in qualitative research involves the researcher's active, critical examination of their own biases, assumptions and perspectives that may influence the research process and outcomes. In this study, the researcher practised self-awareness and transparency in acknowledging how their background and own experiences could shape the data collection, analysis and interpretation. By maintaining reflexivity, the researchers enhanced the credibility and validity of their study, ensuring that their interpretations accurately represented participants' experiences (Ahmed, 2024).

### **3.10. Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the research methodology employed in this study. It provided an in-depth exploration of several key aspects, including the research paradigm, research design, site selection criteria, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and strategies to ensure validity, reliability and reflexivity in qualitative research. The subsequent chapter will delve into the data analysis process and presentation of findings.



## **Chapter 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Analysis in qualitative research involves systematically examining and interpreting data to determine patterns, meanings and insights relevant to the research questions. It is an important step in making sense of complex, context-rich information, particularly in studies focusing on Inclusive Education in South Africa, where diverse learner experiences and systemic challenges must be carefully understood. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), qualitative analysis is not just about summarising data but also about constructing meaning through a rigorous and reflective process. In this study, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes in educators' narratives, enabling a nuanced exploration of their experiences and challenges in implementing inclusive practices. Thematic analysis is particularly well-suited to examining how educators navigate Inclusive Education in a context marked by inequality, resource constraints and policy-practice gaps (Donohue & Bornman, 2021). This chapter analyses and interprets the data collected through interviews to address the research question: What are the experiences of mainstream primary school Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape?

#### **4.2 Profile of the participants**

Throughout the study, participant anonymity was maintained. To protect their identities, the researcher assigned unique codes to the participants' data. These codes helped to ensure privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Participants' experience levels influenced the richness of the data collected, with more experienced participants offering deeper insights into the topic, while less experienced participants contributed less detailed information. The participants' age, professional background and qualifications played a key role in enhancing the depth, relevance and reliability of the data. To ensure a comprehensive data set, the researcher purposefully selected participants with diverse ages,

experiences and qualifications, thereby strengthening the study's overall quality and credibility.

| Participant | Position         | Code | Age      | Experience    | Qualification |
|-------------|------------------|------|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Educator 1  | Grade 4 educator | T1   | 26 years | 6 years       | BEd           |
| Educator 2  | Grade 7 educator | T2   | 48 years | Over 15 years | BEd Masters   |
| Educator 3  | Grade 4 educator | T3   | 42 years | 20 years      | BEd           |
| Educator 4  | Grade 6 educator | T4   | 33 years | 13 years      | BEd           |
| Educator 5  | Grade 5 educator | T5   | 36 years | 5 years       | BEd Honours   |
| Educator 6  | Grade 5 educator | T6   | 32 years | 9 years       | BEd           |
| Educator 7  | Grade 5 educator | T7   | 46 years | 12 years      | BEd           |
| Educator 8  | Grade 4 educator | T8   | 55 years | Over 20 years | BEd Masters   |
| Educator 9  | Grade 7 educator | T9   | 28 years | 5 years       | BEd Honours   |
| Educator 10 | Grade 4 educator | T10  | 49 years | 8 years       | BEd Honours   |

Table 5.1: Participants' biographic information

#### 4.2.1. Age of Participants

|                        | 20 - 30 years | 31 - 40 years | 41 + years |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| Number of participants | 2             | 3             | 5          |

Table 5.2: The quantity of participants in each age group

Table 5.2 indicates that most participants were older than 40 years old. Two are below 30 years old, three are under 40 years old, and five are over 40 years old. Participants needed a minimum of five years of teaching experience to participate in the study.

#### 4.2.2. Teaching experience of participants

|                        | 5 years | 6-12 years | 12+ years |
|------------------------|---------|------------|-----------|
| Number of participants | 2       | 4          | 4         |

Table 5.3: The participants' years of experience

Table 5.3 indicates that most participants had more than the minimum required teaching experience. While a small number met only the minimum requirement of five years, the majority had several additional years of experience, with many having extensive teaching backgrounds. Similar to the participants' age profile, the sample was, therefore, characterised by a high level of professional experience.

The study's criteria required each participant to have at least five years of teaching experience. These more experienced participants contributed rich, in-depth insights into the topic, while those with less experience provided comparatively more limited information. The following themes were explored:

| Research Question                                                                                                                                     | Themes                                                                                          | Sub-themes                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are the experiences of mainstream primary school Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape? | Challenges Intermediate Phase educators experience in implementing Inclusive Education          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under-qualified educators</li> <li>• Inadequate training</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Lack of resources</li> </ul> |
|                                                                                                                                                       | Support structures available to educators when accommodating learners with barriers to learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialised support structures</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Parental involvement</li> </ul>                          |
|                                                                                                                                                       | Improvements that could be made in better implementing Inclusive Education in the Western Cape  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Personalised teaching</li> </ul>                                                        |

Table 5.4: Themes from the semi-structured interviews

Themes were not developed based on isolated participant responses, but through repeated patterns, recurring meanings and shared experiences identified across multiple interviews during the coding process.

### **4.3 Findings**

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview, and with their consent, the interviews were recorded. The audio recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim. Throughout the analysis, the views of the participants are cited in italics as direct evidence. Recurring patterns across participants strengthened the credibility of the themes identified during analysis.

In this study, the concept “*challenges*” refers to the contextual, instructional, emotional and systemic difficulties experienced by Intermediate Phase educators when implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream classrooms. These challenges include barriers related to educator preparedness, classroom management, differentiation, resource limitations, institutional support and learner diversity. The study recognises that challenges are subjective and may differ according to educators’ qualifications, years of experience, classroom contexts and access to support structures. Therefore, the findings presented reflect participants’ individual experiences and perceptions within their specific teaching environments.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Challenges Intermediate Phase educators experience in implementing Inclusive Education**

Several challenges became evident when trying to understand Intermediate Phase educators experiences implementing Inclusive Education in mainstream schools. Participants were asked about their challenges to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in implementing Inclusive Education in their classroom.

#### **4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Under-qualified educators**

The participant shares a common concern among educators: that even with the best intentions, they sometimes feel underprepared to meet the needs of learners with learning barriers.

*T1: “So I think that we need to distinguish what method can you approach with this learner. I think that is the biggest challenge. I mean sometimes, you know, you don’t feel you are that qualified to teach learners with certain barriers; for example, the child with ADHD or, you know, that learning barrier, and you don’t know how to approach it. That is also a big challenge that we do for our kids.”*

This feeling of inadequacy can stem from several interrelated challenges in Inclusive Education. Similar concerns were expressed by several other participants. T3 indicated that educators often feel uncertain about how to support learners with ADHD and other learning barriers effectively, while T6 explained that many educators rely on “trial and error” because they feel inadequately prepared through their initial teacher training. T7 similarly expressed uncertainty around addressing diverse learning needs, stating that “sometimes you are just not sure if what you are doing is the correct support for that learner, especially when they have multiple barriers at once.” This reinforces the sense of professional uncertainty that many educators experience when working within inclusive classrooms.

Educators often struggle with determining the best instructional methods for learners with diverse learning needs. Across participants, these findings demonstrate that educators’ challenges were not isolated experiences but recurring concerns shared across different schools and teaching contexts. As Donohue and Bornman (2021) explain, inclusive classrooms rarely benefit from a one-size-fits-all approach, requiring educators to adapt their teaching strategies to diverse abilities. Yet, many educators feel unprepared for this task, particularly when supporting learners with ADHD, as their initial training often does not equip them to handle such complexities. Similarly, Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel

(2021) confirm that inadequate specialised training remains a significant barrier to effective inclusion.

#### **4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Inadequate training**

T5 explained that many workshops are “too theoretical” and do not equip educators with practical classroom strategies. Similarly, T9 stated that educators are often expected to implement Inclusive Education “without enough guidance or follow-up training.”

These concerns were echoed by other participants. T2 noted that although training opportunities are available, they are often inconsistent and not sustained over time, making it difficult for educators to build confidence in inclusive practices. T7 further highlighted that newer teachers in particular “enter classrooms without having been properly prepared for real inclusive settings,” which places additional pressure on more experienced colleagues to provide informal mentoring. T8 also emphasised that while inclusive education is discussed during training, “it becomes very different once you are in the classroom and have to actually implement it on your own without support.”

This reflects a gap between theoretical preparation and practical classroom realities.

Garcia and Rivera (2020) highlight that many educators report inadequate training in modifying their instruction to support learners with disabilities or learning barriers. This issue is further compounded by resource constraints, as noted by Brown and Thompson (2021), who emphasise that educators often lack access to necessary materials, mentoring and collaborative planning opportunities. Without these resources, educators may feel overwhelmed and under-qualified, making it difficult to implement Inclusive Education effectively.

#### **4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Differentiation**

Differentiation within the classroom adds another layer of difficulty. Differentiation is a teaching approach that involves customising instruction, assessment and learning environments to meet the diverse needs, abilities and six interests of all learners. In the context of Inclusive Education in South Africa, differentiation is

essential for ensuring that every learner, regardless of disability, learning barrier or background, can access and engage with the curriculum meaningfully. It allows educators to provide varied levels of support and challenge, enabling all learners to succeed in the same classroom.

