

Teachers' Experience in Supporting Learners with Impairments in Full-Service Schools

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Abstract

The study investigated the implementation of inclusive education in three primary schools categorised as full-service schools. The study adopted qualitative methodology for investigation. Twenty-four participants took part in the study and were selected through purposive sampling procedure. The social constructionist theory was employed to understand the views of participants and how they handle complex manifestations of challenges confronting inclusive education classrooms. Three techniques for data collection were used, namely, interviews, observations and text analysis. The findings of the study suggest that: a) teachers need training for appropriate implementation of inclusive education (IE); b) all participants in the study comprehend IE differently and are not sure of their specific responsibilities; c) all participants needed sufficient foregrounding in IE; and d) resources need to be improved urgently and classroom structures modified for propitious implementation of the (IE) programme. These findings highlight significant inferences, for example: first, that significant foregrounding of all participants in IE should be considered as priority number one by the Department of Basic Education (DBE); second, that resources have to be mobilised for schools to enable effective implementation of the programme; and third, that it is encouraging that all players recognise and accept that it imperative for schools to practice IE and embraced it.

Key words: Inclusive Education, full-service schools, School Based Support Teams (SBST), White Paper 6, individual support plan

Introduction

Education is an important instrument in the life of any nation, and it occupies central place in broad academic discourses across the globe. In South Africa, the right to education is protected by the Constitution, which introduced equality and prohibition of unfair discrimination (Section 29 of South Africa Constitution Act No. 108: 1996). In these rights, was conceived the concept of inclusive education (IE) for all public under the auspices of South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE). Inclusive education implies the promotion of equal participation and non-discrimination within the education system (Vogel, 2006). Although the policy of inclusive education has been in place for more than a decade in the country, much still has to be done for propitious implementation of the policy. Alongside the establishment of inclusive education policy, emerged full-service schools which were to be equipped and supported to provide a full range of learning needs. Full-service schools are ordinary schools that are inclusive and welcoming of all learners in terms of their cultures, policies and practices (Department of Education, 2014). Full-service schools are first and foremost mainstream schools that provide

quality education to all learners by supplying the full range of learning needs in an equitable manner. They strive to achieve access, equity, quality and social justice in education. A full-service school celebrates diversity by recognising potential, increasing participation, overcoming and reducing barriers and reducing stigmatisation and labelling. The concept full-service schools was introduced to show how ordinary schools can transform themselves to become fully inclusive (Schoeman, 2012). A full-service school works in collaboration with and provides assistance and support to other schools in its locality so that a range of learning needs can be addressed mainly in learners' neighbourhood schools (Landsburg, Krüger & Nel, 2005).

The idea of full-service schools is new to many a school in the country even though some of the schools have tried to accommodate a few children who experienced barriers to learning (Ngcobo & Muthukrishma, 2011). In one way or another, teachers are oftentimes challenged by the diversity among learners. The education system in South Africa has undergone a far-reaching policy change since the dawn of democracy more than two decades ago (Oswald & Engelbrecht, 2005). Before 1994, it is common knowledge that education in South Africa was, in the main, segregated in terms of race as well as disability. A great number of children with impairments were unable to access education (Department of Education, 2005). Such a practice was mainly discriminatory against people with disabilities (Smith & Mpya, 2011). The new democratic dispensation changed the situation because education was made accessible to all without discrimination of any kind. In other words, education became inclusive. In July 2001, the Education White Paper 6 (2001), titled: *Building an inclusive education and training system*, was developed. This policy succinctly outlines the framework for inclusive education. Furthermore, the policy must further be seen as a key process to ensure transformation of the education system in line with the principles of *Education White Paper 6*. In the ensuing section, the research problem comes under the spotlight.

Overview of global trends of IE

Inclusive education has become a worldwide trend in transforming schools from exclusive learning centres to learning centres where all learners are included, regardless of their race, culture, age, language and disability. Oversold, Schmit and Priestly (2011) suggest that growing commitment to inclusive education has increased opportunities in mainstream education in all countries. According to Ainscow (2006), during subsequent years there have been considerable efforts in many countries to move educational and policy practices in a more inclusive direction. The focus on educating all children in the mainstream education system received strong support at the *Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality*, which was held in Salamanca, Spain, from June 7-10, 1994. The conference was held by more than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organisations (UNESCO, 2009). Charema (2010) agrees that the Salamanca Conference marked a major milestone on the road to inclusion. However, in developing countries the number of children with disabilities is grossly underestimated (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education has been internationally recognised as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and quality education for all. A number of international organisations have been developed with a goal to promote inclusive education. For instance, *Handicap International*, which is an independent and an impartial international aid organisation, has been working in the field of education since 1998 (Corps, 2012). Their specific focus is on children with disabilities who represent some of the most vulnerable excluded young learners worldwide. The actions of *Handicap International* are framed by international policies such as

the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), The Millennium Development Goal and Education For all Goals (Corps, 2012).

