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Parental attitudes towards, and their understanding of, barriers to learning and development

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education, a system adopted in post-apartheid South Africa, is an education system which seeks to protect the rights of all learners, irrespective of the barriers to learning and development which they may be facing. It is based on the premise that all learners have the right to an education, and that the education system needs to ensure that they have the appropriate systems in place to ensure that this right is protected. Barriers to learning and development impedes the learning process, and they need to be addressed in order for the basic need of education to be met. One of the key stakeholders in overcoming barriers to learning and development, and ensuring the successful implementation of inclusive education, are parents.

This exploratory and descriptive qualitative study aimed to explore the manner in which parents conceptualise barriers to learning and development, and their attitudes towards them. Seven parents participated in individual interviews, and the data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Participants were parents of school-going children, who had placed their child in one specific mainstream school in Lenasia. The analysis of the interviews revealed that parents hold an overall positive view of inclusive education, but that this perception shifts to a more negative one in light of considering the impact it might have on their own children. Parents are also able to identify barriers to learning and development being faced by the general population of learners in South Africa; these included language and cultural barriers, socio-economic deprivation, transport barriers, as well as large classrooms, and a lack of discipline within classrooms. Most of the participants' responses regarding the barriers to learning being faced by their own children related to barriers within the chosen school, such as teacher attitude and teacher competence, as well as a perceived lack of support from the school. Finally, parents regarded parental involvement as a central contributing factor to the successful education of their children.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Barriers to Learning and Development, Attitudes, Perceptions, Parents.*