As highlighted by Walton and Moonsamy (2021), effective differentiation is a key strategy in promoting equity and inclusion, but many South African educators struggle to implement it consistently owing to limited training and systemic constraints. Lindsay, Smith and Ahmed (2019) also stress that Inclusive Education is not just about the taught content but ensuring that every learner fully understands and engages with it. To address this, there must be a stronger focus on professional development, school-based support systems and institutional backing. Educators need ongoing training, mentoring and access to adaptive teaching materials to feel more confident and capable in inclusive settings. Addressing these issues is essential for creating an educational system where every learner, regardless of their challenges, has access to a high-quality, inclusive learning experience.

*T3: “Personally, I feel like it does, so you will have those learners who need the help and you’re one educator, you know, you can’t focus on them and the rest of the class. Yeah, so that is a challenge.”*

This experience was not isolated. T6 similarly described difficulties in adjusting lesson content for learners performing at different academic levels, noting that lesson pacing often becomes difficult when learners require repeated explanation and additional support. T10 also indicated that time constraints make it challenging to meaningfully adapt tasks for all learners within a single lesson period. T1 also noted that differentiation often becomes secondary to curriculum coverage, explaining that “you try your best, but at the end of the day you still need to finish the work, so you can’t always slow down for every learner.” This highlights the tension between curriculum expectations and inclusive pedagogy. It is evident that educators in inclusive classrooms often struggle with balancing the learners' needs who require individualised support while making sure that the rest of the class stays engaged. As emphasised in the verbatim quotation, it is difficult for a single educator to give every learner the attention they need without feeling

stretched too thin. Therefore, differentiation is difficult to achieve. Educators are expected to juggle multiple learning needs within one classroom and without additional support, it can be overwhelming to manage both individualised care and whole-class teaching effectively. According to Donohue and Bornman (2021), many educators feel overburdened by the demands of catering to diverse learning needs. Garcia and Rivera (2020) also found that educators often experience high levels of stress and burnout owing to the difficulty of balancing individualised support with maintaining overall instructional quality. This ongoing struggle can negatively affect both educator well-being and learner outcomes, making it essential to find ways to better support educators in implementing differentiation in inclusive environments. Brown and Thompson (2021) emphasise how difficult it is for educators to design and implement teaching strategies that accommodate both high-needs learners and the rest of the class. Constantly switching between individualised and group-focused teaching methods can leave educators feeling ineffective, as they worry that some learners are not receiving the support they need. This reinforces the need for better training and resources to help educators manage diverse classrooms more effectively.

#### **4.3.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Lack of Resources**

Besides classroom strategies, resource limitations significantly hinder educators' ability to implement Inclusive Education effectively. Teaching in under-resourced schools, where there is a shortage of basic infrastructure, teaching materials, assistive technologies and specialist support, places immense pressure on educators and can negatively impact learner outcomes. In the South African context, Walton and Moonsamy (2021) note that resource shortages are a constant barrier to inclusion, particularly in rural and township schools, where educators often have to resort to improvisation to meet learners' needs. These constraints not only impact curriculum delivery but also limit opportunities for differentiated instruction, collaborative learning and individualised support. Without access to adequate resources, Inclusive Education remains a theoretical ideal that is difficult to realise in practice.



One participant highlighted several structural challenges that affect teaching practice, particularly time management, classroom management and class size.

As participant T4 explained, *“time management, classroom management and class size... if the class sizes are not that big, it's easier to accommodate everybody. When the class sizes are big, it becomes more challenging for the educator, especially once they leave the Foundation Phase, where group work makes management somewhat easier.”*

Several participants highlighted similar structural constraints affecting inclusive practice. T8 emphasised that overcrowded classrooms limit the accessibility of individualised attention, particularly when multiple learners require simultaneous support. T9 also stated that a shortage of basic teaching materials and resources makes it difficult to adapt lessons effectively for learners with diverse needs.

T2 also highlighted the emotional and instructional strain placed on educators, explaining that even when additional support strategies are implemented, learners without support at home often show limited progress, increasing pressure on classroom teachers to make up for these gaps.

Managing a large class while ensuring that every learner receives the support they need is one of the biggest challenges in Inclusive Education. The participant in the study highlights how class size plays a crucial role in the participant's ability to provide personalised support, particularly for learners facing learning barriers. T8 further explained that overcrowded classrooms limit opportunities for individualised support, while T9 highlighted shortages of teaching materials and assistive resources needed to support learners effectively. When classrooms are overcrowded, educators struggle to meet the diverse needs of all learners, making it harder to create an inclusive environment where every learner can thrive. As identified by [Brown and Thompson \(2021\)](#), smaller class sizes allow for more individualised attention and adaptive teaching strategies, which are essential for effective inclusion. However, in South Africa, with a population of 62 million people and overcrowding in rural and township schools, it becomes almost impossible to create smaller class environments.

Time management is another key issue that arises in larger classrooms. Educators must balance covering the curriculum with addressing the unique needs of learners who require extra support. However, as class sizes grow, the time available for individualised instruction decreases. Garcia and Rivera (2020) found that this strain on time can make it more difficult for educators to implement inclusive practices effectively, as they often must prioritise lesson delivery over personalised interventions. Without additional support, educators may feel overwhelmed, reducing the overall effectiveness of Inclusive Education.

Classroom management also becomes more complex as the number of learners increases. Maintaining engagement and order in a large class can be difficult, particularly when some learners require specialised support. Williams and Carter (2023) argue that successful inclusion depends on strong classroom management strategies, which become harder to implement when educators are stretched too thin. Additionally, as learners progress beyond the Foundation Phase, their need for individualised instruction increases, adding another layer of difficulty in ensuring that all learners receive the help they need.

Allocating or providing teaching assistants can significantly reduce educators' burden (Brown & Thompson, 2021). Teaching assistants (TAs) can play a vital role as support resources in the implementation of Inclusive Education in South African schools. They provide important classroom-based support, allowing educators to focus more effectively on differentiated instruction and individual learner needs. TAs can help manage classroom routines, provide one-on-one or small-group support and assist learners with disabilities in accessing the curriculum and participating meaningfully in lessons. According to Walton and Moonsamy (2021), TAs enhance inclusivity by reducing educator workload and creating a more supportive learning environment, particularly in large or multi-level classrooms. Despite their potential, South Africa has yet to fully institutionalise the use of TAs across all public schools, largely owing to funding and policy implementation gaps. Nevertheless, integrating trained TAs into the classroom structure would significantly strengthen SBSTs and promote more equitable learning opportunities.

The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) provides educators with guidance on how to teach and assess learners, and is taught during educator training. The emphasis on a rigid curriculum becomes problematic when applied to the diverse learning needs of learners in a single classroom. There are expectations of educators to follow a standardised curriculum, as well as also needing to provide individualised support for learners who require extra time to grasp certain concepts. This creates a difficult trade-off; spending more time on one topic can help struggling learners, but it may also slow down overall class progress. Research by Garcia and Rivera (2020) highlights how these rigid curricular demands limit educators' ability to adapt their instruction, making it harder to implement effective inclusive teaching strategies.

The pressure to stay on track with the curriculum often results in some learners falling behind, widening the achievement gap. Brown and Thompson (2021) note that this not only affects learning outcomes but also contributes to educator stress, as educators feel torn between meeting their targets and ensuring full understanding. This ongoing struggle can be frustrating for educators, as it ultimately undermines the goal of inclusion by prioritising speed over understanding. To address this, Williams and Carter (2023) suggest increasing curriculum flexibility and incorporating additional classroom support, such as co-teaching models or instructional aides. Professional development focused on differentiated instruction can also equip educators with strategies to balance curriculum requirements while meeting diverse learner needs. By implementing these changes, education systems can create a more inclusive learning environment that ensures all learners receive the support they need without compromising overall progress.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 2: Educator Support Structures**

##### **4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 5: Specialist support structures**

Specialist support structures play a crucial role in assisting learners with barriers to learning - particularly in South African schools, where many learners require tailored interventions. Professionals such as specialised educators, psychologists and occupational therapists provide important tools and knowledge

used to address specific challenges and ensure that learners receive the individualised support they need. Swart and Pettipher (2020) highlight that Inclusive Education is most effective when supported by specialised professionals, as they contribute to the early identification of learning difficulties, targeted interventions and ongoing progress monitoring. In South Africa, where resources are often limited, these support structures are particularly vital for bridging the gap between mainstream education and the needs of learners who require additional assistance, especially in underfunded or rural schools.

The participants were confident when asked about the support structures that were put in place by the school. They expressed that while challenges still existed, there was a growing recognition of the resources available and an appreciation for the role they played in fostering Inclusive Education as emphasised by participant T5:

*“Well...yeah, twice a week we have a remedial educator who takes the children who are struggling out of the classroom for like 30 minutes to help them with subjects like Maths and English while I carry on. It actually helps me because I can go at a faster pace then. We also have an occupational therapist that comes twice a month. I think the parents can pay extra for this if they need it.”*

Geldenhuys and Wevers (2022) argue that specialist support training provides educators with both professional guidance and practical strategies to navigate the complexities of Inclusive Education. By providing hands-on support, these professionals enable educators to better manage diverse learning needs.