The role of teachers in the implementation of IE

The success of the implementation of Inclusive Education lies in the hands of capable and willing teachers. Educators have a very important role to play in order to make inclusive education effective. Educators are cardinal role players in the development of an inclusive learning community, as they have first-hand relationship with the learners. (Engelbrecht and Green 2001). Similarly, Mpya (2007) agrees that educators instrumental partakers in the successful implementation of an inclusive policy, their capabilities in this field are of utmost importance. Unfortunately, some educators may remain uninterested in accommodating learners who experience barriers to learning due to lack of information and appropriate skills. The Department of Education (2002) acknowledges that when new policies have to be implemented in schools, many people forget how these educators are affected. Oswald and Engelbrecht (2005) suggest that when educators are more informed about the process of change, they will adapt to the changes in the normal course. Although Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) revealed in their study that many of the participating educators perceived their training for inclusive education as unsuitable, recent research has shown that the future of learners rests in the hands of capable educators. Oswald and Engelbrecht (2005) stress that successful transformation in schools does not depend only on change of policy and procedures, including organisational structure, but is dependent on a change of both heart and mind of every educator.

Educator training

The lack of adequate training and experience in dealing with children with special needs might be a dilemma for educators. Educators need to be fully capacitated for them to fulfil their new role of addressing barriers to learning in their classrooms. A study conducted by Smit and Mpya (2011) in Mpumalanga, revealed that educators have never been exposed to teaching learners who experienced barriers to learning in their regular classes and this made them to feel insecure and inadequate. In a similar vein, Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2011) revealed that the educators they investigated complained that they had not received in-depth training on how to teach learners across different categories of disability, and further revealed that the teachers needed urgent training around curriculum and assessment practices that could be responsive to the diversity in their classrooms. There is an eminent need for teachers to appreciate and resolve a range of diverse needs in their classrooms in order for South Africa to address the challenges of exclusion of learners from the education system (Dalton, McKenzie, & Kahonde, 2012). Educators in general can certainly be guided to become more autonomous, creative and self-reliant in the process of implementing inclusive education. However, in order to achieve this, teachers need new skills, training and support from the education system. Magare, Kitching and Roos (2010). The urgent need for more specialised instruction and support is vital to the success of inclusive education (Hunter-Johnson, 2014).

Research problem

For the better part of South Africa's apartheid education system, learners with impairments were not considered academically capable to achieve what their peers were capable of achieving scholastically (Themane & Mamabolo, 2012). In Capricorn District, for example, learners with

barriers to learning are invariably transferred to special schools instead of getting support at their home schools, where they are enrolled. This state of affairs occurs irrespective of the nature of the disability or impairment of the learner. However, Education White Paper 6 (2001), a blueprint for IE in the land, states that special schools should only provide education services to learners who require intense levels of support i.e. learners with severe disabilities, whereas learners with mild impairments should be assisted at ordinary schools (Department of Education, 2007). Furthermore, it appears that educators are generally not well informed, if at all, about the different types of impairments. The present study investigated how learners with impairments were receiving support in full-service schools. We applied qualitative methodology and relevant theoretical context to put the discussion in perspective and the following section reflects these aspects.

Methodology and Theoretical Context

Like we pointed out earlier, the study investigated the way in which implementation of IE is carried out in full-service schools as experienced by teachers. To realise this, we employed qualitative approach to gather data. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2009) and Stake (2014), is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning which individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) maintain that in qualitative research, behaviour is studied as it occurs naturally. Qualitative research relies on thick descriptions, that is, phenomenon is observed and the people who live the problem in their day-to-day lives are interviewed to find their attitudes or opinions either by using questionnaires or face-to-face interviews. Consequently, qualitative methodology was applied in the current context to obtain appropriate data in keeping with the lived experiences of the participants and also with a view to shedding light on the daily praxis of IE implementation.

