

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN INTEGRATING
LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING INTO GRADE 3
CLASSROOMS AT STEVE TSHWETE 1 CIRCUIT**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Clara Nothembela Mahlangu student no. [REDACTED] declare that this dissertation on teacher's experience's in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 circuit in the Nkangala District, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signature

31/03/2022

Date

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are always in the leading position when it comes to the process of implementing inclusive education, accepting their responsibility for all learners in their classrooms, including those who experience barriers to learning as mentioned by Lansberg (2016). This is to ensure that learners with special needs/ disabilities are placed in mainstream school classrooms with their non-disabled age mate's children to receive same education (Kircheener,2015). However, this has proven several times that this process is not happening without challenges. (McManis,2017) is also of the view that according to teachers, dealing with special needs learners is extremely difficult for them.

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher's experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 circuit. This research will however attempt to identify potential problems in the process of doing so as well as to examine the strategies they implement to overcome the challenges they encounter. A literature review provided the active discussion around the topic at hand and also background to the influences on the implementation of inclusive education study.

Qualitative research approach inscribed this study owing its methods and procedures employed to complement its completeness and proceeded from the constructivist paradigm. Foundation phase teachers, teaching grade 3, in particular those who are class teachers were purposively sampled from three primary schools in Steve Tshwete 1 circuit. Interviews, observations and document analysis were used to obtain data. The data was analyzed by using thematic content analysis.

These results suggest that these learners not only need, but also deserve to be included in the same learning space with their age mates to receive same education, Teachers working with pupils with learning barriers need to be sufficiently equipped to deal with the full landscape of learning barriers and the psychology of learners who are struggling with learning

LIST OF ABRIVIATIONS

BoE.....	Department of Education
EACC	Education All Handicapped Children Act
EST	Ecology System Theory
ETDP SETA	Education Training and Development Practices /Sector Education and Training Authority
IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCSNET.....	National Commission report on Special Needs in Education and Training
OBE.....	Outcome Based Education
SASA.....	South African Schools Act
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SLPs.....	Short Learning Program(s)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

KEY WORDS

Inclusive Education, Learning Barriers, Special needs learners, Mainstream school classrooms, Theory, Qualitative research, Diversity, Foundation Phase

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Teachers are always in a leading position when it comes to the process of implementing inclusive education. It has been proven several times that this process does not happen without challenges (McManis, 2017). McManis (2017) is also of the view that according to teachers, dealing with special needs learners is extremely difficult. The most common challenges in the inclusive education process comprises “lack of competencies, lack of concrete materials and large class sizes among other constraints” (Thwala, 2015, p. 3).

Several studies (Engelbrecht, 2006; Gasa, 2011) have attempted to understand challenges experienced by teachers in their implementation of inclusive education. The attempts included the use of inclusive education short learning programmes (SLPs) for teachers, the introduction of inclusive education on pre-service teacher training curriculum, reformulation of the physical structure of schools to cater for disabled learners, focus on vocational skills, and the implementation of policies such as Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) formalised by the Department of Education in 2014. However, even after these efforts, some challenges still persist. Hence, this study aims to reveal challenges and possible solutions from the viewpoint of teachers. The study focusses on foundation phase because in this phase, learners are most vulnerable to most challenges, and if solutions could be found, the other phases will not have much problems.

Inclusive education refers to an approach where learners with special needs or disabilities are placed in mainstream school classrooms with their non-disabled mates to receive the same quality education (Kirschener, 2015). The world has committed to make inclusive education a reality, and much developments have been experienced since its dawn around the 1990s. But in most developed nations like the United States of America, it came into light around the 1950s and the 1970s with civil rights movements (Kovach & Gordon, 1997). Owing to these developments, policies and strategies were developed and implemented to enable its success. To date research has not been conclusive on factors that constrain the implementation and those that

foster it in an absolute sense. It thus remains important to replicate earlier research work in different geographical spaces and with different methodologies. In the multiplicity of environments and methodologies, the hope remains that inclusive education can be more known, and practices may become more poignant, enriched and productive.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Landsberg (2016), teachers should, without reservation, accept responsibility for teaching all learners in their classrooms, without bias on their abilities or lack thereof. The implication is that they would prepare themselves and their work to meet the needs of even those learners with difficulties in learning. This is to ensure that learners with special needs/disabilities are placed in mainstream school classrooms with their non-disabled age counterparts to receive the same education (Kirchener, 2015). However, this seems to be not the case at schools in Steve Tshwete 1 circuit in Mpumalanga Province, where foundation phase teachers are still facing very aggressive challenges (minimal support from the government, lack of parental support, lack of proper teacher training and large classrooms) in the implementation of inclusive education as described in the above section (McManis, 2017).

Several efforts (Engelbrecht, 2006; Gasa, 2011) have been tried to confront these challenges. These include the introduction of inclusive education in pre-service teacher training institutions, the reformulation of the physical structure of schools to cater for disabled learners, focus on vocational skills and the implementation of policies such as formalised Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) in 2014 by Department of Education etc. However, despite these efforts, the challenges are still apparent. Therefore, this study proposes to understand the problem from the point of view of teachers and to listen to their suggestions. For instance, the placement of learners with and those without barriers to learning has remained high in the discourse among both the lay-person, the policy maker and the practitioner.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore teachers' experiences in accommodating learners who experience barriers to learning in their Grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 circuit, correlating with the research questions listed below:

- What are the experiences of Grade 3 teachers in integrating learners with learning disabilities into their classrooms?
- Which potential challenges are involved in accommodating learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms?
- What is the nature of barriers the teachers find most challenging among learners in their Grade 3 classrooms?
- What strategies the teachers employ to learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

- To look into the experiences of Grade 3 teachers in the process of integrating learners with learning disabilities into their classrooms.
- To identify potential challenges involved in accommodating learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms.
- To examine strategies employed by teachers to learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms.

1.5 ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

Theories provide us with a set of concepts or a framework for comprehending, interpreting and explaining an event. They are crucial in assisting us in the construction of knowledge, so they deserve our attention (Teaching for all, 2019). Similarly, Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2016) conceptualise theory as a coherent set of assumptions, ideas and concepts that are organised in such a way that they provide a structure for perceiving and thinking about the world around us as well as an integrated perspective of phenomena in that environment. Theory, as explained by Alfred and Gary (2019), is a stance or point of view that you take in your research to explain, describe, direct and anticipate your phenomena. It allows the researcher to draw connections between the theoretical frameworks and the realistic.

Nel, Nel and Hugo (2013) explain their understanding of theory to be an explanation that can be validated about some characteristics of life. It is an organised system of accepted knowledge that explains phenomena such as learning, attitudes and influences. Imenda (2014) adds by clarifying that explaining and making predictions are some of the most common features of the definition of theory. She argues that theory is defined by its three major characteristics which are: a set of interconnected propositions, concepts and definitions that present a systematic point of view. It identifies relationships among, and explains and makes predictions about the occurrence of events based on detailed interactions.

In this study, the researcher selected the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) (1979, 1986) as it looks most appropriate to address issues of learning barriers. The use of the EST looks appropriate as it explains how both direct and indirect influences on the child can also directly or indirectly shape children's growth and development, and can shape behaviours and social skills-sets. The essence of the EST is that it refers to the multiplicity of environmental factors in the contexts of their levels in influencing development (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005).

Nel, Nel and Hugo (2013) argue that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory show how various systems within which a learner lives can influence its (child) character, behaviour and system of both social and practical skills and the content and processes of the child's self-actualisation. Consequently, this can influence the learner's academic performance and scholastic progress. Nel et al (2013) draw teachers' attention to the importance of familiarising themselves with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) as it enables them to understand complex influences, interactions and interrelationships between a learner and its human, biotic and physical surroundings.

In Bronfenbrenner's model, four interacting dimensions are central to this process: personal factors (e.g. character of the child or parent), process factor (e.g. the forms of interaction that occur in a family), contexts (e.g. families, schools or local communities) and time (e.g. changes over time in the child or the environment). In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1986) has also indicated that proximal interactions that transpire face-to-face and long term relationships are the most important factors in shaping lasting aspects of development (e.g. between a mother and her child, a

teacher and a student or a child and a close friend) (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2012). The interaction is as great as it makes the child achieve greater independence and efficiency as it receives encouragement, support and critical analysis. The more purposive the interactive aspects of the adult or the 'more knowledgeable other', the quicker the child scaffolds through its 'proximal zone of development'.

According to Creswell (2009), theories vary in their scope of coverage at three levels, which are: micro-level, meso -level and macro-level. These levels are described by Nel et al. (2013) as the four nested systems stated by Bronfenbrenner within which child development takes place – *the microsystem*, *the mesosystem*, *the exosystem* and the *macro system* – they all interact with the chronosystem that Swart and Pettipher (2011) explains further saying it looks at the developmental timeframes that take place in the interactions between these systems and their influences on individual development.

The microsystem. Individuals and events that are the closest to a person's life make up the microsystem. These are systems in which a child is closely associated with other people who are acquainted to him or her, such as his or her family.

The mesosystem. It is a system of microsystems which continuously interact with each other, such as activities in the family that influence the peer group and the child's progress at school.

The exosystems is the inclusion of other systems where the child is not directly involved but may be influenced by the people who have proximal relationships with a child in his or her microsystems, such as parents' workplace, siblings' peer groups etc.

The macrosystem refers to attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies inside a society's and cultural systems that may influence or is influenced by other systems.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are defined by Wild and Diggins (2011, p.21) as "the norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about the conduct of an individual in a given state and relationship with others". The researcher adhered to all ethical measures during

the research in order to ensure the safety and rights of participants. The researcher also observed and carried out adequate ethical measures throughout the research (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). A number of ethical measures were observed in conducting this research project.

(a) Permission: permission to undertake this research in Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education schools was sought and granted before the commencement of the research project. An interview to clarify the nature of the research was held with the Circuit Manager who endorsed the project. Furthermore, interviews to clarify the research project were held with principals of the concerned schools, and agreements were made as to how their schools would be involved.

(b) Informed consent: The researcher discussed the process of participant involvement in the research project. The aim of the study was discussed with each prospective respondent. The non-remuneration aspect of the study was also discussed, including participants' right to withdraw from the research at such time they felt fit. Prospective participants were requested to sign the informed consent form.

(c) Voluntary participation: The researcher clarified that participation in the research was a personal volition done in the interest of the research study and the creation of knowledge based on authentic experiences by participants. The issue that there were no external obligations to answer or to stay in the research was explained to participants.

(d) Research integrity: The researcher maintained professional integrity throughout the life of the research project.

(e) Confidentiality and anonymity: The information and data provided by participants was kept confidential, further to treat participants with respect, dignity and maturity. Anonymity of participants was also guarded in that their names, schools and anything that could be associated with them was coded and pseudo-named.

(f) Feedback: Efforts have been made to ensure that the research project document remains the communicative language, and that feedback meetings were held with the school principals and the Circuit Manager of participating schools.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology consists of the many and specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process and analyse information about a topic (Kothari, 2004). In a research paper, the methodology section allows the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability. "Research methodology assists researchers to acquire applicable tools needed to solve the problem at hand" (Engelbrecht, 2005, p.108; Kolb, 2009, p. 136).

This study, which investigates teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms, used the constructivist paradigm. In a constructivist paradigm, the researcher's methodology is deconstruction includes analysis of discourse and text. Therefore, experiences of participants as revealed through observation and structured interviews were described, allowing for greater understanding of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and how teaching and learning can be made to address the inclusion of all learners as well as address barriers faced by learners in classrooms.

1.7.1 Research Design

A research design is the outline or strategy that is used to answer a research question (Burke, 2012). In corroboration with Burke, Kobus (2013) defines a research design to be a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumption to specify the selection of respondents' data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done. He furthermore explained that the choice of a research design is based on the researcher's assumptions, research skills and research practices, and influences the way in which she or he collects data. Kobus (2013) agrees with Ary (2010) that there is a very wide range of research designs from which a researcher may select one that matches her or his logical expectations, and the most appropriate design for generating the kind of data required to answer the research question or questions posed.

From the above mentioned research designs that can be used in qualitative studies, this research adopted the case study design because according to Kobus (2013), it is harmonious with the researcher's theoretical assumptions, and is appropriate for creating the kind of data required to answer the research questions posed. It uses numerous methods such as interviews, observations and documents to gather data, which according to Casey (2013), will provide a more convincing and precise case study. Congruently, Ary (2010) distinguished a case study to be the nature of ethnographic research study that concentrates on a single unit to produce a full description that is rich and complete, and which can answer descriptive questions. Hence, case studies require a detailed study for a considerable amount of time.

1.7.2 Qualitative research

This study adopted the qualitative approach to investigate teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms, to examine challenges that they experience in doing so, and to look at strategies that they implement to overcome the challenges that they encounter. This study looked at the participants by cooperating with and observing them in their natural atmosphere, because qualitative research, as asserted by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), is concerned with the understanding of social phenomena from participants' point of view, where data is collected in a setting that is sensitive to people and places under study.

This study is inscribed in the qualitative research approach. This is owing to its methods and procedures employed to complement its completeness. One of the key prominence of this approach lies on its emphasis on qualitative data as its name suggests (Kobus, 2013; Ary, 2010), which allows the researcher to enter the setting with an open mind prepared to immerse herself in the situation's complexities and interact with teachers. The researcher strove to obtain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation, which was appropriate in comprehending grade 3 teachers' experiences of integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their classrooms (Mahlo, 2011). The emphasis is on the superiority and depth of information (Kobus, 2013). This is dissimilar to the quantitative approach, which uses detached measurement to gather numerical data in a setting which is well-controlled.

The study concentrated on the qualitative approach in which the researcher became a versatile instrument and was capable of adapting and responding to the environment (Ary, 2010). In a qualitative research paradigm, the qualitative researcher becomes the instrument of own his or her research. He or she seeks to establish close interpersonal connectivity and interactions with the sampled participants in their diversity of cultures, skills, viewpoints, and econo-socio-political stance (Ponterotto, 2002). Cognisant of the potential dangers of being an instrument in his or her own research, there were deliberate efforts to guard against becoming biased, adopt a halo-effect, and playing own lenses in the interpretation of data and information. As alluded to by Mahlo (2011), the qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to understand how teachers construct a sense of their experiences, make sense of their own lives, and restructure their being and their becoming as gatherers of data and information in a world that does not have the data cut-and-dried for their sake.