Support structures are, therefore, essential for fostering an equitable and effective learning environment in South African schools. By ensuring that all learners, regardless of their barriers to learning, have access to the tools and resources they need, these structures help create a more inclusive and supportive education system. This is expressed by participant T1 as follows:

*“At our school, there are support structures available to us. We may not have everything we need, but the school does make an effort to help us. We have a group of specialists that the children can go to for extra lessons*

*to get more support. I think this helps us support the learners with barriers to learning."*

Having specialist support available to learners is a key support structure that helps educators accommodate learners with barriers.

#### **4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 6: Collaboration**

With specialist support, it is important that educators work together towards a shared goal of supporting learners. T4 specifically emphasises how collaboration is used in their school by having weekly meetings to discuss problematic learners and strategies to improve learning. Collaboration among educators and access to resources are essential for providing effective accommodations, helping each member to reinforce their approaches through the support of their colleagues. Participant T4 highlighted the importance of this:

*"...We work together a lot. We have regular meetings where we discuss the learners who need extra support. It's great because I don't feel like I'm doing it on my own. We're a team, and everyone has a role to play in helping these learners succeed. I also have access to resources, and I know that I can ask for help whenever I need it."*

By working together, educators, support staff and school leaders can take a more holistic approach to addressing learners' diverse needs. Waldron and McLeskey (2021) emphasise that when educators collaborate effectively, it leads to better outcomes for the learners with learning difficulties, as it fosters a shared understanding of each learner's strengths and challenges.

In South Africa, where schools often face resource shortages and a lack of specialised staff, collaboration becomes even more important. Educators can share their expertise to develop differentiated teaching strategies, adapt learning materials and create an inclusive environment that supports all learners, regardless of their learning challenges. Maree and Stofberg (2022) found that practices such as team teaching and regular SBST meetings provide educators with valuable opportunities to exchange ideas and reflect on strategies that work for learners with conditions such as ADHD, dyslexia and other learning difficulties.

Beyond improving teaching practices, collaboration also helps foster a more positive and supportive school culture. When educators work together, they feel more empowered and less isolated in the challenges of Inclusive Education. This teamwork leads to more effective intervention plans that consider learners' diverse needs—especially in South African schools, where cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors add further layers of complexity to education. Overall, collaboration among educators is key to creating a learning environment that is inclusive for all learners to thrive. Participant T7 highlighted how by supporting one another and combining their knowledge, educators can ensure that no learner is left behind:

*“We now have an Inclusive Education team that is located at our school; so, any kind of OT [occupational therapy] that we might need, speech therapists, that we might need to be able to do that, we have an Inclusive Education team that is already located at the school; so, the process to get those learners help is a lot quicker. We also have regular school-based support team meetings and in those meetings, we discuss the challenges of the learners, and then from there, we will send it to the IE team, where they will take over.”*

An Inclusive Education team ensures that learners receive specialised, tailored attention to meet their specific needs. Typically, an Inclusive Education team consists of multi-interdisciplinary professionals such as special education teachers, speech therapists, psychologists and occupational therapists, all working together to create a strong support system for learners. Botha and Smit (2021) highlight the importance of these teams, emphasising that early intervention and specialised support can improve both social and academic outcomes for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties.

Malahlela (2024) found that schools with well-established Inclusive Education teams are more successful in identifying learning barriers, implementing individualised learning plans and tracking learners' progress. These teams also help ease educators' burden by allowing them to focus on their core teaching responsibilities while specialists provide targeted support for learners with diverse needs.

Beyond benefiting individual learners, these teams foster a collaborative approach in which educators, specialists and parents work together to create a more inclusive learning environment. Learners receive consistent, coordinated support that enhances their overall educational experience when everyone is aligned in their efforts. In this way, Inclusive Education teams are a cornerstone of sustainable, equitable education in South Africa, ensuring that all learners have the resources they need to succeed.

Support structures are, therefore, crucial for helping educators accommodate learners with learning barriers and create an inclusive classroom environment. During interviews, key aspects of these support systems were identified, including access to specialist services such as occupational therapists (OTs), psychologists and support educators. These professionals provide essential interventions that address learners' specific needs, aligning with research by Rose and Dalton (2021), which emphasises the importance of multi-disciplinary teams in Inclusive Education. By offering individualised support, these teams help bridge the gap between learners' needs and the school curriculum, ensuring all learners have equal access to education.

As highlighted by T4, regular SBST meetings provide educators with a platform to discuss learner challenges and develop targeted interventions. These meetings enable educators to share strategies, seek guidance and implement effective solutions for learners with diverse needs.

While many educators acknowledged that these support systems were beneficial, some expressed concerns about inadequate support within their schools. The effectiveness of these structures often depends on factors such as school resources, administrative backing and educator training. Strengthening these support networks through professional development and increased access to specialist services would further enhance educators' ability to address the needs of every learner in an inclusive setting.

*T2: "Certain children who are not passing and have barriers to learning. But there's no improvement. You can give them a scribe. You can give them a reader. You can give them everything. But they're going home."*

*They don't have the support at home as well. So, because we have children from everywhere. So, and a lot of them don't have the support at home. And then you have the other child who gets all the support. Yes. So, you feel like quite a bit of resistance from some parents when it comes to it, like trying to reach out to them and that kind of thing."*

While schools may provide multi-level support systems to assist learners, their impact is often limited without continued reinforcement at home, as highlighted by T2. Without parental involvement, even the best school-based interventions, such as providing scribes or readers, can only go so far in helping a child progress. Research consistently emphasises the crucial role of strong home-school partnerships in developing an inclusive learning environment and ensuring that learners receive support both in and out of the classroom (Woolfson & Matthews, 2019).

#### **4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 8: Parental Involvement**

To successfully implement Inclusive Education, it requires a well-rounded approach that includes specialist support, collaboration among educators, CPD, and active parental involvement creates a solid foundation for those learners with barriers to learning. When all these elements work together, they not only accommodate diverse learning needs but also empower learners, giving them the best possible chance to succeed. Some participants mentioned the lack of parental support. Many parents are unaware of the need for inclusivity within schools in South Africa and therefore, either do not provide support or fail to implement strategies at home that could improve their child's learning ability, a concern also noted by Engelbrecht and Green (2018), who argue that limited parental awareness and involvement significantly hinder the effectiveness of Inclusive Education initiatives. Participant T5 made reference to this,

*"I feel like it's very important, and I do feel what parents need to play their role as well; you know, you can't just send your child to school ... and not doing anything at home; so, when you communicate with parents, you have to address what you as an educator found."*



Van der Merwe and Botha (2020) emphasise that when parents are actively involved in their child's education, they help reinforce learning strategies, provide emotional support and create a consistent environment for learners to thrive both at school and at home. Therefore, in the South African context, where many learners face additional challenges such as socio-economic hardship and language barriers, parental support can help reduce these difficulties by ensuring that learners receive the attention and encouragement they need outside of school hours. Moreover, Shumba and Ndaliso (2021) argue that a strong relationship between educators and parents, particularly regarding the progress of learners with barriers to learning, fosters a shared responsibility for learners' development, leading to more sustainable academic improvements. Involving parents in intervention plans and decision-making processes also helps to align school strategies with home-based support, making the interventions more holistic and effective. Ultimately, research underscores that parental involvement is beneficial and essential for the success of Inclusive Education, particularly in South Africa's diverse and resource-challenged school environment.

Sullivan and Linton (2020) found that without parents' active engagement in educational strategies, even the best-designed classroom accommodations fail to produce sustainable improvements in learning outcomes. This highlights the importance of strong collaboration and communication between educators and families to ensure that learners receive consistent support at school and home. In many cases, as T7 describes, educators encounter resistance from parents, which can create a barrier to the success of interventions. According to Hodgkinson (2022), parental resistance can arise from a lack of understanding of the value of their involvement, limited resources at home or even societal stigmas surrounding special education. These findings suggest that, in addition to the in-school support structures, there is a need for community and parent-focused initiatives that help build awareness, provide guidance and encourage active participation in the educational process. The effectiveness of Inclusive Education is heavily dependent on a comprehensive support system that includes not just school-based interventions but also the full engagement of families and communities.

### **4.3.2. Theme 3: Improvements that could be made in better implementing Inclusive Education in the Western Cape**

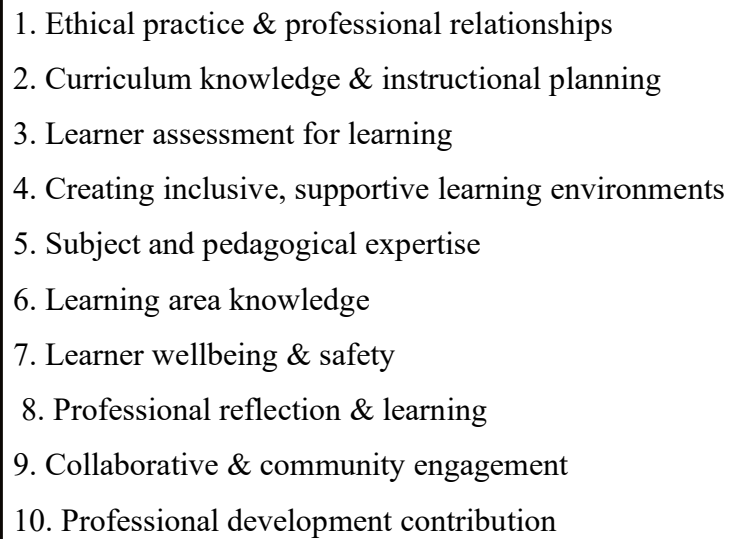
To improve inclusivity in the Western Cape, it is necessary to recognise what can be changed to improve implementation in schools. Many participants emphasised the need to understand their learners and their diverse needs to provide adequate support. Parents must put in extra effort to increase their child's learning ability. Participant T3 emphasised that a lack of training contributes to uncertainty and negative attitudes among some educators, noting that “educators are still not aware” and may feel unable to teach learners with conditions such as autism or ADHD. T3 further reflected that after receiving training in Inclusive Education, they felt a professional responsibility to be inclusive, stating that “as an educator, you owe it to be inclusive in your classroom... you can’t just sit there and say, ‘I am unable to do it.’” This highlights the role of targeted professional development in reducing stigma and increasing educators’ confidence and sense of responsibility toward inclusive practice.