Research design

The study employed a phenomenological design to describe the lived experiences of educators in teaching learners with impairments in the ordinary classroom. John and Christensen (2008) define phenomenology as a form of qualitative study in which the researcher attempts to understand how one or more individuals experience a particular phenomenon. The use of the design was particularly useful in that it enabled us to conduct face-to-face interviews thus complementing other tools of the trade used in the study.

Sampling

Given that the aim of this study was to explore the teachers' experience in the implementation of inclusive education in full-service schools, it was imperative to select schools that cater for learners with diverse learning needs. Purposeful sampling was used to select all the participants from each category of the population. *"In purposeful sampling the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest"* (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 38). Consistent with the present study, we employed the sample as outlined below to obtain appropriate data. In this study participants were chosen from three schools that practice IE. The participants comprised one principal from each school, four members of the School Based Support Team (SBST) from each school and three teachers from each school, who are teaching learners who experience barriers to learning on a daily basis. The classrooms that were visited catered for learners who experienced barriers to learning as a result of disability. Barriers to learning included spelling, writing, reading and numerical

problems including visual, physical and hearing impairments. Below is a graphic representation of the sample size of the study:

Table 1

Schools	School A	School B	School C	03
Principals	Principal 1	Principal 1	Principal 1	03
SBST members	SBST 4	SBST 4	SBST 4	12
Teachers	Teachers 3	Teachers 3	Teachers 3	09
TOTAL	08	08	08	24

(Table 1: Depicting sample size of participants)

Like we explained above, the preceding **table 1** shows the total number of participants to the study. The table shows that three schools were involved. In these schools, a principal took part, including four SBST members and three teachers. In all, 24 participants took part in the study aimed at understanding how they implement inclusive education. In the interest of preserving confidentiality, each of the schools is designated alphabetical code instead of its proper name. Principals are designated numerical codes, e.g. principal from School A will be designated Principal 1 and one from School B retains Principal 2, etc. Regarding SBST members, each member from School A is categorised as A4a, A4b, etc. A member of SBST in School B are categorised B4i in Roman figures and so on. Members from School C are designated C4James for the first teacher, C4Joel, C4John and C4Job. In the case of teachers, a teacher from School A is designated ATa, ATb, and ATc. Teachers from School B will be code named BT1, BT2, and BT3. Those from School C, are code-named CTi, CTii and CTiii. These codes are used for purposes of discussion and analysis and to preserve confidentiality of all participants.

The following table is designed to assist prospective readers in understanding the designated codes as indicated above:

Table 2

Schools	School A	School B	School C
Principals	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
SBST members	SBSTA4a SBSTA4b SBSTA4c SBSTA4d	SBSTB4i SBSTB4ii SBSTB4iii SBSTB4iv	SBSTC4James SBST4Joel SBST4John SBST4Job
Teachers	ATa ATb ATc	BT1 BT2 BT3	CTi CTii CTiii

(Table 2 showing code names of participants)

In the ensuing sections on the discussions and findings, the above mentioned codes are used frequently and the reader is advised to refer to the codes (*in table 2*) for convenience.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1. Teachers' experience

The participants described their experience in the implementation of inclusive education in full service schools, in varying degrees, albeit with mixed feelings. Their shared understanding is that IE is a long and difficult process because it needs specialised training of teachers including psycho/social and educational foregrounding of IE in public schools. In some instances, some teachers expressed the feeling that IE was introduced to schools too late when the damage had already occurred. This feeling is underscored by the belief that some learners have already dropped out of schools due to poor handling and lack of knowledge in IE implementation. For example, ATa affirms:

IE has started very late when the damage has been done (sic). We have learners who dropped out from schools due to lack of knowledge on the side of teachers. It has also opened our eyes as far as supporting learners in the classroom is concerned.

The rest of teachers in other schools echoed the same sentiments expressed by Ata. Nevertheless, participants appreciated the implementation of IE, because in their experience, it encouraged them to work in line with the pace of learners and to apply individual teaching techniques. In spite of the views from teachers, Principal 3 complained about lack of exposure to IE and hinted that it constraints his ability to comprehend IE. There seems to be a measure of agreement amongst principals that IE is filtering in schools and parents are also taken on board to keep the abreast and also to make them understand that all learners irrespective of disability have places in public schools. Both the principals and the teachers seem to agree that the SBSTs are defective in executing their mandates. The contention is that they have very little knowledge about IE. This assertion is summed up by the following expression from SBST members (SBSTA4b; SBSTA4c; SBSTB4iii; SBSTB4iv; SBSTC4James; and SBST4Job) collectively:

We have not any training...yet we are expected to offer support.

