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Barriers to Learning in Full- Service Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and School Leaders

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Master's Research Project

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Barriers to Learning in Full- Service Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and School Leaders

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Declaration

I, Lebogang Sybil Mosaka (student number: 1985097), a student registered for a Master's Degree in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. Declare that the research submitted for the Masters of Education Degree was entirely written by me an has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination to this university or any other university.

Signed:

L.Mosaka 25 October 2024

Lebogang Sybil Mosaka **Date**

Acknowledgements

The journey to the end of this research project has taken longer than I expected, but it has truly been fulfilling. My passion for inclusive education has been further ignited, and I am now more than ever more invested in exploring the extent to which inclusive education can be implemented within our South African schools.

I especially appreciate the two full-service schools that allowed me to do my research. Your assistance and collaboration were crucial in obtaining the required information. I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who took part in the interviews for this study. Your experiences and insights were priceless and significantly enhanced this research.

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Abstract

This study explored the various variables and obstacles that impeded learning for learners in full-service schools. The purpose of this research project was to examine the constraints to learning that children faced in full-service schools and the challenges that teachers and principals encountered when implementing inclusive teaching strategies to cater to a diverse range of learners with different learning needs. By highlighting these challenges, this study aimed to contribute to the field of inclusive education by shedding light on the barriers that learners in full-service schools in South Africa experienced, both in terms of their initial learning difficulties and the support they received within these schools. Additionally, it investigated the strategies that teachers employed to accommodate these needs.

A qualitative research design was adopted for this study, utilizing a case study approach to gain in-depth insights into inclusive education practices. Data was collected from two full-service schools in South Africa—Sunshine High School and Hopefield High School—through semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had direct experience with inclusive education, ensuring that the data gathered were relevant and reflective of real-world challenges. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes related to resource constraints, the impact of the medical model of thinking on learners with barriers, and negative parental attitudes towards screening for learning difficulties.

Furthermore, the study examined issues such as negative teacher attitudes toward inclusion, under-preparedness due to inadequate pre-service and in-service training, lack of policy alignment, pressures to prioritize academic excellence over inclusivity, and the demands of the CAPS curriculum, which further challenged the implementation of inclusive education.

In addition to identifying these challenges, the study highlighted the affordances associated with inclusive education, particularly the role of teacher support in assisting learners and the contribution of school management in fostering inclusive practices. By providing a comprehensive analysis of these factors, the research contributed to the broader discourse on inclusive education and emphasized the urgent need for a paradigm shift toward a more inclusive learning environment that embraced diversity and enabled all learners to reach their full potential.

Chapter One

Introduction

Every aspect of the study report is built around the basis provided by Chapter One. The study's topic is introduced in this chapter, with an emphasis on the challenges to learning that can prevent students attending full-service schools from realising their academic potential. The chapter begins by contextualizing the research, outlining its motivation, and clarifying the unique function of full-service schools in South Africa: to cater to students with diverse learning needs. Full-service or inclusive schools are, first and foremost, mainstream education institutions that provide quality education to all learners by supplying the full range of learning needs equitably. They should strive to achieve access, equity, quality and social justice in education" (Guidelines for Full-Service Schools, DBE, 2010). These schools were set up to provide inclusive spaces; however, children are still underperforming (de Royston & Madkins, 2020). This, therefore, raises the question of why children are not thriving within these schools. This chapter, therefore addresses the value of an inclusive school and how these kinds of schools are meant to be able to accommodate students who are having difficulty in regular classroom settings. A problem statement outlining the main obstacles full-service schools must overcome is also included in this chapter. These obstacles include insufficient support, limited resources, and systemic barriers.The study's objectives are outlined, followed by the principal research enquiries that direct the inquiry.

The chapter also describes the study's scope, including its restrictions, boundaries, and research focus. The theoretical framework—Brenfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory, in particular, will be applied to examine the numerous levels of variables influencing inclusive education within full-service schools is briefly introduced. The chapter ends with a summary of the report's format, including an outline of each chapter and the methodical presentation of the findings.

This chapter lays the groundwork for the report's following sections, which will delve deeper into each issue at hand.

Topic

Barriers to Learning in Full-service Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and School Leaders

Background

South Africa's education system continues to grapple with the enduring effects of apartheid-era inequalities (Naicker, 2006). Despite efforts to promote inclusive education, many learners—particularly those with learning differences and from marginalized communities—face significant barriers to meaningful participation in the learning process (Department of Basic Education, 2001). Full-service schools are designed to create supportive and inclusive environments (Donohue & Bornman, 2014), yet systemic and school-level challenges often limit their effectiveness. This study examines these constraints, focusing on how school environments and practices impact the inclusion of learners with diverse needs. Problem statement

Full-service schools in South Africa are mandated to provide inclusive education by accommodating learners with diverse learning needs (Department of Basic Education, 2010). However, despite these intentions, many learners continue to face barriers to learning that hinder their academic progress. These barriers stem from various factors, including inadequate resources, negative parental attitudes toward learning support, and teachers' and school leaders' struggles with implementing inclusive education policies effectively. While full-service schools are expected to bridge the gap between mainstream and special education, there is limited research that specifically explores the constraints faced by learners, teachers, and school leaders in these schools.

This study, titled *Barriers to Learning in Full-service Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and School Leaders*, is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the systemic and contextual challenges that prevent full-service schools from functioning as intended. By exploring the perspectives of teachers and school leaders, this research aims to identify the specific barriers to learning that exist within these schools and to examine how school leadership and teacher support influence inclusive education practices. The study also investigates how resource limitations, curriculum demands, and prevailing medical model approaches impact learners who require additional support.

Given the Department of Basic Education's commitment to inclusive education (DBE, 2014), it is critical to examine why full-service schools still struggle to meet the needs of all learners. This research is particularly important because it highlights the practical difficulties educators and school leaders face in implementing inclusive education, contributing to the broader discourse on how full-service schools can better support learners with barriers. By addressing these issues, the study aims to provide insights that could inform policy adjustments, teacher training, and resource allocation to strengthen inclusive education in South African full-service schools.

Aim

This study investigates constraints to learning that limit students who attend full-service schools from achieving their accessing lessons from the perspective of teachers and school leaders. The study aimed to investigate the constraints to learning that children are facing in full-service schools, as well as what support measures are in place in the classroom to support learners with different learning needs. The role that school leaders play within full-service schools is also in question; therefore, the study also investigated to what extent school leaders support the implementation of inclusive teaching practices in their schools. The accommodation and support of learners with learning needs by teachers within the classroom will also be investigated, along with the environmental factors that constrain the implementation of inclusive teaching practices. Finally, this study will investigate what affordances to inclusive teaching are evident in full-service schools.

Objectives

This research project has the following objectives.

1. Firstly, to investigate what constraints to learning children in full-service schools face despite the intentions of the DBE to provide these environments to support children with different learning needs.
2. Second, within these full-service school environments, what specific supportive measures have been put in place in the classroom spaces to support children with different learning needs.

3. Third, the extent to which school leaders supported the implementation of inclusive teaching practices within full-service schools.
4. Fourth, within these full-service schools, how did teachers accommodate the various learning needs of learners.
5. Fifth, to investigate the environmental factors that were found to constrain the successful implementation of inclusive teaching practices in full-service schools.
6. Sixth, to investigate what is being done to support learners with various learning needs in full-service schools.
7. Finally, to assess the affordances of inclusive teaching that are present in the two full-service schools.

Research Questions

1. What barriers to learning do students face in full-service schools, and how do these challenges impact their academic progress?
2. How are teachers and school leaders implementing and supporting inclusive teaching practices in full-service schools?
3. What environmental and systemic factors constrain the implementation of inclusive education in full-service schools?
4. What existing strategies and affordances contribute to the successful implementation of inclusive education in full-service schools?

Purpose/Rational of study

The purpose of the research project was to explore the various constraints that children face in full-service schools and the challenges that teachers and principals face when implementing inclusive teaching strategies to meet the challenge of teaching to a wide range of learners with different learning needs. This study aims to build knowledge in the field of inclusive education by shining a light on, firstly, the learning challenges that children face in a full-service school in South Africa and, secondly, explore what teachers are doing in the research sites I have chosen, to accommodate these needs. This is a case study project conducted in a full-service

school in South Africa, and there is a dearth of research into full-service schools, which makes the findings from this project important.

This study will, therefore, adopt Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a lens to investigate the research questions above (Anderson, Boyle & Deppeler, 2014). The social, psychological, and biological disciplines come together in the Ecological Systems theory (Crawford, 2020). In order to create a theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1994) took into account the effects of all systems, no matter how distant, that have an impact on an individual's lived experiences (Crawford, 2020). The study pursues interviews as a method of data collection. Interviews are needed to gather qualitative data, which allows me to find out about the lived realities of people and, from an epistemological point of view, the participants' relation to their reality. This includes how they construct their knowledge. This data is then coded according to the various themes that have been identified.

An examination of the factors limiting students in full-service schools will be preceded by an explanation of the study's history, purpose, and importance in the introductory chapter. The second chapter will offer a thorough literature analysis, exploring global viewpoints on inclusion, particular difficulties encountered in the South African context, and a conceptual framework to support the research. In chapter three, the research technique will be thoroughly explained, along with the rationale for the qualitative approach and an explanation of the case study design, data collection tools, and ethical considerations. The research findings will be presented in the fourth chapter, which will also explain the impact of the medical model, resource constraints, unfavourable parental attitudes, and positive outcomes attributed to management and teacher support. This chapter will also conduct an analysis and synthesis of the data, offer workable solutions, and highlight the consequences of inclusive education in a lively conversation. The last chapter will go over the original goals of the study again, highlight the most important discoveries, go over the practical consequences, and offer potential directions for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Introduction

The literature review, which aims to give a thorough overview of global perspectives on inclusive education and contextualise the difficulties within the South African educational system, provides a crucial foundation for this study. The initial portion of the chapter will examine the worldwide conversation around inclusion, covering critical theories such as the social and medical models of disability. Afterwards, the emphasis will be on comprehending the subtleties of inclusive education in the South African context, illuminating particular issues and national initiatives. A narrative literature review to locate pertinent papers was used to create this review. A narrative review provides a comprehensive overview of the literature related to a specific issue.Its main goal is to give a comprehensive summary of the body of knowledge by critically analysing and interpreting it in order to spot trends, gaps, and trends in the subject. Unlike systematic reviews, which are organised and stringent in technique, narrative reviews offer more freedom and focus on providing context and insight rather than strict repeatability (Jahan et al., 2016). Using electronic databases as a method of conducting a literature search, such as Google Scholar, WITS libraries, and internet sources, the search covered a time frame of no more than the early 2000s to the present (Snyder, 2019). Key search terms were "models of disability," "barriers to learning," "inclusive education," and "South African inclusive education." Articles that primarily discussed disability labels or had nothing to do with the difficulties encountered in inclusive education environments were filtered out (Grant, Maria & Booth. 2009).

International background on inclusion in education.

The purpose of education is to enrich learners with knowledge and skills that they may use outside of school to help them become successful citizens (Bass, 2008). Globally, human rights for children aim to protect children and ensure that all children get the opportunity to reach their full potential by attending school and receiving an equal education where they do not suffer from any form of discrimination. This right is declared in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) position statement, originating in 1948 and updated in 2015. However, there are still children who are not given access to this right because of various factors surrounding their country, including various cultural, economic, and social factors (UNESCO, 2018). There are many inequalities in education, and although some of these inequalities are a result of the mentioned factors, one of the main inequalities preventing equal access to education for all is disability (Kurth et al., 2018).

Children with intellectual disabilities are often excluded systematically from schools because their potential is often undermined (Aruna, 2016)

It is essential to first understand what the concept of inclusivity means. Inclusivity is an idea based on the social model that puts the responsibility in the hands of society to remove the barriers to learning for children and recognize that diversity is something that exists for all people and teachers have to accommodate the different learning needs of all, not most at the expense of some (Engelbrecht, 2020). Inclusive education acknowledges the fact that there are inequalities in education that have been caused by the historical marginalization of learners not only because of their intellectual capabilities but also because of other societal factors (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). Inclusive education, therefore, strives to provide all learners with equal primary education regardless of the previous marginalization; however, this access to education should be provided to learners with the provision of support structures to ensure that they achieve their latent academic potential (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). The Salamanca conference was held to address issues relating to special needs education, which was (and continues to be) a concern for education systems in all countries, and therefore called for a reform of what was known as an ordinary school (UNESCO, 1994). Mainstream schools had to be reimagined to accommodate all children instead of discriminating against learners, this could, however only be done if these schools were provided with the necessary resources to assist with this change. “Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system” (UNESCO, 1994).

Inclusivity in schools not only benefits the school community but also changes the narrative of disabilities in society. In the education system, inclusivity is justified because it aims to educate all children. This has to be done through the development and usage of various teaching methods that respond to the needs of individual intellectual abilities of learners (Ainscow et al., 2019). Inclusive education also benefits and changes the narrative in society concerning special needs children, changes the attitude that people have toward children and promotes a non-discriminatory society. The Salamanca conference (Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education UNESCO, 1994) has been an essential reference in the development of various policies and social debates surrounding special education needs in various countries (Ainscow et al., 2019). Although Salamanca's statement has been a great

stepping stone in inclusivity, arguments have raised regarding the evaluation and follow-up of the statement concerning the number of children with disabilities who remain marginalised in the education system (UNESCO, 1994).

The historical roots of inclusive education from Salamanca to now

One of the most important international agreements to support the ideas of inclusive education is the United Nations Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994), according to Ainscow and César (2006). The Salamanca statement declared that inclusive education in ordinary schools is "the more effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all" (UNESCO 1994, 4). The statement was responsible for the change within the education system in that it increased the obligation on governments and society to reconsider how schools are set up. It questioned the notion of disability, which had traditionally been defined as the outcome of a lack of capacity, shifting the emphasis from the individual to the educational system and teachers in charge of reducing obstacles to learning (Hernández-Torrano, Somerton & Helmer. 2020). The notion of inclusive education as education for all has gathered international momentum with subsequent treaties and declarations building on the concept of Education for All (UNESCO 2000). These agreements and programs attest to the field's forward-thinking growth since Salamanca served as the catalyst for the creation of a social justice educational paradigm and the pursuit of the abolition of all forms of prejudice and exclusion (Hernández-Torrano, Somerton & Helmer. 2020). The realization of "inclusive and quality education" (UNESCO, 2015) is contingent upon every learner, including the majority of children who are marginalized and excluded, have access to, engage in, and gain from school (Hunt, 2019).

The cornerstone of the United Nations' human rights approach to education, as stated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA, 1948), is the conviction that every child has the right to a high-quality education that respects and promotes her or his dignity and optimum development (Hunt, 2019). Every child, without exception, has the right to a high-quality education in compliance with the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2007 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Salamanca statement mandated that all educational policies and reforms prioritize inclusive education. Countries continue to struggle with inclusive education, from the ostensibly simple process of defining it to the more difficult effort of putting it into practice (Anderson & Boyle, 2021).

Understanding inclusion: towards a definition

The term inclusive education sparks many debates among scholars with regard to the definition of this term. In certain situations, the term "inclusive education" has come to refer to curriculum, teaching and learning, and educational leadership in addition to all types of student diversity. However, in other cases, all that inclusive education has become is a rename for special education (Hernández-Torrano, Somerton & Helmer, 2020). One of the issues, as Slee (2011) points out, is the wide range of interests associated with the term inclusive education, which is problematic due to its frequent definitions and close examination. Some scholars, on the other hand, caution against the possible peril of emphasizing defined categories since doing so could further marginalize kids who do not fit within one (Messiou, 2017). The field of inclusive education emerged from special education and first focused on teaching students with disabilities. Currently, it is recognized that it includeshat it includes teaching all children (Boyle & Sharma, 2015). Some researchers, however imply that achieving a completely inclusive educational system is unfeasible and unattainable (Anderson & Boyle, 2021). According to Slee (2011), providing every child with the best possible learning opportunity, regardless of the setting in which it is delivered, is the goal of inclusive education (Anderson & Boyle, 2021). Since e the concept of inclusive education lacks a clear definition and a set of standards by which to be measured, it thus becomes problematic to quantify the success (or failure) of inclusive education (Anderson & Boyle, 2015). This is because measuring something requires one first to understand precisely what it is that is to be measured (Anderson & Boyle, 2021). According to research conducted over the past few decades, there are several approaches to gauge the effectiveness of inclusive education according to Schwab, Sharma, and Loreman (2018). These include techniques like counting the number of students who are enrolled in regular classes despite being classified as having special education needs, determining their academic and social outcomes, and looking into the general well-being of the school (Anderson & Boyle, 2021).

Inclusive Education in the South African Context.

Inclusive education implementation has not had the anticipated traction since the introduction of White Paper 6 (The Education White Paper Six: Special Needs Education (WP6), Department of Education [DoE], 2001). The apartheid era brought about inequalities in society,

and these were further reflected in the education system in that not all learners received equal education (Naiker, 2006). Post-1994, South Africa took on an approach to policymaking that made use of other countries' policies as a blueprint because policymakers lacked the experience of creating policies that would be fair for all. Inclusive education is regarded as a means of ensuring equal education for all (Engelbrecht & Walton, 2022). "Inclusive education within the South African context has not been promoted as simply one more option for education, but as the educational strategy most likely to contribute to a democratic and just society" (Engelbrecht, 1999). The Constitution of South Africa (1996) was adopted to restore the dignity and human rights of all those who had been marginalized. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act of 1996 includes a Bill of Rights that entrenches the rights of all South Africans, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture, or language, to primary education and access to educational institutions (RSA, 1996). Policies created post-1994 had to be in line with the Bill of Rights; this, therefore, gave rise to policies such as the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996), The White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995), and the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (Department of Education, 1997). The establishment of White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, building an inclusive education and training system was an effort by the government to acknowledge the failure of the education system in not responding to the needs of all children (Engelbrecht, 2006, p. 255). This policy views the training needs of teachers as a priority and provides a framework for systematic change that caters to all barriers to learning, most notably learning disabilities.