#### **4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 9: Professional development**

The participant identifies the importance of making on-going training compulsory for all educators, emphasising that ongoing training is key to equipping educators with effective inclusive teaching strategies. Without regular training, many educators struggle to keep updates in the evolving teaching practices, leaving them unprepared to cater for the diverse needs of their learners. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) mandates that all registered educators should participate in CPD to maintain and enhance their standard of teaching. As outlined in the SACE Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) policy, educators are required to attend regular workshops, seminars and training sessions to stay updated with current educational practices and policies. These professional development activities are essential for improving teaching quality, addressing emerging challenges in the classroom and promoting inclusivity. It is clear that although the policy exists, many educators still feel like they are lacking in professional development which may reflect a lack in enforcement by management - highlighting a potential downfall in the system.

SACE also emphasises that such engagement is not optional but a professional obligation, contributing to the accumulation of professional development points that are monitored through the CPTD system (SACE, 2019). This ensures that educators remain competent, responsive and able to meet the various needs of their learners in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Beyond just attending workshops, the focus should be to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that what educators gain in training can be effectively applied in real classroom settings. This is especially relevant in regions like the Western Cape, where Inclusive Education policies must be translated into meaningful teaching practices.

In the Western Cape, issues such as large class sizes, resource shortages and varying levels of educator preparedness often make it difficult to implement Inclusive Education successfully. Research has shown that improved educator training could significantly enhance inclusive practices. Jones and Brown (2021) found that 16 regular professional development sessions enable educators to adopt innovative teaching strategies, while Van der Merwe and Smith (2022) emphasise that compulsory training fosters collaboration among educators. When all educators participate in shared learning experiences, good practices spread more effectively, creating a support system that helps individual educators address the challenges of diverse classrooms and, in turn, contribute to the development of ideal educators. SACE has also formalised its expectations of what constitutes an “ideal educator” through its CPTD policy (Annexure A):

- 
- A rectangular box with a black border containing a numbered list of ten items.
1. Ethical practice & professional relationships
  2. Curriculum knowledge & instructional planning
  3. Learner assessment for learning
  4. Creating inclusive, supportive learning environments
  5. Subject and pedagogical expertise
  6. Learning area knowledge
  7. Learner wellbeing & safety
  8. Professional reflection & learning
  9. Collaborative & community engagement
  10. Professional development contribution

**Figure 4.1: SACE's ten core standards** (SACE, 2019)

Making professional development mandatory could therefore yield several key benefits. Standardised training would ensure that educators are aware of the most recent Inclusive Education strategies, creating consistency across schools. Additionally, when educators receive ongoing practical training, their confidence in handling diverse classrooms improves, leading to better learner outcomes. Finally, by aligning professional development with national Inclusive Education policies the gap between policy and classroom practice would be bridged, ensuring that well-intended educational reforms translate into meaningful change for learners. This view was reinforced by participant T5, who emphasised the demand for specialised educators to target specific learning needs, suggesting that “a qualified educator who can teach them to read while the class educator continues with the curriculum” would allow learners to receive targeted support in areas where they are struggling. According to T5, this skills-focused approach would enable learners to improve more quickly, thereby advancing the implementation of Inclusive Education in mainstream classrooms.

By introducing specialised educators in the Western Cape, Inclusive Education would improve by providing targeted support for learners who struggle with specific skills, such as literacy or numeracy. This approach allows classroom

educators to maintain the overall curriculum while ensuring that learners who require additional help receive the necessary intervention. Research identifies that specialised support makes Inclusive Education more achievable by addressing individual learning barriers without slowing down the entire class. Incorporating specialists into the classroom not only helps struggling learners but also fosters a more collaborative teaching environment. A co-teaching model, where specialists work alongside educators, results in shared expertise and enhances overall teaching quality. When educators collaborate in this way, learners can benefit from a more inclusive and dynamic learning experience. Additionally, schools with bigger class sizes and limited resources could use this approach to ensure that all learners receive adequate support without overburdening educators. For this strategy to be sustainable, ongoing professional training is vital.

Educators need support on how to effectively work with specialists and implement co-teaching methods in a way that maximises learner learning. Investing in structured professional learning opportunities would help create a more adaptive and resilient education system. By prioritising specialised teaching support and continuous educator development, the Western Cape can take a meaningful step toward ensuring that each learner, regardless of their barriers, has the opportunity to succeed.

#### **4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 10: Personalised teaching**

Understanding how learners learn best is important for effective teaching, especially in diverse classrooms. The participants highlight the importance of educators taking time at the beginning of the year to observe their learners' learning styles and understand whether they are auditory, visual or kinaesthetic learners. This allows them to adapt their teaching styles to better suit individual needs, resulting in improved engagement and learning outcomes. Research supports this approach, emphasising that differentiated instruction enhances the educational experience for learners with varying abilities, backgrounds and learning preferences (Lynch & Rizzo, 2023). This was reinforced by participant T6, who emphasised the need to understand individual learners' needs and learning styles, explaining that educators must “get to know your learners... who

are your auditory learners; who are your visual learners; who are your kinaesthetic learners,” and observe their interests and behaviours over time.

In the Western Cape, where classrooms often include learners representing diverse language and cultural groups as well as those with special learning needs, such personalised instructional practices are particularly valuable. By adapting teaching methods to how learners engage and learn, educators can foster more inclusive classroom environments in which each learner has greater chances to succeed. This can be especially helpful in under-resourced schools, where traditional, one-size-fits-all teaching approaches may not be effective. Additionally, professional development focused on helping educators recognise and respond to diverse learning styles can equip them with the tools needed to implement these strategies effectively (Smith & Govender, 2022).

Moving forward, schools and education policymakers should prioritise ongoing training in differentiated instruction and encourage educators to collaborate and share best practices. Simple adjustments, such as using a mix of visual aids, interactive activities and movement-based learning, can make a significant difference in ensuring all learners stay engaged. By fostering a culture of adaptability and continuous learning among educators, the Western Cape can take meaningful steps toward an inclusive and effective education system.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Chapter Four discusses the research findings. Data obtained from interviews were organised into themes and sub-themes. The literature review presented a critical analysis of the findings, aimed at addressing the main research question and the sub-research questions. The data were analysed, interpreted and the findings discussed. The following chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations. The participants were confident in the support structures provided, which reflects an ongoing awareness among educators of the resources available to them. These support structures included internal support teams, collaboration with colleagues and professional development workshops. This suggests that schools are making positive strides towards fostering inclusivity, with many educators actively seeking out additional knowledge and

sharing strategies with their colleagues. This aligns with recent research on educator professional development, which emphasises the significance of continuous learning and peer collaboration in enriching the effectiveness of inclusive practices (Polat, 2021).

Several challenges emerged from the interviews, particularly regarding the adequacy of classroom support and the role of parents in reinforcing inclusive strategies. Many educators reported feeling overwhelmed by learners' diverse needs during their lessons. Florian (2019) also identified educators' difficulties in providing individualised attention because of time constraints and large class sizes. The insufficient number of classroom assistants or additional staff is a recurring issue that undermines the ability to support all learners effectively, and participants highlighted this issue in particular. The importance of reducing class sizes and increasing classroom support has been emphasised in recent literature as crucial to achieving truly Inclusive Education (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2019).

Another notable barrier, as identified by the educators, was the limited involvement of parents in reinforcing learning strategies at home. This concern is well-documented in Inclusive Education research, where parent engagement is often recognised as a key factor in the success of inclusive practices (McKay, 2020). The apparent resistance from 20 parents to engage in the educational process highlights the need for more community outreach and awareness programmes to help parents understand the importance of supporting at-home learning.

Overall, while the educators in this study demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusivity and relied on a range of strategies to assist learners with barriers, the results suggest that the full potential of Inclusive Education can only be realised if certain systemic challenges are addressed. These include providing additional classroom support, expanding professional development opportunities and fostering stronger partnerships with parents. As recent educational frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the South African Education White Paper 6 emphasise, inclusivity is not only a pedagogical challenge but a social and political one,

requiring collective effort from schools, communities and policymakers to create an opportunity for all learners to thrive (Engelbrecht, 2018).



## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of mainstream Intermediate phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape with the aim of highlighting educators' role as part of the efforts towards inclusive school environments and quality education for all. The research questions were used to identify the main challenges that Intermediate Phase educators face in implementing Inclusive Education practices in their classrooms, the support structures available to educators when accommodating learners with barriers to learning and the strategies to improve Inclusive Education in schools in the Western Cape. A qualitative research approach was employed to collect data with the semi-structured interview questions technique to address the research questions and purpose of the study.