Mahlo (2011, p. 84) further asserted that “qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that believes there is no objective reality, but rather multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest...” and that “...participants are not objects, but human beings who can speak and think for themselves and who can define things from their own point of views”. Furthermore, a person working within the quantitative approach would criticise this approach as it does not have the ability to generalise findings to the entire population. However, in this study, the main aim is not to generalise findings to individual sites or places outside those under this study Creswell (2009), but rather, to gain an in-depth understanding of how grade 3 teachers experienced the integration of learners who experience barriers to learning into their classrooms.

1.7.3 Population and sampling

Sampling is a relationship between the population and the sample drawn from it (Kobus, 2013). Purposive sampling, which MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) define as a sampling technique where a researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be preventative of or informative about the topic of interest, was used to sample participants of this study. The sampled participants comprise six post level one teachers from three primary schools. All teachers sampled ought to be Grade 3 teachers, particularly those who are class teachers in their classrooms because they

are in a good position to express their feelings, and to explain the challenges they experience when integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their classrooms in Steve Tshwete Circuit one under Nkangala District. In addition, all teachers had at least five and above years of teaching experience in Grade 3. This allowed the researcher to juice out even more information.

1.7.4 Data collection

According to Wubbels (2011), data collection in a qualitative research includes interviews, observations and document analysis. In-depth interviews and document analysis were employed as the key data collection methods of this study. The main purpose for proposing in-depth interviews is because it allows the researcher an opportunity to get even more information from participants as long as rapport is maintained. The same applies to the document analysis method. Furthermore, using indepth interviews enables the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into how people interpret and order their words, and address sensitive topics that they might be reluctant to discuss in a group setting (Snauwaert, 2013). With regard to document review, the researcher reviewed documents such as policies and guidelines to gauge the understanding of teachers on these documents and if they are able to implement them fruitfully.

1.7.5 Interviews

Kobus (2013) defines an interview as a two-way conversation in which either should ask the other questions, presumably with the researcher's questions aimed at seeking data about the research objectives, and participants' interest being on the research and on clarifications around their participation therein. In pursuit of the research objectives, the researcher asked participants questions that helped in collecting data about views, ideas, beliefs, opinions and behaviours of participants. He further asserted that the aim of the qualitative interview is to see the world through the eyes of participants and to obtain rich descriptive data that will help the research to understand participants' construction of knowledge and social reality. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants. This technique allowed the researcher to probe participants and to clarify questions. As observed by Kobus (2013)

that notetaking could slow down the interview conversation, the researcher sought permission from participants to tape-record the interviews.

1.7.6 Document study

Document study is one of the data gathering techniques available to the qualitative researcher. The researcher focused on all types of written communications that could shed light on the inclusion of learners with learning barriers into mainstream classes. The authenticity and accuracy of documents was evaluated before using them. The criterion used in the choosing of documents was simply that they were official documents and were assumed to have been reflective of the correct description of what was transpiring on the ground. Kobus (2013) warned that researchers must be wary of the accuracy of the documents they use in qualitative research.

1.7.7 Data analysis

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explain that data analysis is an important step in the research process. It is in this phase of the research that the raw data that has been gathered was converted into meaningful information. This step involved an analysis of the data collected by separating comprehensive data into various parts for the purpose of enhancing comprehension and making the collected data to be clear and understandable. This further aligned the data to answering the research questions. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) further explain that the collected data is processed by organising it by means of determining themes into understandable units.

In this study, the thematic data analysis method was used to find meaning patterns across the data. Burnard (2016) indicates that the thematic process involves analysing the transcript of recorded interview to identify themes. The first step in thematic analysis is to familiarise yourself with the data by reading and re-reading notes and transcripts so that the data can be easily retrieved (Simpson & Hancock, 2009). The researcher made memo notes of the first impression of the collected data when reading the transcript. The second step was to code the data by identifying units of meaning in the data labelling, which gave light to the importance of that category of meaning. With this open coding process, the researcher summarised line-by-line the basis preceding the next step which involves searching for categories (Simpson et al., 2009). Finally, the researcher clustered codes by arranging them into groups to

indicate related ideas. The themes were grouped as research findings by the researcher, which will provide answers to research questions.

1.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The following criteria were observed when conducting this study:

1.8.1 Credibility: To ensure the credibility of the study, the researcher conducted a pilot study to check if the instrument tested what it was intended to test. The credibility criterion in this qualitative research had far-fetched implications on the procedures employed in the research and the post-study impact of the research. In this awareness, the research sought clear links between the findings of the research project and reality of inclusive education and its practical aspects as operated in the sampled schools and discussed in literature. In pursuance of credibility, the research intended to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research effort. In meeting the credibility criterion of trustworthiness of the research project, a number of triangulations were deployed: methodological triangulation, source triangulation, analyst triangulation and theoretical triangulation. Member-checking was also done. Participants were given an open opportunity to comment on how the research had interpreted the data given and whether they felt that the conclusions elaborated from the study reflected what they felt was the reality with their experiences with inclusive education.

1.8.2 Transferability: By its nature, qualitative research seeks less of generalisability and more of localised in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in its context. However, in seeking transferable utility of the research findings, the research sought an understanding of the contexts of the schools and the forces that influenced how they were operated. It also sought a theoretical understanding of the literature around inclusive education at an international level. In facilitating future research work, the research project described the contexts of the sampled schools.

1.8.3 Dependability: In seeking consistency and reliability of the findings of the research project and the depth of documentation of the methodology of this research, the researcher sought to improve the dependability of the research effort. These efforts created room for those external to this research to follow, critique and audit the research process (Streubert & Capenter, 2007).

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher observed that most learners with learning barriers become vulnerable, frustrated and even traumatised by their situation in the learning environment and in their classrooms because they were not coping at the level of their classmates. They lose hope, and adopt a 'I don't care anymore attitude'. Most will start to find other ways of being recognised and getting attention. This leads to bullying, where learners try to get attention by bullying others.

Children with special educational needs are often clever, but because they have difficulties in learning, they struggle to do well at school. We need to remember that all learners come to school with their own characteristics and identities that will influence their academic progression. This means that learners can learn, and will, at a stage, need some kind of support, including learners without disabilities or learning difficulties (DoE, 2001). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to focus on how teachers are prepared to manage diversity of barriers in their classrooms in the Foundation Phase to assist learners with diversity of barriers to learning (Emmerentia, 2017) to avoid having drop-outs which will lead to illiterate and unskilled youth in the future.

The research argues that there is still much to be done to provide the needed support for Grade 3 teachers. Hence, this study seeks to investigate teachers' ability to manage diversity of barriers to learning in their classrooms by assisting learners with barriers to learning. The researcher believes that findings will contribute meaningfully by making recommendations for improvements in the situation. This study will add more knowledge to the existing body of knowledge. Teachers and other education stakeholders will be able to get to grips of the most active challenges encountered by Grade 3 teachers and the possible solutions to the challenges. This study could also inspire policy developers to have insight into teachers when developing policies related to inclusive education.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research investigates teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms, which is the purpose of this study. Teachers in Grade 3, in particular those who are class teachers in their classrooms were purposively sampled. This will help to relate their experiences on how they deal with challenges in integrating learners into their classrooms.

Furthermore, the researcher is of the view that barriers to learning can negatively affect any phase at schools, but considered that most barriers have more impact in the foundation phase. This is the phase in which the foundation of learning is laid. It is also a critical time when interest in education is promoted, and a positive attitude towards school and selfconcept are developed. In addition, the researcher believes that learners need to be identified in their early age and be given appropriate support to eliminate chances of experiencing barriers to learning (Nel, 2013).

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one: serves as an introduction of this research study, which provides a brief background and motivation to the study, explaining the research problem as well as looking at the purpose of the study and methodology used to collect and analyse the data collected.

Chapter two: In the second chapter, the key concepts that shape the research study are discussed as well as the learning barriers and learner diversity in terms of disabilities. It also includes international discussion in regards to perspectives and practices within inclusive education.

Chapter three: focuses on the methodology utilised in this study, the research approach, the research design and the data collection procedures of the investigation to find out teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their grade 3 classrooms.

Chapter four: contains the analysis and interpretation of data that has been captured from participants.

Chapter five: is a summary of findings, draws conclusions of the study and makes recommendations for further research.

1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Managing diversity by foundation phase teachers in their classrooms differ from one teacher to the other, but is, at the same time, a challenge to all of them. They are faced with this classroom full of learners experiencing diversity of barriers to learning. The teacher has to come with strategies and abilities to assist each and every learner

according to their differing needs (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). White Paper 6 on inclusive Education (2001) acknowledges that all children can learn with support. However, teachers who are supposed to give support to these children experience severe challenges in their classrooms regarding assisting learners with their different learning needs. There is a definite need for teachers to be supported practically and continuously in managing an inclusive classroom and with integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the key concepts that shape the research study are discussed as well as the learning barriers and learner diversity in terms of disabilities. This is followed by international discussion with regard to perspectives and practices within inclusive education. This section concludes by discussing how South Africa approaches inclusive education.

2.2 CONCEPTULISATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Inclusive education

Inclusive education has been discussed often at an international level and in state institutions that are charged with the responsibility of looking at the welfare of children. The media has, in the debates, found some places and topics to run storyboards (Landsberg, 2016). In addition, inclusion has become important to many people in such a way that many authors make us aware of the variety of inclusion that occurs in different international education contexts. For instance, inclusion may mean same space and same time for others while it may mean different spaces, different resources and adaptable curriculum for others. However, even with the different interpretations of the concept and the various ways in which it is used in different contexts, there are extensive principles in the interpretations of inclusion. Furthermore, Nel (2013) and Landsberg (2016), indicated that establishing a more inclusive society, a fairer and stronger education system, and also a conviction that all schools including ordinary schools are responsible for addressing all learners various learning needs, are all common goals in the worldwide arena.

Different authors have defined inclusion differently. These definitions can be grouped into two categories. One, those who see inclusion as an extension of special education. Two, those who see it as embracing all students, including gender, race issues, language diversity and many more (Landsberg, 2016). The Salamanca Declaration produced under the guidance of UNESCO in 1994 serves as the key

document in guiding the development of inclusive education at an international level. The framework that accompanies the Declaration defines the scope of inclusion in terms of the guiding principles that inform this framework; that schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, language or other circumstances. This will include learners with disabilities and gifted learners, street and working students, learners from remote or nomadic communities and learners from other disadvantages or marginalised areas or clusters. Inclusion is used to define the mechanism by which learners, particularly those facing barriers to learning and development, have access to the general school system in which they participate. To satisfy the diverse learning needs, the education system needs to adapt (UNESCO, 1994).

Any child's right to be in the mainstream of education starts with inclusion. Apprentices do not have to earn their way into the classroom; they must be considered full participants even if changes, adaptations and comprehensive support are needed (Nel, 2013). In this study, inclusion is seen by the researcher as a process of opening up the classrooms to welcome and embed hitherto marginalised, stereotyped, stigmatised and neglected learners experiencing mental, physical, locomotive and other hindrances in their lives. With inclusive education, teachers need to refrain from the attitude of owning the classroom with specific rules of ownership fit for her and learners who abide by these rules. Inclusion requires teachers to take account of all aspects of classrooms, including pedagogy, curriculum, and classroom climate to ensure that the environment is conducive to learning for every learner. Inclusive education is a common theory and practice which should be followed by local cultures and circumstances. This has a global presence that has played a substantial role in several countries' educational restructurings. Nel (2013) proposes that a global agenda for Inclusive Education should be premised around the human rights culture throughout the world, including a special focus on the rights of those living with disabilities, children's rights and egalitarian access to education.

2.2.2 Learning barriers

According to the Education White Paper (1995), learning barriers are those factors that obstruct teaching and learning, making learning difficult. There can be obstacles to learning and development within a learner, within the learning place, within the education system itself and within the wider social, economic and political climate.

These obstacles also arise temporarily during the learning process. Similarly, according to Nel et al (2013:15), “barriers to learning are issues that may be a source to failure in learning. Furthermore, they can be the product of an impairment or chronic condition that can prevent a person from engaging completely in learning activities and can also contribute to discriminatory practices”. Barriers to learning can be **intrinsic**, which the Department of Education (2004) describes as conditions within the person. They can also be **extrinsic**, meaning conditions outside a person. Nel et al. (2013) stresses that teachers should be conscious of the various barriers to learning so that they can be on guard. If they identify these barriers in their classrooms, they will be able to get accurate aid and support for learners.

Learning needs in the learner community are major at any time and need to be fulfilled, for the learners to learn successfully and to be retained in the learning system. The Department of Education (2001) explains further, saying specific learning needs develop in this respect from a variety of factors that build barriers to learning and growth, including physical, mental, sensory neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social commotion, differences in intellectual ability and socioeconomic shortage. Barriers to learning can also result from a negative approach to differences, an inflexible curriculum, inappropriate language or language of learning and teaching, inaccessible and dangerous built environment, insufficient support facilities, inadequate policies, non-involvement of parents, including inadequate and inappropriate trained education managers and educators.

2.2.3 Diversity

Tallying to the view above, Wayne (2009) believes that while diversity involves a rich mix of societal differences, similarities that exist are significant interconnecting factors that contribute to the social structure of societies. This view is aligned with the international vision presented by UNESCO (2003), that education must find content and learning strategies which enable everyone to learn to live together, and which is reinforced in South Africa by the policy on Values, Education and Democracy and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002).

The Department of Education’s policy on inclusive education highlighted prevention and support to be the two main approaches in addressing barriers to learning. The

preventative approach in education focused on changing education, institutions and curricula to promote access for all learners to effective education. This also focuses on social change aspects that can help eliminate obstacles to learning from occurring. The supportive approach focuses on delivering education support programmes to teachers, schools, staff, parents and learners. The meaning of these approaches is the development of every level of the system to accommodate diversity and to offer a supportive teaching and learning environment for all. In this way, the policy accepts that differences must be treasured, and discrimination abolished; learning can occur in numerous ways and at different steps. In addition, the active participation of all students is to be stimulated and sustained (Department of Education, 2001).

Diversity is a range of various kinds of differences and different needs of learners whatever their background, ability or circumstances, which is central to the concept of inclusion and which need to be accommodated (Donald, 2010). Furthermore, three dimensions of accommodating this diversity are recognised as flexibility, relevance and respect. He explained that by flexibility, an inclusive curriculum is a flexible one. Flexibility in teaching is crucial if diversity of learning needs amongst learners in class stands to be accommodated. Similarly, in a context where a firm teacher-focused methodology dominated in the past, emphasis on active learning and a flexible studentcentred methodology is significant. As far as relevance is concern, what is learned and how it is taught has to be experienced as relevant.