White Paper 6 emphasises expanding access and provision in terms of providing inclusive education, which implies a need for considerable resources, particularly staffing. At the current average staffing ratios in particular schools of around 1:10 (ranging from 1:6 to 1:16), expanding the system on the conventional model will be impossible. However, it is expected that in an inclusive education and training system, the majority of individuals with barriers to learning are integrated into 'full-service' schools. Full-service schools have been designed to expand provision and access to disabled learners within neighbouring schools, this is done through having at least one school per district being a full-service school. Inclusive schools are provided with the necessary physical, material and human resources and professional development of staff so that they can accommodate the diverse range of learning needs (Department of Basic Education, 2001).

A key component in directing South Africa's educational system towards inclusivity is the National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support. The policy emphasises how crucial it is to identify and assess students as soon as possible if they may be experiencing learning obstacles. Prompt resolution of issues requires early intervention. It encourages inclusive assessment procedures that take students' varied needs into account. The goals of assessments are to be equitable, easily accessible, and consistent with inclusive education values. The creation of Individualised Support Plans (ISPs) for students with a range of needs is highly valued under the strategy. ISPs are designed to tackle specific issues and offer a path forward for focused actions. The teacherspolicy acknowledges the significance of ongoing professional development for teachers. The goal of training programmes is to improve teachers' abilities to recognise, evaluate, and assist students with a variety of needs. In order to accommodate the many learning styles and skill levels present in a variety of educational settings, the policy promotes differentiated instruction methodologies.

National legislation aiming at ensuring fair access to education for students with varied needs has contributed to the rise in popularity of inclusive education, especially in South African full-service schools. Full-service schools are made to serve students who face varied levels of educational obstacles by providing individualised support systems and encouraging an inclusive learning atmosphere. Notwithstanding these endeavours, the execution of inclusive education in these educational institutions encounters various obstacles, such as insufficient resources, deficiency of expertise, and cultural perspectives. A number of policies, including White Paper 6, have been created by the South African government to support inclusive education and the conversion of education into inclusive educational environments. According to this concept, full-service schools are designed to be role models for inclusion, providing extra resources for students who would find it difficult to succeed in conventional mainstream education. The aim of these schools is to ensure that they fulfil the various needs of every student, especially those who face learning obstacles such as disabilities (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Systemic problems, however, frequently prevent these rules from being effectively implemented in practice. Full-service schools are designed to serve as establishments that provide extra assistance to students who do not need to be placed in special schools but may fail in traditional mainstream settings. To aid students in overcoming obstacles to learning, they are provided with resources, including specialised teachers, aids such as technology, and intervention from District-Based Support Teams (DBST). According to South Africa's dedication to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

and the Education for All framework, these educational institutions ought to develop inclusive environments that meet the diverse needs of students and ensure equal opportunity for education (Walton, 2020). The goal of the schools' adaptable strategies is to meet each student's requirements through varied education and a variety of evaluation techniques. The creation of full-service schools is essential to promoting a more inclusive system in South Africa, where students with difficulties are accommodated rather than placed in special education programs, according to the Department of Basic Education (2021). Therefore, these institutions play a crucial role in promoting systemic changes meant to lessen educational disparities.

The Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) Policy, which describes the procedures for identifying and assisting students with learning difficulties, serves as the operational framework for full-service schools. The Department of Basic Education (2021) states that SIAS plays a critical role in helping schools identify learning difficulties early on and offer treatments to lessen their effects. SIAS implementation, however, has not been uniform, as some schools have reported challenges in obtaining assistance from DBSTs and other organisations that support the implementation of inclusive education policy (Walton, 2020). Full-service schools have the power to dramatically enhance the academic results of students with difficulties when they operate well. They offer a setting where students can get the help they require without facing discrimination or shame. Many students with disabilities face social isolation in standard settings; the inclusive environment lessens this and promotes a sense of belonging. Research indicates that inclusive education fosters acceptance and comprehension among all students in addition to helping kids who have challenges (Walton, 2020).

Understanding inclusion through the models of disability

Our comprehension of how to assist learners with various learning requirements varies according to the model under which it is viewed. The two models that have been used to understand inclusion are the medical model and the social model of disability (Retief & Letsosa, 2018). The medical model of disability is a view on disability that has previously been used frequently when addressing issues in education when dealing with differently-abled people. It attaches a negative connotation to disability and is also referred to as the ‘personal tragedy model’ in that it regards disability as a tragedy for the individual and their relatives (Thomas & Woods, 2003). Authors who advocate for this model perceive disability as a

negative outcome that should be avoided or remedied to mitigate its potential consequences.This model looks down on individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities and regards these individuals as being “not normal” (Retief & Letsosa, 2018). This model of disability disregards individuals’ ability to learn in the school context as this model regards individuals with disabilities as sick, therefore meaning that they are unable to complete tasks for themselves. This model does not consider the fact that disabled individuals do not consider themselves as sick. Instead, they view themselves as having impairments that do not have to hinder their ability to perform in schools (Retief & Letsoa, 2018, p. 3).

Social Model of Inclusion

The social model, on the other hand, views disability as a socially constructed phenomenon (Retief & Letsoa, 2018). This model was developed as a critique of the medical model of disability. According to this model “, it is a society which disables people with impairments, and therefore any meaningful solution must be directed at societal change rather than individual adjustment and rehabilitation’ (Barnes et al., 2010:163). It is due to this that the social model promotes the notion that disability is socially constructed, caused by social conditions. The social model argued that because disability is socially constructed, these social conditions should be eliminated and dealt with in society. In this sense, the disability is not only that of the individual and their family, like the medical model, but that of society as a whole. This model encourages disabled individuals to be active participants in their lives and take control of their lives instead of being treated as incapable of doing anything. The social model differentiates between disability and impairment, ‘People with learning difficulties are ‘disabled people’ whose impairment is their learning difficulty: they are disabled by the social reactions to it’ (2013:26). The social model is primarily concerned with addressing the ‘barriers to participation’ experienced by PWDs as a result of various ableist social and environmental factors in society (O’Connell, Finnerty & Egan 2008:15). It promotes inclusivity in that it believes that disabled individuals can learn and be independent regardless of the impairments that they may have, this model believes that disabled individuals should be supported, the element of support is used in the inclusive education policy, in that teachers are encouraged to support these children in the school context.

There is a complicated and continuous argument over the conflict between inclusive education and special needs education (SNE), which is based on the medical model. SNE has always

adhered to the medical model, which sees disability as a personal deficiency (Brisenden, 1986). Based on the social model, inclusive education views social constraints as the cause of disability (Shakespeare, 2014). SNE places a strong emphasis on individualised instruction and may require special schools or segregated environments (Rieser, 2012). The integration of diverse learners into mainstream classrooms is advocated by inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). The ideas of inclusive education are still influenced by the Salamanca Statement, as debated by UNESCO in 1994. According to Briden (2018), SNE could unintentionally lead to the stigmatisation of students with disabilities. The goal of inclusive education is to establish a setting that promotes tolerance and comprehension. SNE frequently emphasises customised interventions and accommodations (Brisenden, 2018). According to Engelbrecht (2016), inclusive education necessitates systemic adjustments to practices and regulations to establish a welcoming atmosphere.

Constraints to Inclusion in South African Schools

The implementation of the mandates of inclusion from the United Nations in South Africa has resulted in the Department of Education acknowledging the diversity found in the learners within the country, and as a result, full-service schools have been founded. Although the policy of inclusion seems perfect in theory, implementation issues have arisen based on the fact that this policy needs to be implemented in different contexts. The first constraint to inclusion in education is due to the policy implementers themselves, which are teachers (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Teachers are the primary implementers of the policy within the school context because they are responsible for providing pedagogical methods that ensure that all learners are included regardless of their diversity in terms of learning abilities and learning needs. Although the policy provides guidelines for how the policy should be implemented, these guidelines are not always inclusive in that they are not considerate of the fact that not all teachers have received adequate training in addressing diversity in the classroom. Some teachers do not know how to go about helping learners with various learning impairments and making sure that these learners are not excluded from the classroom.

History of full-service schools

he. The fundamental component of Full Service School is to provide support for learning, coordinate, and organize help to suit a wide range of learning needs. Along with the School-

Based Support Team (SBST), the School Management Team (SMT) should Develop ways to address institutional, teacher, and learner support requirements and then, gather the necessary resources for support provision. Coordinate the involvement of parents in decision-making and planning for support for their children. Work collaboratively with teachers to assess individual students' needs for support and develop support plans for those students. Communicate with the District Based Support Team (DBST) to improve the school's support provision (Inclusive Education in South Africa, 2018).

According to the Report on the Implementation of Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (2015), There is a steep increase in the number of full-service schools and the number of learners with disabilities enrolled in them from 664 in 2013 to 787 in 2014. How the identification and recording of learners with disabilities have been done needs to be verified. There is also a severe concern about the fact that some schools enrol more than 150 learners with disabilities. In terms of the rule of natural proportion, full-service schools should ideally not enrol more than 5% of learners with disabilities, unless the 30% of learners who have learning difficulties in any given context are included in these numbers. Full-service schools should never be seen as a new type of particular school that draws learners from afar.

Issues with Teacher Training and Inclusive Education

Teachers' lack of preparation is a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusive education. Many full-service school teachers claim they feel unprepared and underqualified to handle the many requirements of students who have barriers. The lack of District-Based Support Teams (DBST) support and in-service training makes this problem worse. Teachers find it difficult to acquire the abilities required for inclusive teaching in the absence of continual professional development (Engelbrecht, 2020). Student teachers frequently do not receive enough emphasis on inclusive education, which leaves newly certified teachers ill-equipped to provide adequate support to students who face obstacles. Nel and Grosser (2021) stress that more thorough instruction on inclusive teaching practices, such as how to collaborate with a diverse student body in a classroom, must be a part of teacher education programs. Teachers must be suitably qualified and have the attitudes, abilities, and knowledge necessary to meet the various requirements of students in full-service schools in order to implement inclusive education.

Nevertheless, teacher preparation programmes, both pre-service and in-service, frequently fail to provide teachers with the skills they need to implement inclusive education. The foundation for forming teachers' comprehension of inclusive education practices and ideas is laid by pre-service teacher training programmes. These programmes, however, face a number of obstacles that make it difficult for them to equip teachers for inclusive practice effectively. According to research published by Engelbrecht (2006), pre-service teacher preparation programmes in South Africa frequently do not provide a thorough emphasis on inclusive education and only cover a small number of solutions for meeting the requirements of students with a variety of learning styles. Furthermore, according to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), pre-service teachers could not have had enough experience in authentic classroom settings, which would hinder their capacity to integrate theoretical knowledge into practice.

The provision of in-service training is vital in aiding teachers' continuous professional growth and augmenting their ability to implement inclusive education. Practising teachers can improve their inclusive education knowledge and abilities through in-service training programmes. However, issues, including a lack of funding, a lack of time, and a lack of continuous assistance, can make these programmes less successful. According to research by Forlin et al. (2009), rather than emphasising unique interventions for meeting the varied needs of students, in-service training frequently concentrates on general teaching tactics. Furthermore, research by Slee (2011) suggests that during in-service training, instructors could run with opposition or scepticism regarding inclusive methods, especially in situations where school communities are not entirely supportive of inclusive education. The influence of in-service training on teachers' capacity to implement inclusive education may be restricted in the absence of sufficient support and reinforcement (Andrews et al., 2021).

According to Andrews. et al (2021), in-service training programmes in South Africa might not be consistent or have enough funding, limiting teachers' access to possibilities for professional growth in full-service schools. Furthermore, Heystek and Terhoven (2015) point out that, in contexts where the implementation of inclusive education may be complicated, in-service training programmes frequently fall short of meeting the unique needs of teachers.

The shortcomings in pre-service and in-service teachers' preparation significantly impact the implementation of inclusive education in full-service schools. Teachers may find it challenging to develop inclusive learning environments that meet the various needs of all students without sufficient training and continuous assistance. This may lead to discriminatory behaviours,

restricted access to possibilities for learning, and differences in the academic performance of marginalised pupils. Sufficient pre-service and in-service training is crucial for tackling these issues and encouraging the successful integration of inclusive education in full-service institutions. In South Africa, full-service schools that practise inclusive education face significant obstacles due to problems with pre-service and in-service teacher preparation. It will take coordinated efforts to improve teacher training programmes' quality, relevance, and accessibility in order to address these issues. Teachers must be prepared with the information, abilities, and attitudes necessary to create inclusive learning environments that support the academic success of all students.

Negative Attitudes of Teachers and Principals Towards Learners with Diverse Learning Needs

The implementation of inclusive education is significantly hindered by the negative attitudes of teachers and principals towards students with diverse learning needs, often stemming from a medical model approach. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) argue that a lack of knowledge and inadequate training on inclusive teaching methods perpetuate these unfavorable attitudes, suggesting that professional development gaps are a key barrier to inclusive education. Similarly, Matolo and Rambuda (2022) highlight that principals often exhibit reluctance in fully adopting inclusive education, frequently defaulting to discriminatory policies shaped by deficit-based perceptions of disability. This implies that leadership buy-in is crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education, yet systemic barriers continue to reinforce exclusionary practices.

Moreover, deeply ingrained beliefs about the medical model continue to obstruct teachers' ability to accommodate diverse learners. Andrews, Walton, and Osman (2021) suggest that these attitudes not only shape classroom practices but also contribute to the broader institutional resistance to inclusion. This implies that even where inclusive policies exist, their implementation remains superficial if educators' perspectives are not shifted towards a more social model of disability. Rieser (2012) reinforces this argument, stating that teachers who adopt a deficit-based view of impairments actively contribute to the marginalization of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. This suggests that unless educators move beyond seeing disabilities as individual deficits and instead recognize the role of environmental and structural barriers, genuine inclusion will remain unachievable.

The consequences of these attitudes extend beyond policy and pedagogy, directly affecting student experiences and learning outcomes. Retief and Letšosa (2018) argue that deficit-based thinking

perpetuates cycles of exclusion and discrimination, effectively denying students fair access to education. This suggests that the persistence of such attitudes does not merely reflect individual biases but rather indicates a systemic failure to reframe disability within a social justice framework. Similarly, Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021) underscore the damaging effects of teachers' pessimistic attitudes on the academic performance and self-worth of students with disabilities, implying that inclusion is not just about physical integration but also about fostering a sense of belonging and dignity within the learning environment.

Given these challenges, it is clear that addressing negative educator attitudes requires more than just policy directives. The continued reliance on the medical model indicates that deeper systemic interventions—such as targeted professional development, leadership accountability, and curriculum transformation—are necessary to shift perspectives towards a social model of inclusion. This implies that without deliberate efforts to reframe disability as a societal rather than an individual issue, inclusive education will remain a theoretical ideal rather than a practical reality.

Constraints in the curriculum

A constraint that follows closely to that of teacher training is in the curriculum. The curriculum in South Africa has changed multiple times since 1994, all in an effort to be more equal and inclusive of all learners. The most recent curriculum, The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, was implemented by the Department of Education to address the inequalities of the past and enrich learners with knowledge that would prepare them for their roles in society (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The rapid development and content-rich structure of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum in South Africa have drawn criticism because they pose difficulties for teachers and students alike. Criticism risen about this policy because many scholars and teachers argue that the policy does not fully promote inclusivity because it provides stipulated content that should be taught and time limits in which this content should be taught (Walton, 2017). Despite advancements in policy formulation, the Inclusive Education Policy's actual application is still patchy. The demands of the curriculum and the requirement for tailored education for students who face hurdles are frequently too much for schools to handle. For example, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is perceived as being overly fast-paced and content-heavy, giving teachers little leeway to successfully use differentiated tactics (Nel et al., 2021). This leads to conflict

between attending to each student's unique demands and fulfilling the curriculum's academic objectives. Although some may argue that it makes the teacher's role easier in that it gives teachers specific content to be taught, critics argue that the time given to deliver the content is not always accommodating of inclusivity (Mbatha, 2016). This is because sometimes a teacher would need to explain concepts using various teaching and learning methods, which would surpass the time given for that topic or theme. According to (Andrews et al., 2021), policy ambiguities make it more difficult for teachers to adopt inclusive approaches that work. Engelbrecht (2006) talks about how teachers are under enormous strain to go through a lot of subject matter in a brief period because the CAPS curriculum is quite content-heavy.

Additionally, the rapid development of the curriculum raises questions about how learners' critical thinking abilities and depth of learning may be compromised (Hudson et al., 2019). Similar concerns have been repeated by studies conducted globally. For example, Cacciattolo's (2015) research highlights the negative impacts of a fast-paced curriculum on students' participation and well-being, which can result in elevated stress levels and alienation from the educational experience. Furthermore, Goertz and Mahoney (2012) address how curriculums that are heavy on content restrict teachers' capacity to concentrate on students' mastery of critical ideas and competencies, which takes away meaningful learning opportunities.