The findings of this study are interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains human development as being shaped by multiple interacting environmental systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. In the context of Inclusive Education, this framework provides a useful lens for understanding how educators' experiences are influenced not only by classroom-level factors, but also by broader institutional, policy and societal systems.

Bronfenbrenner's theory is particularly relevant to this study as it allows for the positioning of educator challenges and support structures within a layered system of influence. For example, classroom practices such as differentiation occur within the microsystem, while collaboration with colleagues and parents reflects mesosystem interactions. Resource allocation, policy implementation and specialist support structures are located within the exosystem, while national policy frameworks such as White Paper 6 and CAPS represent the macrosystem shaping inclusive practices in schools.

Using this framework, the findings of this study are not only described but also interpreted in relation to the systemic interactions that enable or constrain Inclusive Education in mainstream classrooms in the Western Cape.

## **5.2 Summary of the Results**

### **5.2.1 Support structures available to Intermediate Phase educators in mainstream primary schools**

Support structures are essential for identifying learning difficulties early, providing targeted interventions and monitoring progress. The educators felt that they were inadequately trained to deal with most barriers to learning. They were aware of the value of specialist support structures such as psychologists, occupational therapists and specialised educators found in the districts and private practices as resources they can assist to handle specific barriers in the classroom. However, in terms of availability within the education system, these specialists generally seemed only partially available and were not employed full-time by the schools. Some educators voiced concerns about inconsistent support, limited resources and insufficient training. The confidence of the educator's own ability seemed to be lacking. This did, however, encourage educators to collaborate among staff and provide extra lessons as common strategies. T1, for example, emphasised how their school had limited resources but that extra lessons with the necessary specialists were provided. Although there was a lack of specialist support teams in classrooms daily to promote inclusivity, there was a common theme of educators being dedicated to improvement despite systemic limitations. This reflects a recognition that Inclusive Education requires more than just policy—it depends on practical, ongoing support. Specialist support structures and educator collaboration, therefore, enhance Inclusive Education in South African schools, especially in under-resourced contexts.

During the interviews, educators recognised their responsibility to develop themselves through various means, including self-educating and sharing knowledge, to enhance inclusive education. Inclusive Education practices showed a proactive shift toward improving support for diverse learning needs. T4

mentioned how regular meetings and team-based approaches reduce educator isolation and increase confidence in supporting struggling learners. This response aligns with Waldron and McLeskey's (2021) assertion that collaborative practices improve learner outcomes through shared understanding. The findings realistically acknowledge South Africa's frequent resource and specialist staff shortages, making collaboration not just ideal but necessary. It points out that strategies like team teaching and SBST meetings, as noted by Maree and Stofberg (2022), are practical solutions already in use. Beyond practical teaching strategies, collaboration helps foster a supportive school culture, empowering educators and reducing professional isolation.

It creates a more inclusive, responsive system that considers the cultural, linguistic and socio-economic challenges South African learners face. Despite limited resources, schools that foster teamwork, share knowledge and provide structured support systems are better able to accommodate learners with diverse needs. These collaborative efforts not only improve teaching strategies but also build a more positive and inclusive school culture, ultimately enhancing learner outcomes. Research by Rose and Dalton (2021) reinforces the significance of multi-disciplinary teams, indicating that such collaboration bridges the gap between the standard curriculum and learners' diverse needs. These teams help ease educators' pressure, allowing them to focus on teaching while professionals address specific learner needs. This division of roles creates a more manageable and effective learning environment. The collaborative model extends to parents, educators and specialists, fostering a cohesive support system. While these systems are effective when implemented, educators noted that their success is often limited by factors such as resource availability, educator training and parental involvement.

Many participants in this study also noted that parental involvement and home support influenced the success of their teaching and learning, with learners who needed more home support not always receiving it. Learners with involved parents tend to make better progress, while those without fall behind, even with the same school-based assistance, which would then result in deeper disparity between learners. The participants, specifically T2 and T5, emphasised the

limitations of school-based interventions when learners lack support at home. Furthermore, T2 even mentioned experiencing parental resistance, indicating barriers to communication or engagement from families that limit educators' ability to provide holistic support.

Strengthening support networks is essential for ensuring that Inclusive Education is accessible, sustainable and equitable across schools. The participants in this study relied heavily on collaboration with other staff members to manage the challenges of teaching learners with barriers, as many educators felt underprepared to handle these needs alone in classrooms with multiple learning abilities. Although specialist support teams were reported as being available, they were not a prominent presence in the day-to-day classroom environment. Parents also emerged as crucial stakeholders in the success of inclusive teaching, yet participants noted that some parents were not fully committed to supporting their children's learning. This lack of involvement often stemmed from socioeconomic pressures, such as both parents working, leaving little time to reinforce educational strategies at home. As Shumba and Ndaliso (2021) argue, parental engagement is a decisive factor in sustaining inclusive practices, while Sullivan and Linton (2020) similarly emphasise that even the most well-designed school interventions are likely to fail without active family cooperation.

From a Bronfenbrennerian perspective, support structures operate across multiple ecological levels. Specialist services and SBST teams represent exosystem influences that indirectly support classroom functioning, while collaboration among educators reflects mesosystem interactions that strengthen teaching practice. Participant T4's description of regular team meetings illustrates how mesosystem relationships can enhance educator confidence and learner support. However, inconsistencies in access to specialist services indicate breakdowns within the exosystem, limiting the effectiveness of inclusive practices at classroom level. This suggests that while support structures exist within the system, their uneven distribution reduces their overall impact on inclusive education outcomes.

### **5.2.2 Challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education practices**

The participants were asked about the systematic, practical and emotional challenges that they experienced in implementing Inclusive Education practices within their classrooms. Five issues became prominent among the participants: Firstly, as discussed in subsection 5.2.1, was the lack of home support and parental involvement. Many participants highlighted that parents' understanding and involvement in their child's learning was limited. This would directly limit the effectiveness of school-based inclusive strategies. Without reinforcement at home, learners with barriers struggle to progress, even when accommodations (e.g. scribes, readers) are provided. The participants stressed the importance of home-school partnerships in sustaining Inclusive Education efforts. Parental involvement highlights the mesosystem within Bronfenbrenner's framework, where interaction between home and school environments directly influences learner outcomes. As indicated by T2, limited parental support and resistance can weaken the effectiveness of school-based interventions. This demonstrates that Inclusive Education cannot function optimally when mesosystem connections are weak or inconsistent. Strengthening home-school collaboration is therefore essential for improving learner progress, particularly for learners with barriers to learning.

Secondly, educator preparedness remains a significant challenge in the implementation of Inclusive Education practices, as reflected in T1's comment expressing feelings of uncertainty and being underqualified when supporting learners with ADHD and other learning barriers. This points to a broader issue within the education system: many educators lack the necessary training to confidently and effectively accommodate diverse learning needs in their classrooms. Garcia and Rivera (2020) and Brown and Thompson (2021) emphasise the shortfall in both pre-service and in-service training, noting that such programmes often lack the depth and practicality needed to fully prepare educators for inclusive teaching. Garcia and Rivera (2020) maintain that there is a disconnect between theoretical training and real-world classroom challenges, while Brown and Thompson (2021) highlight the limited exposure educators have

to differentiated instruction during initial training phases. This places the need for ongoing professional development that is not only continuous but also responsive to the evolving needs of diverse classrooms. Access to experienced mentors and adaptive teaching resources further supports this process, as these tools help to bridge theory and practice. Together, these support mechanisms can significantly enhance educator confidence and competence, ultimately improving their capacity to implement inclusive practices that accommodate the full spectrum of learner needs.

Balancing the needs of individual learners with those of the entire class is evidently a struggle. T3 describes the emotional and logistical strain of supporting high-needs learners while still engaging the rest of the class. This pressure is intensified by the absence of TAs and limited opportunities for collaborative planning, leaving educators to navigate complex classroom dynamics largely on their own. As a result, many educators experience elevated stress and burnout, which, in turn, can diminish their overall effectiveness and passion for their work. Research on Inclusive Education consistently confirms that without adequate support, the demands of balancing individualised and whole-class teaching can lead to professional fatigue and compromise the quality of education delivered. Addressing this issue requires a more sustainable approach that includes classroom support staff and structured time for collaborative planning, ensuring that all learners receive the attention they need without overwhelming educators.

Class size, time constraints and limited resources are major barriers to effective Inclusive Education, as highlighted by T4. Larger class sizes significantly reduce educators' ability to provide individualised support, making it difficult to meet the diverse needs of all learners. In contrast, smaller classes and structured group work—commonly used in the Foundation Phase—offer more opportunities for meaningful interaction and tailored instruction, fostering a more inclusive environment.

However, in many mainstream schools, overcrowded classrooms remain the norm, which hinders the implementation of differentiated teaching strategies.

Research supports this concern, showing that when educators are responsible for too many learners without adequate support, they often feel overwhelmed and unsupported. Systemic shortcomings within the education system, such as a lack of infrastructure, insufficient staffing, and minimal institutional backing, create conditions in which educators are expected to meet the needs of diverse learners without the necessary tools or support. This disconnect between policy expectations and practical realities places pressure on educators, many of whom are already overwhelmed (Donohue & Bornman, 2021).