Individuals and the entire population in many South African countries considered education as something alien to their cultures and educational needs because the material and educational practices were heavily influenced by the colonial past. Therefore, education tended to exclude rather than include. It is therefore vital that teachers are aware of relevance in the daily process of teaching and learning, because education must importantly be experienced as useful to the whole society and to individual students. Lastly, as further elaborated by Donald (2010), inclusion relies on respect for diversity in all stages of education. This means respect between all stakeholders in education. As a teacher, to display respect in a classroom, you need to model it yourself for such differences between races, social classes, genders,

religion, languages and abilities, so that your learners learn to treat each other with respect.

2.2.4 Foundation Phase

It is a period in the school setting ranging from grade R to Grade 3. The Foundation Phase is a four-year process containing learners from six to nine years of age, which offers all subjects in the curriculum, such as Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. The foundation process teaches children the basics of reading, writing and numbers, and improve their intellectual skills. Sports and cultural activities are important in the promotion of the social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth of the child in this stage. The researcher will concentrate on teachers who are teaching learners in this Phase as this is a crucial stage because it is a step forward of formal schooling in South Africa, and is significant in creating the foundation on which learners can develop into formal education. Learners who do well in the basic process should usually perform well in subsequent phases. According to the ETDP SETAs report (scarce and critical skills Guide, 2015), Foundation Phase teaching is the number one scarce skill in the education and training sector. South Africa has a considerable shortage of foundation step teachers.

2.3. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.3.1 Introduction

An analysis of perspectives and practices of inclusive education across the globe should benefit this research in that we get to know what has worked and what has not worked across the globe. Systematic and comparative analysis will show patterns and uniqueness in handling issues of inclusion. Here, inclusive education in the USA, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, Europe and Asia are discussed.

2.3.2 United States

According to Choate (2000), the United States of America was one of the first Western countries to introduce a detailed anti-discrimination legislation in the education of children with special educational needs. In the United States of America, the public Law

94-142 was legislated and recognised in 1975 (known as Education for All Handicapped Children Act). This Law brought about major changes in the way schools functioned. The Act directed that both students with and without disabilities be taught in the same settings. Further to equity in teaching and learning settings, learners with disabilities were increasingly entitled to free quality state-funded education that responds to their particular conditions and meets their needs. Thus, traditionally disadvantaged minorities have contributed to the high occurrences of categories of impairment that are based on clinical judgment for decades, and have unreasonably high dissemination.

Two United States Federal laws provide clear messages about ensuring equal opportunities to Special Educational Needs learners. The law ensures that both the learner with learning difficulties and those without learning difficulties receive the same curriculum (Erradu, 2012). The first Federal law - Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, was vocal that learners with disabilities should participate and progress in the general education curriculum. The second Federal Law - No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 required states to include learners with disabilities in large scale assessments in line with the general curriculum used to assess sufficient progress annually. These regulations were beneficial in providing inclusive education for all learners, bringing equality to all learners and allowing learners to participate in educational experiences that allow them to study and master the same curriculum as their usual peers.

According to Gause (2011), there are numerous achievements that have been made, including those benefiting numerous minorities through a cascade of programmes and initiatives run by federal, state and local legislations. Furthermore, as the population of the United States increased, so did the diversity in cultures and ethnicity, in discrimination by class and race as evinced in public, than in private schools. This trend has progressively left learners of colour and those living in poverty even further behind. The situation in the United States but definitely not any worse than most countries across the world, has been of children from deprived families and backgrounds feeling hardest hit by effects of unfulfilled promises, failing schools, unequal learning opportunities, and inadequately trained teachers. Not unless there is massive improvement in the current nation system, public schools, the majority of

racial or linguistic, minorities will never realise their aspirations, prosperity, independence and the search for their happiness (Gause, 2011).

2.3.3 Inclusion in Europe

According to Armstrong (2009), the history of special education in Europe began in the eighteenth century with the education of deaf children. The 1880s saw the implementation of compulsory education in England and two years later, in 1882, France implemented its own version of compulsory education. These strategic initiatives were followed by a seriatim of policy frameworks in the provision of special education now getting to other countries of the continents. A consistently unified programme of special education was born, and had the dual purpose of relieving ordinary schools of what had been traditionally seen as troublesome learners. Apart from their separation, there was the opportunity of meeting their special needs more effectively and efficiently. However, this programme of special education was exclusive to deaf learners because all learners, particularly those facing obstructions to learning and development, must have access to and participate in the main school system, and schools should accommodate all of them regardless of their disabilities (UNESCO,2004).

Tuswa (2016) discussed how the French Revolution triggered a change in the perception of democracy, equality and association that arose and was extended into the education system of that era. The French education system was entrenched in the principle of the right to social inclusion, which symbolises that no child should be excluded from formal education because of religion, nationality or gender. The irony of this right to social inclusion principle was the perennial exclusion of learners due to disabilities and learning complications.

Between 1950 and 1970, the economy of Europe blossomed as did special education in all its facets. This growth helped in enriching and extending the rendition of care, remediation, medical aid, education, training and control. After 1970 there was backslide in the economy. This raised the issue of integration and debate around inclusion in education. These high level and low level concerns about inclusive education persisted into the 1980s, especially after the 1981 Education Act was

enacted in England. Five years previously, in 1975, France had passed the *Loid'Orientation en Faveur des Personnes Handicapees*. In France and England, these laws asserted the right of access to social integration by all children, young people and adults with physical, sensory or mental disabilities. Tuswa (2016) further elaborated that albeit the number of special schools in England were reduced, there was no commensurate reduction in the total number of children placed in these segregated schools. In France, the 1989 *LoiJospin* (the Framework Law on Education) reaffirmed the right of all children to be allowed to attend ordinary school as far as possible.

The above changes exhibit the concomitant transformations in the manner society understood each other, and particularly the movement from xenophobia to a more considerate approach, and a general recognition that disabled children should be included in regular education. However, there still exists a significant and complex network of special schools and establishments in England and France despite the aforementioned legislation.

Presently, the curriculum and assessment policies in ordinary schools are factors obstructing the full inclusion of disabled learners and learners with learning problems in mainstream education. Among the main challenges to a fully-fledged inclusive system in France is the separate development of education and practices concerned with health and disability. There are numerous disconnects. The Social Affairs Commission report of July 2002 stated that a quarter of children and young people with a physical disability, and 8% of children with a sensory disability do not attend school. The report also observed huge gaps in accessibility to public transport, buildings, workplaces and schools (Tuswa, 2016).

In the context of Europe, teacher education on the theories and practices of inclusion in education makes an assumption that teachers have, and accept the vital role to play in training learners to take their place in society and in the world of work. The observations also pointed out that teachers in particular need the requisite skills to perform several activities, including understanding the needs of each individual learner, and responding to such needs by implementing a wide variety of teaching

strategies. There was an observation that there is a need to help young people grow into fully autonomous lifelong learners. Lifelong learning would help them to acquire the skill-sets and competences listed in the European Reference Framework of Key Competences. Included in the ERFKC are the competences to work in multicultural settings, including an understanding of the value of diversity, and respect for differences and to work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community (Tuswa, 2016, p. 23).

The European ministers responsible for education agreed at the European Council's convention held 15/11/2007 that there was a need to enhance teacher access to education that improves their pedagogical skills as well as academic and professional knowledge of the subjects they taught; have access to operative early career support programmes at the start of their careers; have satisfactory encouragements throughout their careers to review their learning needs; and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence. Teachers were said to be expected to be able to teach key competences and to teach effectively in heterogeneous classes, engage in reflective practice and research, and be self-sufficient learners in their own career-long professional development. Strategies to tackle learning barriers in Europe were centred fundamentally on educators who are primary implementers of comprehensive education. The focus was on providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with learner barriers to learning (Donnelly & Watkins, 2011).

2.3.4 Inclusion in Asia

In 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organised the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Spain, and concluded the conference with the Salamanca Statement to call for Inclusive Education around the world (UNESCO and Ministry of Education and Science, Spain, 1994). The Statement set the framework for the future work of UNESCO in Inclusive Education. Following this conference, UNESCO organised a number of events to sponsor the development of policies and skills for inclusive Education in a number of developing countries, including China. The Social Welfare Department and the Education Department were the only two government departments involved in the provision of special education services in Hong Kong. The government became more

active with the establishment of the special education section within the Education Department of the Hong Kong government in 1960 (Board of Education, 1960), and gradually took over the financial responsibility and control of all special education services. The changeover of responsibilities to the education department represented a paradigm shift from perceiving special education services as care-giving to it as part of mainstream education.

The British colonial government did not take any action to implement the policy, even after the concept of Inclusive Education was imported into Hong Kong in the 1970s and included in the government's education policy document, "Integrating the Disabled into the Community": A United Effort (Board of Education, 1977). This policy was, however, formally enforced in September 1997 after the handing over of independence over Hong Kong from Britain to mainland China. The government perceived the implementation of integration as a symbol of the alignment of Hong Kong with the developing nations and regions in promoting and protecting human rights and equal opportunities (Board of Education, 1996). As the education system of Hong Kong was organised under the British model, it still resembles that model heavily (Yung, 1969).

As in the international scene, we have learned from the Hong Kong experience of implementing inclusive education that certain vital elements such as providing sufficient and challenging accommodations, embracing school culture, and better trained school teachers must be in place in order to achieve successful integration. The lack of these critical elements is mainly due to competing philosophies in Hong Kong that support or alleviate against Inclusive Education. On some degree, the opposing powers tend to clash more strongly in the radical reform of education introduced in 2000, which is currently being enforced in stages (Poon-Mc-Brayer, 2013).

2.3.5 Inclusion in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is also a signatory to many international charters and conventions related to Inclusive Education such as the Salamanca Declaration the Agreement for Intervention and Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994). Inclusive in Zimbabwe is

synonymous with disability and the school. It is one of the numerous ways in which Zimbabwe's education authorities have tried to improve citizenship rights for disabled children. Furthermore, Chireshe (2011) noted that inclusive education includes recognising and reducing or eliminating obstacles in the participation of students in conventional settings such as schools, homes, communities and workplaces; and leveraging resources to promote learning and participation.

Although other writers like Mpofu (2007) reported that prior to independence in 1980, there was no disability-related legislation or assistance for Black African students at schools, Chireshe (2011) mentioned the availability of laws such as the 1996 Zimbabwe Educational Act and the 1996 Zimbabwe Disable Persons Act that were legislated after independence in 1980. Besides, various Ministry of Education circulars require that all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed and disability have access to basic or primary education up to Grade 7. Erradu (2012) explained that the secretary for Educations directive for Inclusive Education requires schools to provide equal access to education for learners with disabilities, routinely screen for any form of disability and admit any school-age child regardless of ability. Moreover, any school that refuses to register a child on grounds of disability is in violation of the Disabled Persons Act (1996), and faces disciplinary action from the District Education office.

Zimbabwe has a strong practice of Special Needs Education founded on the special school and integration perceptions. The most common integration practices is those that use resources rooms (e.g. visual impairment), self-sufficient integration units (e.g. hearing impairment) and special classes with fractional integration (e.g. mental disabilities). Tuswa (2016) highlighted that the concept of integration advocates bringing the apprentices with disabilities into the mainstream school system so that they can learn together with regular apprentices, focusing on the idea of fitting them into the mainstream school system and assisting them to adapt to the system by providing the required support. Over and above, the Special Needs Education concept is based on the acknowledgement that there are two clearly distinguished groups of students in the school systems: normal students and special students. Normal students require a normal teacher, normal school, normal curricular and normal pedagogy. On the other hand, the special student requires a special teacher, special

school, special pedagogy and a special curriculum. The focus on special education is the child with disabilities and not the system of education.

2.3.6 Inclusion in Namibia

According to Matengu (2019), when elaborating on Namibia's education history, Namibia's education system was segregated along ethnic lines, with Blacks listed in an order of priority where the people of San and Ovahimba were in the lowest groups. Whites and Coloured in this apartheid system enjoyed endless advantages at the detriment of the Namibian indigenous people worst impacted by the Ovahimba and the San communities. It dignified democratic equality long anticipated by many, as independence emerged in 1990. The government has since committed itself to the process of educational change to ensure equal access to quality education for all Namibians. This process included worth initiatives such as recognition of the San as an educationally marginalised group, emphasis on education in the mother tongue, use of satellite and mobile schools for Ovahimba learners and Inclusive Education policy in the Namibian Sector Policy.

As affirmed by Matengu (2019), Namibia is devoted to the accomplishment of inclusive education by implementing international and national directives and policy instruments that guide education requirements such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Notably, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), which reinforced that schools have to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, mental, social, emotional, language or other circumstances. This included children who are gifted and talented, those with disabilities, those with other problems such as street and working children, children from isolated or wandering populace, children from linguistic, racial or cultural minorities, and children from other deprived or side-lined areas or groups. In addition to the sector policy on Inclusive Education, these provisions ensure that the education system is comprehensive, responsive and open to all children's needs, and that they obtain the same education where they are in the world.

The Ministry of Educations Sector Policy on Inclusive Education believes that Inclusive Education can be achieved by focusing on capacitation and mainstreaming. It states

that Inclusive Education can be seen as a process of strengthening the capacity of an education system to reach out to all learners. In other words, if more and more learners from marginalised groups have access to education, the Ministry can argue that they are achieving their aim. A 2011 UNICEF study that assessed trends in quality and equality in education confirmed that primary school enrolment for the general population was relatively high at 90.9%, of which 90,5% were male and 91.3% were female. Evidence confirms that early drop-outs and low education and achievement was predominant with both San and Ovahimba learners despite an enabling legislative framework.

The enactment of Article 20 in the Namibian Constitution stating that all persons shall have the Right to education laid the foundation on which all future Policy Frameworks were to be anchored. It also achieved a Policy Framework that articulated major goals of education, access democracy, equality and quality, the identification of the academically side-lined, including San and Ovahimba for whom expanded support should be given to enable them to access equitable, quality education. Lastly, it achieved the establishment of a department for marginalised communities in the office of the vice president specifically to target the San and Ovahimba learners from paying school-related fees, which were in line with this constitutional provision (Matengu, 2019).