The CAPS curriculum's rapid pacing and content-rich style have a significant impact on how well students learn and retain information. According to Sandelowski (1995), a curriculum that is too dense with information may encourage rote memorization and surface-level comprehension rather than in-depth conceptual comprehension and skill implementation. Neuman (2012) also emphasises the difficulties instructors encounter while modifying their methods of instruction to meet the varied requirements of their students while staying under the boundaries of a strict curriculum. In order to address these issues, curriculum design and implementation methodologies must be reevaluated with a focus on student well-being, critical thinking abilities, and depth of comprehension.

Inclusion in education srequires teachers to be more inclusive in their teaching strategies by employing various teaching methods to ensure that all learners' needs are catered for. It would be ignorant to pretend that South Africa is a country with an overflow of resources. A lack of resources, therefore, constrains the successful implementation of inclusive education (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Inclusive education also requires schools to be considerate and accommodating of all learners, regardless of their physical or intellectual impairments. When

catering to physical impairments, schools need to be equipped with infrastructure that makes it easy for all learners to access classrooms and learning. Second Language Learners

The process of acquiring a second language (SLA) is complicated and impacted by a number of variables, including linguistic, cognitive, social, and cultural aspects. Mestry and Chetty's (2017) research emphasises the linguistic diversity found in classrooms, as many students speak more than one language or are bilingual. For teachers, this variety offers both possibilities and problems as they work to build inclusive classrooms and overcome linguistic hurdles. Similarly , Cloete, Makalela, and Molefe (2018) stress the significance of appreciating and acknowledging learners' native tongues in the classroom because language is essential to both identity development and academic success. Research on the relationship between the ability to speak a language and academic success has been conducted internationally. The concepts of Cognitive Academic Language competency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) were first presented by Cummins (2000), who emphasised the differences between academic and interpersonal communication competency. This divide is significant for second language learners, who may be proficient in a spoken language outside of the learning environment yet find it difficult to absorb the academic language needed for instruction.

Learners who got assistance in improving their academic language skills outperformed their counterparts in educational metrics as time passed, according to Collier's longitudinal study. Second language learners encounter particular difficulties navigating educational systems that do not sufficiently meet their curricular and language requirements. Encouraging inclusive and equitable learning settings requires acknowledging the range of languages spoken in classrooms and offering focused language development support.

Challenges with District-Based Support Teams Implementation and Overcrowding in Full-Service Schools

District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) are intended to play a crucial role in providing support to students with diverse learning needs in South African full-service schools. However, several systemic barriers hinder their effectiveness, exacerbating the challenges of overcrowding and resource shortages in these schools. This suggests that while DBSTs are designed to promote

inclusive education, their operational constraints often undermine their intended purpose, leaving both learners and educators without adequate support.

According to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), DBSTs struggle to meet the diverse needs of students in full-service schools due to insufficient staff, limited resources, and inadequate training. This implies that although DBSTs are mandated to provide specialized support, their structural limitations significantly reduce their capacity to fulfill this role effectively. Similarly, Matolo and Rambuda (2022) highlight that overcrowding in full-service schools further compounds these challenges, negatively impacting teaching quality and the overall learning experience. This suggests that resource constraints not only affect students requiring additional support but also place a strain on educators, making inclusive education more difficult to implement in already overwhelmed classrooms.

These challenges are not unique to South Africa, as international research also points to similar issues in inclusive school settings. Andrews, Walton, and Osman (2021) argue that support services often fail to meet the diverse needs of students in mainstream classrooms, particularly when resources are insufficient. This implies that even in settings where inclusive education is prioritized, the absence of adequate support structures can render the model ineffective. Moreover, UNESCO (1994) underscores the detrimental impact of overcrowding on the learning environment and academic outcomes, emphasizing the necessity of adequate infrastructure and resources to support inclusive education effectively. This suggests that without significant investment in educational facilities and support systems, the potential benefits of full-service schools remain largely theoretical rather than practical.

The shortcomings in DBST implementation and the persistent issue of overcrowding raise serious concerns about the equity and effectiveness of inclusive education in South Africa. Inadequate support services and resource constraints place learners with diverse needs at risk of marginalization and exclusion, contradicting the very principles of inclusive education. This implies that unless targeted interventions—such as increased investment in support services, infrastructure development, and capacity building for teachers and DBST personnel—are prioritized, the goals of full-service schools will remain largely unattainable. A more holistic and systemic approach is therefore necessary to bridge these gaps and ensure that inclusive education is not merely an aspirational policy but a practical reality.

Overcrowding and Under-Resourcing in Full-Service Schools

Full-service schools, which aim to offer all-encompassing assistance to students with various requirements, frequently face difficulties related to overcrowding and inadequate resources. Consequently, it is critical to investigate both domestic and foreign research to clarify the elements causing overcrowding and resource shortages in full-service schools and the consequences of inclusive learning.

According to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), urbanisation and rapid population increase have a negative influence on school infrastructure, resulting in overcrowded classrooms and subpar facilities. The difficulties experienced by full-service schools are even worse in remote places due to restricted finance and resource availability. According to Matolo and Rambuda (2022), overcrowding have negative impacts on educational quality, and the provision of efficient support services to students with a range of requirements is hampered by a lack of infrastructure and resources. Full-service schools face resource constraints that hinder the proper implementation of inclusive education. The lack of sufficient educational resources, such as assistive devices, specialist support staff, and adequate teacher training, means that learners with barriers are often not receiving the support they need. A study by Dreyer (2020) highlights the fact that many full-service schools are under-resourced and overcrowded, which significantly impacts their ability to implement inclusive education effectively.

Similar findings from studies have shown that inadequate funding and overcrowding are significant obstacles to inclusive education. According to Rieser (2012), financial restraints and conflicting goals sometimes leave inclusive schools with insufficient funds for physical improvements and support services. Furthermore, studies conducted by UNESCO (1994) underscore the significance of sufficient resources in promoting inclusive practices and stress the detrimental effects of overcrowding on the educational environment and student performance.

The challenges of overcrowding and under-resourcing in full-service schools have profound implications for educational equity and the realization of inclusive education goals. Without adequate facilities, resources, and support services, learners with diverse needs are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from meaningful participation in the educational process. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to prioritize investment in infrastructure development, resource allocation, and capacity building for teachers and support staff.

Theoretical framework

The ecological system theory is a framework that will be used to addressthe proposed research questions. The ecosystemic model, which emphasises the impact of diverse environmental influences on development, is based on the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and places individuals within the framework of linked systems. The ecological system theory "places learners at the centre and identifies the overlapping and interrelated systems that affect the individual" (Kurt et al., 2018). This has been a helpful lens because the ecosystemic model offers a sophisticated lens through which to examine the complex relationships affecting students and teachers in South Africa, where historical, cultural, and economic issues impact educational environments (Engelbrecht, 2006). This theory makes use of four systems, the micro-, meso--, exo-, and macro-systems, to analyze inclusivity within the education system. According to Kurt et al. (2018), the microsystem is the most immediate environment that influences a learner. This includes family and teachers, as they are the people a student directly interacts with on a regular basis..Teachers are impacted by inclusive education in that it requires them to adjust how they do things within the classroom in an effort to be more inclusive of learners' needs (O'Rourke, 2015). This, therefore, means that teachers are required to develop specific expertise to ensure the successful implementation of inclusivity. Families, on the other hand, are required to provide support and encouragement to their children to encourage learners to reach their latent potential. Upon analysing the mesosystem, the model promotes research on partnerships between local communities and schools, acknowledging the impact of these interactions on academic achievements (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The exosystem includes social structures, processes, and events that indirectly impact students in their immediate environment (Kurt et al., 2018). This system considers teacher education and the experience that the teacher has in their profession and with dealing with differently-abled learners. The model also investigates how laws, governmental organisations, and academic institutions affect the learning environment at the exosystem level (Engelbrecht et al., 2018). A learner's access to inclusive education is impacted by policies, structures, cultural norms, and societal values, together referred to as the macro system. The Salamanca Statement and the White Paper 6 policies on inclusion are two policies that significantly impact inclusion in education. Therefore the implementation of inclusive education will always be based on the guidelines stated in these policy documents. This study will, therefore seek to investigate the implementation of inclusion according to the suggested guidelines. Children with disabilities

and their access to inclusive schools are also impacted by other cultural and social norms, such as how society views the causes of disability, which fall under the ecological systems theory (Kurt et al., 2018).

The macrosystemic approach addresses problems including language, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status while taking into account more significant sociocultural impacts (Engelbrecht et al., 2018). The model takes into consideration the chronosystem and takes historical events and changes into account, acknowledging their influence on the educational landscape across time (Nel, 2017). Although the ecosystemic model offers a valuable framework, researchers such as Nieuwenhuis (2016) argue that a critical analysis is necessary, taking into account the dynamic nature of South African educational systems. The ecosystemic model provides a robust theoretical foundation for study in the South African educational context because it is based on ecological systems theory. Through investigating the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystems, researchers can acquire a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate dynamics impacting teachers and students.

Examples where Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory has been used in South Africa

Among different South African researches, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory centers on the environment as a microsystem affecting human development to several degrees and is applied widely in browsing inclusive education issues. The theory provides an extensive template that can be used to examine the ways that a variety of contextual factors work with and against one another to socialize students into specific educational experiences.

Researchers have used Bronfenbrenner's perspective to understand how children are affected by the conditions in which they live, especially pertaining to their academic success and welfare. Engelbrecht and Green's (2017) Research, for instance, looked at the influence of socio-economic status as well as family support on the academic performance of disabled children. Support during students' academic agenda: supportive family settings defined by parental participation and good attitudes toward education are the factors that highly influence how well students with special needs will be achieving.

With children attending school, another significant part of Bronfenbrenner's model is the customs established at their schools and also the attitudes which impact teachers. The study of Oswald and Swart (2011) examined the implementation of inclusive strategies in South African schools from an ecosystemic paradigm. It was evident from their study how important it is to

have the backing of school administration and teachers, which will lead to a thriving learning environment. The survey also made clear the importance of ongoing professional development among teachers in order to implement inclusive practices effectively.

The social and cultural community context also has a significant impact on shaping the learning experience. Swart and Pettipher (2019) viewed the inclusion of children with disabilities in rural South African schools based on Bronfenbrenner's theory. This means that stigma and negative cultural attitudes act as barriers to inclusive education, but the same report also underlinethat there is a need for social support and community acceptance.

At this level, policy and socialization of disabled people remain as government's policies that are part of the policy and macrosystem that Bronfenbrenner has articulated. The reason why this approach was used was justified by Donohue and Bornman (2014), who aimed to analyze the effects of educational policy in South Africa on students with special needs inclusions. They, therefore concluded that though Education White Paper 6 and the other policies constitute a sound and positive frame work of integration, there are still many barriers, which include, for illustration, a lack of resources besides the failure to operationalize the agreed policies.

Studies conducted in South Africa have also concentrated on the interactions between the many systems included in Bronfenbrenner's model, such as those involving the family, community, and school. Hay et al. (2018) investigated how these interrelated systems affect students who face learning obstacles in their educational paths. The study emphasized the significance of adopting a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the dynamic interplay of diverse systems in order to facilitate inclusive education.

Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theories as a lens to interpret data.

Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory provides an all-encompassing framework for examining how different settings affect a learner's development and educational experience. Within the framework of this research study on South African full-service schools, this theory is critical to comprehending the interrelated elements that influence the effectiveness of inclusive education. By applying this theoretical lens, the study examined the multiple systems that students, teachers, and school administrators operate within, highlighting how each level of influence either supports or hinders the implementation of inclusive education.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), human development is shaped by interactions within various systems, including the microsystem (the immediate environment, such as the classroom and teacher-student relationships), the mesosystem (interactions between different environments, such as collaboration between teachers and school leaders), the exosystem (external conditions that indirectly affect learners, including district policies and support structures), and the macrosystem (broader societal and cultural influences on education). This study utilized Bronfenbrenner's framework to investigate how factors such as parental attitudes, resource constraints, and the dominance of the medical model of disability shape learners' experiences in full-service schools.

At the microsystem level, learners' daily experiences are directly affected by the school environment, including classroom resources, teacher preparedness, and instructional strategies. One of the key challenges identified was that overcrowded classrooms and underprepared teachers hinder effective inclusive teaching (Nel, 2020). Teachers often struggle to provide individualized support due to the high learner-to-teacher ratios, making it difficult to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. However, the mesosystem—which encompasses the interactions between teachers, school leaders, and parents—plays a crucial role in either mitigating or exacerbating these challenges. For instance, while school leaders may encourage professional development workshops on inclusive education, systemic constraints such as limited resources and administrative demands may prevent teachers from fully implementing inclusive strategies (Makoelle, 2020). This reveals a gap in communication and understanding within the mesosystem, where school administrators may not fully grasp the practical difficulties teachers face in delivering inclusive education.

The exosystem, which includes district policies, external funding, and support from the Department of Basic Education, indirectly influences inclusive education practices. For example, full-service schools rely on District-Based Support Teams (DBST) to provide guidance and additional resources for learners with barriers to learning. However, the study found that delays in resource provision and insufficient training for teachers often undermine the effectiveness of these support structures (Walton, 2020). Additionally, the dominance of the medical model in district-level decision-making means that learners are often categorized based on their disabilities rather than receiving holistic, classroom-based support. This approach fails to address the systemic changes needed to create an inclusive learning environment (Swart & Oswald, 2020).

By applying Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory, this study highlights how inclusive education in full-service schools is not solely dependent on individual teacher practices but is instead shaped by complex, multi-level interactions across different systems. The study underscores the need for stronger mesosystemic collaboration between teachers and school leaders, as well as improved exosystemic support from district authorities. Without addressing these systemic issues, inclusive education will continue to face barriers that limit its effectiveness in full-service schools. Understanding these interconnections provides valuable insight into the structural challenges impeding inclusive education and highlights the necessity for coordinated efforts at all levels to create a more equitable and supportive learning environment.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The methodology chapter provides a framework for the methodical investigation of the constraints to inclusive practices at the schools. It will describe the general research strategy, go into the philosophical foundations supporting the investigation, and provide specifics about the techniques used to collect and evaluate data (Cohen et al., 2017). The first section of the chapter will explain the study's ontological and epistemological position. With its emphasis on the nature of reality, the ontological approach will be in line with the constructivist paradigm, which recognises the subjective character of reality and the socially created elements of learning obstacles in the context of inclusive education. A qualitative study methodology has been used to fully grasp the complex and varied perspectives pertaining to learning obstacles. The techniques employed for gathering data will be described in detail in the methodology chapter, with a particular emphasis on semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. In order to acknowledge the continuous character of qualitative research, a cyclical technique will be employed while approaching data analysis. With this approach, data gathering and analysis are constantly interacting, allowing new themes and patterns to emerge and influence further research. The methodology chapter establishes the framework for a thorough investigation of the obstacles to learning in full-service schools by matching particular techniques, research strategies, and philosophical viewpoints to the particular circumstances of this investigation (Cohen et al., 2017).

Research approach

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the constraints in the school and classroom impacting children with different learning needs from realising their potential, in a full-service school. This has been done by conducting investigations, through the use of interviews that took place between the principal and teachers in two full-service schools, of these constraints in a full-service school that has implemented inclusive education into their school environment. Researchers use convenience sampling, a non-probability selection strategy, to choose individuals based on their accessibility and closeness. When time and resources are scarce, this

strategy works well (Etikan., 2016). Convenience sampling has been chosen as a valuable technique for this study because these schools are located in Gauteng, which made it easier for the researcher to access the school when conducting interviews (Etikan et al., 2015). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences and perspectives. I designed an interview guide to address key themes, such as support mechanisms for learners with diverse learning needs, the effectiveness of inclusive education strategies, and challenges in implementation. The interviews took place at the participants' convenience and were conducted face-to-face at the schools in order to create an environment conducive to open and honest discussions. Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, and participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in capturing responses for later analysis. The participants were selected through convenience sampling, a non-probability technique that was chosen for its practicality and feasibility, given the location and accessibility of the schools in Gauteng (Etikan et al., 2016). The research included principals, who provided insights into the broader school-level challenges, and teachers, who shared their experiences in implementing inclusive practices within their classrooms. Both schools were situated in areas of low socio-economic status, and each had a significant number of learners, providing a rich context for understanding the complexities of inclusive education in these environments.

The schools in which the research was conducted are situated in areas of low socio-economic status, however, they both have a large influx of learners . Identification, examination, and reporting of patterns (themes) in data constitute the process of thematic analysis, a popular qualitative research methodology. Thematic analysis is a popular tool used by scholars in South Africa to investigate a wide range of topics in different disciplines (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Writing the report, familiarising oneself with the data, creating preliminary codes, looking for themes, evaluating themes, defining and labelling themes, and so on are typical steps in the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis requires researchers to reflect on their perspectives and biases, contributing to the overall rigour of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Epistemological and the ontological perspective of study in relation to an interpretive paradigm and qualitative research

Ontological subjectivism is frequently accepted in qualitative research, especially when it is done within an interpretive framework. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), reality is moulded by human experiences and perceptions, is contingent upon context, and is socially produced. Scholars who use an ontological subjectivist approach recognise the existence of many subjective realities and aim to investigate the interpretations people make of their experiences. What constitutes legitimate knowledge and how knowledge is acquired are topics covered by the epistemological perspective in an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive or constructivist epistemology is commonly used in qualitative research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), this viewpoint challenges the notion of an objective reality that can exist independently of the observer and places a strong emphasis on the researcher's role in creating knowledge through interactions with participants and the data. Interpretive scholars acknowledge that knowledge is located within a social and cultural context and is shaped by it. The ontological and epistemological views are entwined for this study, which was conducted inside an interpretative paradigm. Recognising that knowledge is created via the interpretation of people's experiences and meanings, the researcher adopts an epistemological stance, acknowledging the socially constructed aspect of reality. This integrated method captures the subtleties and context-specific characteristics of the phenomenon under inquiry, enabling a thorough analysis of participants' subjective reality. Knowledge is created within the context of the research participants who have been interviewed.