Without the foundational systems in place, such as well-resourced classrooms, adequate specialist support and consistent administrative guidance, educators are left to navigate the complexities of Inclusive Education largely on their own. Addressing these systemic gaps is essential to creating an environment where inclusive practices can thrive and where all learners have equitable access to quality education. Classroom management becomes significantly more complex as class sizes grow, especially in inclusive settings where learners have varying needs. As the number of learners increases, maintaining engagement and order becomes increasingly difficult, particularly when some learners require individualised support. Williams and Carter (2023) emphasise that while effective classroom management is necessary for successful inclusion, it becomes much more challenging when educators are stretched too thin. Educators are expected to juggle multiple responsibilities; managing behaviour, delivering curriculum content and supporting learners with barriers to learning, all within the same time frames of balancing the diverse needs of learners with the rigid demands of the CAPS curriculum. Some participants expressed a desire to spend more time supporting struggling learners, yet felt forced to move forward to avoid falling behind. This highlights structural flaws within the system: standardised curriculum expectations often clash with the principles of learner-centred teaching. Garcia and Rivera (2020) and Brown and Thompson (2021) support this, showing that inflexible curricular frameworks severely limit educators' ability to adapt instruction to suit diverse learning needs. This affects the well-being of educators and undermines the effectiveness of Inclusive Education. For true inclusivity to be achieved, curriculum structures must become

more flexible, allowing educators the autonomy to pace learning so that no learner is left behind.

Educators in South African mainstream schools face complex, multi-layered challenges when implementing Inclusive Education practices. The majority report feeling underprepared and overwhelmed by the demands of supporting learners with diverse learning needs. Walton and Rusznyak (2019) echo these concerns, pointing to the urgent need for targeted professional development, reduced class sizes, access to TAs and robust school-based support systems. Achieving meaningful inclusion requires systemic reform, including improved educator training, active parental involvement and adequate resource allocation. Without these foundational changes, Inclusive Education risks remaining an aspirational ideal rather than a practical reality.

The challenges identified in this study can be understood through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which highlights how difficulties experienced by educators are shaped by multiple interacting systems. At the microsystem level, educators reported struggles with differentiation, classroom management and meeting individual learner needs, as reflected in T3's experience of being unable to support all learners simultaneously. At the exosystem level, factors such as large class sizes, limited resources and lack of specialist support significantly constrained inclusive practice. Furthermore, at the macrosystem level, rigid curriculum expectations such as CAPS contributed to pressure on educators to prioritise content coverage over learner-centred teaching. These interacting systems demonstrate that the barriers to Inclusive Education are not isolated issues but are structurally embedded across multiple levels of the education system.

### **5.2.3 Improvements that could be made in better implementing Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape**

Participants were rich in information about the topic, as they could reflect on their lived experiences in the classroom. Strategies need to use a bottom-up approach to ensure that the right stakeholders have input into improving the quality of education for all.



### **5.2.3.1. Educator Training**

A strong theme across participant responses is the urgent need for ongoing, compulsory professional development for educators. T3 highlights how many educators still lack the skills and confidence to teach learners with barriers. Without structured training, educators may hold misconceptions or feel unprepared to meet diverse needs. Research (Jones & Brown, 2021; Van der Merwe & Smith, 2022) supports that regular professional development enhances educator confidence and promotes the effective implementation of inclusive strategies. Bridging the gap between theory and practical application is essential, particularly in resource-constrained contexts like the Western Cape.

### **5.2.3.2 Specialised Support in Classrooms**

Introducing specialised educators for specific skills, such as literacy, is another crucial recommendation. This model allows general educators to continue delivering the curriculum while learners with specific challenges receive targeted interventions. A co-teaching model, where specialists and general educators collaborate, could reduce pressure on individual educators and enhance teaching quality. For success, schools must invest in training that supports this team-teaching approach, enabling educators to work effectively alongside specialists. Specialised educators bring targeted expertise in areas such as learning support, speech therapy, and behavioural intervention, which can significantly enhance teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. According to Makoelle (2020), the inclusion of such professionals within school-based support teams not only alleviates pressure on general educators but also promotes a more responsive and equitable learning environment. Without the involvement of specialised educators, Inclusive Education risks becoming superficial, with learners' needs insufficiently addressed.

### **5.2.3.3. Understanding and Responding to Learner Diversity**

A learner-centred approach prioritises the individual needs, interests and strengths of each learner, resulting in active participation and meaningful learning experiences. In the context of inclusive classrooms in South Africa, this approach

is essential for addressing the diverse learning needs found in mainstream settings.

According to Engelbrecht and De Lissa (2020), learner-centred teaching promotes equity by valuing learner diversity and enabling differentiated instruction that supports all learners, including those with barriers to learning. By shifting the focus from educator-led instruction to learner agency, this approach enhances engagement, autonomy and academic success in inclusive environments (Donohue & Bornman, 2021).

T6 emphasises the importance of understanding learners' individual learning styles— auditory, visual, or kinaesthetic—and tailoring instruction accordingly. This learner-centred approach is especially important in inclusive classrooms with varied linguistic, cultural and cognitive needs. Differentiated instruction has been shown to improve engagement and learning outcomes (Lynch & Rizzo, 2023). Ongoing training (Smith & Govender, 2022) in recognising and adapting to diverse learning styles is essential to support this strategy.

Inclusive Education practices in the Western Cape can be significantly strengthened by focusing on three pillars: mandatory professional development, targeted specialist support and learner-centred teaching strategies. These approaches require systemic investment in educator training and collaboration. When implemented effectively, they can transform Inclusive Education from a policy ideal into meaningful classroom practice, promoting equitable opportunities for all learners, regardless of the challenges they face.

The proposed improvements in this study also align with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Recommendations such as improved professional development and specialist support address weaknesses in the exosystem, while learner-centred teaching strategies strengthen the microsystem. Policy-level recommendations such as curriculum flexibility reflect necessary changes within the macrosystem. This demonstrates that improving Inclusive Education requires coordinated changes across all ecological levels rather than isolated interventions at classroom level.

#### **5.2.4 Response to the Research Questions**

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to each research question posed at the outset of the research.

##### **Research Question 1: What challenges do Intermediate Phase educators experience in implementing Inclusive Education practices in mainstream classrooms in the Western Cape?**

The findings show that Intermediate Phase educators experience multiple interconnected challenges in implementing Inclusive Education. One dominant challenge is the lack of adequate training and preparedness to support learners with diverse learning needs, particularly learners with ADHD and other barriers to learning. Educators reported feeling underqualified and uncertain in their ability to implement effective inclusive strategies, which contributed to reduced confidence in their teaching practice.

Structural constraints such as large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient access to classroom-based support staff also significantly hinder the implementation of inclusive practices. Educators described difficulties in balancing curriculum coverage with individual learner needs, particularly within the constraints of the CAPS curriculum, which was described as rigid and time-bound.

Another major challenge identified was limited parental involvement and inconsistent home support, which reduced the effectiveness of school-based interventions. Educators emphasised that learners who lacked support at home were less likely to make meaningful progress, even when reasonable accommodations were provided at school. Emotional strain and workload pressures further compounded these challenges, contributing to educator stress and burnout.

Overall, the study found that challenges are not isolated but are systemic in nature, arising from the interaction between classroom demands, institutional constraints, and broader policy expectations.

## **Research Question 2: What support structures are available to Intermediate Phase educators when accommodating learners with barriers to learning?**

The findings show that while support structures do exist within the education system, their availability, consistency, and accessibility are uneven. Educators identified School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs), district-based specialist services, and access to professionals such as educational psychologists, occupational therapists, and learning support specialists as key forms of support.

However, these support structures were largely described as inconsistent and not regularly available within daily classroom practice. Many specialists operate at district level or within external/private systems, limiting their direct involvement in classroom-based intervention. This resulted in educators often relying heavily on informal collaboration with colleagues and internal school-based strategies such as team meetings, shared planning, and peer support.

Despite these limitations, collaboration among educators emerged as one of the most effective and accessible support mechanisms. Participants highlighted that teamwork, shared responsibility, and regular communication within schools helped reduce professional isolation and improved confidence in addressing learner needs.

While some parents were actively involved in their children's learning, others were less engaged due to socioeconomic pressures or communication barriers. This inconsistency further influenced the effectiveness of inclusive education practices.

Therefore, support structures exist at multiple levels of the system; however, their inconsistent implementation limits their overall effectiveness in supporting inclusive education in practice.

### **Research Question 3: What strategies can improve the implementation of Inclusive Education in mainstream primary schools in the Western Cape?**

The study identified several key strategies that could strengthen the implementation of Inclusive Education. A main recommendation is the need for ongoing, compulsory, and practical professional development for educators. Participants emphasised that training should move beyond theoretical content and include practical classroom-based strategies for differentiating instruction and managing diverse learning needs.

Another key strategy is the integration of specialised support staff within mainstream schools. The presence of learning support specialists, therapists, and co-teaching models was seen as essential in reducing the burden on classroom educators while ensuring that learners receive targeted intervention.

The findings also strongly support the implementation of learner-centred and differentiated teaching approaches. Educators highlighted the importance of recognising diverse learning styles and adapting teaching strategies to meet individual learner needs, which enhances engagement and academic progress.