Whilst it cannot be mistaken that the SBST members have accepted to provide significant support in the implementation of IE in the schools, there was general consensus amongst participants that paramount for the successful implementation of IE is adequate training of participants. SBST members were happy to be part of the teams but they expect The Department of Basic Education to provide training in order for them to successfully carry out their support mandate. It is important to understand that these teams have been in place for sometimes since IE was proclaimed and put forward for implementation. Notwithstanding the challenges mentioned above, the participants appreciated the significant difference that IE has brought within the education landscape.

a. The difference brought by IE

Inclusivity occasions a paradigm shift in perceptions (Bornman & Rose, 2011). The participants, continually opined that IE has brought changes in their schools. In the first place, it provides the affected learners with opportunities to learn in the same settings as their non-disabled peers. The

sages, from time immemorial, idiomatically expressed that ‘the masters, in the course of their teaching, also learn’. True to form, the participants indicated that in the course of implementing IE, they were learning a great deal. The introduction of IE was not only beneficial to learners, but also to the teachers who are confronted with the daunting task of applying it. The “inclusion” concept is a catalyst for improved policies and teacher expectation in the classroom (Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014). Inversely, other participant recounted with excitement the effects of inclusive education on the learners; the mere fact of being admitted and enrolled in the same school and attending the same class boosts the morale of the learners, especially those affected. Accordingly, IE keeps learners at school, especially learners with disabilities. CTiii and BT2 conclude: “there is collaboration amongst state institutions because some professionals from the neighbouring hospital once visited our schools and they helped us to identify learners with problems”. In addition, learners with impairments refrain from inferiority complex because they have been accepted by other learners in the classroom. IE has positive spin-offs as much as it is loaded with challenges. Furthermore, it enhances the oneness among learners and foster the recognition that all children, albeit psycho-physio divergences, belong to one human family.

For all intents and purposes, the consciousness referred to above, is precisely consistent with the stipulations of IE as pronounced in the White Paper 6 (2001). Although individual conduct of learners may not be predicted in schools, it anticipated that learners benefit immensely by working together through the motivations of teachers and the school community at large. Exclusion in South African schools had been a fundamental standpoint of the erstwhile apartheid system which led to profound and deep-sited perceptions about learning. Individualism and eccentricity formed the central nerve of learners’ conduct and teachers alike within the didactic environment and the struggle to embrace the new beginning was always going to be an uphill battle in the era of democratic dispensation (Smith & Mpya, 2011). The frustrations expressed above by the teachers are symptomatic of the mood permeating most of the schools at which IE is being introduced. Since IE is relatively a new phenomenon in some of the schools, if not all of the schools within the country, it is sensible that all teachers be exposed to basic IE initiative as a matter of utmost urgency before actual wholesale implementation.

2. Principals’ perceptions of IE implementation

Some principals view the process of IE implementation as tedious and they also harbour the feeling that the process of implementation had occasioned hardship on teachers. In the opinions of principals, the feeling is that in spite of the challenges that some teachers are faced with, they still appreciated the ideals of IE. Some of the participants expressly stated that inclusive education is a move in the right direction, as it helped them to identify learners who experience barriers to learning. It is clear though, that IE was capable of instilling confidence in both the teacher and the learner. Despite the sentiments expressed one could discern that there is more that still needed to be done in order to foster support in the classroom. Regardless of the principals’ feelings, the need to adopt strategies that would make IE successful cannot underrated. The preceding view is in keeping with the views of some scholars, who contend that the levels of support ought to be specific to the needs of an individual (Bornman & Rose, 2010; Walton & Lloyd (2012),). Therefore, it is imperative that for IE to succeed, both the principals and teachers should live the reality that all learners, regardless of impairment, would have to be supported.

3. Strategies

With regard to the strategies that they use to support learners with impairments in the classrooms, most teachers have intimated their frustration. The presence of learners with impairments made them feel incompetent and uncertain about their work, yet they are expected to support these learners successfully. According to Bornman and Rose (2010), teachers are often overwhelmed by the presence of children who for one reason or another are marginalised or excluded.

4. Seating arrangements

The strategy that almost all of the teachers used was to change the seating arrangements in the classroom in order to accommodate learners with impairments. For instance, learners with hearing and visual impairments were allotted seats in front and next to the chalkboard. A child who uses a wheelchair is seated at the back of the classroom because she needs to be far from the chalkboard.” Furthermore, these learners were given individual attention. The latter statement is in line with the recommendation by Bornman and Rose (2010) which states that the levels of support ought to be specific to the needs of an individual.