Research paradigms inform the design, methodology, and analysis of the study and serve to lead research discoveries through assumptions and guiding principles (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). The first pillar of research paradigms that has been considered in this research study is ontology, which is “the study of the nature of reality” (Ulz, 2023). This pillar aims at questioning whether or not there are multiple realities to the research questions. This research study aimed at identifying various factors affecting the successful implementation of inclusive education. Therefore it can be concluded that multiple possible realities broaden the researcher’s viewpoint, thus influencing the findings (Ulz, 2023).

This project took on a qualitative technique for knowledge investigation and gathering. This research paradigm has greatly been influenced by the constructivist approach to problem-solving (Schwandt, 2001). The research study attempted to answer the questions surrounding the factors that essentially influence the successful implementation of inclusive education. This ties in with the belief of constructivists that there is a constructed reality that is based on circumstances, contexts, and experiences (Ulz, 2023).

This study made use of purposive sampling in the context of selecting participants to be interviewed (Etikan et al., 2016). This technique of sampling selects participants according to the qualities the participant possesses and how valuable their inputs are to the research questions (Etikan et al., 2016). In the context of this study, six participants are selected from the two schools. These comprised of the principal, the deputy principal, three teachers and a learning support specialist. These participants have been selected based on the fact that they are the individuals who are required to implement inclusive education into the school environment. By implementing inclusive education it is expected that this would eliminate barriers to learning. However, there are still barriers present. These participants have been selected to give their perspective on the barriers that learners face because they interact with the learners daily and are familiar with the realities of the school environment. The principal and deputy principal provide the perspective of barriers to learning from a leadership context. As mentioned above, this study will make use of an ecological theory system lens therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the fact that leadership in the school, which is the macrosystem, interacts not only with the learners as individuals but also with the exosystem, which includes the district and the local government (Crawford, 2020). Principals will, therefore give their perspective on the barriers and the support they get from the district, which essentially affects the learners. Learning support specialists are able to give their perspective on what these barriers are and how these barriers affect learners' everyday routines within the school environment.

Research instruments

This research is based on a multi-case study in full-service schools and the constraints that learners within these two schools face. Therefore, the research sampling had to be received from this school. According to Young (2016), Interviews are a valuable method of data collection, especially in primary research. Contrary to non-interview surveys, interview-guided surveys produce data of the highest quality and with the most outstanding quantifiable reliability (Neuman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews will be used in conducting the study as these enable participants to provide open-ended responses for more in-depth information and promote two-way conversation, which gives interviewers a chance to discover the answers to queries and the justifications for those replies (Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Case studies are the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies (Yazan, 2015). "Case study research design is comprised of five components: a study's questions; its propositions, if any; it is unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings" (Yin, 2002, p.19). In the context of this study, a multi-case study has been used because data is retrieved from two full-service schools, a multi-case study is appropriate because it offers an opportunity to learn from experiences and influence the practice of theories. Through the use of a case study, multiple sources of evidence are used to derive data; in this context the sources are from interviews, as discussed above (Yazan, 2015).

Data analysis

"Working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (Bogdan & Biien, 1982, p. 145). The data gathered from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, a qualitative research method that focuses on identifying, examining, and reporting patterns (or themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was chosen because it is flexible and widely used in qualitative research, particularly for exploring complex issues such as the implementation of inclusive education. The steps involved in the analysis included familiarising with the data, generating preliminary codes, identifying themes, reviewing, defining, and naming the themes. The process was reflective and iterative, ensuring that researcher bias was minimised, and the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences and perspectives. Thematic analysis provided a rich, nuanced understanding of the barriers and affordances related to inclusive education in full-service schools.

Data coding will be used in the analysis of data, which will be a valuable method for categorizing data findings. Data coding identifies the primary categories and related subcategories in order for all units of data to finally be categorized using these codes (Westbrook, 1994, p. 7). In the words of Clarke and Braun (2013), coding is making sense out of qualitative data by classifying or labelling them to fish out themes that exist within and between. By parsing the information into manageable segments and weaving those pieces together in meaningful ways, individuals can interpret the data. One needs to know the data inside out before one can code for it. These can involve re-studying one's notes and audio files

and taking basic notes. This stage helps in understanding the range and depth of data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). The initial coding process involves discovering overall distinctive qualities in the data. Codes are given for these features, and any exposure, link, or specific experience related to the research questions or aim could form the basis of initial coding (Cohen et al., 2017). The themes being created are categorized and named. This is done by drawing out the core contents of each theme and the critical parts in detail. The subjects' headings should be both concise and informative, thus revealing what the information is about. In order to ensure that the titles are adequately informative, the themes are checked and revised. During this time, they look at the themes in connection with both the data file and the coded selections to see if they really pertain. It could be that certain concepts are seen as different topics, whereas others are joint. Formulating the results is the final step. This calls for the selection of eloquent, interesting sampling of the previous research and making a connection between the current analysis and the literature and research issues. The presentation of the data in the report should be both coherent and compelling.

The classification of results and interview responses with the help of the coding table can be done systematically. For instance, the statements of teachers and administrators in the schools begin to be split into shorter and, therefore, more accessible units for managing meaning as the study progresses. These very units are then assigned codes in a simple, concise manner of description. Thus, different codes are grouped under various subtitles that manifest the general phenomena in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). By using the coding table, the pursuers of research can acquire the knowledge of how diverse quotes are related to particular issues relatively quickly.

The coding table not only reveals connections but also represents the ease of drawing conclusions that lead to coherent dialogues. Besides, there is a column for notes/comments that give further context, and to this extent, the recording of the data properly becomes a priority, and it is to be remembered for the whole period of the analysis.

Ethical considerations

Researchers are encouraged to avoid unethical behaviors including lying and breaking confidentiality and privacy laws (Cacciattolo, 2015). As a result, this research study has been conducted with ethical considerations in mind to protect the participant’s rights and dignity. An ethical research project safeguards the participants' safety, and by establishing a

collaborative discussion platform that acknowledges bias, the researcher hoped to collect information that will advance knowledge in the area of interest (Cacciattolo, 2015). Thus, it follows that the study be conducted in a manner that notdoes put the participants in the interview process in danger; as a result, the participants' identities have been kept a secret. Before the interviewing process began, participants were asked to complete consent forms. To make sure that one's report is morally acceptable and is recognized as valuable in the research field, one must do an excellent ethical report. Once interviews had been concluded, the results obtained from the study were revealed to the schools. It is necessary to acknowledge that the concepts presented in the research paper are not entirely the authors alone. Thus, using the appropriate APA referencing was crucial and guarded against plagiarism. This research study has also been submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee to ensure that it is ethical and does not discriminate in any manner.

Limitations to the study

Limitations in research are inevitable (Marilyn, Simon & Goes, 2023). It is thus essential for one to declare and identify these possible limitations at the beginning of the research writing process so that they are able to address these ahead of time while providing possible solutions. This study's main shortcomings include its small sample size and small number of those who participated, which could limit how broadly the results can be applied. The capacity to apply findings to other schools in South Africa or elsewhere is restricted by the concentration on a particular full-service school inside a localised context. In qualitative research, small sample sizes might result in a limited viewpoint, which may cause one to ignore the variety of experiences that other teachers and learners have in various places or with different resources (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

Moreover, the small sample size, especially among teachers and administrators, might not accurately reflect the variety of difficulties and achievements encountered in the more comprehensivebroader implementation of inclusive education in full-service schools. Given that the opinions expressed are unique to a small group and might not be representative of the general public, this restriction may have affected the depth of insights obtained (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the case study approach has been criticised for its shortcomings in generating results that are widely relevant to a variety of educational contexts despite offering an in-depth examination (Yin, 2018).

Limitations in terms of time can also exist. Restricting the scope of the inquiry by conducting detailed interviews and extensive analysis in a constrained amount of time may hinder a deeper examination of emergent themes (Maxwell, 2013). The study's reliability may have increased with an extended investigation period since it would have enabled more thorough data collecting and analysis. External validity, or the capacity to extrapolate the results to other schools, is restricted by the study's context-specific design, which centres on only two full-service schools. This is especially true for schools with dissimilar socioeconomic origins or resource availability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Full-service schools in South Africa operate in a variety of environments, and the difficulties encountered in one might not be encountered in another, which could have an impact on how applicable the findings are. Moreover, the research fails to adequately take into account the viewpoint of additional stakeholders, including parents or outside support personnel, whose opinions may offer essential perspectives on inclusive education. If their voices are not heard, we might not fully comprehend the obstacles and facilitators of inclusion in full-service schools (Punch, 2014).

The research sites.

This research project focuses on two full-service schools. These full-service schools cater to a wide range of student demographics while dealing with specialized staffing shortages and resource constraints.

Johannesburg is home to Sunshine High School (SHS), a public combined school. The school is located in Gauteng's Johannesburg North. The school opened for business on March 30, 2001. In accordance with the Gauteng Department of Education in South Africa, Sunshine High School endeavours to develop students who possess the following abilities: identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking: “work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team; organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and language skills in various modes; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation” (Modern Classroom, 2024). The school provides both Primary Level and Secondary Level studies because it is a mixed school. Primary subjects consist of both Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) and Foundation Phase (Grades R–3) topics. Grades 7 through 9 comprise the Senior Phase, whereas Grades 10 through 12 comprise the FET phase and are the subjects

found in the secondary level. Public education is offered at Sunshine High School (SHS). South African public schools charge little or nothing at all in the way of tuition fees. This is a result of the annual funds provided by the government. It consists of mobile containers that are used in classrooms. It provides services to the learners who are currently disadvantaged. There are forty-three teachers in the school, with over one thousand six hundred learners in both the primary and high school combined. Overcrowding is an issue in schools, and the schools have problems with classroom layouts and limited access to professionals like psychologists. The educational institution has embraced a comprehensive methodology that prioritises social-emotional development inside the confines of the classroom. In spite of these limitations, it makes use of volunteer programs and neighbourhood organisations to improve student assistance and foster a supportive learning environment. The school has two learner support specialists who have to cater to the needs of both the primary school and the high school.

Hopefield High School (HHS) is a public secondary school situated in the south of Johannesburg. Cultural richness, socioeconomic diversity, and academic success are all priorities for the school. The school runs from grade eight to grade twelve. However, the school also has a second stream/division, which is the Technical and Occupational Curriculum (TOC) division, which has been formulated to accommodate learners who wish to pursue a more technical approach to education. The TOC was also established in the school to make the school more inclusive of all learners regardless of their learning barriers. The school is a no-fee school, with over two thousand learners and ninety-one teachers. The school has a principal whom two deputy principals assist. Hopefield High School is distinguished by a high student-teacher ratio, which places additional pressure on teachers to address the emotional and intellectual requirements of its pupils. Although this is a full-service school there are not any psychologists and occupational therapists at the school.

Chapter 4

Research Findings and Discussions

Introduction

Chapter Four provides a comprehensive analysis of the study's findings in connection with the study's leading questions. It starts by summarising the major themes that arose from the thematic coding process of tabling used for the data analysis. These themes represent the viewpoints and personal experiences of the participants, which include teachers and school administrators, regarding the learning barriers that prevent learners attending full-service schools from realising their potential academically.

This chapter examines the ways in which problems including limited resources, unfavourable parental attitudes about screening, and the survival of the medical model of thought impact the execution of inclusive education. The results are analysed via the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory, which offers a framework for comprehending the intricately intertwined elements that affect students' development in the classroom.

Raw Data Themes and pseudonyms for interviewed individuals

After a rigorous analysis and coding process, the raw data from participant interviews were grouped into essential themes. The coding table was utilised to systematically identify and categorise these themes, facilitating the categorisation of recurrent patterns and discoveries. This procedure guaranteed that the data would be appropriately analysed in accordance with the goals of the study. Please refer to the appendix, which contains the entire coding table, for a thorough explanation of the individual topics and coding structure.

Pseudonyms for the interviewed individuals and their roles in the schools.

All the individuals that have been interviewed had to have over five years of teaching experience. These criteria were used to ensure that the data collected is based on not only one year’s experience but multiple years, where teachers could also compare how inclusive education and inclusive education practices have changed over the years. All participants were also required to have a minimum of a Bachelor of Education degree or a teaching diploma for the teachers who got their qualification over a decade ago.

Table 4.1: Interviewed individuals and their roles in the two full service schools.

Role at Sunshine High School	Pseudonym	Phase taught	Number of years in education
Learner Support Specialist 1	Tina	All grades	5+
Learner Support Specialist 2	Thando	All grades	5+
Educator	Rose	FET	10+
Head of Mathematics department	Linda	The foundation phase and intermediate phase	10+
Deputy Principal	Mbali	Senior phase	10+

Role at Hopefield High School	Pseudonym	Grades taught	Number of years in education
Busi	Educator	TOC	5+
Trevor	Deputy principal	FET	10+
Adam	Principal	N/A	20+
Timothy	Deputy principal	FET	10+

Theme analysis

The themes that arose from the data collected for this study's analysis are shown in the following section. The main problems and obstacles that teachers, administrators, and guardians face when implementing inclusive education in full-service schools are reflected in these themes. Through an analysis of the experiences and viewpoints of the participants, recurrent themes emerged that underscore the obstacles to reaching complete inclusivity, such as a lack of resources, crowded classrooms, prejudice against students who face barriers, and insufficient leadership support. These themes are:

- Unravelling Negative Parental Attitudes Towards Screening for Learning Barriers
- Resource issues and their negative impact on inclusivity

- Lack of qualified staff
- Infrastructure
- Teacher path dependencies linked to a medical model of thinking.
- Support given to learners by teachers.
- Support from school leaders and the challenges to inclusive education implementation from the leaders' perspective Towards Screening for Learning Barriers

Unravelling Negative Parental Attitudes Towards Screening for Learning Barriers

One of the most critical steps in promoting inclusive education is the implementation of screening for learning difficulties in children. However there are difficulties with this procedure, especially with regard to how parents react when they find out their kids might have learning challenges. In order to create educational environments that are really inclusive, this research intends to investigate the unfavourable attitudes that parents may hold.

Developing successful ways to overcome potential hurdles requires an understanding of parental attitudes towards learning barrier testing. The success of inclusive education efforts might be negatively impacted by negative views that impede parent-teacher collaboration. The literature on inclusive education places a strong emphasis on the value of early detection and assistance for children who are experiencing learning obstacles (Rieser, 2012). According to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), screening is seen as a proactive approach to offering individualised help that is consistent with the ideas of inclusive education.

Although there is general agreement on the need for inclusive education, research has shown that parents have negative attitudes towards having their children screened for learning disabilities. Hudson et al, (2019), talk about the difficulties in putting policies into practice, including opposition from parents who might view screenings as stigmatising. One common reason why parents have a terrible attitude about screening for disabilities related to learning is that they are afraid of being stigmatised. In the past, disability has been linked to a medical paradigm that frequently leads to stigmatisation and social stereotypes (Gin et al., 2021). Parents could worry that allowing their kids to participate in screening procedures will stigmatise them, which would only serve to reinforce unfavourable social stereotypes. Parents

may oppose the screening procedure out of feelings of guilt and denial about their child being classified as having a learning obstacle.

The results offer critical new perspectives on the difficulties faced by teachers and school administrators with regard to parental participation and responses to the process of screening for learning impediments. Teachers have observed that, in spite of their best attempts to engage with parents, a large number of them respond poorly when told about their child's difficulties in school, this is evident in the responses by Tina, Rose and Busi.

> *"we inform the parent and there are parents who are who usually don't take it positively."* Tina from SHS.
>
> *"parents shift their learners to different schools after they been informed of the screening results. Parents who do this believe that the problem is with the school and that the school is in fact discriminating against their children."* – Rose from SHS.
>
> *"we do not give learner profiles to the parents instead the profiles are sent to the school that the learner is being transferred to."* - Busi from HHS.

Tinas' response draws attention to a persistent issue where parents find it difficult to accept the screening results, maybe as a result of a lack of knowledge about the procedure or the stigma attached to learning disabilities. Rose from SHS emphasised this. It also highlights the complex perspectives of parents, who sometimes decide to move their kids instead of seeking help or solutions because they think the problem is with the school rather than focussing on the needs of each student. Comparably, Busi from HHS described the process-related difficulty in handling learner profiles; this procedure likely reinforces parents' negative perceptions and influences their decision to transfer their children to other schools by limiting their access to vital information about their child's learning barriers. As a result, the relationship between schools and parents becomes even more complicated. The findings highlight the more extensive relational and institutional obstacles that impede the adoption of inclusive education in full-service schools.