In addition, strengthening collaboration between educators, parents, school leadership, and district-level support services was identified as a critical system-wide improvement. Effective communication, shared planning, and structured support systems were seen as essential for sustaining inclusive practices.

Finally, systemic reforms such as reducing class sizes and improving resource allocation were identified as necessary conditions for enabling meaningful inclusion in mainstream classrooms.

#### **5.2.5 Contribution of the Study**

This study makes several contributions to the existing body of knowledge on Inclusive Education, particularly within the context of mainstream Intermediate Phase classrooms in the Western Cape.

Firstly, the study provides context-specific empirical evidence on the lived experiences of educators implementing Inclusive Education in South African schools. It highlights how systemic challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited specialist support, and curriculum pressures directly influence classroom-level implementation.

Secondly, the study contributes to the understanding of Inclusive Education as a multi-layered system rather than an isolated classroom practice. By applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the research demonstrates how interactions between the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem collectively shape educators' ability to implement inclusive practices.

Thirdly, the findings extend existing literature by showing that in under-resourced contexts, exosystem and macrosystem constraints (such as staffing shortages, policy demands, and resource allocation) often result in a stronger influence on classroom practice than individual educator attention. This highlights the structural nature of barriers to Inclusive Education in South Africa.

Finally, the study contributes to policy and practice by identifying practical strategies, such as professional development, collaboration, and specialist support integration, that can bridge the gap between Inclusive Education policy and classroom reality.

#### **5.2.6 Evaluation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory proved to be a useful framework for interpreting the findings of this study, as it allows for the analysis of Inclusive Education as a system influenced by multiple interacting environmental layers.

The theory is particularly effective in explaining how classroom-level experiences (microsystem), such as differentiated instruction and learner engagement, are influenced by relationships between home and school (mesosystem), including parental involvement and educator collaboration. It also provides a useful lens for understanding how external support services and institutional resources (exosystem) impact classroom practice, as well as how national policies and

curriculum frameworks (macrosystem) shape educational expectations and constraints.

However, the findings of this study also suggest limitations in the theory within the South African context. While Bronfenbrenner's framework acknowledges multiple systems of influence, it does not fully account for the depth of structural inequality, resource scarcity, and implementation gaps that characterise many public schools. In this study, exosystem and macrosystem factors were found to have a disproportionately strong influence on classroom practice, often limiting the effectiveness of microsystem-level interventions.

This suggests that while the theory is appropriate for structuring analysis, it may require contextual adaptation when applied to education systems marked by persistent inequality and under-resourcing. In such contexts, the interaction between systems is not always balanced, but rather hierarchical, with structural constraints significantly shaping and limiting classroom agency.

Therefore, while Bronfenbrenner's theory remains valuable for understanding the complexity of Inclusive Education, this study indicates that it should be supplemented with perspectives that more explicitly account for systemic inequality and policy-practice gaps in education.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

The different sections discussed previously in this study focused on key findings with relation to the implementation of Inclusive Education in mainstream public schools in the Western Cape. This section makes recommendations with the focus being on answering the main research question and the sub-research themes of this study. Recommendations are divided into two categories: Strategic recommendations and suggestions for future research

#### **5.3.1. Strategic recommendations**

- Educator training institutions should embed Inclusive Education practices as a core component with a strong focus on practical, classroom-based strategies. Additionally, the DBE need to implement structured, ongoing

compulsory professional development workshops and mentorship programmes to ensure educators are consistently supported in applying inclusive practices effectively. In South Africa, the inadequate training of educators in Inclusive Education remains a significant barrier to effective implementation, despite national policy commitments. SACE had a vision to implement ongoing educator development through its CPTD system, which is designed to enhance educator ability, professionalism and the quality of teaching in South Africa. This system requires all registered educators' involvement in structured professional development activities, such as workshops, short courses, peer collaboration and school-based initiatives, with the accumulation of Professional Development (PD) points over a three-year cycle. SACE monitors and supports this process by accrediting providers, maintaining an online CPTD self-service portal and providing guidelines to ensure that development activities are relevant, accessible and aligned with national education priorities (SACE, 2019).

The main goal of this initiative is to foster a culture of lifelong learning among educators, equipping them to respond effectively to evolving classroom challenges, including those related to Inclusive Education and curriculum delivery. However, the actual implementation has been uneven and slow, with ongoing challenges in staffing, training and funding. Many educators enter the profession without sufficient preparation to address the diverse learning needs found in inclusive classrooms. For example, a study by Donohue and Bornman (2021) revealed that South African educators often feel ill-equipped to support learners with disabilities owing to limited exposure to inclusive practices during their initial educator education. As a result, educators frequently report feeling unequipped and unsupported, which contributes to exclusionary practices and inconsistent application of inclusive principles (Walton & Moonsamy, 2021). According to Donohue and Bornman (2021), without comprehensive and ongoing professional development, educators struggle to translate Inclusive Education policy into classroom practice. This highlights the urgent need for South Africa's education system



to invest in high-quality, sustained training that empowers educators with the knowledge, skills and confidence to create inclusive learning environments.

- Schools should establish structured collaboration frameworks that include regular meetings between educators, parents and support staff to ensure consistent communication and coordinated intervention strategies. Additionally, the DBE should provide funding and policy support for parent training programmes and multi-disciplinary support teams to enhance stakeholder engagement and ensure all learners receive the comprehensive support they need. Improving collaborative efforts among stakeholders is crucial to fostering adequate support for learners with special needs in South Africa's Inclusive Education system. Despite progressive policies, a lack of coordination between educators, school leadership, parents, support staff and the DBE often result in fragmented support structures that fail to meet the needs of vulnerable learners (Donohue & Bornman, 2021). Strengthening collaboration can enhance the consistency and quality of interventions, promote shared responsibility and create a unified approach to inclusive practices. According to Walton and Moonsamy (2021), effective collaboration requires open communication, clearly defined roles and joint planning processes among all those involved. Multi-disciplinary support teams, regular stakeholder meetings and collaborative professional development initiatives can help ensure that learners receive holistic, sustained support. Parental involvement is particularly vital, as parents offer insight into their children's specific needs and can reinforce inclusive strategies at home. Empowering parents through workshops and regular communication with schools helps to build trust and promotes shared ownership of learners' development. Fostering these partnerships is essential for building inclusive school cultures where all learners, regardless of ability, are supported to reach their full potential.
- Reducing class sizes would allow for better time management and personalised instruction, while improving access to essential

resources would enable educators to implement inclusive practices more effectively. Large classroom sizes and inadequate resources remain major obstacles to effective teaching and Inclusive Education in South African schools. Many educators are expected to manage classrooms with over 40 learners, despite the national educator-learner ratio being set at 1:40, thus overcrowding, which limits their ability to provide individualised support, particularly for learners with special needs (Spaull & Jansen, 2019). The lack of basic teaching materials, assistive devices, and infrastructure further exacerbates the challenge, making it difficult to create an environment where all learners can thrive. According to Khumalo and Mahabeer (2021), overcrowded classrooms lead to learners' loss of interest, increased educator burnout and a decline in overall educational quality. Smaller classroom sizes would combat these issues.

- The DBE should prioritise the recruitment and placement of qualified support specialists in public schools, particularly in under-resourced rural areas. Furthermore, establishing DBSTs that work closely with schools can ensure timely interventions, provide ongoing professional development for educators, and foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners. The need for support specialists in South African schools is critical to the successful implementation of Inclusive Education. Many educators lack the expertise to address complex learning barriers on their own, and the absence of on-site specialists such as educational psychologists, speech therapists and learning support practitioners severely limits the support available to learners with special needs (Donohue & Bornman, 2021). Support specialists play a vital role in identifying learning difficulties early, developing intervention plans and guiding educators in adapting instructional strategies to meet diverse learner needs. According to Walton and Moonsamy (2021), integrating support specialists into school teams not only enhances learner outcomes but also alleviates pressure on classroom educators, fostering a more collaborative and responsive educational environment. Strengthening the presence of support

specialists through targeted recruitment, training and deployment strategies is essential for building a more inclusive and equitable education system in South Africa.

### **5.3.1. Suggestions for future research**

- The attitude of management towards implementing Inclusive Education within schools in South Africa could hugely influence the drive of the educators. There is, therefore, a need to understand the correlation between the success of inclusive implementation and the attitudes of management in mainstream schools.
- There is a continuous need to add recent studies on Inclusive Education within primary schools around South Africa to advance the espoused vision of the release of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), which laid the foundation for a shift towards equity and access. However, more than two decades later, research highlights persistent implementation challenges, particularly in primary schools. For example, Donohue and Bornman (2014) found that educators often lacked sufficient training and resources to effectively support learners with learning barriers. UNESCO (2020) reports corroborate these findings at a broader level, noting that despite policy frameworks, schools—especially in resource-constrained contexts—struggle to provide inclusive, learner-friendly environments. Importantly, very few studies have directly compared the practices of public/state and private schools. Such a comparative investigation could illuminate both the strengths and limitations of each sector, identify best practices and contribute to the development of a more coherent and unified policy framework for Inclusive Education in South Africa.
- As many educators throughout this study felt under-prepared to support the diverse learning needs in their classroom, there is a need to evaluate the quality and impact of Inclusive Education modules and courses offered at educator training institutions to determine how well they prepare educators for inclusive classrooms.