5. Learning support

Regarding learners who experience barriers to learning, logically implies enriching the regular education taking place in the classroom with learning support (Florian, Young & Rouse (2010). Basically, teachers understand that they need to design intervention strategies in order to provide appropriate support for learners with impairments. However they lack sufficient knowledge and resources to carry out this mammoth task.

Appertaining learning impairments, teachers offer extra classes in the afternoons. The majority of teachers shared an understanding that strategies and programmes are interrelated. Teachers were specifically asked to indicate programmes that are in place to ascertain a successful inclusive education.

6. Programmes

Most of the teachers described the strategies and programmes that are available to sustain a successful inclusive education as interrelated, which could be used in the classroom to support learners with impairments. In fact, teachers provided some of the answers that they gave in the previous question which was about strategies that could be used to support learners with impairments in the classroom.

7. The role of the School-Based Support Team

All participants mentioned the School-Based Support Team as one of the main programmes, but they were not clear about the role of the SBST. During the focus group interviews, members of the School-Based Support Teams, indicated that they have not been trained to carry out the responsibility of ensuring a successful implementation of inclusive education. The School-Based Support Team should deal with inclusive education matters in the school. Thus their proficiency in the field is vital. The participants felt that a thorough training for all members of the School-Based Support Team is essential if the implementation of inclusive education is to be effective.

The SBST members that were interviewed were not clear about their duties. Members indicated that they find it difficult to assist other teachers when they approached them with challenges that the teachers encounter in their classrooms. Just like other teachers in the school, they have not received any training on assisting other teachers when they encounter problems in the classroom and yet we are expected to offer support. The SBSTs do exist only as a token; practically, they are not functional. According to the Department of Education (2005), the principal of the school should take the responsibility to ensure that a School-Based Support Team is set up and is functioning well.

8. Individual support plan (ISP)

Individual support plan is amongst the programmes that the Department recommends. This programme is intended to assist learners individually. Teachers are aware of the plan, but are not implementing it as yet. The reason for not implementing the individual support plan is that teachers do not understand it, as most of them explained.

9. Collaboration

Collaboration is described as a creative partnership between all the role players who work together to identify mutually defined barriers and needs, and ways to meet the needs and address the barriers (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). The participants displayed some measure of confusion on collaboration. Regardless of the confusion experienced, the participants explained that collaboration has occurred at least once with health officials from the neighbouring hospitals of the same schools. This occurred when learners with different impairments and disabilities were identified and that was the only ‘collaboration’ according to the teachers.

The so called ‘collaboration’ was an attempt to implement Screening, Identification, and Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy. The SIAS policy was aimed to identify learners who experience barriers to learning, the support needs that arise from barriers experienced and the support programme that needs to be in place to address the impact of the barrier on the learning process (Department of Education, 2014). The SIAS process has not been completed by the schools where the research was carried out.

It can be understood from the teachers’ description of a once-off encounter as ‘collaboration’, that they do not quite appreciate the meaning of ‘collaboration’ for the present purposes.

Teacher empowerment

In order for the teachers to effectively execute their tasks, it is imperative that they be empowered efficiently. Teacher empowerment, therefore, is an important component in the greater scheme of things. Teachers have pointed out lack of skills and training for their frustration and uneasiness, when dealing with learners with impairments in their classrooms. Most of the participants identified their lack of proper training as a cause for the ineffective implementation of inclusive education. On teacher development and empowerment, the principals confirmed that there was some level of training, including school-based workshops, although such were not enough to fully capacitate the teachers to implement inclusive education successfully.

Workshops and related sessions form an integral part of teacher empowerment. It is important to have teachers partaking in such instructive sessions. However, the teachers mentioned that the workshops that they attended so far were not sufficient to prepare them for their new role of supporting learners with disabilities in their classrooms; they had not been exposed to learners with impairments before. As a result of the lack of knowledge, they do not understand the different types of disabilities and how to handle them. Teachers prefer to attend workshops (first-hand) as opposed to selected teachers attending on their behalf and thereafter giving feedback because inclusive education is new and complex. Even those who attended workshops, felt that the duration of the sessions was insufficient.