Most of the teachers referred to parents being in *"denial"* once they were informed of the screening results, in which their children were identified to have barriers. This further supports the literature that, given the perceived consequences of learning difficulties, parents may

engage in denial and resistance. Rejecting screenings is a way for parents to disengage with the social model of disability and avoid confronting society's beliefs about disability and inclusive education(Shakespeare, 2006 & Babik, Gardner, 2021). Lack of faith in educational systems can also affect parental views. Scepticism may be heightened by worries about whether children with recognised learning obstacles are receiving enough resources and support (Engelbrecht, 2006). Parental views regarding learning barrier screening in the microsystem are influenced by their close relationships with their kids and their educational setting. In the event that a learning obstacle is discovered, families may oppose screening out of concern of stigmatizing or naming their kids by members of society. (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

The complex interplay of historical beliefs, societal dynamics, and multidimensional negative attitudes towards screening requires recognition in order to develop effective measures that cater to the particular concerns of parents (Grinker, 2010). Recognising the historical background that has supported the medical concept of disability helps parents overcome their ingrained anxieties (Mackelprang et al., 2021). For researchers, addressing these issues is essential to creating interventions that tackle the screening procedure as well as the way the public views learning obstacles. Parent-focused educational initiatives can enlighten participants on the advantages of early detection and intervention. Providing parents with information can have a good impact on their attitudes, in accordance with Burchardt's (2004) capacities framework. Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory offers a useful framework for interpreting the findings related to parental attitudes towards learning barrier screenings. The findings suggest that negative parental attitudes toward screening and the process of identifying learning difficulties significantly impact the successful implementation of inclusive education. Using Bronfenbrenner's theory, this issue can be understood through the lens of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem.

In the microsystem, the family environment plays a pivotal role in shaping how parents perceive and respond to their children's learning challenges. The findings from this study indicate that parents often react negatively to the idea of screening for learning difficulties, driven by concerns about stigma and social stereotypes associated with disabilities. This aligns with the microsystem concept, where the closest environment—home in this case—affects a child's development and experiences. Parental denial, as seen in the responses of teachers such as Tina, Rose, and Busi, reflects a defence mechanism in reaction to the discomfort caused by the potential social stigma of disability. This is compounded by historical views of disabilities through the medical model, which associates impairments with shame and inadequacy (Gin et

al., 2021). The negative reactions from parents are often informed by these cultural and historical contexts, suggesting that their attitudes may be shaped by broader societal norms, which Bronfenbrenner's model would locate in the macrosystem.

This suggests that the microsystem—parents' direct influence on children—interacts with broader systems like the mesosystem, where the relationship between home and school plays a crucial role. The study indicates that, when parents reject the process of screening or disengage with the school (as seen in the experiences of Rose, Tina, and Busi), the relationship between the school and home is strained, complicating collaboration efforts. This implies that any attempt at inclusive education is hindered when parents' beliefs about screening, based on fear of stigma or lack of trust in the system, are not addressed. The mesosystem, then, is central to understanding how the interaction between the school's support structures (such as teachers and administrators) and the family environment influences the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives. If parents view screening as a form of discrimination or labeling, as indicated in the findings, this undermines the process of identifying learning barriers early on, and the desired outcomes of inclusive education are stifled.

The exosystem also plays a critical role in shaping parental attitudes. The study highlights that some parents feel that the school is at fault for their children's difficulties, further reinforcing their reluctance to engage with inclusive education practices. This reflects the broader systems at play, such as the education policies or local district regulations that influence schools' ability to provide the necessary resources and support. In the case of the schools in this study, where resource shortages and overcrowding are a concern, parents may develop skepticism towards the system's ability to meet their child's needs. This may contribute to the perceived disconnect between what the school offers and what the child requires. As these structural barriers manifest in the exosystem, they exacerbate the parental distrust, creating a vicious cycle where parents resist collaboration, and teachers struggle to provide adequate support.

Involvement of parents in screening process.

The results also show how educational leaders actively involve parents in the screening process for learning obstacles and the development of learner support plans that follow. In order to address the needs of students who face learning challenges, teamwork and transparency are

essential, and this can only be achieved through effective communication with parents. Thando from SHS describes how the school communicates with parents below;

> *"We inform parent before we screen their children and we also inform them once the testing has taken place and their childrens' barriers have been identified. We communicate with the parents to make them aware of the support that their children will be receiving to help them overcome their barrier in learning".* - Thando from SHS.

This quotation highlights the proactive measures teachers take to make sure parents are well-informed about the nature of their child's learning hurdles and are actively participating in the process. It also shows how dedicated the school is to helping students by providing focused interventions, giving parents peace of mind that the right tools are in place to help their kids get past these obstacles. Ongoing communication and the school's commitment to share the support measures demonstrate the school's efforts to establish trust and a relationship with parents, which is crucial for the efficient execution of inclusive education.

Collaboration is essential for inclusive education to flourish (Gordon-Gould & Hornby, 2023). Establishing a collaborative decision-making process, as recommended by Retief and Letšosa (2018), guarantees that parents participate actively in the educational process, promoting collaboration and trust. Miscommunications and distrust about the screening process might result from poor parent-teacher communication and cooperation (Engelbrecht, 2020). Parents' views on screening may worsen if they feel like they are not included in decision-making processes or if their concerns are not being adequately taken into account.

> *"there are some parents who are positive and actually come to the school and ask us as teachers how they can help their children with barriers at home. Even though some of them cant read they are still willing to assist for the sake of their children."* -Thando from SHS.

Alleviating concerns about stigmatisation through open communication regarding screenings and the adoption of a strengths-based approach is consistent with the social model of disability and changes the narrative to one of empowerment (Shakespeare, 2006). A comprehensive strategy that incorporates education, teamwork, and compassionate communication is necessary to mitigate negative attitudes (Colgan et al., 2024). However, a variety of interconnected elements within various environmental systems have an impact on parents' unfavourable views about screening for learning difficulties. Urgent worries about

discrimination and distrust in the educational system are essential at the microsystem level. These views are made worse in the mesosystem by a lack of communication and cooperation between parents and teachers. This claim is supported by the participants who mentioned that it is harder to address learners' barriers if the learner's parents are not willing to partake in conversations on how their children can be supported. Exosystem elements, such as parental work situations and insufficient community resources further influence perceptions. Macrosystemic societal and cultural perspectives have a significant influence on how parents feel about screening.

Resource issues and their negative impact on inclusivity

Lack of funds is one of the primary resource problems affecting inclusion in schools (Goldan., 2021). Additional funding is needed for many inclusive education programmes in order to offer specialised materials, teacher and staff training, and other resources. Inadequate finance can make it more challenging to adopt inclusive policies and restrict the resources available to students who face obstacles. This finding will be elaborated on in this paper. Limited Access to Assistive Technology: The accessibility of assistive technology, which could be highly beneficial to students with particular needs, may be restricted due to a lack of financing. The inability of learners with barriers, such as visual or auditory impairments, to fully participate in the learning process may be caused by financial limitations that prevent the purchasing of necessary assistive devices (Bauer & Shea, 2017). Insufficient funding impedes the use of adaptable software, which impacts students who need customised digital resources to meet their wide range of learning requirements (Alnahdi & Almahyawi, 2016). Meeting the different needs of learners requires having accessible and inclusive learning resources available (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, & Lundqvist, 2016). Insufficient resources for creating or modifying materials leads to a mismatch between the educational materials and the various demands of students, which would restrict their ability to participate in the process actively (Al-Azawei et al., 2016). When given resources that do not suit their unique learning preferences or styles, learners with barriers may become disengaged from the session (Smith & Daunic, 2019).

From these findings and as reported in the literature review, a lack of resources constrains teachers in full-service schools from implementing and sustaining inclusive teaching practices. Resourcing constraints were identified as a theme from the data where all the participants complained about how a lack of resources was negatively impacting their ability to teach inclusively. This was evident in these interview extracts from Tina and Trevor, who said:

> *"teachers send learners to us as support specialist because these learners are unable to keep up with the pace in which the teacher is moving*."-Tina from SHS

> *"Lack of access to appropriate learning resources makes it difficult for learners to stay up with their peers, this results in gaps in their knowledge and possible academic difficulties, with the learner not meeting the required academic targets"*- Trevor from HHS.

It is evident here that Trevor has concerns about a lack of resources negatively impacting learners' ability to keep up with their peers. In this case, Trevor is referring to human resources, which includes learning support specialists who would be allocated to lessons, and support staff, which includes psychologists and other therapists. Similarly, Tina's issues also relate to issues around learning support specialists.

Less access to relevant learning resources may have long-term effects on learners with barriers to educational results, influencing their success in the classroom and prospects for the future (Alnahdi & Almahyawi, 2016). Resource problems in the microsystem, such as crowded school settings, inadequate teaching resources, and a shortage of specialized personnel, have an immediate effect on students and teachers' everyday experiences. Teachers may find it challenging to effectively adopt inclusive teaching approaches in overcrowded classrooms since this can result in a lack of individualized attention for children with obstacles (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). These issues are made worse by insufficient teaching materials and resources, which make it harder for teachers to meet the requirements of students with varying learning styles. The data also highlight the difficulty of giving learners with constraints timely and efficient support. Tina from SHS gives a detailed description of this problem, saying.

> *"sometimes we provide support to learners however this support may still not be enough because these children are then sent back into the classroom after the learning barrier that the teacher had initially identified has been resolved. However one of the issues with this is that by the time they go back to their classes the teacher has already moved on with the contents of the curriculum , leaving this learner to fall further behind."*-Tina SHS.

A critical problem with these schools' ability to be pedagogically responsive to the different learning needs of the children in this school are shown by this quote. Although there are support systems in place to deal with acute learning difficulties, students are frequently unable to return

to the classroom with ease because of ,more considerable systemic flaws. Due to the curriculum's rapid pace and the rigidity of the teaching approach, these students are at risk of falling behind once more, which makes catching up a vicious cycle (Andrews, Walton & Osman, 2021). This has a direct bearing on more general resource issues that arise inside the microsystem, as explained by the Ecosystemic Theory of Bronfenbrenner. When students return to the mainstream, teachers find it challenging to provide each student with the tailored attention they need in cramped classrooms. The two learning support specialists who participated in this study emphasised that A shortage of specialised professionals and inadequate teaching resources exacerbate the issue. It is challenging to close the gap when students are left to handle the advanced curriculum on their own without the proper support systems or extra help to help them reintegrate into the classroom after obtaining support (Pillay et al., 2013).

It has been identified through this study that some of these learners end up leaving school because, as time goes on, their learning needs are not sufficiently tended to, and they resort to dropping out after repeating grades multiple times.

> *"Unfortunately as learning support specialists we have to cater to a smaller amount of learners in our classrooms so that we are able to attend to learners' barriers successfully. This however means that there are some learners who we are unable to reach in time"- Thando from SHS.*

Not only is there a financial shortage, but there is also a structural undervaluation of inclusive education caused by insufficient finance. Every rand that is withheld from inclusive practices is a lost chance to help kids overcome obstacles to reach their full potential. It has an effect not only on the tangible resources but also on the message it conveys, which is that the educational system is not entirely dedicated to giving each student equal chances. The lack of sufficient funding results in lost opportunities for individualised learning. Access to assistive technology, specialised teacher training, and a nurturing learning environment are essential for students facing obstacles. Due to financial constraints, some students are unable to break free from an unfair cycle that prevents them from realising their full potential (Golann, 2015). Lack of appropriate learning resources results in under-representation and accommodations for students who face obstacles. It makes them feel excluded and makes it more difficult for them to engage entirely in the learning process. A wide variety of flexible resources are necessary

for inclusive education, and the scarcity of these resources limits the opportunities for meaningful learning experiences. Not only is the scarcity of educational resources a practical problem, but it also violates people's right to an education. Every piece of content that fails to accommodate a range of learning requirements is a chance lost to include and empower students. In order to guarantee that no student is left behind, educational materials should be inclusive of a wide range of learners.

The microsystem is where the most immediate interactions take place, including between students, teachers, and the classroom environment. The findings from this study reveal that resource constraints within the microsystem—such as overcrowded classrooms, limited access to support specialists, and inadequate teaching materials—directly hinder the adoption of inclusive practices. As shown in the responses from Tina and Trevor, teachers are unable to provide the individualized support that many learners with barriers need. This resonates with the microsystem's focus on the influence of immediate surroundings on a child's development. Teachers' inability to meet the needs of all students within the limitations of overcrowded classrooms, with insufficient support staff and specialized materials, creates a significant barrier to inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006).

The lack of assistive technology further exacerbates this problem, as students with visual or auditory impairments are left without the tools needed to fully participate in the learning process (Bauer & Shea, 2017). The limited access to such resources prevents students from engaging with the curriculum in ways that match their individual learning styles, leading to disengagement and academic struggles (Smith & Daunic, 2019). This suggests that in the microsystem, where learning occurs, the absence of tailored resources disrupts the ability of students to thrive in a classroom environment that should be supportive and inclusive.

Moreover, the observations from Tina about students returning to the mainstream classroom without adequate reinforcement, due to the fast-paced curriculum and systemic flaws, indicate that the microsystem is not equipped to handle the diverse needs of students with learning barriers effectively. This reflects the ecological theory's assertion that the direct environment must be adaptable to the needs of individuals. When students return to their classes without the proper support, the mismatch between the pace of the curriculum and their learning needs only deepens the gap, illustrating how financial and resource constraints directly undermine inclusion at this level. In the **mesosystem**, the focus shifts to the interactions between different components of the child's immediate environment, such as the relationship between home,

school, and the broader community. In this study, the lack of resources and specialized support services within the school system also impacts the **mesosystem**. Teachers' frustration with limited resources for effective teaching and their inability to support all students in the classroom may influence their communication with parents. If parents perceive the school as inadequately addressing their children's needs due to resource constraints, this could erode trust in the educational system, further complicating efforts to engage parents in the inclusive education process.

The data showing how some learners are transferred to other schools, as indicated by Rose, highlights a disconnect between the school's resources and parents' expectations. This tension between what parents need and what the school can provide deepens the challenge of inclusive education, demonstrating how the **mesosystem** can be affected by the broader systemic issues of resourcing. In this way, the **mesosystem** reflects the negative interaction between home and school caused by insufficient resources, which prevents the school from delivering on its promise of inclusivity and leaves parents feeling unsupported in their children's educational journey. At the level of the exosystem, the broader societal factors, such as national education policies and financial systems, play a key role in shaping the resources available to schools. The findings in this study about a lack of funding highlight how systemic issues at the exosystem level affect the day-to-day functioning of schools and classrooms. The inability to secure adequate financial support for inclusive education means that schools are unable to purchase assistive technologies, provide necessary teacher training, or hire sufficient support staff. This suggests that the exosystem—which includes local education authorities, policy frameworks, and funding structures—has a cascading effect on the microsystem and mesosystem by restricting the resources that schools can access to implement inclusive practices effectively.

From Bronfenbrenner's perspective, the impact of the exosystem is significant because it creates a ripple effect that undermines inclusivity at the microsystem and mesosystem levels. When educational systems and governments fail to allocate sufficient funds for inclusive education, the negative consequences are felt in the immediate environment of the classroom, where teachers are left struggling with overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching resources. Furthermore, the exosystem's focus on broader structural factors, such as policy support and funding priorities, illuminates the disconnect between educational aspirations for inclusivity and the actual opportunities available within schools.

Lack of qualified staff

One major resource issue influencing inclusivity is the lack of specialised staff, such as exceptional education instructors, therapists, and counsellors (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010). According to McLeskey and Waldron (2011), there is a possibility that the lack of specialised individuals will cause a delay in recognising learning obstacles (McLeskey, 2017). This hold-up may make it more challenging to provide prompt interventions and support services that are essential for students with hurdles to succeed academically. Students risk experiencing setbacks in their academic and social development if they do not receive critical support services like counselling and individualised education plans (Frisby & Vallade, 2021). A lack of qualified staff can make it challenging to develop and carry out personalised learning plans, which reduces the amount of specialised assistance that students facing barriers can get (Artiles et al., 2010). (specialised assistance should be from the teacher in the classroom, universal design for learning, not sending the learner out of class). Learners may encounter emotional and behavioural difficulties that impede their academic development and school community integration in the absence of sufficient specialised support (Smith & Daunic, 2019 & Garwood, 2023). This, however, is contradictory to just what inclusive education is because inclusion is about what the teacher does in the class to support whole class teaching -it is not about external support specialists. In a school that has over one-thousand six hundred learners, Sunshine High School only has two learner support specialists, who have to attend to support learners with barriers. If the school were fully inclusive, it would mean that the teachers themselves should be able to support these learners with learning barriers thoroughly.

From the data collected at SHS it is apparent that the teachers feel under-prepared to deal with the learning challenges presented by the learners. This is evident when Thando comments on the fact that she feels that she is expected to be a psychologist and is not trained for this role when she says:

> *"we are not psychologist here*" -Thando from SHS.
>
> *"there are some learners who demonstrate behaviour problems and act violently, it is in these cases that we do not know how to assist."*
>
> *"that she has identified that some of these learners bear the crosses of what's happening in their communities and their homes."*-

These are emotive statements that also fall under the medical model of thinking and lack of training of teachers because the support specialist acknowledges that they are not fully qualified to cater for all the learners' needs, and there are instances where they are unable to assist learners. Insufficient financial resources frequently lead to restricted chances for teachers to receive training in inclusive education approaches (Smith & Daunic, 2019). This may cause teachers to be less knowledgeable and skilled in meeting the various requirements of students who are facing obstacles. According to McLeskey and Waldron (2011), a lack of funding may impede the creation of specialised training programmes, which could have an adverse influence on teachers' capacity to support students and their comprehension of their diverse needs effectively. The lack of specialist workers is a , and severe weakness in the support system that needs to put barriers in the way of students' progress, and it is not only a staffing issue. teachers, The lack of specialised teachers is an indication of a lack of interest in recognising and meeting the requirements of diverse learners. Since education ought to be a team endeavour, the lack of staff members is indicative of a system that is inadequate in supplying the required knowledge. For students facing barriers, the lack of trained professionals is like trying to navigate unfamiliar territory without a map. Delays in detection and intervention prolong problems that may have been avoided with prompt and focused assistance. It is through embarking on this research that I can say that every student should have access to teachers who are qualified to mentor them throughout their academic career, as this will help them thrive in their academic career.