2.3.7 South African Perspectives

Inclusive education in South Africa has not developed in a vacuum as explained by Landsberg (2016). It has experienced various and thorough changes since the mid-1990. International movements have directly influenced and continue to influence educational policy practices in the country. Both national and international patterns and trends regarding disability have undergone major shifts, which have influenced, to a very large extent, the movement towards Inclusive Education in South Africa. Tuswa (2011) states that in South Africa, under the old dispensation, and in particular for those living in rural areas, the rate of illiteracy was the highest among the African population, as much as sixty-one per cent. In 1994 there were significant discrepancies between the pass rate of white and black school leavers. Across the

country, learner: teacher ratios showed racial and spatial discrepancies with regard to addressing Special Needs of learners in education. There were extensive imbalances.

Broadly speaking, Landsberg (2016) makes it clear the development of specialised education in South Africa, asserting that it followed trends similar to those in most other countries. However, a unique aspect in the history of South African specialised education is the extent of political and philosophical influences, which resulted in gross inequalities and inconsistencies in the provision between the previous racially segregated government and provincial departments. Governance in the apartheid era categorised and officially classified people in terms of race, language and disability or ability. Thus, some social provisions, even those that were governmental, were unequally distributed to the people of South Africa. Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001) expanded further that while education and support services were reasonably well developed in those departments serving whites, coloured and Indians, they were grossly underdeveloped in departments serving black children. Therefore, a large proportion of learners and specifically those facing obstacles to learning were not only discriminated against along racial lines, but also by policy and legislation that separated learners in the mainstream from learners identified as having “special needs” and requiring education in a “special school”.

The separation of learners with special needs from mainstream education and the manner in which disability was understood and managed contributed significantly to various misperceptions, stigmatism and stereotyping. Further to the three ills, there was a strong focus on the Medical Deficit Model of diagnosing and treating learners with some perceived deficiencies. Swart and Pettipher (2011) noted the dominance of the use of this model in the 1900s. In the model, learners with a particular impairment were defined and positioned according to their skills or disability. In South Africa, learners with Special Educational Needs were separated from learners who do not display any form of disability. This separation resulted in two separate systems of education. The dichotomous system would consist of learners without learning difficulties in the normal school and the second school type of learners with specific learning difficulties. Thus the Medical Deficit Model perpetuated segregation and exclusion of some learners.

A proposal was raised and became the epicentre of the White Paper 6: Special Needs Education Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001). The essential aspect of the White Paper 6 promoted a movement that would emphasise, promote and support learners through full service schools, ordinary schools and resource centres. Thus gradually there would be repudiation of segregation according to categories and place in education.

As part of the far reaching political, social and economic changes in South Africa aimed at a democratic, practical and healthy society, the new political dispensation replaced the previous education policy with a constructivist, Outcomes Based Education approach (Tuswa, 2011). Additionally, Outcomes Based Education emerged from the need to emphasise common citizenship and nationhood. The Outcomes Based curriculum allows for the realisation of the values and principles held by the RSA Constitution (Act 108 of 1996). The constitution was founded on a democratic state and common citizenship, holding the values of human dignity, rights and freedom. It sets out a constitutionally based building framework for National and Provincial Legislative action in the field of education.

The Outcomes Based Education provided for non-discriminatory basic and adult education for all citizens. It provided a shift from an unequal social system to a more open system with more permeable restrictions. This would be in contrast to an exclusive, divided system which contributed towards social inequality. The new structure in education would be characterised by the presence of a single National Qualifications Framework, with multiple learning pathways in which there would be new trans-disciplinary subjects and programmes.

Tuswa (2011) explained the launch of the Outcomes Based Curriculum (Curriculum 2005) in 1997, which was later followed by a revised version, the National Curriculum Statement, saying that the curriculum, as originally introduced, was not easily received and implemented by teachers. Tuswa (2011) affirms that teachers found the OBE as elaborate, difficult and inflexible. On the other hand, the Revised National Curriculum was found to be more easily implemented but remains the subject of debate amongst

some educators. These are those who have difficulty understanding a competencebased curriculum as they had taught for many years using a curriculum which was systemic and contained regulatory features with discrete subjects and disciplines. The new curriculum was also intended to be the vehicle for Inclusive Education.

In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education in South Africa. A joint report on the findings of these two bodies was presented to the Minister of Education in November 1997, and the final report was published by the Department of Education in February 1998 for public comment and advice. In the light of these findings, the joint report of the two bodies recommended that the education and training system should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (DoE, 2001).

Nel (2013) specifies that in 1997, the National Commissions Report on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) began moving education services into a more comprehensive environment. This environment later led to the acceptance of White Paper 6 as a legal policy for developing an integrated education and training in 2001. The NCSNET and the NCESS report as well as White Paper 6 were based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which guarantees human rights, and the South African Schools Act (SASA). These documents focused primarily on the integration of special and ordinary education through building modifications, curriculum development and adjustment and the training of staff. To a greater degree, Nel (2013) highlighted the United Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of the United Nations to be a dynamic strength in the direction of inclusive education. At the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in 1994, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on Special Needs Education was

approved, which declared the fundamental right of every child to education, and that all children are unique, and therefore education must consider their various needs and individualities.

Building an Inclusive Education and Training System in South Africa is located in the right of every child to an education as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and was forcefully confirmed by the World Declaration on Education for all (UNESCO, 1993). Every learner has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an accessible level of learning. This right is also applicable to South African Education System. As stated in Section 2 of the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996:5), the Constitution recognises that everyone has the right to basic education. Every learner has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Therefore, education systems should be designed, and educational programme implementation to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.

2.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Theory, as explained by Gary (2019), is a stance or point of view that you take in your research, to explain, describe, direct and anticipate your phenomena. Theory allows the researcher to draw connections between the theoretical frameworks and the realistic. Nel, Nel and Hugo (2013) explain their understanding of theory to be an explanation that can be validated about some characteristics of life, and an organised system of accepted knowledge that explains phenomena such as learning, attitudes and influences. Imenda (2014) added by clarifying that explaining and making predictions are some of the most common features of definitions of theoretical aspects. Landsberg (2016) perceives theory as a set of ideas, hypotheses and concepts arranged in such a way that it tells us about the world, ourselves or a reality aspect.

Equally important, when addressing the distinctions between theoretical and conceptual structures, Imenda (2014) describes theory as a careful description of concrete concepts in a particular field to explain why and how the relationships are logically established in such a way that the theory provides clear expectations.

Therefore, a good theory is taken as the one that provides a very simple and thorough picture of the field of events to be clarified by it. Moreover, it is extremely important for each researcher to identify and describe a suitable theory, because without it, a study lacks proper guidance and a framework for a constructive literature review, as well as descriptive and clarifying of the results accruing from the analysis.

In this study, the researcher has selected the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) as it offers a related vision with regards to Inclusive Education. Mahlo (2011) emphasises that the Human Development Ecology involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which developing people are affected by the relationships between the settings and the broader context in which the settings are rooted. Furthermore, the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is the most relevant because it addresses the issues of learners who experience diversity of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase classrooms, where teachers face challenges in accommodating those learners. Depicting from Landsberg (2016), the

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can be an advantageous device for understanding the historical development of inclusion in South Africa and its implementation, the nature, the understanding and management of barriers to learning in the classroom. This also acts as a substitute system for previous linear models, the likes of medical deficit.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a native Russian born American psychologist, developed the complex ecological systems theory, which explains the direct and indirect influences on a child's life by referring to the many levels of environmental or context levels that influence the development of a person. This model suggests that there are layers of different interacting systems resulting in the development of physical, social and psychological change (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). The model explains how these systems, and the relationships between them affect a learner's development. It puts the child at the core of the process and at the centre in making decisions which are in the child's best interests (Teaching for All, 2019). These environmental systems include the micro-system, which is characterised by individuals and events that are

closest to a person's life; the meso-system, which is the relations between the family and the child's school or peer group; the exo-system, which refers to environments where a learner is not directly involved but still may influence or be influenced by what happens in settings; and the macro-system, which refers to attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies within the systems of a society and culture which may be influenced by other systems. All these interact with the chrono-system, which is time dimension. Mahlo (2017) clarifies further, stating that what happens in one system affects and is affected by other systems, which implies that human behaviour, experiences, and actions cannot be understood if the contexts in which they occur are not considered.

Landsberg (2016) indicates that Bronfenbrenner had a long-held belief that a person's qualities are biologically based, which he later during his career, executed by extending his theory and adding the morpheme bio- to the term ecological. These qualities have an impact on human development and proximity processes. In his bio-ecological model, Bronfenbrenner mentioned four interacting elements that are crucial to shaping our understanding of how different levels of a system in the social context interact in the process of child development: personal factors such as the temperament of the child or parent; process factor, e.g. the forms of interaction that occur in a family, contexts e.g. families, schools, or local communities; and time e.g. changes over time in the child or the environment. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1986) also pointed out that face to face proximal interactions and long term relationships such as those between a mother and her child, a teacher and a student, or a child and a close friend, are crucial for determining long term developmental features.

Nel et al (2013) specified the importance of the constructivist theory to learning as a new learning theory as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which, together, show how various systems within which a learner exists can influence his or her behaviour and his or her academic progress. As already mentioned in the reading above, Inclusive Education focuses on the system approach, which are: systems in society, classrooms, schools, families and communities, the government needs to collaborate with these systems to provide a supportive structure for all learners. In addition, Nel (2013) mentioned that there is ample evidence within the socio-ecological model that teachers play a key role recognising, evaluating and helping learners who

face learning challenges in every classroom. To be successful, systems need to be put in place to assist teachers to acquire knowledge and skills to fulfil their positions in their classrooms.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The literature that was reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that more and more countries are embracing the policy of Inclusive Education to provide learners who experience obstacles to learning with the required provision to overcome their obstructions. Based on the literature that has been discussed above, the researcher came to the conclusion that a study on challenges faced by teachers in accommodating learners with diversity of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase classrooms should be investigated. This chapter focused on Inclusive Education, learning barriers and diversity, which was discussed in detail. It also highlighted Foundation Phase as well as Steve Tshwete circuit one in the Nkangala District, as they are key constructs in this study. In the next chapter, the focus will be on the design which will clearly illustrate the research methodology in resolving the researcher's questions as to challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers in their classrooms to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning, strategies used by these teachers and support that they need to overcome challenges that they are facing.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, inclusive education, barriers to learning and diversity were explored through a literature study. In this chapter, the focus will be on the research design, which clearly illustrates the research methodology used in resolving the researcher's question: teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning in their Grade 3 classrooms, the challenges they face in doing so and strategies that they used to overcome the challenges. It describes the research process that informed this study and provides details of the research paradigm, research approach, research design and sampling. The chapter also provides a detailed description of the process of data collection and analysis, explaining how trustworthiness issues were addressed in qualitative research.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Landsberg (2016), a paradigm or world view is a shared pattern of basic beliefs and assumptions about the nature of the world and how it works. These assumptions tell us what is real and what is not. They shape our cultural identity and guide and justify our institutional practices. They are enabling but also possess the light of new theories and knowledge that attempt to better explain the nature of the world. Paradigms are complex and evolve over time. Similar to the above definition, Creswell (2009) chooses to use the term worldview as the definition of the word paradigm. He further explains that worldview is a basic set of beliefs that guide action. Creswell (2009) identifies four different worldviews, for example, post positivism, constructivism, advocacy and pragmatism, and explains that they are shaped by the discipline area of the student, beliefs of advisers, faculty in a student's area and past research experiences. The types of beliefs held by individual researchers will often lead to embracing the qualitative, quantitative or mixed method in their research (Cresswell, 2009).

A paradigm incorporates three elements, the first one is ontology, which raises basic questions about the nature of reality (Tuswa, 2016). Ponterotto (2002) says that

ontology entails the nature of reality and existence. In accordance with the constructivist paradigm, reality is subjective and is influenced by experiences and perspectives. It accepts that reality is socially constructed through discourse. The second one is epistemology, which possessed the how do we know the world? Epistemology addresses the relationship between the inquirer and the knower (Tuswa, 2016). The epistemological factor of an interpretative paradigm maintains that knowledge is achieved by engagement and empathic listening, whereas the constructivism paradigm considers that versions are produced by the observer Erradu (2012). The third one is the methodology which, according to Tuswa (2016), focuses on how we acquire information, and includes the processes and procedures of research. In addition, the interpretive paradigm methodological dimension is based on the researcher's subjective relationship with the participants, but in the constructivist paradigm, the researcher's approach is deconstruction and incorporates discourse and text analysis (Erradu, 2012).

The constructivist paradigm was chosen by the researcher as relevant to the study because it embraces expectations, allowing for a better and greater understanding of teachers' perceptions of integrating learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms, and how to overcome the challenges they encounter in this process. Human beings generate meaning as they interact with the world they are understanding through the use of open-ended questions that allow participants to share their perspectives. Furthermore, in the constructivist paradigm, humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective by visiting the location and gathering information personally in order to understand that context. Furthermore, according to the constructivist paradigm, humans interact with their environment and make meaning of it based on their historical and social perspectives by directly visiting the area and acquire knowledge in order to comprehend the context (Creswell, 2009).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACHES

Ary (2010) says that educational research is usually classified into two extensive groups, which are quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Each approach has its own practice and vocabulary. Quantitative and qualitative research have emerged from various philosophical assumptions that shape the way researchers

approach problems, gather and analyse data. Quantitative research uses measurements of the objectives to collect numerical data used to answer questions or test predetermined hypotheses. It generally requires settings which are well-controlled. It focuses on analysing social phenomena from the perspective of individual participants in a natural environment. It does not start with a formal hypothesis, but as the study unfolds, it may result in a hypothesis. This means that the researchers seek to explain a phenomenon in the qualitative approach by focusing on the overall picture rather than breaking it down into variables. The aim is the holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numerical interpretation of the data in the quantitative approach.

Mixed method research is explained by Ary (2010) as a new methodology in which the same uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The end result of mixed method research is findings that can be more reliable and that provide a more comprehensive explanation of the research problem than either method alone could offer. In agreement, Kobus (2013) pointed out that mixed methods research is quite new and builds on both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a manner that researchers collect numerical and text data simultaneously or sequentially, and select variables and units that are best suited to addressing the study's purpose and finding answers to the research questions. Creswell et al. (2003) point out that the reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative methods in one study are to elaborate on quantitative results with consequent qualitative data; to use qualitative data to develop a subsequently tested measuring instrument or theory; to compare quantitative and qualitative data sets in order to draw validated conclusions; and to boost a study with an additional set of either quantitative or qualitative data.