Knowledge management and knowledge sharing skills may be lacking amongst the teachers. Some teachers indicated that they only attended two meetings and it was their first time to hear about inclusive education. In another school some teachers were never selected to attend workshops and have not empowered themselves through studies, yet they are members of the School-Based Support Team. In spite of the lack of training and insufficient workshops, some teachers have empowered themselves through private studies. Whilst it is encouraging, the studies referred to are only theoretical and resolutely not very helpful, absent the practical aspect as a necessary accompaniment to the theory.

Benefits of inclusive education

The majority of the participants were aware, from their lived experiences, of certain benefits of inclusive education. The educators appreciated that learners with disabilities no more feel inferior because there is no segregation and isolation.

Acceptance

The present researchers gathered that other learners seemed to accept their peers with impairments in the classrooms. Learners even offer to help those with impairments where necessary. According to other educators' experiences learners with disabilities are accepted by other learners in the schools and are free to learn in an inclusive environment with their non-disabled peers. On the contrary, the participants from another school had different views with regard to benefits of inclusive education because some of their learners were referred to special schools.

Referrals

According to some participants, inclusive education has some minimal benefits towards teachers, learners and parents. Some of the participants' view is that learners are not benefiting due to lack of relevant resources to support inclusive education in their schools. As a result, some learners are referred to special schools.

Awareness

Generally, inclusive education may benefit the learners in that most teachers are aware of the changes brought by inclusive education and are willing to support the learners with impairments in their classrooms. Furthermore, through inclusive education awareness has been raised that

children with impairments can be taught at ordinary schools. This will help the parents to enrol their children in schools of their choice, rather than taking them to special schools.

Accommodating diverse needs

More than ever before, classroom teachers are required to understand a multitude of exceptionalities, manage a diverse classroom, implement differentiated instructional strategies and make appropriate accommodations for individual needs (Peebles and Mendaglio, 2014). However, the participants expressed a huge concern on lack of training and resources throughout the interviews, and accommodating diverse the needs of learners was no exception. There is an element of uncertainty when dealing with this aspect of accommodating the diverse needs of learners.

Uncertainty

What is clear from the interviews is that there was uncertainty amongst participating teachers who are members of the SBST: whether they were on the right track with regard to how learners should be supported in the implementation of inclusive education. Most of the members doubted the strategies that were employed to support learners in the implementation of inclusive education. The teachers were generally unfamiliar with the types of impairments and how to handle them. As a result, they were always frustrated and assisting by trial and error, which is not proper.

Involvement and participation of learners

As we have observed that the teachers could not provide learners with different materials to cater for diverse needs of learners. Teachers indicated that the learning materials were not sufficient to supply to every learner at the same time. As a result of the shortage of materials, teachers improvised with handmade materials. To avoid labelling, some participants opted not to group learners according to their needs or impairments. Learners were mixed and the teachers knew which learners needed more support in the classroom. One of the teachers indicated:

*The learners who experience barriers to learning have a lower concentration span.
Such learners grasp the work at a slower pace.*

The teachers proffered as an explanation, the socio-economic status of learners, as having an effect on their learning and participation capabilities.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

The study revealed that teachers experienced the implementation of inclusive education as a long and difficult process. Despite this common view by the teachers, they acknowledge the difference brought by the introduction of inclusive education in the education system. A conclusion can be drawn that the participants appreciated the positive changes that inclusive education has brought regardless of how they felt. It was also found that the participants

were frustrated when it came to supporting learners with impairments in the classrooms. Their lack of knowledge added to this frustration. The encouraging factor brought up in this study involves optimism that the principals and the teachers showed. First, both parties share the view that IE has the potential to succeed. Second, the willingness to see IE succeeding is palpable and profound. Third, the SBSTs exist as a token and their role is unclear. Fourth, all participants carry out their work on the basis of conjecture because they have not been foregrounded in IE. Lastly, the question of partnership amongst all players shows disconnect because none of them support one another for propitious implementation of IE. Similarly, all existing programmes such as the SBST, individual support plan (ISP) and collaboration were not yielding results in the implementation process of IE. The teachers were of the opinion that they have an obligation to support learners with impairments in their classrooms.

The significance of this study is that it has ignited a discourse and shed light on some prevailing situation in some schools in the Capricorn Region of the Limpopo Province. IE has become an important policy of the Department of Basic Education and all schools are expected to implement it without reservations. It is therefore, disconcerting to realise that schools may be struggling to realise IE implementation, particularly, in full service schools on account of skills deficiencies. We also hold the view that the study has created a fertile ground for similar studies in future.

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