Infrastructure

The results of this research study show that major resource gaps that are preventing inclusive education from being implemented successfully in the two full-service institutions. Adam from HHS draws attention to the problem of overpopulation by saying,

> *"our school has over 2000 learners, however the number of classrooms are not enough to cater for all these learners."*-Adam from HHS.

The data shows that overcrowding has a direct negative effect on educational quality by reducing the amount of space available for students and hindering teachers' capacity to give each student the individualised attention that is so important for helping students who are facing obstacles.

Problems with the infrastructure are also a significant factor in the erosion of inclusion. As HHS's Timothy clarifies,

> *"one of our main concerns is with regards to the safety of the infrastructure, since the school had been build many years ago, there are areas that have started to degrade which is a safety concern."*- Timothy from HHS.

This statement highlights a more significant issue with South African schools' deteriorating infrastructure, which has an impact on learners' safety and wellbeing as well as the school's capacity to offer all children, including those with special needs, a suitable learning environment (Engelbrecht, 2020). The absence of suitable facilities for students with physical limitations exacerbates the problem. Adam from HHS raises this worry and says,

> *"although we are a full service school that should be catering for all learners regardless of their physical and mental needs, our school does not have ramps. This is something we are still trying to gather funds for"*- Adam from HHS.

This emphasises how different full-service schools' policies and practices are from one another. Even though these educational institutions aim to be inclusive, their inability to provide the infrastructure and resources needed to serve students with a variety of needs has a direct impact on those students' access to education. When taken as a whole, these statements highlight the vital part that tangible resources play in promoting diversity. Full-service schools face obstacles in their mission to support all students, regardless of their requirements, including crammed classrooms, dangerous infrastructure, and a dearth of basic accessibility amenities like ramps. In such contexts, inclusive education is still an aspirational aim rather than a reality until sufficient resources and infrastructure are invested.

Significant obstacles to inclusiveness in the educational setting are caused by inadequate infrastructure and accessibility (Bunch, 2011). Students with physical disabilities may find it difficult to walk around the school grounds due to inaccessible structures and a lack of ramps (Bunch, 2011). According to Frederickson, Dunsmuir, and Lang (2011), inaccessible infrastructure can lead to social isolation since it can be difficult for students who have impairments to enter common spaces, which limits their options for social engagement. Insufficient facilities may prevent students from facing obstacles in engaging in extracurricular activities, which could restrict their socialisation and educational experience in general (Ruijs,

Peetsma, & van der Veen, 2010). One of the most significant obstacles many South African schools are facing is overcrowding within the classroom. This is due to the lack of infrastructure. Sunshine High School is a primary and high school; however, the school has only a limited number of classrooms. In the exosystem, choices made by elected officials and educational authorities that have an impact on how resources are allocated to schools and how much money they receive have a significant indirect effect on inclusion (Pritchett, 2022). Insufficient finance for full-service schools makes it difficult for them to offer crucial support services to students with difficulties, such as occupational therapy and speech therapy (Engelbrecht, 2020). These students may have higher dropout rates and unsatisfied goals in school as a result of this absence of assistance resources.

Continued to be a significant obstacle to the effective implementation of inclusive education is the severe problem of overcrowding in full-service schools, as evidenced by the data from Rose,

> *"the school is overcrowded and our classes are also overcrowded. There are instances where our classes can have close to seventy learners, with the minimum being fifty-five learners in one class."* – Rose from SHS

From this quote, it is evident that the teacher's capacity to give each student individualised attention—which is vital for students who are experiencing learning obstacles—is severely hampered by crowding. It is practically hard to provide individualised instruction and meet the individual requirements of every student in a classroom of seventy, which undermines the objectives of inclusive education.

> *"In the primary school the maximum number of learners in the classroom is sixty five."* -Linda from Sunshine High School.

Considering younger learners frequently need more supervision and attention to build core skills, this situation is especially troubling. At this early age, over-crowded classes can negatively affect a child's comprehension of fundamental ideas, making learning-disabled children even less advantaged. These quotations highlight how an atmosphere that is not supportive of inclusive education is produced by overcrowding in both primary and secondary schools. The sheer number of students in each class detracts from the standard of education and strains the abilities of the teachers, making it practically impossible to give learners with barriers the support they need. Consequently, this detracts from the overall educational

experience and makes it more difficult for full-service schools to fulfil their stated goal of universality.

Teachers frequently give less individualised attention to students in overcrowded classes (Fisher & Berliner, 2011). Support that is tailored to each student, especially those who face obstacles, is essential for inclusive education. It is difficult for teachers to meet the individual requirements of every student in an overcrowded classroom due to the sheer number of students. Learners facing obstacles who might need more assistance or adjustments are less fortunate in crowded environments. Their capacity to fully engage with the curriculum is hampered by the absence of individualised attention, which may also exacerbate academic difficulties (Fisher & Berliner, 2011). The amount of time that teachers and students spend together is reduced in crowded classrooms (Blatchford et al., 2009). An inclusive and encouraging learning environment is primarily dependent on meaningful relationships. The lack of direct contact opportunities impacts the quality of education offered. Close relationships between teachers and students are beneficial for learners who face barriers. Less engagement prevents teachers from developing connections and makes it more difficult for them to identify and meet the unique requirements of these kids (Blatchford et al., 2009). Educational resources and support services are severely strained by overcrowding (UNESCO, 2009). To meet the different learning requirements of students, inclusive education needs sufficient resources and support systems. These essential components are strained in overcrowded classrooms, which lowers the standard of learning for every student.

The results show that the problem of classroom overcrowding is a recurrent theme, which is further supported by the experiences of learner support professionals who work to offer specialised assistance. SHS's Thando outlines the difficulties in providing sufficient support:

> *"as learner support specialists we try to have a maximum of twelve learners in the support class, this however is not an accurate representation of what's happening in the classroom. In their normal classroom it is impossible for the teacher to give learners one on one attention because of the overcrowding*". – Thando from SHS

This claim draws even more attention to the stark differences that exist between the support offered in specialised settings and the actual classroom settings. In order to provide individualised attention, learner support specialists strive to keep the number of pupils in their classrooms manageable. However, this can be not easy, given how packed mainstream

classrooms are. Because of the sheer volume of students, teachers are unable to attend to the specific needs of each student, which is especially harmful to individuals who have learning disabilities. Since students are unable to benefit from constant, individualised attention in their normal classes due to overcrowding, the effectiveness of every intervention offered in support classes is compromised, which widens the learning gap.

Extra resources, including assistive technology or specialised materials, could be needed for students who face obstacles. Resource constraints are made more difficult by overcrowding, making it challenging to offer the essential support services that promote inclusion (UNESCO, 2009). Overcrowding in classrooms is a complex problem that seriously undermines inclusivity, especially for students who confront hurdles. The effects covered highlight how critical it is to eliminate overcrowding as a first step in creating a fair learning environment. Inadequate infrastructure is a real obstacle to participation for learners with barriers. It creates a feeling of exclusion that goes beyond simple inconvenience. Beyond only being physical obstacles, social isolation and restricted access to public areas have a significant negative impact on mental health. One of the findings from both these schools is that a welcoming atmosphere is essential for inclusive education, and inadequate facilities directly conflict with this idea. From an ecosystemic standpoint, the macrosystem (national education policy) and exosystem (societal attitudes towards education) are both responsible for the scarcity of resources. Due to the interconnection of both systems, teachers' capacity to adopt inclusive teaching techniques might be hampered by resource constraints in the exosystem, which can have a direct impact on the classroom environment in the microsystem (Donald et al., 2021). This illustrates how restrictions at higher organisational levels can have a detrimental effect on students' and teachers' everyday educational experiences. When confronted with obstacles, school administration and personnel frequently take the initiative to assist teachers and pupils. SHS's Linda, the head of the mathematics department, explains how she participates in this process:

> *"as the head of department for mathematics my role is to attend to the needs of the learners by offering support to the educator and addressing learners needs by teaching a lesson using methodology different to that of the teacher."*-Linda from SHS.

This realisation emphasises how the school works together to meet students' needs. By utilising a variety of instructional techniques, Linda offers a distinct perspective that might be more appealing to pupils who are having difficulty grasping a topic. She also emphasises the

importance of adapting teaching methodologies to accommodate a range of learning preferences.

In a similar vein, Rose, an employee of SHS's school-based support team (SBST), describes her methods for assisting students who face obstacles:

> *"as the school based support team we try and initiate afterschool programmes to assist learners who have barriers and may have not been able to grasp a concept in the classroom. During contact time I make use of a strategy where I place learners who I knows have barriers in front so that I am able to support them throughout the lesson.* "-Rose from SHS.

This is done to make the lessons more inclusive and accommodate learners with different barriers. However, problems with resources have a detrimental effect on inclusion on several levels. This quotation highlights the value of planned, continuous assistance both during and outside of school hours. With after-school programs that give students in need of extra learning opportunities new learning opportunities, the SBST plays a critical role in offering targeted interventions. Furthermore, Rose's in-class approach of placing students who have difficulties at the front of the room emphasises an inclusive teaching technique meant to improve these students' access to support and guarantee their sustained attention throughout the course. These procedures demonstrate a solid dedication to modifying instructional strategies and establishing welcoming environments for students who face obstacles to their academic success. In the microsystem, low resources and crowded schools make it difficult to teach and learn effectively. Inadequate assistance might lead to strained relationships between schools and parents in the mesosystem. The macrosystem emphasizes how cultural attitudes affect inclusion, whereas the exosystem emphasizes how policy and financing decisions shape school resources.

Teacher path dependencies linked to a medical model of thinking

Encouraging inclusivity in the educational setting is significantly impacted by the medical paradigm of thinking, which sees disability as a personal medical issue that has to be treated. Rather than addressing the more significant social and educational issues that lead to barriers, this approach frequently concentrates on the disability itself. According to Shakespeare (2006),

the medical model tends to pathologize variances by portraying them as aberrations from the norm that need to be adjusted or normalised. In addition to creating an atmosphere where students who face barriers could feel stigmatised and marginalised, this viewpoint maintains a deficit-based understanding of disability. The idea that students who face obstacles must be identified and "fixed" before they can overcome them is frequently fostered by the educational system's continued use of the medical model. Although the goal of this perspective is to pinpoint and meet individual learning requirements, it occasionally ignores the more prominent systemic elements that lead to the difficulties faced by students. Study participants shared this mentality, with many expressing the common belief that,

” learners *should be diagnosed while there's still time”* a mutual statement by participants

This claim highlights the medical model's emphasis on identifying students as the primary method of addressing learning challenges and implies that prompt intervention is essential to overcoming these problems. Busi of HHS, however, drew attention to a more concerning outcome of this strategy in the event that intervention is postponed or fails, saying:

“Some learners end up leaving the school system because they have been repeating a grade for multiple years.”- Busi from HHS.

This illustrates the fact that, in a medical paradigm, students who are not "fixed" in a predetermined amount of time are frequently seen as incapable of improving, which can result in repeating grades and possibly dropout. This inflexible approach to learning obstacles ignores the inclusive, holistic approaches supported by more advanced educational models, which centre on modifying the learning environment to accommodate a range of student requirements.

These quotations demonstrate how the medical model has drawbacks, including the potential for learners to be marginalised if their development does not meet established benchmarks due to the focus on diagnosis and correction. This is a medical response to barriers because barriers are perceived as something wrong and something that, if not dealt with, will have dire consequences. Negative perceptions may become internalised for students who face barriers if their learning conditions are consistently framed as medical problems. This may affect their self-worth and make them feel alienated from the school community (Shakespeare, 2006). Teachers who use a medical model of thinking tend to see students who face obstacles mainly through their perspective of their weaknesses or limitations. Low expectations and an emphasis on correction rather than strengths and potential are frequently the results of this viewpoint. This can impede students' intellectual and social growth in the classroom by causing them to

be excluded, giving them less challenging work, and keeping them apart from their peers (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Due to the medical model's effect on education, students are frequently categorised according to their aptitudes, which can have severe repercussions for individuals who nodo not fit the mould. SHS's Thando clarified this matter by stating that,

> *"if we have 200 learners, maybe 30% of the learners are able to read the learners that are classified as unable to read may end up leaving the system because of the lack of support they receive from the school and from their parents."* – Thando from SHS.

This claim highlights the systematic inability to offer sufficient, continuous support and mirrors the medical model's propensity to label students as weak or unable when they have difficulty with particular abilities, like reading. Teachers make use of bell curve teaching where they do not adjust their teaching methods - they teach to the majority, and the kids at the extremes of the bell curve cannot access the lesson. Bell curve teaching as a way that ignores the needs of all learners and focuses on the majority at the expense of some (Andrews, Walton & Osman, 2021). Moreover, Thando went on to highlight the long-term effects on these students, saying

> *"some of the learners who leave the school system end up coming to visit and they tell them that they are unable to find other schools that will accommodate them or they are unable to find employment."*- Thando from SHS.

This demonstrates the far-reaching consequences of a model that not only falls short of meeting the needs of students inside the educational system but also renders them unprepared for success outside of it.

These quotations highlight how the medical model might lead to the exclusion of vulnerable children because it places a higher priority on diagnosing and labelling kids than on modifying the learning environment. Insufficient parental involvement and inadequate support systems in schools cause students to be pushed out of the system, which feeds back into cycles of disadvantage.

The terminology used to characterise learners who face barriers reflects the medical model's tendency for dehumanising. Phrases that reinforce the negative perception of barriers, such as "afflicted with" or "they are very slow", are examples taken directly from participants of the

study. In my opinion, this method appears to be labelling a student instead of appreciating their range of abilities and possible contributions to the learning community. Instead of fostering an environment of acceptance and understanding, this stigmatising language may foster a culture of sympathy or pity. It could give the impression that students who face barriers are failures rather than essential members of the school community. This viewpoint has the potential to heighten feelings of loneliness and impede the growth of deep connections among students. We run the danger of moulding pupils with barriers into victims when we pathologize their unique learning abilities. They may come to believe that the learning environment is the only thing that is negatively impacted by their distinctive learning needs. It is critical to change this viewpoint and stress that diversity is an asset that enhances everyone's educational experience rather than a drawback.

This is evident from the data collected at the two sites, as the majority of the participants interviewed commented on community attitudes towards learner differences. This was evident when Linda comments:

> *"some parents take their children out of the school after we call them and tell them that their child has a learning barrier"-Linda from Sunshine High School*

Parents whom the medical model impacts could concentrate more on their child's limits and barriers rather than on their strengths and opportunities. As a result, there may be less support for inclusive education and less cooperation between parents and educational institutions to promote their children's overall development. The medical model in parents' thinking may also cause a kid to experience stigma and low self-esteem, which might have an impact on their academic performance and level of participation (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

According to Shakespeare (2017), the medical model places more focus on an individual's weaknesses or barriers than it does on the social and environmental causes that lead to exclusion. This restricted viewpoint ignores the contribution of the school system to fostering an inclusive atmosphere. When the focus is only on their unique shortcomings, learners who face barriers could feel inadequate or guilty. This point of view might result in a lack of systemic support since it ignores the role that the educational system plays in fostering inclusive and accessible environments (Barnes, 2019), when talking about students who have difficulties, using pathologizing terminology is like putting a diagnostic label on a pupil without taking into account the complexity of their identity. The diversity of learning methods

and skills in our classrooms should be celebrated rather than being framed as weaknesses. The goal in full-service schools is to create an atmosphere where children are appreciated for their contributions rather than being defined by their barriers. This, therefore, means that teachers have to steer away from the medical model of thinking. The school having a school-based support team that makes use of inclusive methodologies for learning is a perfect example of the support that teachers give learners.

> *"there is a group or a team of teachers in the high school that will remain after school, and we give them DBE books for practice. There are instances where learners come back after completing school and thank us while showing us all their qualifications"*. -Rose from Sunshine High School

In this quotation by Rose, it is clear that when teachers support learners through inclusive practices, they give learners the opportunity to excel. Students who experience barriers may believe that they are never quite measuring up to some undefined benchmark, which undermines their self-worth and drive. It is critical that instead of promoting a deficit-based perspective, we turn our attention to developing inclusive educational approaches that value and promote a range of skills. If teachers make use of a medical model way of thinking, it only impedes the learner's potential, and however if they are more inclusive in their practices, then this positively affects learners. It is crucial for learners to feel supported by teachers, as this encourages them to look beyond their learning barriers and reach their full potential. As mentioned in the above quote by Rose, if a learner is fully supported, they are able to reach their full potential and are able to even further their studies despite the learning barrier.

The medical model's reliance on outside assistance could make people with barriers feel dependent on others, which would reduce their sense of independence in the learning process (Brisenden, 1986). Sunshine High School receives a significant amount of assistance from non-profit organisations in terms of donations, which are used to assist underprivileged learners and child-headed homes with food parcels. These organisations also donate their time and occasionally assist in tutoring learners. While outside interventions are essential, designing inclusive and widely accessible educational methods should not be overshadowed by their value. Professional support is necessary. Learners who encounter obstacles could experience a lack of empowerment and dependence on outside assistance, which could restrict their involvement in the educational process. This method does not promote inclusive educational

environments in which every student can actively participate in self-advocacy (Brisenden, 1986).