Therefore, this study adopted the qualitative approach to investigate teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms, to examine challenges that they experience in doing so and to look into strategies that they implement to overcome the challenges encountered. The study looked at participants by cooperating with and observing them in their natural atmosphere, because qualitative research, as asserted by McMillan and Schumacher

(2010), is concerned with the understanding of social phenomena from participants' point of view where data is collected in a setting that is sensitive to people and places under study.

The researcher entered the setting with an open mind prepared to immerse herself in the situation's complexities and to interact with the teachers. The researcher was able to obtain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation, which was appropriate in comprehending experiences of grade 3 teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their classrooms (Mahlo, 2011). The emphasis is on the superiority and depth of information (Kobus, 2013). This is dissimilar to the quantitative approach, which uses detached measurement to gather numerical data in a setting which is well-controlled.

Correspondingly, this study concentrated on the qualitative approach in which the researcher is a versatile instrument capable of adapting and responding to the environment (Ary, 2010). In agreement, Ponterotto (2002) explains that through a researcher as an instrument and close interpersonal interaction with culturally diverse participants, researchers are alerted to their own unconscious biases, stereotypes, expectations and privileges, thus facilitating their own professional and personal growth and development. In essence, the instrument, which is the researcher, changes and evolves as a result of intensive interaction with participants in their natural socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, Mahlo (2011) added that the qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand how teachers make sense of their own lives, experiences and structures of the world by physically going to schools to interview them, analyse documents and record behaviour in its natural setting by way of observation. This allowed participants to express their opinions in words which were captured and used to investigate teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms.

Mahlo (2011) asserted that qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that believes that there is no neutral reality, but rather multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest. This is because participants are not objects, but human beings who can speak and think for themselves and who can define things from their own point of view. Furthermore, a person working within the quantitative approach would criticise this approach as it

does not have the ability to generalise findings to the entire population. However, in this study, the main aim was not to generalise findings to individual sites or places outside those under this study (Creswell, 2009), but rather, to gain an in-depth understanding of how grade 3 teachers experienced the integration of learners who experience barriers to learning into their classrooms. In the next section, the researcher discusses the research design that was adopted to conduct the study.

3.4 Research Design

Burke (2012) conceptualises the research design as an outline or strategy that is used to structure a research project, giving it logic, flow and coherence that would help it answer its own research questions with rigour. Kobus (2013) corroborates the definition by Burke by referring to the research design as a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumption of the research to influence the selection of respondents' data gathering techniques to be used, and the data analysis to be done. Generally, the choice of the research design is based on the researcher's assumptions, research skills and research practices, and influences the way in which she or he collects data. Kobus (2013) notes that there is a plethora of both qualitative and quantitative research designs from which a researcher may select. However, the choice cannot be a willy-nilly one as there are a number of factors to consider about the research competences, the nature of the research question and the environment or context in which the research project will evolve. The design must as well be accommodative of the uniqueness of the potential audience of the research output (Matorera, 2016). Although there are a variety of qualitative research approaches available, Ary (2010) identified eight as the most commonly used: basic interpretative studies, case studies, content analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, historical research, narrative inquiry and phenomenological studies, which are discussed below.

3.4.1 Basic interpretative studies

They are the simplest and the most common qualitative studies, with the purpose of understanding the world or experience of another person. The researcher is interested in the manner in which participants perceive events, processes and activities. They include concise accounts aimed at explaining the phenomenon using data that could be collected in a number of ways, such as interviews, observations and reviews (Ary, 2010).

3.4.2 Case studies

According to Christensen (2014), case study research is a type of qualitative research that focuses on presenting a full description of one or more cases. It is holistic because it considers each case as a whole unit living in its real world context. Explaining further, Christensen (2014) affirms that case study research can be used to answer exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research questions since it is more varied than Phenomenology, which focuses on particular aspects of culture; or Grounded theory, which focuses on constructing an explanatory theory. In tallying, Ary (2010) defines a case study as a type of ethnographic research study that focuses on a single unit such as a single individual, group, organisation, or programme, and uses multiple data collection methods such as interviews, observation and archives to achieve a detailed understanding and description of that unit.

3.4.3 Content analysis

The researcher usually starts with a question that he believes can be best answered by reviewing documents. The researcher looks at many materials in order to understand more about a specific phenomenon. Content analysis focuses on analysing and interpreting recorded material which may be public records, textbooks, letters, films, tapes, diaries, etc. to learn more about human behaviour. When determining the level of coverage provided by various textbooks in the achievement of some learners, content analysis can be quantitative (Ary, 2010).

3.4.4 Ethnography

Rooted in anthropology, ethnography is a thorough study of the behaviour that occurs naturally within a culture or social group. It is sometimes named field research by social scientists because it is conducted in a natural setting or field. As it occurs naturally in the setting, the researcher observes group behaviour. Ethnography needs a variety of data collecting measures such as extended observation of the setting, interviewing members of the culture and studying documents and articles (Ary, 2010). Ethnography, according to Christensen (2014), is one of the most common approaches to qualitative research in education since it focuses on uncovering and documenting group culture, bringing forth its literal meaning "writing about people". He went on to say that ethnographers are interested in describing group culture and learning what it is like to be a member of that group from the perspective of group

members, documenting things like shared attitudes, values, norms, practices, patterns of interaction, perspectives and language. They may also be interested in material goods produced or used by members of the group, such as clothing styles, ethnic food and architectural styles. Ethnographers believe that the group is more than a sum of its parts. In a sense, that when they explain how individuals of a group interact and come together to form a group as a whole, they strive to utilise holistic descriptions (Christensen, 2014).

3.4.5 Grounded theory

Since theory is an explanation of how and why something operates, grounded theory means that the theory is theoretically grounded (Christensen, 2024). Grounded theory is a qualitative strategy to construct and build a theory based on evidence collected or studied by the researcher. It is a method for coming up with themes or explanations that use an inductive approach. Ary (2010) confirms, saying that grounded theory is predicted to establish a theory of social occurrences based on the data obtained in a theory of field.

3.4.6 Historical research

According to Ary (2010), historical research analysis documents or uses eyewitness interviews to gain understanding of past events. It is done so that researchers can better understand events that have already occurred. Christensen (2014) elucidates that in a historical study, the researcher researches about people, places and events in the past. Additionally, historical research is sometimes called narrative research because it studies the text of history and often presents its results through stories or narratives. Amidst the explanations above, Ary (2010) warns that the historical researcher must establish the authenticity of the documents used, as well as the validity of its contents because its success depends on the accuracy and completeness of the source material. Many historical research studies are best defined as mixed when quantitative and qualitative data are used; therefore, some of the data obtained in historical research may be quantitative (Ary, 2010).

3.4.7 Narrative inquiry

In contrast to Ary (2010), Creswell (2009) defines narrative inquiry as an approach in which the researcher scrutinises the lives of individuals and asks one or more of them to contribute tales about their lives. In addition, Christensen (2014) asserted that

narrative inquiry is a qualitative research which studies not only life experiences as a storied phenomenon, but it also inquiries into the institutional, social, cultural and linguistic. As participants tell their lived stories in relational ways, the researcher enquires into and about their experiences. The researcher might share with participants' similar experiences that they have had. Narratives in which each participant experiences are embedded and this shapes individual experiences (Christensen, 2014).

3.4.8 Phenomenological studies

Phenomenological research assumes that various truths are embedded in themes and viewpoints, and that an experience might have different meanings for different people. When the researcher employs unstructured interviews to examine themes, ideas and sentiments to stir the core of an individual's experiences, these studies may be undertaken to answer the "what" questions. An experience can give different senses for each individual (Ary, 2010). Phenomenology study, as described by Christensen (2014), is the first major type of qualitative research study. The significant component of a phenomenology research study is that the researcher attempts to understand how people experience a phenomenon from each person's own viewpoint, targeting to enter the inner world of each participant to understand his or her perception and understanding.

From the above mentioned research designs that can be used in qualitative studies, this research adopted the case study design because, according to Kobus (2013), it is harmonious with the researcher's theoretical assumptions and is appropriate for creating the kind of data required to answer the research questions posed. It uses numerous methods, such as interviews, observations and documents to gather data, which, according to Casey (2013), provides a more convincing and precise case study. Congruently, Ary (2010) distinguished a case study to be a nature of ethnographic research study that concentrates on a single unit to produce a full description that is rich and complete, and which can answer descriptive questions. This requires a detailed study for a considerable amount of time. Case studies are attached in real life and can provide rich detailed versions of teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms. They also allow for the identification of potential challenges in accommodating learners with learning

disabilities into their classrooms as well as strategies used by teachers in their Grade 3 classrooms to assist learners who face learning challenges.

Ary (2010) argues that case studies, which have their origins in business, law and medicine, are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic, which means they concentrate on a single phenomenon, scenario, or event to produce a thick rich descriptive end product, focusing on providing new insights. Moreover, case studies focus on a single unit to generate a rich and holistic description based on the features of the item, phenomenon, person or location. A specific unit which may be selected because of its uniqueness or for a variety of other reasons is defined within specific boundaries, referred to as a bounded system. For the unit to be bounded, the phenomenon must be identifiable within a specific context. If it cannot be described in such a way, a case study may not be the best approach to study it. In some ways, a case study is not so much about how the phenomenon is studied but, rather about the choice of what to study.

Ary (2010) considers a case study to be a longitudinal approach because it necessitates a detailed examination of an individual or unit over a long period of time, with emphasis on understanding why the individual does what he or she does and how behaviour changes as the individual responds to the environment. With its intensive inquisitive character, which is also regarded as its biggest benefit in terms of depth possible, a case study tries to understand the entire case in the context of the entire environment.

Not only may an individual's current activities be examined, but also his or her past, environment, feelings, and thoughts can be probed. In this case, the researcher gathers data regarding the subject prior state, emotions and thoughts, and how these factors relate to one another. In addition, Ary (2010) asserts that researchers believe that there is something to be learned from this particular case because when scrutinising a process, case studies might answer descriptive questions or attempt to explain why something happened. This provides an opportunity for the researcher to develop understanding into basic aspects of human behaviour, which may lead to the discovery of previously unsuspected relationships. Therefore, in the next section, the researcher will discuss how the sampling or population procedure is conducted following this chosen research design.

3.5 SAMPLING

Maree (2013) defines sampling as a relationship between the population and the sample drawn from it. Ary (2010) conceives sampling to be a process of taking a portion of the population, making observations on this smaller group, and then generalising the findings to the larger population from which the sample was drawn. In this study, the researcher used the purposive sampling strategy because it selects individuals that encounter specific requirements of the study. Participants were also selected based on the confidence that they could provide relevant information about teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms. The sample criteria included only teachers in Grade 3, in particular those who were class teachers in their classrooms. This helped in relating their experiences on how they dealt with challenges in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms. They had to be at post level one. They were credentialed teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience, which allowed them to speak with reasonable experience. Using these criteria, six teachers were selected through the purposive sampling strategy.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Wubbels (2011) is of the view that data collection methods in qualitative research embraces interviews, observations and document analysis. I am in agreement with Snauwaert (2013), who states that interviews motivate participants to talk about their personal experiences, opinions and feelings. In this study, individuals were interviewed to collect data. This was to allow participants who were purposefully selected to be free to explain and express themselves individually. Using individual interviews enabled me the opportunity to gain insights into how people interpret and order their words, and to address sensitive topics that people might be reluctant to discuss in a group setting. The researcher remained open and engaged in the density of the research, and cooperated with participants when collecting data.

In addition, I used the document analysis method. Creswell (2012) states that documents are a valuable source of information in qualitative research. He added that documents represent a good source for text data in qualitative study. Therefore, the researcher collected documents such as curriculum documents, policy documents,

school policies and school vision and mission statements. These documents were checked by the researcher to establish if teachers are familiar with them and are able to apply them in integrating these learners into their Grade 3 classrooms.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher searched and arranged the data methodically in order to increase its understanding and the ability to present it to others (Ary, 2010). In addition, following Bertram and Christiansen's (2014) explanation, the collected data was processed by determining themes and categorising collected data into understandable units. The processing of the data in order to identify themes entailed coding and clustering the coded data. In this study, analysing thematic data was used to find meaning patterns across the data as indicated by Creswell (2009) that the thematic process involves analysing the transcript of recorded interview to identify themes.

Drawing from Hancock and Simpson (2009), the researcher began by first reading and re-reading notes and transcripts to become familiar with the information gathered so that it could be easily retrieved. Furthermore, the researcher did memo notes of the first impression of the collected data when reading transcripts. The second step was to code the data by identifying units of meaning in the data labelling, which gave light to the importance of that category of meaning. With this open coding process, the researcher summarised on a line-by-line basis preceding the next step which involves searching for categories. Finally, the researcher organised the codes into categories by grouping them together to reflect related ideas. The researcher categorised the themes as research findings, which aided in the development of responses to the research questions.

3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality criteria refer to whether the data collected is valid and reliable. Wild and Diggins (2011) describe reliability as the research that obtains the same results when the same research is undertaken by different researchers. According to Maree (2013), there can be no validity without reliability, and a demonstration of validity is sufficient to establish reliability. He further elaborated that generally, it is accepted that engaging multiple methods of data collection, such as observation, interviews and document analysis, will lead to trustworthiness. In addition, involving several investigators or peer

researchers to assist with the interpretation of the data could improve trustworthiness. In this way, trustworthiness as validity can be ensured. In his argument, Ary (2010) elaborated that validity concerns the accuracy or veracity of findings, which is most frequently referred to as credibility by qualitative researchers. Furthermore, credibility in qualitative research concerns the veracity of findings of the inquiries. It also involves how well the researcher has established assurance in the research design, participants and context-based findings.

To the four criteria stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Houghton (2013) affirmed that they form the framework for determining the accuracy of the research, which are: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Houghton (2013) further articulates that lengthy commitment and tireless observation can enrich the credibility of research. These skills require researchers to spend sufficient time in the field or in a case study sites, to gain full understanding of the phenomena being investigated. All participants' personal expertise and perceptions will be crucial to this process. There will be plenty of time spent with participants in the language they are comfortable with. This will facilitate the free full participation and disclosure of information that is relevant and confidential. Credibility can also be enhanced through triangulation. In this study, triangulation was arranged by replies from transcripts, field notes and draft reports from individual interviews compared to statements being consistent and accurate. Hence triangulation uses several methods to study one phenomenon (Houghton, 2013). The two main purposes of triangulation are to confirm data and to ensure that data are complete.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Wild and Diggins (2011) define ethics as norms or behavioural standards that guide moral choices about an individual's behaviour in a given state and relationship with others. Therefore, during the course of this research study, the researcher adhered to ethical measures to ensure participants' safety and rights, and to observe and implement adequate ethical measures throughout the research (Creswell & Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2007) argues that in order to gain right of entry in any field of

research, right of entry should be authorised by the management office. To add on that, Walliman (2005) indicates that social research and other types of research that study individuals and their relationships with each other and with the environment must be particularly sensitive to ethical issues.

