

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the needs of Foundation Phase teachers within an inclusive education system. The policy of inclusion in education is currently being promoted in many countries and has over the last decade been part of the new educational movement in South Africa. The rationale for this study lies in the pivotal role of teachers in facilitating the success of an inclusive system. The study utilises a sample of eighteen female teachers in the Foundation Phase of six different township-based mainstream primary schools in Gauteng. The schools share similar socio-economic backgrounds, and are all dual medium of instruction (English and Afrikaans), co-ed schools. The participants range in age from 26-59 years old, having a tertiary qualification in education and a range of teaching experience from 1 year to over 10 years. The teachers were asked to participate in a guided interview that was designed to examine 1) their perceptions of what they need in order to be effective within their classrooms, 2) their perceptions of their competency in managing diversity within their classrooms, and 3) their perceptions of support services with regard to in-service training programmes, district-based support teams, school-based support teams, and within school resources. The findings revealed that the major needs of teachers within an inclusive setting relate to: smaller class size, less administrative paperwork, specialised support from professional experts within the field of education (e.g. psychologists, remedial teachers), greater support from support teams, and training programmes aimed at directly addressing their difficulty in adequately meeting the individual needs of learners. Further, the teachers feel that they do not possess the necessary skills that are needed to cope with meeting the demands of learner diversity within their classrooms. The results of this study provide reasons for concern regarding teachers who are viewed as the key role-players for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The research findings suggest that unless the needs of teachers are acknowledged and addressed through effective interventions, the implementation of inclusive education could encounter serious obstacles. The limitations of the present study are discussed and directions for future research are made.

## **KEYWORDS**

Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Attitudes, Needs, Support, Learner Diversity, Stress.