The idea that inclusive education is unsuitable for all kids continues to be reinforced by the historical support for the segregation of students with barriers in line with the medical paradigm (Rieser, 2012). Instead of creating a welcoming and varied learning community, segregation continues to reinforce the belief that students with learning barriers should receive an education apart from other students.

It was evident at both research sites that some of the teachers interviewed had a medical deficit model that directed their teaching pedagogical methods. For example, Trevor had a particular method for addressing learners with different learning needs. This was evident when Trevor comments:

> *" I place learners with barriers in front of the classroom and give them tailored activities according to their barriers."*- Tevor from HHS.

Although this is a great idea and is effective at times, it may also create a sense of exclusion as these learners are treated differently from their peers, and they may be categorized as slow by their peers because it is known that if you sit in front, you are given more accessible work. Students with learning barriers may feel like outsiders as a result of segregation, which could stigmatise them and prevent them from participating in social activities (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2024). In addition to being against the principles of inclusivity, dividing students based on perceived skills or limitations also limits opportunities for shared learning experiences and cooperation. Isolating students who face barriers conveys the idea that they are essentially distinct from their peers. Realising that every student, regardless of ability, has a ,unique contribution to give to the educational community is vital. A lack of training or provision for inclusive teaching methods signals a breakdown between the needs at the micro level (teachers in the classroom) and the meso level (school leaders accessing appropriate training opportunities/support for inclusive teaching.

The unrelenting search of solutions or normalisation techniques might foster a culture where learners with barriers feel their distinct identities are unwanted. It appears that this strategy values social norm compliance more than acknowledging the variety of human experiences and abilities. Learners who encounter barriers could experience pressure to meet set expectations instead of appreciating their unique abilities. The school system's continuous

emphasis on uniformity could be interpreted as a devaluation of their distinctive qualities. I think this strategy loses out on the chance to foster an environment where diversity is valued as a strength rather than a flaw.

The ways that the medical model undermines inclusivity are by emphasising the importance of language, realising the need for systemic change, giving students the agency to actively shape their education actively, pushing for inclusive settings in mainstream settings, and embracing diversity rather than aiming for normalisation.

On the contrary, although many negatives were identified from the interviews, there were also positives to the implementation of inclusive education in my two investigated full-service school. The medical model promotes isolation, lowered standards, and an emphasis on weaknesses rather than capabilities at every level of the ecosystem. A more inclusive, strength-centered strategy necessitates adjustments at every level of the ecosystem, from specific classroom procedures to broader cultural perceptions. All students can benefit from an inclusive and encouraging learning environment if these interrelated variables are addressed.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a nuanced understanding of how the medical model of diagnosis and intervention influences inclusive education. At the microsystem level, the focus on early diagnosis and intervention can lead to grade repetition and potential school dropout if interventions are ineffective or delayed. The mesosystem is affected by strained relationships between home and school as the medical model creates a focus on quick fixes rather than fostering collaboration and holistic support. The exosystem influences the availability of resources and institutional structures that may reinforce a deficit-based view of learners, while the macrosystem shapes societal attitudes that prioritize medical models over inclusive, adaptive educational practices. Understanding these ecological layers helps to highlight the need for a more flexible, inclusive approach to education that accommodates the diverse needs of all learners, rather than adhering to rigid timelines and expectations that may harm students with learning barriers.

Support given to learners by teachers

Teachers are essential in helping to support learners who are facing barriers in an inclusive education setting (Thomas & Kumar, 2020). Support can come in a variety of forms that are customised to each person's requirements. When it comes to inclusive education,

teachers' ability to provide pupils with individualised help is essential to making sure that all students, no matter what their obstacles, can access the curriculum. Linda from SHS emphasises the system of collaborative support for students, stating that

> *"if a teacher is experiencing challenges presenting a lesson in an inclusive manner she steps in and makes use of resources other than the ones the teacher had used."*-Linda from SHS.

This proactive strategy demonstrates the dedication to modifying instruction to meet the needs of students with a range of learning styles. Linda exemplifies the value of flexibility in teaching approaches by intervening and providing substitute resources. This way, students who might not have benefited from the original teaching approach are given another chance to understand the material. In inclusive classrooms, when one-size-fits-all teaching methods are insufficient, this kind of assistance is crucial. It also emphasises how important it is for teachers to work together and modify their approaches on a regular basis in order to meet the particular difficulties that students with barriers encounter.

Customising teaching strategies, resources, and evaluations to meet the needs of students with various styles of learning and capacities is known as differentiated education (Tomlinson, 2001). With this strategy, all students—including those who face barriers—are guaranteed to get an education at a level appropriate to their preparation, interests, and learning profiles. A method that the majority of the teachers use is to work with these students who have barriers after school. Individualized education plans are closely aligned with the teaching philosophy at Sunshine High School.. Teachers, parents, and, if feasible, the pupils themselves work together to create IEPs, which are individualised plans. They provide specific learning objectives, as well as assistance and modifications for students who face barriers (IDEA, 2004). When it comes to giving students individualised help that meets their specific requirements, IEPs are essential.

> *"it is only after COVID that we started using platforms like WhatsApp to engage with learners and their parents. Some classes have WhatsApp groups to assist them with sharing schoolwork. But not all of our learners have cell phones so we avoid using it too much"-Busi from HHS.*

Technologies and learning tools that help learners who have barriers obtain information and engage in educational activities are collectively referred to as assistive technologies (Edyburn,

2006). Teachers can offer individualised learning experiences through the incorporation of technology. To serve students with a variety of needs, this involves utilising educational apps, internet resources, and assistive technologies (Roblyer & Doering, 2021).

This sub-topic explores the benefits of implementing positive, inclusive education methods, with a focus on how these approaches support equality, social cohesion, and academic performance; the two investigated full-service schools. All students, especially those who face barriers, can benefit from inclusive education by having access to high-quality instruction in a flexible and encouraging environment (Walton & Moonsamy, 2020). In addition to meeting each learner's unique needs, inclusive methods, including individualised instruction, peer assistance, and group work, help schools foster a climate of acceptance, empathy, and shared learning (Dreyer, 2020). Beyond promoting academic success, these affordances encourage social growth and emotional health, two things that are essential to creating a supportive learning environment for every learner (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Teachers who practise inclusive education frequently use a variety of tactics to guarantee that all students, regardless of ability, have the chance to succeed. Peer teaching is one efficient strategy that Rose from SHS emphasised. She clarifies,

> *"within the classroom I sometimes group learners in a way where learners who are good at a subject or concept are grouped with learners who don't understand that concept and peer teaching can take place. Sometimes changing the person who delivers the content may help learners understand better, and in some cases using their peer makes the content delivery more relatable to the learners."-Rose from SHS.*

This method shows how teachers deliberately create cooperative learning settings where students help one another succeed academically. When content is presented by a classmate who may do so in a more relatable or familiar way, peer teaching enables students to interact with the subject matter in a manner that feels easier to comprehend. Teachers offer a different kind of assistance that helps close comprehension gaps by fostering these kinds of interactions. This approach offers a more individualised learning experience, fosters teamwork, and gives students the confidence to actively participate in their education, making it very useful in inclusive settings. Peer support initiatives promote inclusivity and a feeling of community. Students facing barriers may feel more connected and supported with the use of peer-assisted learning and support networks (Mastropieri et al., 2017). Creating an environment in the

classroom where students actively assist and learn from one another is essential to promoting peer support and teamwork. Based on the requirements and skills of each student, teachers can divide the class into several groups using flexible grouping. Alongside this method, students who face barriers can work alongside their peers, obtain individualised teaching, and participate in activities that play to their unique abilities (Tomlinson, 2014). These initiatives, in my opinion, are crucial in dispelling myths and promoting an accepting society. They demonstrate how learning is a group endeavour and how each student has unique abilities.

Using a responsive classroom management strategy is similar to sowing the seeds of good behaviour. It takes more than just keeping things in order to foster an environment where children feel valued, comfortable, and inspired to participate. This method, in my opinion, creates the conditions for a classroom in which each student can succeed.

Support from school leaders and the challenges to inclusive education

School leaders are essential in creating a welcoming educational setting by assisting instructors in working with students who have difficulties (Day et al., 2016). The success of inclusive education methods in their educational institutions is significantly impacted by their management, direction, and supply of resources. School principals play a critical role in providing the leadership and direction necessary for the successful execution of inclusive education. Regarding HHS, the assistant principal underlined the value of teacher professional development by saying,

> *"we encourage our teachers to attend workshops that are provided to them by the district"- deputy principal of HHS.*

This active approach to teacher growth demonstrates how school leadership works to give teachers the tools they need to manage inclusive classrooms. School administrators hope to meet the variety of student requirements by supporting professional development, which will better equip instructors to tackle the difficulties of inclusive education.

But there are still issues with upholding discipline and making the most of teaching time. The HHS assistant principal for curriculum clarified these issues by stating,

> *"within our school we often have staff meetings in which we try to address discipline issues and methods of addressing these issues. We*

have cases where learners bunk classes which in turn is taking away from their contact time"-deputy of curriculum from HHS.

This observation highlights a significant obstacle to inclusivity, where behavioural obstacles and attendance issues further complicate attempts to successfully integrate inclusive education. These difficulties highlight the diverse responsibilities of school administrators, who not only assist instructors but also oversee the larger school setting to promote an inclusive learning atmosphere.

These quotations make it clear that although school administration is attempting to encourage inclusive education using workshops and meetings, more extensive approaches might be required to deal with the more severe issues, like student participation and discipline in the classroom. The guidance and difficulties discussed here are consistent with Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem theory, which emphasises the interactions between various microsystems, including teaching personnel and school administration. The function of teachers in the microsystem (classroom) is strengthened when school administrators offer opportunities for professional development. However, obstacles like disciplinary problems that result from interactions between students and teachers in the classroom also have an impact on how inclusive education is carried out (Donald et al., 2021). The requirement for constant support between them emphasises the interdependence and dynamic nature of these systems in influencing educational practices.

Principals of schools frequently oversee continuous continuing education and training programs designed to provide instructors with the abilities and information needed to manage students with a range of needs. Usually, these types of workshops include a range of inclusive education topics, such as behaviour control, customized instruction, and assistive technology utilization (Walton & Lloyd, 2012). Leaders at the two schools that took part in my study assist teachers in staying current with the newest inclusive education methods and initiatives by placing a high priority on lifelong learning.

"we do get invitations to attend workshops, however most of these workshops are focused on the curriculum and delivery of the curriculum. We attend a lot of cluster meetings which are not always helpful."-Trevor from Hopefield High School.

"our school gets plenty of school visits from the district. However these are often due to monitoring the performance of the school"- principal of Hopefield High School.

Trevor's above statement is a contradiction to what inclusive workshops should be about. As mentioned by Walton & Lloyd (2012), these inclusive workshops should be assisting teachers with methods that ideally should help them promote inclusivity in the classroom so that they depend less on learner support specialists. Strong partnerships and open communication among the many players in the educational ecosystem are necessary to provide successfulinclusive education. However, a lack of management and support from higher levels of the educational system frequently presents challenges for principals in promoting this kind of partnership. This may result in disjointed attempts and an incoherent approach to meeting the needs of students who face obstacles (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). Beyond their administrative responsibilities, educational leaders have a critical role to play in promoting inclusive education. In order to guarantee that inclusive practices are implemented successfully, they frequently must be involved with teachers and students. As an essential part of the school-based support team, Rose from SHS emphasises this dedication by saying,

"our school has a school based support team which works together to figure out ways in which we can assist learners in not only the classroom environment but in their everyday lives as well"- Rose from SHS

"I initially had forty-four periods on my cycle however, because I am a member of the school based support team, I asked that these be reduced so that I am able to dedicate time to assisting teachers with developing strategies to assist learners in the classroom and to assist learners afterschool"-Rose from SHS

This quotation illustrates how leading in full-service schools frequently entails juggling a variety of responsibilities, such as working with students during regular school hours to make sure all of their requirements are satisfied and offering direct support to teachers in the classroom.

There are also difficulties because of the special place full-service schools hold in the larger educational ecology. SHS's Mbali talks about how the district views their school as a resource, pointing out,

> *"our school is one of the only schools in the district that are considered a full-service school, therefore whenever teachers in other schools feel that they are unable to fully assist a learner with a barrier to learning they refer the learner to us"- Mbali from SHS.*

This quote emphasises how full-service schools are under pressure to help students suggested by other schools in addition to their students. The implementation of inclusive education may become even more challenging as a result of overpopulation and stretched resources.

These quotations highlight the challenges encountered by school administrators, who must encourage inclusive education at their institutions while simultaneously acting as a hub for learners facing regional obstacles. In spite of the fact that instructors and students are supported, full-service schools bear an additional burden that underscores the necessity for more significant structural support in order to guarantee the successful implementation of inclusive education throughout the more extensive educational system.

Through creating forums for support like professional development communities or inclusion teams, leaders foster an inclusive school culture. These teams of individuals collaborate to offer focused assistance and exchange best practices. They frequently include psychologists, experienced teachers, and exceptional education professionals (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). By working together, leaders can contribute to making sure that teachers do not feel alone in their classrooms and may use each shared expertise to solve problems that arise. School Leaders and teachers have direct communication in the microsystem. This degree of engagement is vital because it affects teachers' daily experiences and their capacity to manage inclusive education successfully. In situations where principals offer ample support, including consistent feedback, resources, and encouragement, teachers are more likely to feel appreciated and capable in their positions. On the other hand, insufficient assistance can result in teacher burnout, annoyance, and a feeling of inadequacy, all of which have an adverse effect on their performance (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

For inclusive education to be implemented successfully, school leaders' support is essential. However, despite the best efforts of school administrators, obstacles, including a lack of resources and packed classrooms, still stand in the way of advancement.

> *"we do get support from our HODs when it comes to getting certain resources, however because we are a big school these can take time"- Busi from HHS.*

This quotation demonstrates how efforts to provide a welcoming environment for learning can be hampered by the size of the educational institution and the drawn-out process of acquiring the required equipment, even if leadership is frequently proactive in looking for resources. In a similar vein, the HHS deputy principal recognises the more significant resource constraints that affect instruction, sharing,

> *"one of the biggest challenges that we are facing as a school is in terms of getting resources. A good example of this is how we are still waiting for mobile classrooms to be delivered as our classes are overcrowded, we know that this affects the learning process."-Deputy Principal of HHS.*

This quotation makes a clear connection between the inability to provide inclusive education and overpopulation and resource shortages. Overcrowding makes it practically hard for teachers to give each learner with a barrier the individualised attention they need, which further complicates the help that school managers are attempting to provide. These statements show that even while school administrators are dedicated to helping instructors and students, structural problems like a lack of resources and delays in the process create serious challenges. This emphasises how important it is for educational leaders and outside education authorities to work together to make sure full-service schools get the tools and resources needed to promote inclusive education.

Allocating resources effectively is another crucial area in which school leaders may be of assistance. According to Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), this involves making sure that classrooms are furnished with the right instructional resources, assistive technology, and learning aids to meet the requirements of students who have obstacles. Principals may help teachers successfully use inclusive teaching practices by acquiring the following resources). Teachers at Sunshine High School are fortunate in that they are provided with charts, have access to the printing machines whenever they need them, and some classes have smart boards. In order to build a collaborative environment, management should also concentrate on developing a resource-sharing environment within the school, where teachers are encouraged to share successes, advice, and ideas on different tools they have found valuable. It becomes a challenge in that in both of the schools that have been studied, there is a severe case of overcrowding. This overcrowding impedes an educator's ability to promote inclusive practices, such as working individually with a learner to attend to their needs. One can not entirely blame

the leadership of a school if there are shortages of resources, as these shortages are often due to a shortage of financial assistance from the department.

The absence of assistance from the exosystem, which consists of district and national educational authorities, frequently places restrictions on principals. This absence of assistance takes many forms, including frequent financial and resource constraints that make it difficult for them to give inclusive education the assistance it needs. Principals are unable to recruit more staff members or provide classrooms with the necessary supplies to address the requirements of students who have hurdles if they do not receive sufficient funding assistance (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In the cases of both schools, overcrowding is due to a lack of financial assistance, as one of the principals mentioned that they are still awaiting mobile classrooms from the department.

The effective integration of inclusive education with a school's goal requires the backing of educational leaders. The Hopefield High School principal states the following to highlight this connection:

> *"our schools vision and mission align with promoting equality within education. our code of conduct has the schools rules which are how the school is run"-principal of HHS*

This quotation demonstrates the leadership's dedication to creating an inclusive atmosphere by including equality in the school's fundamental principles and procedures. The school leadership sets an example for teachers and students by integrating inclusivity into the vision and mission statement, highlighting the value of equity in education.

Trevor from Hopefield High School added a practical component to this leadership by explaining how students are prescreened upon enrolment.

> *"when learners are enrolled into the school they are usually prescreened, this is so that we are able to allocate the learners to the correct school stream as our school has a main stream as well as a technical occupational curriculum stream. Learners who are identified to have major (for a lack of better words) learning barriers are referred to the TOC so that they are assisted within the classroom"- Trevor from HHS.*

This quotation exemplifies a calculated strategy for inclusive education in which the leadership makes sure that students who have substantial learning obstacles are put in suitable environments, such as the technical vocational curriculum stream, within which they can get the specialised help they require. These quotations show how school administrators allocate resources and engage in strategic planning to create tangible initiatives that support inclusion. However, structural constraints and the difficulty of overseeing several streams of learners make it challenging to implement these inclusive strategies. These difficulties highlight the necessity for continuous assistance and resources to guarantee that inclusion is wholly incorporated into daily operations and not only a component of the school's vision.