The researcher adhered to the responsibility as outlined by Ary (2010) to be mindful of cultural, religious, gender and other significant differences within the research participants in the planning, conduct and reporting of the research.

Permission to conduct the study in the field was obtained from the University of Limpopo in South Africa. Permission was also requested and obtained from selected primary schools in Steve Tshwete Circuit-1 in Nkangala District of Mpumalanga Province. **Informed consent** from participants, the aim of the study and the process was explained in full detail to participants verbally and in writing.

Voluntary participation, participants were valued in the study and took part on a voluntary basis. There was no stipend for their participation. They had the right to participate without penalty or offence to the extent that they participated.

Confidentiality and Anonymity, this study involved the participation of human beings, hence they were treated with great respect to their rights and privacy.

Feedback was forwarded to relevant research participants, school principals and other stakeholders in a clear, simple and appropriate language, or in the form of a complete written document when needed.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The research paradigms, research approaches, the research design and various components of the research methodology such as the sampling of participants, collection and analysing of the data, quality assurance and ethical matters were discussed. The results of this study could guide discourses about teachers' experiences in integrating learners with learning disabilities into their Grade 3 classrooms with a view to assisting them. The findings, according to the researcher, could be used to identify challenges faced by Grade 3 teachers in their classrooms, as well as strategies that they use to assist learners with learning difficulties. Furthermore, the findings might also be used to provide appropriate additional support strategies to teachers to conquer challenges that they are facing.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data collected is analysed and presented in a narrative form. Special care is taken to limit researcher interpretation of the narratives presented to her by respondents. Thus, much quoting is done and connecting senses across each and among responses from participants. Section 4.1 presents findings and analyses on experiences of grade 3 teachers as they attempt to integrate learners with learning barriers into the mainstream class. In section 4.2, reference is on the challenges involved with the integration of special needs learners, and the last, section 4.3 presents findings and analyses of strategies used by grade 3 teachers dealing with learners with learning barriers.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Participating schools were normal primary level schools each with grade 3 learners. The schools are registered with the Department of Basic Education and are governed by the laws of the Department. They receive grants and other support from the state, and are all within Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Nkangala District, Mpumalanga Province.

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

For reasons of anonymity and confidentiality, participants are hereby scantily described as teachers qualified to teach in the Primary school phase. They had varied socioeconomic backgrounds and all ranged from 4 years teaching experience to 12 years.

The participants were recognised as Teacher A – F (T-A up to T-F).

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.4.1 What are experiences of grade 3 teachers in the integration of learners with learning barriers?

The dilemma of integrating learners with special learning and teaching requirements is widely ventilated in literature. The reasons put in favour of their integration or

reabsorption into the mainstream education system are as many and heterogeneous as are those in favour of their separation from the mainstream education system. T-A felt that it was needful to have dichotomy in the education system, "...in a society that does not have the best of infrastructure, resources and qualified staff to deal with the problems shown by these learners why should we keep them together..." with "...each wasting the resources that would otherwise improve the situation for the other..." interjected T-D. The justification for a separation of the child with learning disabilities is that they are not overwhelming many, and acquiring resources that would best address their needs should not be prohibitively expensive. T-C felt that the integration of the child with learning barriers into a class full of abled children was more political than rational and professional "...you see the politics of the decision ..." "...once these kids are brought into the mainstream, the mathematics of saving begins to work for them..." "...I mean the economies of scale play to their benefit..." of saving money.

Theme: motive of the integration policy

Apparently, teachers felt that it would benefit teaching and learning on be part of the learner with learning barriers if these would be taught by themselves by fully experienced teachers with knowledge, skills and competences to provide tuition to this class of learners with learning barriers. T-C opines that "...there is great saving, you see, say a class has 38 learners of which 9 having varying grades of learning barriers. Because it is one class you would need just one teacher..." "...now let's assume you decide to teacher the barriered learners alone then you would need another teacher, another classroom, separate resources this is the cost the politician doesn't want no matter how reasonable the professional may see it..."

It sounds like the integration of the 'barriered' learner in classrooms full of 'unbarriered' learners frustrate the teacher's motivation to teach from the onset. Teachers are likely to approach such classes already with a sense of loss, helplessness and with no expectation of productivity. If such occurs, innovation, quality and commitment are eroded. T-D describes the situation as one of "...some kind of abuse..." "...you know when the system doesn't care at the top..." and "...you seat right at the foot of it..." and "...you are required to make it excellent, make it look good, sound good and smell pleasantly well..." then "...by subscribing to want it to look good, sound good and smell

well, you are kind of subscribing to your own abuse, you actually are abusing yourself...”.

T-C felt that the training that aspiring early phase teachers get does not go far of teaching anyone to any profundity about ‘barriered’ learners. On-the-job learning does not happen because there are just too many of these learners to deal with at once. Following up closely on a learner or just 10 of them out of a class of 40 or more becomes injustice to the rest. And in the majority of cases the ‘barriered’ learner may have repeated grades in the past, thus making them overage at grade 3.

Theme: The compensatory behaviour pathway

There are a lot of factors that begin to weigh on the barriered child. “...yaaa one cannot overlook the fact that the graph of indiscipline exponents, rather than dying, continues to grow as the child searches for a position among their peers...” as they “...were once behind by 2 or 3 or 4 years and now they are facing off on a mathematics problem and the younger is doing even better...” explained T-B. Compensatory behaviour as explained in literature is not uncommon among children who are integrated in larger groups, and they find that one of their features is not aligning with the majority. Or that one of their aspects of identity or that aspect of self that could give him/her standing in the group does not measure up. Over-aged repeating learners are very much likely to feel under pressure in classes and schools that are dominated by well performing younger kids. Compensatory behaviours are perceived as attempts to erase shame, anxiety, guilt or other bad and negative feelings about oneself. In behaving in ways that compensate for own shortfalls, various strategies can be adopted. Among the strategies adopted are environmental modifications or behavioural strategies designed to bypass persistent impairment in attention, memory, executive-function, or and other cognitive skills, essentially by behaving extraordinarily require so as to close the gap between ‘who one wants to be seen as...’ and ‘who one really is’ can drive immature kids into escalating commitment to do more of the same wrong thing. Each deed is felt to have insufficiently compensated. There are many reasons why each deed is seen as not having achieved enough.

One, the school is not a place for most of the deeds done in compensating for academic weaknesses. By doing a visibility seeking deed, one might be inviting even

more attention to them and inversely the attention makes the doers' shortcomings even more conspicuous. Being more conspicuous with things that do not belong in the situation for which a school is established becomes even more punishing.

Two, as the school reacts to the child's misdemeanour, each action-reaction scenario romps up the stature of the child. This creates visibility of the child but with the undesired identities. Most kids are conscious that wrong deeds do not auger well with schools. So the more they are neutralised, the more they thicken the feeling of a loser, a fallen hero, and a further shame. They each time have more to compensate.

Three, the child who experiences barriers to learning, gets lost in seeking compensation in identity and may feel depressed when he or she feels isolated with no one wanting to be associated with his or her behaviour. This can lead the barred child to seek new attention in new groups. But as the school follows on neutralising the bad behaviours, the doer feels pressured and goes even wilder in search of compensating for the lost compensation.

The issues raised in one, two and three above are some of the factors that entangle most of the children with learning barriers, and find themselves in schools with teachers under skilled, unknowledgeable about their plight, and without competences of dealing with root causes of their struggles.

Theme: Characteristics and causatives

The general experience among grade 3 teachers working with learners experiencing various barriers in their learning includes aggression, depression (T-C); regression (T-C; T-F & T-A); juvenile delinquency (T-A) and misconduct, negativism (T-C; T-A; T-B; T-E) and withdrawal, elective mutism (T-C & T-B). There is a commonality in this observation and analysis of the interpretation of participants of the behaviour that translates into barriers to learning. Kapp (2018:113) discusses these as results of biological factors, family factors and school factors.

Teachers tended to concur on the impact of both family and school factors on poor learning benefits. And the impact of biological factors on impaired learning was not so well appreciated. It maybe that teachers do understand the impact but deny it in their

attempt to corner parents and guardians into reigning in on their kids. T-A in reference to this point said "...if we can't share the burden of correction...", "...you see, I am saying okay, you let this kid get spoilt neeh, and I am not part of it and never was, but I am saying let's get this sorted neeh then this parent thinks I have to get it sorted all by myself neeh..." and "...this thing of father was or grandpa was 'this and that' you see, eeee, doesn't work..." then "...what should I do with that ancestry..."? The point being driven home is that "...you see when the biography of the child, of the family becomes the biology of the child..." the school "...can't be able to deal with that...".

T-C and T-F felt that some parents are "...quite genuine..." with the situations of both the school and their kids. And would "...check in on the school and teacher maybe just as much to say 'how is it going with the boy'..." and this "...gives the sense that aaaah where the child is coming from there is some concern, let me do something that shows we are concerned..." and "...we genuinely do...". T-A admitted that "...in some instance we are unskilled to deal with the situations we face..." like "...this child is heavily impaired and I have to teach them within a class of some well off and academically gifted..." then "...I say to myself 'how do I go about it', we are not fully trained in this..." the university "...didn't think, I mean, in their teaching that we would in this deep end of the pool...". In reference to teacher ability to deal with learners with barriers to learning T-B equally felt that they are much oftener found wanting as their "...professional training did not equip..." them "...to deal with ninety percent of what..." they "...come across in the day-to-day school...".

Theme: Resources impact

It sounds like common knowledge that schools should be well resourced for whatever they are providing to their communities. Most strategies are in more than one-way resource-based. Teachers felt that the availability of resources in the schools had much to do with their capability to successfully integrate the learner with learning barriers in the mainstream education system. One of the most important sets of resources is the bundle of skills, competences and knowledge handled by the teacher. This point has been alluded to above. T-A felt that there is not much consideration of the learner with barriers when it comes to the financial plans of the school, but they "...are expected to run super well with the least of resources..." which according to T-

B, "...are not very relevant to addressing the teaching-learning peculiarities of the child...". The problem with integration is that the learner with barriers becomes the minority in the school and in the class as in the classroom. Much of the decision-making process becomes inherently in favour of the majority who are already at above the average. T-A says "...with each step we tend to marginalise the already luckless and marginalised learner with barriers...". whether integration should mean physically putting the learner with learning barriers in the same school and same classroom with the gifted or other nonbarrier learner, or should mean that both the barriered and the gifted and advantaged follow the same curriculum but learning separately has been ventilated with much ambiguity both formally and informally across political and non-political debates.

Theme: Dedicated schools and rendition

What advantages would be gained from integration and disintegration is a subject of inconclusive debate. T-A felt that there was a need "...to segregate the streams, put the students with learning barriers in their own classrooms and give them their own teachers fully trained to deal with a curriculum for that particular group of learners...". The segregation approach is felt too by T-C as a better approach because "...if they want us to treat these kids in a manner that recognise and responds to their barriers..." in a class of the other 40 or so "...we are still segregating them..." and even "...making their lot burdensome because if have to be coming to their desk 40 times and to the next other only once..." and according to T-B, these constant frequenting of their desks is necessary but are we sure it is welcome? Definitely NO...". The synthesis from the three renditions seems to make sense. Kapp (2018) suggests that teachers should not behave in ways that expose learners of their shortcomings as doing so may create resentment of the teacher, the learning environment and the learner's own self. By implication, if learners with barriers were in their own classes and classrooms, the frequency of teacher visitations would, for each be near to the class average and would go unnoticed and therefore unlabelled as unfair, biased favouritism. Apparently the attempt to integrate the student with barriers into the mainstream classroom "...worsens the thing for the school, teacher, child and parent, yaa the parent will get nothing from the child's 12 / 15 years in the school...".

Theme: learners with barriers are a special niche

The point of poor training that neglects fundamentals of educating students with learning barriers has been discussed, and figments of this are quoted and populated in the afore-discussions. The teacher operating with students with learning barriers would need in-depth training on behaviour therapy, biology of behaviour and psychology. The fact as seen by T-D is that "...the training curriculum ignores these fundamentals..." of which "...without this in-depth understanding the rendition would suffer greatly...". The most referred to strategy is a focus approach that cannot be "...contaminated by a simultaneous need to pay attention to an abled majority..." said T-B. the teacher went on to argue that "...in the industry successful companies focus on a niche and understand the niche clearly then plan and deliver satisfaction to the niche..." and "...in the market of education, learners with barriers to learning are a niche on their own..." and "...must get specialised attention...". The implication is that we get specialised teachers, specialised resources, specialised teaching approaches and consequently high quality learning.

Theme: environmental deprivation

Teachers T-A, T-B and T-C had similar claims with T-D on "...not causes as such, but eeee I would say conditions of being whose outcomes we see as barriers to learning...". Kok (1970:10-12) and Pretorius (1987:21-22) discuss environments of learners as consisting of the particular residence, residential area, and the material possessions of family, and accessible by the child as having an impact on the academic / scholastic performance of the child. In essence, the depriving environments are seen as those that rob learners of an opportunity to fully self-actualise and achieve what their own potentialities could. T-A in reference to parental involvement talked of a "...street factor..." and the "...home factor..." as having "...a huge influence on the externalisation of the child..." as "...these kids rarely would behave in manners that they know are not approved at home and they have never been engaged in in their streets...". T-B highlighted instances in which communication patterns at home could have created feelings of "...deprivation of chances in life..." and the child has "...lost trust in self and rather this situation creates a web of consequences that are barriers to their own learning...".

The basic condition for the integration of students with learning barriers is being successful in identifying the cause of the barrier and eliminating it. An attempt to integrate thus often fails when there are no means to identify and deal with the causative conditions. Teachers may identify the cause of the barrier through suspicion but if they are under-trained, they may identify it wrongly or incompletely. This inadequacy of the system itself makes responses to learners with barriers inadequate, and may be unproductive. Difficulties with learning at grade 3 may just be a manifestation of a real problem that could have started much earlier in the child's life. This confirmation would need the intervention of a specialist, for instance, a psychologist, behavioural therapist et cetera. who can use diagnostic skills to isolate the real problem from propositions and guesses.