- Explore educators' experiences and perceptions of collaboration with support specialists, parents, and school management within full-service and special schools to identify factors that facilitate or hinder effective teamwork.
- Conduct qualitative research focusing on learners with barriers to education, examining their challenges in accessing mainstream schools, classroom participation, peer and educator relationships and the influence of community and parental support.
- Explore Inclusive Education using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory by specifically examining how interactions between microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem factors influence learner outcomes.

#### **5.4. Limitations of the study**

- The study is focused on how Intermediate Phase educators are implementing Inclusive Education in their classrooms. However, it did not include the attitudes of the management in schools and how this could influence the success of implementation.
- The study focuses on the experiences of mainstream Intermediate Phase educators in implementing Inclusive Education in the Western Cape. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised to all primary school educators in South Africa.
- Purposive sampling was used where voluntary participation was encouraged. Therefore, there is no assurance that the data collected would be replicated in a different context
- As the sample size of this study was small, it restricts the ability to draw broader conclusions or apply findings on a national scale as it may not be a true representation.

- This study applied Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory; however, its ability to fully capture the complexity of systemic inequalities in South African Inclusive Education contexts may be limited, particularly in relation to structural resource constraints and policy-practice gaps at exosystem and macrosystem levels.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

The study found that there is a conscious movement within the Western Province mainstream public schools towards implementing Inclusive Education. Each educator was enforcing their own strategies to accommodate different learning abilities within their classroom. Most participants voiced that there were improvements that needed to be made but had found strategies to provide the best teaching and learning experience for all learners. Feeling under-qualified and uncertain when supporting learners with diverse needs was a common theme. Addressing this issue requires a systemic commitment to ongoing professional development, practical training and mentorship programmes that empower educators with the skills and confidence to create truly inclusive classrooms. Strengthening collaboration among educators, parents, support staff and the DBE is essential to ensure consistent support for learners with special needs in South Africa's Inclusive Education system. Communication, multidisciplinary teams, and active parental involvement can also create unified, responsive support systems that promote shared responsibility and improve learner outcomes. Moreover, the allocation of more Intermediate Phase educators would allow schools to reduce class sizes and improve resource availability. These measures would not only alleviate pressure on educators but also ensure that all learners, especially those with special needs, receive the support they require to succeed.

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the findings of this study confirm that Inclusive Education in the Western Cape is shaped by interacting systemic layers rather than isolated classroom practices. While educators attempt to implement inclusive strategies at the microsystem level, their effectiveness is significantly influenced by exosystem factors such as

resource allocation, specialist support and class size, as well as macrosystem pressures including curriculum demands and national policy expectations.

The study therefore supports Bronfenbrenner's assertion that individual practice cannot be understood in isolation from broader systems. However, the findings also suggest that in contexts of high inequality and resource scarcity, such as many South African public schools, the exosystem and macrosystem exert a disproportionately strong influence on classroom practice. This may indicate that the theory requires contextual adaptation when applied to education systems characterised by systemic under-resourcing.

Overall, mainstream schools in the Western Cape still have a long way to go in fully integrating successful inclusive practices in their classrooms. However, there seems to be a shift in the urgency to accommodate learners with learning barriers, and the participants spoken to in this study seemed passionate about achieving this. As stated in the White Paper 6, special schools should be instrumental in supporting these educators and providing practical strategies and guidelines. The Minister of Basic Education, Siviwe Gwarube's vision of focusing on ECD centres, may also play a pivotal role in early screening and identification of learning barriers, which may allow learners to overcome these barriers or minimise them before entering primary school. There are so many ways schools could implement successful inclusive practices in their classrooms, but this will only be possible with a shared vision and input from the multiple stakeholders involved. Creating awareness and ongoing studies in this field is imperative not only to bring a voice to those with lived experiences in the topic but also to identify limitations that may be hindering the overall success of implementation.

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## Appendix A: Unisa Ethical Clearance



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 12 October 2024

Ref: **2024/10/12/000000207/05/RB**

Name: **Ms Melani Dawes**

Student No.: **53017447**

**Decision:** Ethics Approval form

Dear **Ms Melani Dawes**

**Researcher(s):** Name: **Ms Melani Dawes**

E-mail address: [53017447@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:53017447@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Telephone: **0795779896**

**Supervisor:** Name: **Prof R Tabane**

E-mail address: [Tabanrj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Tabanrj@unisa.ac.za)

Telephone: **0827068568**

**Title of research:** The Experiences of Mainstream Primary School Intermediate Phase Educators with Implementing Inclusive Education Practice in the Western Cape.

**Qualification:** MEd in Psychology of Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/10/12** to **2027/10/12**.

*The **write risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **12 September 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2027/10/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2024/10/12/00000207/05/RB** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



Prof RB Monyai  
Acting Head: CEDU Research  
[monyarb@unisa.ac.za](mailto:monyarb@unisa.ac.za)



Prof Mpine Makoe  
Executive Dean: CEDU  
[gakisme@unisa.ac.za](mailto:gakisme@unisa.ac.za)



Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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## Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**25 October 2024**

Title: The Experiences of Mainstream Primary Intermediate Phase School Educators with Implementing Inclusive Education Practice in the Western Cape

**Good Afternoon**

I, Melanie McEwan and I am doing research with Professor R Tabane , a professor in the Department of Educational Studies towards Master's degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled The Experiences of Mainstream Primary School Intermediate Educators with Implementing Inclusive Education Practice in the Western Cape

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study is to explore the attitudes and experiences of mainstream educators towards implementing inclusive education and whether they feel supported with the adequate knowledge, resources and skills needed to effectively teach learners with learning barriers.

#### WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been selected because I believe you would fit the criteria needed for this study due to being an inclusive mainstream primary school based in the Western Cape. This study will explore the lived experience of 10 educators around Cape Town

#### WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study will entail a one-on-one *semi-structured* interview with educators from public schools involving a series of open ended questions. Please see questions attached to this document.



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Your participation will be needed on one day for 30 minutes. There is also the option for educators to participate in the interview through a Zoom meeting to avoid geographical barriers.

**CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mainstream primary school educators in implementing inclusive education in the Western Cape with the aim of highlighting whether more training and resources are needed to support teachers. By participating in this study, you as the educator will be expressing your experiences in implementing inclusive education within your classroom. This could bring awareness to the level of skills, support and resources available to support students with special needs and how the school can support both the teacher and the student.

**ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

The study is low risk as it is not focussed on a sensitive topic and the participants are voluntary. The main inconvenience would include the time that it would take to complete the study. In the unlikely event that the participant feels uncomfortable, counselling will be available.

**WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Your answers will be given a code number or a



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pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings, but your identity will be protected and you will not be identifiable in any such publications.

#### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *[where? Indicate the location]* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Indicate how information will be destroyed if necessary *[e.g. hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme]*.

#### **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no payment for this study

#### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa ( Ref: 2024/10/12/00000207/05/RB). A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

#### **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Melanie McEwan on 0795779896 or email [53017447@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:53017447@mylife.unisa.ac.za). The findings are accessible for a year.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Professor Tabane via email [Tabanrj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Tabanrj@unisa.ac.za)



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Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Professor Tabane via email [Tabanj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Tabanj@unisa.ac.za). Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Prof Abraham Motlhabane on [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Kind regards

Melanie McEwan



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## Appendix C: CONSENT FORM

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....(please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....



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## **Appendix D: Interviews Schedule**

1. Please outline your teaching background and specify the grade(s) you currently teach?
2. How many learners in your classroom have been identified as having learning barriers, and what types of barriers are most common?
3. What training or qualifications have you received related to Inclusive Education?
4. How do you interpret the concept of Inclusive Education
5. Can you share your experiences in implementing Inclusive Education practices in your classroom?
6. What methods do you use to address the diverse learning needs of learners?
7. Are there particular challenges you face when trying to implement Inclusive Education? Please elaborate.
8. What types of resources or support are available to you (e.g., teaching assistants, learning materials, DBST/SBST)?
9. How effective do you find these support structures in assisting you to meet the needs of learners with barriers?
10. In your opinion, what additional resources or support would help you teach more inclusively?
11. How confident do you feel in supporting learners who encounter barriers to learning?
12. Have you received ongoing professional development or mentorship on Inclusive Education? If yes, how has it helped?
13. How do you instill collaboration with parents, colleagues, and support teams to support learners with barriers?

14. What changes would you recommend to improve the implementation of Inclusive Education in your classroom or school?
15. Is there anything else about your experiences with Inclusive Education that you would like to share?

## Appendix E: Language editing certificate

### EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

22 Osche Street

The Reeds

Centurion

0157

18 February 2026

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that I have edited Melanie Dawes's dissertation titled, "**The Experiences of Mainstream Intermediate Phase Educators in Implementing Inclusive Education Practices in the Western Cape.**"

I found the work easy and intriguing to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language, grammar and syntax, which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors' Guild.

Hereunder are my contact details:



Jack Chokwe (PhD – University of Leicester (United Kingdom)

Contact numbers: 072 214 5489

[jackchokwe@gmail.com](mailto:jackchokwe@gmail.com)

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## Appendix F: Turnitin Report

|                                                 |                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
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Summary