Promoting change for the necessities of their educational institutions and carrying out policies that promote inclusive learning are vital responsibilities of principals. They guarantee that regulations like the Department of Basic Education's (2014) National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) are efficiently implemented, enabling a methodical approach to identifying and assisting students with obstacles. Although screening takes place within schools, it does not align with the goals of inclusive education, which are to provide equal and inclusive education to all, regardless of one's learning barriers. Though intended to promote inclusive education, programs such as the National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) are frequently not effectively implemented in practice. The absence of suitable direction and assistance from higher levels of government may lead to uneven practices and insufficient support for teachers in the implementation of policies by principals (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Screening, however aligns with the medical model and its beliefs. Principals play a crucial role in shaping school culture and policies. When principals adhere to the medical model, they may prioritize special education services that segregate rather than include learners with barriers. This approach can lead to a lack of professional development for teachers in inclusive practices and an overall school environment that does not support diversity and inclusion (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006).

The exosystem's lack of support—which includes low financing, difficulties implementing policies, few opportunities for professional growth, and poor teamwork—heavily impedes school leaders' attempts to foster inclusive school environments. Higher education authorities must work together to address these problems by giving principals the tools, direction, and assistance they need to fulfil their vital jobs.

Chapter 5

Research Summary

Introduction

Through careful exploration of the affordances and constraints of inclusive teaching in two full-service schools, this research study has identified vital obstacles and potentially fruitful paths towards promoting an inclusive learning environment. The contextual challenges and strategies that teachers and school leaders face while trying to adopt inclusive education in full-service schools are examined in this study, which offers critical new perspectives. The study provides valuable insights into various critical domains where inclusive education methods either thrive or struggle through an in-depth examination of these experiences. A paradigm shift in comprehending and embracing diverse learning needs is required, as evidenced by the investigation of negative parental attitudes towards screening for learning barriers. These attitudes are rooted in societal perceptions and influenced by the dominant medical model of thinking (Brisenden, 1986; Shakespeare, 2006).

Findings Summary

This study aimed to address key questions regarding the challenges and affordances of inclusive education, as well as the roles of teachers and school leaders in fostering inclusivity within full-service schools. The findings provide valuable insights into how environmental, systemic, and educational factors impact the implementation of inclusive education and contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive practices.

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers in providing individualized support in diverse classrooms?

The findings reveal that while teachers are at the forefront of inclusive education, they face significant challenges in providing individualized support due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and difficulty in meeting the diverse needs of students. These constraints underscore the environmental factors that hinder successful inclusion, echoing the research of Du Plessis & Mestry (2019) and Hudson et al. (2019). The study contributes to the literature by highlighting how the pressing need for structural modifications, policy revisions, and improved resource distribution remains a critical barrier to achieving inclusive education. These issues emphasize the importance of addressing systemic shortcomings that impede the effective implementation of inclusive practices, and the study further demonstrates how these systemic problems negatively affect students' academic success.

2. What are the constraints to learning faced by students in full-service schools?

This study addresses the prevalence of the medical deficit model, which views students with learning barriers as “problems” to be fixed rather than individuals in need of continued support. The research illustrates the detrimental effects of this model, which limits the recognition of learners' potential and reinforces stigmas, as discussed by Burchardt (2004) and Samaha (2007). The findings reinforce the need to shift towards the social model of disability, which emphasizes learners' capacities over their deficiencies (Shakespeare, 2006). The study contributes to existing literature by revealing how overcrowding, lack of resources, and physical infrastructure deficits, such as the absence of ramps for physically challenged students, hinder the implementation of inclusive education. The research highlights how systemic issues create obstacles for both students and teachers, making it difficult to achieve the desired outcomes of inclusivity.

3. What affordances of inclusive teaching practices were identified in the case study schools?

Despite the challenges, this study also identified encouraging affordances in the case study schools, where teachers demonstrated a committed effort to support learners with barriers. The findings show that differentiated instruction, the use of assistive technologies, and collaborative learning strategies can significantly enhance the academic potential and well-being of students. This aligns with the principles of the social model of disability, as demonstrated by Heystek & Terhoven (2015) and Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik (2021). The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the transformative role of teacher support

and individualized attention in helping students with learning barriers. These affordances emphasize the positive impact of teachers' proactive engagement in inclusive practices, even within resource-constrained environments.

4. How do school leaders support the implementation of inclusive education?

The study highlights the crucial role of school leaders in creating a supportive environment for inclusive education. It found that leaders who model inclusivity and provide ongoing support to teachers are essential for fostering a culture of inclusivity. However, the study also identified the limitations faced by school leaders, including inadequate resources, excessive administrative burdens, and a lack of external support from the broader educational system. This aligns with the findings of Hudson et al. (2019), which emphasize the need for fostering teamwork and addressing institutional barriers. The study contributes to existing literature by illustrating how school leaders' capacity to support inclusive education is shaped by the structural challenges they face, further corroborating Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory. The theory underscores the importance of the exosystem—policies and resources outside the school—which directly influences the microsystem of the classroom. This study adds to the understanding of how systemic constraints impact the effective implementation of inclusive education at the school level.

Contribution to Existing Literature

This study contributes to the growing body of research on inclusive education by addressing the complex interplay of environmental factors, systemic issues, and the practices of teachers and school leaders. It reinforces the need for structural changes, greater resource allocation, and professional development to support inclusive education effectively. The study also highlights the persistence of the medical deficit model and the importance of adopting the social model of disability to ensure a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

By exploring the challenges and affordances of inclusive teaching, as well as the roles of school leaders, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to and opportunities for implementing inclusive education in full-service schools. The findings underscore the need for systemic reforms, including policy revisions and improved resource distribution, to enable schools to meet the diverse needs of learners and foster an inclusive educational environment.

In summary, this study not only pinpoints and analyses the obstacles to inclusive education within full-service schools but also highlights the methods by which positive change can be achieved. To overcome the unfavourable attitudes of parents, the limits of the medical model of thought, and resource constraints, teachers, parents, and policymakers must work together. Positive results that emerge from management and teacher support act as a light of hope, demonstrating that inclusive education can become a reality and enable every student to realise their full potential with coordinated efforts. This study clarifies the relationship between practice, policy, and systemic difficulties in putting inclusive education into practice. Using the framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory, it shows how different systems interact to produce both opportunities and challenges for inclusivity. It shows that despite the efforts of teachers and leaders to maintain the values of inclusivity, these efforts are frequently undermined by systemic problems such as a lack of resources, difficulties in leading, and deeply ingrained medical model thinking.

The role of teachers when it comes to supporting learners with barriers is vitally important. It has been identified in this study that teachers face many challenges that may impede their ability to implement inclusive education within their classrooms. There are still teachers who go above and beyond to ensure that no learner is left behind. Although classrooms are overcrowded, teachers make use of peer teaching and grouping of learners. The grouping of learners allows the teacher to allocate time to the learners with barriers and assist them with overcoming these barriers using various teaching methods. In Sunshine High School, two learning support specialists are there to support learners with barriers. The role of the school-based support team is crucial because they can assist teachers who have identified learners with barriers in their classrooms. Teachers have an important role in communicating with parents and getting parents also to support their children at home.

Given the challenges outlined above, the practical recommendations for inclusive education policies must focus on improving teacher training, addressing systemic support gaps, and providing a more inclusive and resource-rich learning environment. The recommendations can be categorized into teacher training and professional development, systemic support and policy revisions, and resource allocation. These recommendations are grounded in the research findings and the need to move away from the medical deficit model towards a more inclusive, social model of disability. Teachers must be equipped with continuous, in-depth professional

development opportunities that go beyond one-time seminars. These should focus on practical strategies for inclusive education, including differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL), and how to effectively use assistive technologies. This development must be grounded in the social model of disability, emphasizing the capacities of all learners rather than focusing on deficits. Offer ongoing training throughout the school year, with in-person or online workshops and mentoring opportunities led by experts in inclusive education. Ensure these sessions provide hands-on activities, case studies, and real classroom strategies to tackle diverse learning needs effectively.

Inclusive education policies must prioritize the social model of disability, which emphasizes changing the environment to support diverse learners, rather than focusing on diagnosing and "fixing" students. This can help reduce the stigma associated with learning barriers and encourage a more inclusive mindset among teachers, students, and parents. Revise educational policies to emphasize a social model of disability. This includes supporting a shift in teacher attitudes and practices away from a deficit-based view of learners and towards one that focuses on adapting the environment to meet diverse needs. Schools should actively engage families and communities in supporting inclusive education, helping to create a network of support for students. Policies should be developed that encourage the involvement of parents and other community stakeholders in the development and implementation of inclusive practices.

One of the primary barriers to effective inclusion is the lack of resources. To address this, policies should be enacted to increase funding for schools, ensuring that they can provide necessary resources such as teaching assistants, learning support specialists, assistive technologies, and flexible learning spaces. Development targeted funding programs for schools that serve a high percentage of students with learning barriers, ensuring that these schools have the resources to provide personalized learning and adequate support. Implement policies that limit class sizes, particularly in classrooms with a higher proportion of students with special educational needs. Ensuring manageable teacher-student ratios will enable more personalized attention and allow for effective differentiated instruction.

School leaders, including principals and heads of departments (HODs), play a critical role in creating an inclusive school culture. These leaders must be provided with the tools, training, and resources to effectively support teachers in implementing inclusive practices. Provide leadership training that focuses on inclusive education strategies and how to manage and allocate resources effectively to support inclusivity. Leaders should be trained to recognize the

systemic issues that hinder inclusive education and be empowered to advocate for necessary changes at higher levels.

Limitations

This study is in no way representative of all full-service schools, and this is a limitation of the study. However, it does show that there is a need for structures operating in the exosystem (district officials) to focus on teacher training initiatives to support teachers in full-service schools. In addition, these findings highlight the need for state actors (Education departments) to find more funds to support full-service schools where they address issues like inferior infrastructure and teacher shortages. The data also shows that overcrowding is an issue at both schools and if such overcrowding is endemic, then the state needs to find the funds for more schools. Finally, the data shows that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive teaching are framed from a medical deficit orientation – this calls for an urgent need for in-service education for these teachers and a focus on inclusive education training at the pre-service level so that the next generation of teachers who enter the workplace isis better equipped with an understanding of what it means to be inclusive and with the skills necessary to be an inclusive teacher.

My study makes a substantial contribution to the expanding corpus of research on inclusive education in South Africa, especially in full-service institutions. This study sheds light on the barriers and achievements that teachers encounter when adopting inclusive education by examining the strategies and problems that teachers and school administrators encounter. According to Engelbrecht et al. (2020), the results highlight the vital need for sufficient training, resources, and structural support—all of which are frequently absent from full-service schools and result in gaps in effective inclusion. By looking at the long-term effects of these barriers on learners and concentrating on how inclusive education might be more successfully incorporated into educational systems, future research can build on this study. In addition, this study explores the effect of parental attitudes and community participation, emphasising the leadership's support of inclusive practices. These findings lay the groundwork for future investigations into how these external factors impact inclusivity (Walton & Osman, 2020). This research helps to create more inclusive and sustainable education methods that can influence South African educational policy and practice by highlighting important areas for improvement. In the end, this study emphasises the need for more all-encompassing support systems, improved resource distribution, and a departure from deficit-focused methods of addressing learner diversity. By doing this, it advances knowledge on the prerequisites needed to successfully adopt inclusive education approaches in South Africa's full-service schools.

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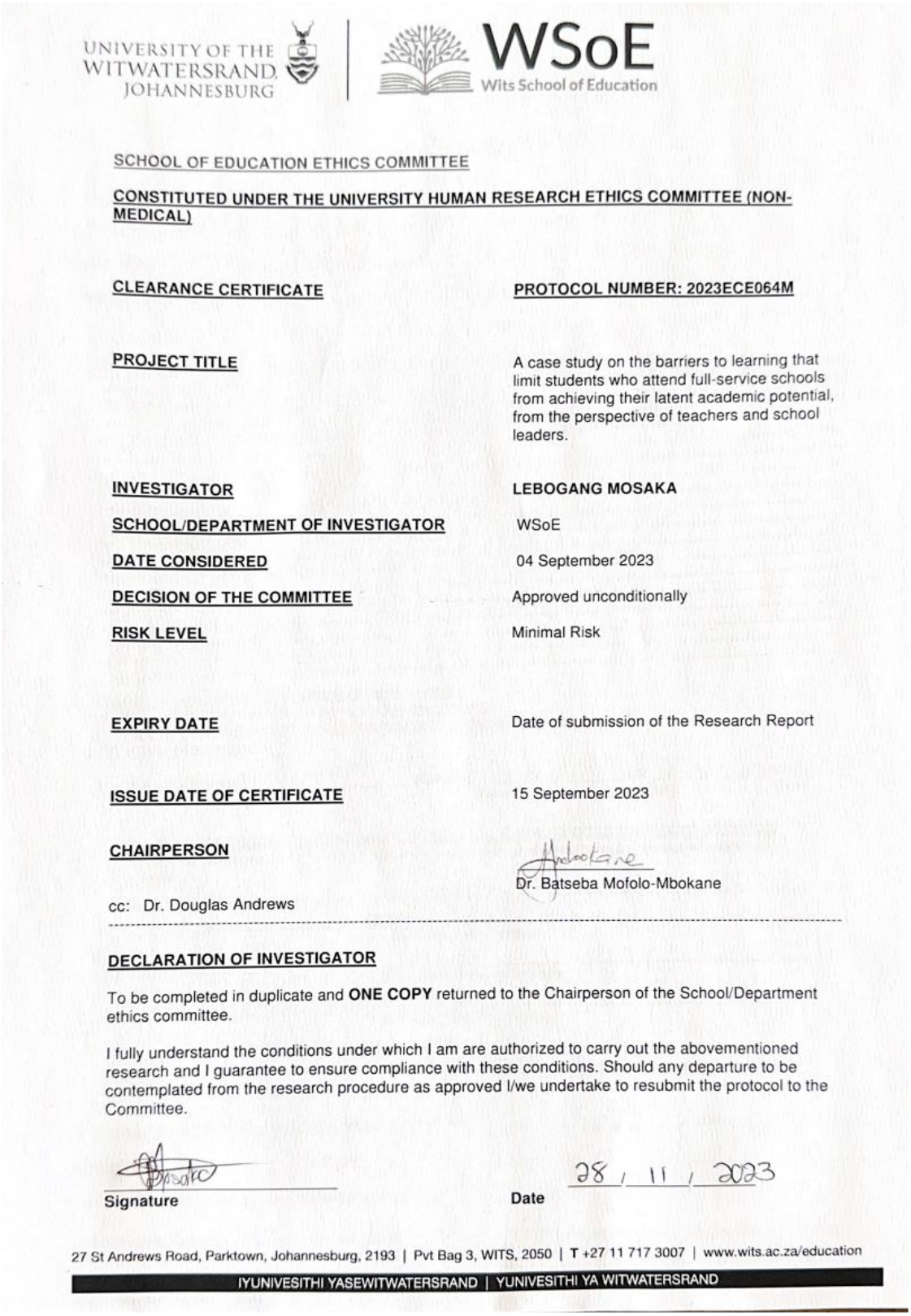
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1 Appendix

Appendix A



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

WSoE Wits School of Education

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2023ECE064M**
PROJECT TITLE	A case study on the barriers to learning that limit students who attend full-service schools from achieving their latent academic potential, from the perspective of teachers and school leaders.
INVESTIGATOR	**LEBOGANG MOSAKA**
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WSoE
DATE CONSIDERED	04 September 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Minimal Risk
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the Research Report
ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE	15 September 2023
CHAIRPERSON	Dr. Batseba Mofolo-Mbokane

cc: Dr. Douglas Andrews

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature **Date** 28 / 11 / 2023

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Appendix B

RAW DATA THEMES	FIRST ORDER THEMES	HIGHER ORDER THEMES
• assist them to get rid of their to barrier • they should be diagnosed while there's still time • so if it has to do with the intellectual, we invite the psychologist • the testing to be done • these different schools • cannot outgrow whatever challenge • only special school • diagnosed • these different schools • they are very slow • identifying them • academically slow	Medical model of inclusion	Medical Model of Disability and Its Impact
• be a socio-economic problem • They're taking they take time and we end up proceeding the	Constraints to inclusion (resource issues. Human and physical resource issues)	Systemic Resource Constraints

• be diagnosed while still early, but it's not happening • it has one allocated for so many schools • The child headed families • take care of their siblings • t's not enough, because we have school holidays • are 80, something 70, something something in class. • , I've got 44 periods, 84 slotted in one time period of five days		
• to withdraw from school • to find placement for other learners • if we have 200 learner, maybe 30% of the learners are able to read	Exclusion(Support)	Systemic Resource Constraints
• support agent • social workers, • academically • a group or a team of teachers in the high	Support provided	Systematic support

school that will remain after school. • give them DBE books • service providers who are coming to school to give them food parcels • we use our school kitchen to give them food • sit down and then one by one, teach them how to read and write • reading day • is teaching for those who don't know anything		
• They cannot cope • That's new teachers are coming and then they don't come at the end of the day.	Lack of support/consequences of lack of support	Teacher Practices and Classroom Management
• helps us to know the kind of learners that we are teaching • Each type is unique	Social model of inclusion	Inclusive school culture.
• Very slow and processing and understanding,	Attitudes to inclusion	Attitudes and involvement
• we inform the parent and they are parents	PARENTS RESPONSE	Parental Attitudes and Involvement

who are who usually don't take it positively • those who are in denial • they shift the learners • we don't give the profiles to the parents.		