Theme: diagnostic limitations

Teachers felt that they lack connection with agents outside the school that can help them fill up their performance gaps. T-C said that teachers could know a lot about and around the child with learning barriers but may not have the skills to "...individualise a factor and connect it to a failure mode on the child...". Tiedt (1968:5) refers to deprivation among kids coming from wealthy families that lack love and connectivity with the kids. Broken homes, uneducated parents and overly busy parents may cause their kids to suffer pedagogical neglect. This lack of teaching, counselling and encouragement may cause the child to grow without motivation of any nature. Teacher experience is that barriers of such origins can be remedied but "...this would need lots of time which is not always available where the numbers of learners are so huge...". Lack of parent-child communication was found by Kok (1970) to be a hindrance in the pedagogical development of the child. Teachers equally felt that some "...parents had little understanding of their kids' plights..." and were therefore of not much use in helping them.

Language proficiency in the home has an impact on learner performance at school. T-B said "...the medium of teaching is English and you ask this child to do A, B and C at home in English, where English is not understood. They return the next day with nothing done..." because "...the home cannot help with the work in a language they do not understand...".

4.4.2 What are the challenges with the integration of grade 3 learners with learning barriers?

There are multiple sources of challenges with the integration of learners with learning difficulties into the mainstream education system, particularly in grades as low as grade 3. Phasha, Mahlo and Maseko (2013) observed that the majority of teachers in service have not been trained to teach learners with special needs, and find it difficult to deliver effective and productive teaching.

Theme: Socioeconomic factors

Socioeconomic factors lead to huge class sizes, and the "...enormous classes prohibits contact and a learner-centred pedagogy..." (T-A). Without the close interaction between the "...teacher and the struggling student there is very little purpose that the school will be serving..." (T-B). The majority of learners walking into the school gate face a number of difficult situations that further lead to their psychological, social, and academic difficulties. The challenge faced by teachers is that they are aware of the harrowing situations of the learners but are little skilled to deal with such situations.

Theme: role conceptualisation

Further to lack of pragmatic responses in situations in which learners find themselves, "...teachers do not conceptualise their roles clearly as the inclusive education policy requires them to perform some duties to which they were not accustomed", says Mahlo (2017, p. 2).

Some challenges with dealing with learners with learning barriers are at supra-school level, intra-school and others have much to do with the lateral environment of the school. At the supra-school level, the researcher observed that most teachers were poorly trained to deal with learners who have complex learning barriers. This point has been raised in the sections above. There is little understanding of policy and the emanating guidelines as indicated by all 4 respondents. This point is raised again by Mahlo (2017).

Apparently, much of the complications relate to school readiness. School readiness with reference to the child was characterised by Mashburn (2006), High (2008) and

Duncan (2007), who state that the child is able to move into a school and be able to cope with the new demands, requirements and processes taking place in that school. Teachers at grade 3 receive learners who must have been in school for the past 2 or more years. However, having been in a school does not necessarily mean or imply that the child was or is still school-ready. A kid may have lost interest with school at some past time and the loss of interest could be his new cause of learning barriers. T-A corroborated this point "...we get learners with this history of learning difficulties, but we get new ones developing learning barriers, there right in our eyes..." and "...we wonder 'what's this now'...".

School readiness has the other side of the school itself that has or does not have systems in place to deal with learners with learning barriers. Generic criteria for school readiness measurement include, among others, age, physical, perceptual, cognitive, language, affective-social, and normative criteria. T-B says of their school "...we don't have clarity on policy and how it should or at least how it is being read and interpreted in this school..." and "...I am not sure what are the metrics, I mean the criteria by which as a school we are saying aaaah yes this child is or has become ready to go into or past grade 3...".

T - C said "...if we could have the skills of screening the kids maybe we would not have many of them going into a higher grade where they will not cope...".

Theme: school readiness criteria

The next challenge is lack of knowledge and skill of applying school readiness criteria across the school. There are informal and formal identification techniques. Among the informal identification criteria are physical, normative, cognitive, linguistic, perceptual and affective-social that indicate whether a child is ready for a formal teaching situation. The four teachers have never used and did not know about more formal identification tools like the group test; Nel-Sonnekus development scale; NB-Group test; M.J.L.

Kruger school-readiness test; Strebel's school-readiness test, and the Aptitude test for school beginners. The absence of knowledge about these tools indicates the shortcoming in actioning on the really causes of learner barriers.

Theme: Didactic neglect

Students with learning barriers may be so because they have been didactically neglected. Learners who experience didactic neglect exhibit visible deficiencies, deviations and errors with respect to knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes which should have been acquired and exhibited at their level. Didactic neglect can be blamed on the learner who did not take earlier learning opportunities seriously and thus created lots of gaps in their learning paths. Now at a higher level, the learner wants to take learning seriously. As the learner retakes learning, there are barriers and hardships they will experience because the subject matter has become disconnected.

T-A said that

“...when these kids are pushed on to grade 3 when they had grasshopper attendance at grade 1 and grade 2 doesn't work...” and “...there is no time to fill up those gaps...” because “...we are managed for what the syllabus say we must do at grade 3 not for retrospective gap-filling of what was not covered in grade 2 or 1...”.

The other kind of didactic neglect can arise from the teacher not covering the content at grade 2 or earlier stages of grade 3 itself. Barriers to learning are not permanent and not across the whole curriculum for each child. Barriers can be temporary and can be subject-based or specifically experienced with a portion of the subject. T-D said of subject content-based didactic neglect “...the problem is when you get learners from lower grades, and was said to be doing okay but you discover that there are no skills or baseline capabilities of dealing with grade 3 content...”.

The third form of didactic neglect refers to the learner not being at an appropriate didopedagogical level of development that would allow him to learn as much and in a style that allows him to maximise learning. Learners sometimes show differential ability, wherein they perform far well in some subjects and are decimal in one or the other subject.

One of the challenges, at a higher level is the connectivity among the subject-matter, the learner and the teacher. Learner relationship to the teacher and the subject matter is of critical importance to successful learning.

Theme: teacher competences

It is not in many teachers to confess that they, rather than the child is a key problem or a hindrance to successful scholarship of their students. T-A admitted that "...my problem is packaging my lesson..." and "...I often take what I would later feel is too much for the short time and for the children..." "...mixed classes are a headache, you can't tell what is appropriate beforehand...". The diversity of the class normally pushes the teacher to adopt open learning approaches. And the danger of open teaching is that lesson objectives become too broad and "...goals are unclear and the path to the goals even more messy and hazy..." (T-B). T-C said "...lessons are difficult to plan, how do you tell the steps of a lesson when the class is so heterogeneous, high fliers, mediocre and a pocket of those with learning barriers there..."

4.4.3 What strategies do teachers use to overcome challenges in the integration of learners with learning barriers?

There are numerous strategies that teachers can use in dealing with the integration of students with learning barriers. Some strategies may not necessarily be about improving the learning but about getting calm in the classroom. The efficacy of each strategy is relative and contextual. The research identified 15 strategies from teacher responses. These are presented below:

Theme: Make learning participative

T-C encouraged inclusion of the learners "...as much as possible in the teachinglearning process..." and believed that by keeping the learners "...active in the act they commit to the whole learning process...". Active learning is a fairly old conception of learning, and has been widely believed to be an approach that is engaging and productive in terms of improving content retention rates.

Theme: Encourage peer learning

Sometimes learners have their own ways of encouraging learning among themselves that teachers may not understand. T-B said "...I often see that they like, let me say prefer to hear it from among themselves...". When peers teach each other, they generally generate competitive cooperation wherein they help one another get fuller understanding of what is required, but want to put forth a better presentation than that by the other person (T-F).

Theme: Using learner contexts

The 6 teachers who participated in the research agreed that the use of learner context was a much used and effective strategy of improving learning in the child with learning barriers, "...the trick is in getting them to appreciate themselves and that the environment in which they live or they learn is a source of knowledge..." (T-D). Teachers thought that by using the language structures commonly used by the learners themselves, they would get emotionally and psychologically closer to them. The important thing in engaging through use of their contexts is "...being clear about activity purpose and how it relates to the skills needs of the learner..." said T-A.

Theme: Being simple and plain

T-B felt that making both spoken and written information clear and being "...unambiguous, using simple terms and plain English guidelines would improve the touch between teacher and the kids...". The issue of getting along with learners with learning barriers was widely held by the participants and believed to "...cool their tempers, you see...", said T-B.

Theme: Self-control

We live in a diverse society with people subscribing to very diverse values and beliefs. Teachers felt that social consciousness is "...very important in ensuring that as teacher I don't inadvertently offend a learner..." (T-C) as they are already "...irritable, they are quick to get on their nerves..." (T-B). Teachers should always struggle to disarm themselves of any attitudes.

Theme: Being observant and accommodating

T-D said that it was not easy working with learners "...particularly those with some barriers to learning, as these may be barriers to straight thinking as well...". This was resonated by T-C, who said "...it is important to check on what works for one and what does not work for the next...".

Theme: Finding some emotional connection

The teachers agreed that putting the child in "...some emotional relaxation was a good thing..." (T-C) as it "... pave way for an understanding among the learners and with

the teacher...". Cooling of tempers has been seen to be a way of helping the learner to approach their learning in a mood that enhances their productivity.

Theme: Cultural sensitivity

It matters to be culturally sensitive when dealing with anyone. T-B referred to the importance of cultural sensitivity by saying "...you get small things breaking the class, creating fighting grounds among learners, like are you Zulu or the other..." and "...remember they have some stereotyping done into their heads by the environment..." and "...don't assume that this child is Zulu and would love to be identified as Zulu, nooo, you see that is going to bring lots of trouble..." particularly that "...when you have a huge class and there is your team of learners with barriers who you need to keep busy so they catch up...". Young learners do create their own identities, and this can include a Zulu identifying himself or herself as a Venda or something definitely non-Zulu. Because we are valued animals, we give value to particular things as they interest us as humans. We also shun off those things that disgrace us, and deny any connection with them no matter how naturally connected to us they are. Being cultural or sensitive to the ethnicity of learners is together with all other things a strategy of reducing entropy in the classroom.

Theme: to be or not to be too directive

In many instances than one "...the learner with learning disabilities may say what they think you want to hear, either in good faith or as their way of vending their anger..." said

T-B. It matters then to always keep one's cool and "...be a quick study, you see, you should be good at picking jokes and laugh off with the rest or deflect arrogance in ways that don't show your anger...". T-D said "...one of the reasons for failure to learn well is the background that is so loose that these kids do as they please, no rules, no controls..." and "...when you try to be directive with them you create fights with them...".

Theme: communication registers

T-D said that it is important that every staff in the school "...be aware of the language you use and of that used by other members of the group including nonverbal communication..." and if there are ways of communication that have calcified in the

school and were being found unfriendly and unpalatable with the learners, members must be prepared to change if it would be the most appropriate thing to do. There is a psychological disposition of the learners that staff working with learners with barriers to learning need appreciate. "...they pick fight quickly and most times unreasonably...".

Theme: constantly ready to help

Encourage learners to ask for help is one suggestion and strategy that teachers interviewed were adopting. T-A said "...the idea is to help the situation, doing so should cover helping the guardian, the learner..." and of help T-C said that "...we even call the parents and say 'this is what should be done to help out the situation' and we work it from there...". T-B felt that there was everybody wanting to help, and he had "...once, I made a referral and yaaa they came and the parents got involved and the lady changed, yea like she is quite better now...". T-A felt that it was important to give constant help to the struggling learner, and most importantly, "...show the learner that this is acceptable to ask for and to get unasked for help and that it is not a sign of failure...".

Theme: reprimanding mode in response to the content

The content of any communication should be as important as the style and mode in which that it is delivered. However, T-A, T-B, T-C, T-E and T-D seem to suggest that learners are still young at grade 3 and may be wrongly brought up. To keep the image and face of the teacher / school, it matters to focus interactions on the content and pay less attention on the style of its delivery. In the same instance or at some sooner time, it is important to take the child back and "...show them what would be the best style of communicating with other persons...".

Theme: celebrate with them

Encouraging learners to be creative will engage them and enable them to expand their thinking and ideas. T-D said that they always look for opportunities for "...learners and for collaborative work with their peers, and teaching staff and support staff...". This "...will enable them to demonstrate their skills and build on their skills, achievements and experience...". Celebrated achievements tend to generate new successes.

4.5 RESULTS FROM DOCUMENTS

The documents that were qualitatively analysed included the school strategic plan, lesson plans, assessment schedules and teacher notes.

The strategic plans of 2 of the 3 schools did not show recognition of the sector of learners with learning barriers. There were no provisions for resources for specific use by the sector, subjects or teachers.

Lesson plans did not show differential treatment of abled learners and learners with learning barriers. This is one of the reasons why T-C mentioned that teachers find difficulties in the management of teaching, pacing it and right-sizing the content for each lesson.

Assessment records showed numerous -1, a symbol used to indicate “did not write” and there being no remedial activities to show. Apparently, learners who faltered lessons or assessments were not made to follow up with alternative work.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The findings and analyses have focused on three key directions of the research project. Firstly, experiences of teachers in an inclusive education landscape. There is little understanding of the role of dealing with an ‘overpopulated’ class of mixed ability, including the child with learning barriers. Secondly, a number of challenges face teachers as they are not fully trained to match the task, operate in milieu of resourcepoverty and a not-so-supportive stakeholder. Thirdly, teachers adopt a number of strategies to cope and survive rather than to exploit for the betterment of learners with learning barriers.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The conclusions presented below are derived from analyses of research findings presented in the previous chapter. These are presented in the order of the three main research questions. Recommendations are also suggested and follow the order of the three main research questions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Results indicate varied experiences with the integration of learners with learning barriers into the mainstream education pathway. There were patterns of experiences, dotted with some joy yet as much with frustrations and disappointments. Teachers were finding the presence of learners with learning barriers in some classes with the 'abled learners' rather misplaced. The presence of learners with learning barriers in huge classes stretched the diversity of learners which in turn made it difficult in setting lesson goals, planning lessons, actual teaching and in making choices of assessment and evaluation standards.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL FINDINGS

5.3.1 Conclusions derived from experiences of grade 3 teachers in inclusive education

The motive for integrating learners with learning barriers into mainstream classrooms is little understood and does not have support from teachers who felt that classrooms are domineered by the 'normal majority', and resources that could be used by struggling learners cannot be confined to them in a mixed class.

Learners with learning barriers indulge in compensatory behaviours, and each time such fails to boost their esteem, they try another and the escalated commitment to secure a place of honour brings more of the undesired identities.

Teachers have scant resources and knowledge on profiling learners with learning barriers. Without correctly identifying the affected learner, schools and their lessons are often unhelpful in offering meaningful help and interventions.

Over and above the politics of social integration, learners with learning difficulties are a distinct niche and a unique species of learners who require devoted schooling, appropriate qualified professionals, and adequate resources.

Teachers often work on assumptions that are based on inadequate knowledge, skills and competence when identifying learners with learning barriers. There are no professional diagnoses of learners, and the much thought of barriers are related to environmental deprivation in the silence of didactic neglect of the learners with learning barriers.

Teachers felt that it was not their exclusive role to deal with learners with learning barriers and that other stakeholders need to get involved. There was a dearth of knowledge on professional and formal school readiness tools and tests that could be effectively done by professional entities.

5.3.2 What are challenges in the integration of grade 3 learners with learning barriers?

Socio-economic factors, role conceptualisation, application of school readiness criteria, didactic neglect and teacher competences are some of challenges most referred by teachers. They stymie their efforts in the integration of learners with learning barriers.

Socio-economic factors of residence and affordability of extra-school resources make integration of learners with learning barriers difficult as repeat and extra educative activities could not be carried out.

Teachers did not show sufficient engagement with their role in teaching learners with learning barriers. The thinking is that they should be somewhere in a specialised setting with specialised resources and specialised teachers.

Not all learners identified as having learning barriers really have learning barriers and do not deserve being treated so. Equally so, there is feeling that many not identified as learners with learning barriers actually are. There is no use of the correct informal and formal tools in identifying learners with learning barriers.

Didactic neglect is not prevalently being acknowledged as a cause of the now visible barriers to learning. Superficial and inclusive methods are used to identify learners as having learning barriers.

Teachers do not have the full package of skills to deal with the identification and treatment of troubled learning.

5.3.3 What strategies do teachers use to overcome challenges in the integration of learners with learning barriers?

Teachers were using varied strategies to overcome challenges that came with the integration of learners with learning barriers. Some strategies were unique while others are quite common with all interviewed teachers. The following conclusions are based on the observed benefits.

Making learning participative puts the learner attention on the work and removes him from the possibility of fidgeting and disrupting. Encouraging peer learning was used, but often the learner with barriers would not volunteer to be the 'teacher' or one going in front of the process.

Learner contexts were mainly used to improve learner relevance and to show that their experiences and contexts are teaching elements as well. Being simple and plain was used to ensure that learners would not get 'lost' in complex presentations. This, however, kept the majority disadvantaged because complex presentations prepare learners in dealing with complex concepts in complex environment, thus challenges higher thinking skills.

Self-control benefits the relationship between the learners with learning barriers, the teacher and the content. It sets a good role model on the part of the teacher. Teachers were more observant and accommodating to minor deviance so as not to sour relations as soured relations would rob the teacher of opportunities to develop the learners behaviour.

Emotional connection with the learner helped teachers identify with the kids and able to influence their behaviours. Cultural sensitivity to the learner helped teachers in staying away from things that could potentially hurt the learner and stall or reverse any achievements thus far registered.

Being less directive was viewed as a strategy that could align with the already established relationship between the learner and those in her home. Being almost often irritable and extra cautious with vocabularies helped in keeping positive relationships.

Being ever ready to help was felt as a way to identify positively with the principles of the profession, the parents / guardians and the learners. Teachers were more inclined to downplay the 'rude' modes of communication by learners in preference to focusing on the content of their communication.

Celebrating small learner achievements was found to be a strong encouragement for more participation.

A number of conclusions were presented with relation to what could be synthesised from analyses under the three main research questions. There are strong indications that teachers working with learners with learning barriers are not sufficiently equipped to deal with the full landscape of learning barriers and the psychology of learners who

are struggling with learning. Even if learners with barriers are within normal school settings and infrastructures, there is a belief that operating schooling or separate classes for them could be worthwhile.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are hereby being proposed. The recommendations are derived from the analyses of data and conclusions therefrom.

5.4.2 Recommendations arising from analyses of experiences

Teacher participants in this research project lived well storied professional lives. However, if they had been well trained and had a profound commitment to their roles in the tuition of learners with learning barriers, their stories could have had a profoundly different meaning, could have served the profession quite differently and could have not been about complaints and blames, but about how they and every other teacher make the role much richer, more meaningful and purposeful in schools and the community.

5.4.3 Recommendations on dealing with challenges of integration

With reference to socio-economic factors affecting learner performance, it is recommended that schools engage stakeholders in both the private and gubernatorial sectors for help and intervention to make materials and resources available to struggling learners and their families.

Providing training to handle learners with learning barriers can help build confidence in them, and a feeling that working with troubled learners is not about baby-sitting them but a reason for their training and deployment.

There should be training in handling school readiness issues, particularly teacher competences in running both formal and informal school readiness criteria and tools.

Didactic neglect is common and yet a least recognised cause of learning difficulties. It matters thus to address this with parents through meetings and television outlets. Teacher competence needs improvements. This aspect has been mentioned already.

5.4.4 Recommendation on strategies

With regard to strategies adopted by teachers faced with the multitude of challenges of integrating learners with learning barriers, it matters to appreciate that the strategies enunciated have more to deal with getting quietness in the classroom than getting learning, didactical and pedagogical successes with the learners. The strategies are more about coping with the situation than correcting a deep grained problem in the education of a special class of learners. In this synthesis, the following recommendations are proposed:

Teachers should find more creative ways of making learning participative, connected and ubiquitous.

Peer learning should not be restricted to among those showing learning barriers but between them and the 'abled and advantaged' learners as well. Home learning that involves learners with learning barriers, their street mates and home should be seriously thought of. Learning barriers should not be thought of as permanent. They are reversible and erasable.

Using learner contexts should be encouraged as a way of exploiting their contexts and backgrounds in their own academic development. Teachers and schools should build learner profiles that they would use in resourcing their teaching.

Using simple and plain language, and attitudinal dispositions facilitates communication between teachers, the class and their content. There should be study and learning materials in simple and plain language. This would stymie the challenge necessary to stimulate complex and higher thinking and communication skills needed in learning and teaching.

Teachers should be encouraged to take emotional intelligence / control skills training to enhance their abilities to:

- Self-control,
- Being observant and accommodating,
- Emotional connection,
- Cultural sensitivity,
- Communication register use,

Teachers should be encouraged to take interpersonal and mindfulness skills training to enhance their abilities to:

- ◆ Respond to content rather than modes of communication,
- ◆ Celebrate small achievements as motivation,
- ◆ Provide consistent help,
- ◆ Lead, let go without loss of control.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out with a sample of six participants. This had the potential of the research failing to gather as much data from people with differing perspectives. In the light of this risk, the research has returned to the participants a number of times to get as much data as possible on a longitudinal scale. The interviews were allowed to flow in relaxed conditions in a bid to gain as much data as possible. There was much probing of respondents.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken with the purpose of investigating teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 circuit. It was to highlight potential difficulties involved in accommodating these learners who face learning barriers in Grade 3 classrooms and to examine strategies used by teachers in Grade 3 classes to integrate these learners. In the second chapter, the literature was reviewed to get opinions from other authors and researchers in relation to this topic. The third chapter dealt with the research approach, the research design and methodology used to conduct the research and the sampling method.

Furthermore, the tools used to collect data were discussed. Data presentation and analysis was done in chapter four. The collected data was categorised and presented in themes. The fifth and final chapter contains the summary and conclusion as well as recommendations for stakeholders involved in education, regarding alternate techniques of integrating learners with learning disabilities into their Grade 3 classrooms. The themes and findings of the data collected and analysed were discussed in this final chapter.

A number of conclusions have been presented under each key research question where teachers presented numerous challenges that are more serious than the challenge of dealing with a mixed ability class. They are under-trained, do not receive in-service training and are misplaced in terms of their professional qualification and the role given them. The strategies used to confront the challenges associated with mixed ability classes are more generic, abstract and self-serving to teachers. It is recommended that there be special streams for learners with learning barriers within or even outside formal schools. It is further recommended that teachers be in-serviced and their curricula be resourced.

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10. APPENDIX A – Letter to DoE (Department of Education)

P.O Box 22241
MIDDELBURG

1050

17 March 2021

Enquiries: Mahlangu C.N

Cell: 0824595488

Email:claramoloko70@gmail.com

The Director: Strategic Planning and Research Directorate

Cc: Head of Department-Education

Khatanga Building

Government Boulevard

Riverside Park

Mpumalanga Province

1200

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE PROVINCE

I Clara Nothembela Mahlangu, am currently conducting research towards the completion of Master Degree in Education.

I hereby request that I be allowed to conduct my research at schools under Steve Tshwete 1 Circuit. My research study entails investigating teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms.

To access the information, I will have to administer questionnaires and interviews.

Kindly be assured that data collected will be strictly confidential and will be only used for other purposes after the participants have granted permission to that.

Thanking you in advance for allowing this research to take place.

Yours Sincerely

Clara Nothembela Mahlangu.

10. APPENDIX B – Letter to Principal

P.O Box 22241

MIDDELBURG

1050

17 March 2021

Enquiries: Mahlangu C.N

Cell: 0824595488

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL.

I Clara Nothembela Mahlangu, am currently conducting research towards the completion of Master Degree in Education.

I hereby request that I be allowed to conduct my research at your school.

My research study entails investigating teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 Circuit.

To access the information, I will have to administer questionnaires and interviews.

Kindly be assured that data collected will be strictly confidential and will be only used for other purposes after the participants have granted permission to that.

Thanking you in advance for allowing this research to take place.

Yours truly,

Clara Nothembela Mahlangu.

APPENDIX C - letter to the participant

Dear colleague

I am Clara Nothembela Mahlangu, a teacher at Mvuzo primary School. I am currently conducting a research study as part of my Master's Degree in Education.

My research is to investigate teachers experience in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning into their Grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 Circuit.

In order to access this information, I will have to administer questioners and conduct a short interview.

Kindly be assure that the data collected will only be used for my research and can only be used for another purpose if you grant permission to that. Please note that your anonymity confidentiality is of outmost importance and will be maintained throughout the research.

I appreciate the time and the effort it would take to participate in this study.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours truly

Clara Nothembela Mahlangu

APPENDIX D - Consent form

I..... The teacher at.....here

by give my consent to Clara Nothembela Mahlangu as part of her research.

Name & Surname

.....

Signature

.....

Date

.....

APPENDIX E - Respondent agreement form to participate

I hereby consent, freely and voluntarily, in the research project. I acknowledge that I have been informed by the researcher about the purpose of research. I also acknowledge that I was given a chance to ask questions for clarity and for my safety and protection about the research before participating. I also understand that I have the right to terminate or withdraw my participation at any time.

Name of participant

.....

Date

.....

Signature of participant

.....

Date:

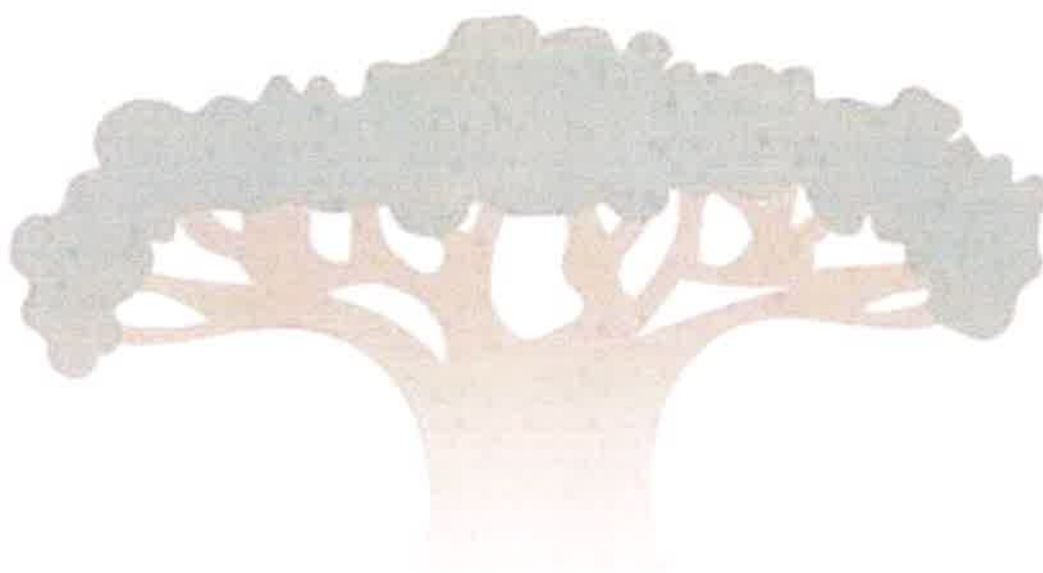
.....

APPENDIX F - Interview guide

1. What is your understanding of the term inclusive education?

2. What do you understand by the term learners with barriers to learning?
3. What responses do you usually receive from parents when having parent-teacher meeting when discussing their children's progress in school?
4. Do you have provision in your school policies for the assistance of learning experiencing barriers to learning?
5. What resources does the school have in order for it to implement the inclusion policy of the school?
6. What training or profession development have you received for you to handle learners in an inclusive classroom?
7. List and explain the nature of barriers that you find most challenging among learners in your classrooms?
8. What additional support would you like to receive so that you can be able to handle learners with barriers more effectively?
9. What support do you receive from the school and from the District office to overcome the challenges you are facing in your classroom
10. What type of support do foundation phase learners receive from other departments e.g. Health, social departments?

APPENDIX G- Ethics Clearance Certificate



Finding solutions for Africa

APPENDIX H- Approval letter from Mpumalanga Department of Education



education
MPUMALANGA
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Cr: 18/11/2019, 10:07:00 AM
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Ms Clara Ntshwete, Matielang
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RE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN INTEGRATING LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN GRADE 3 CLASSROOMS AT STEVE TSHWETE 1 CIRCUIT

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your research project reads: "An Investigation into teachers' experiences in integrating learners who experience barriers to learning in Grade 3 classrooms at Steve Tshwete 1 Circuit". I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as set out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and COVID -19 regulations to be observed. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the department's annual research dialogue.

