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Managing the Teaching of Diverse Learners in Inclusive Classes in a South African Context

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ABSTRACT The White Paper 6 of 2001 addresses the teaching of the special educational needs of learners in public schools in South Africa. It provides for all learners - irrespective of barriers to learning and development – to have the right to be educated in a public school by well-trained teachers. In line with this policy this original study analysed the experiences of teachers of inclusive classes and the roles played by school-based support team (SBST) members in terms of adequately capacitating and supporting the teachers. The challenges that are encountered by principals, SBST members and phase teachers in providing support for teachers of inclusive education were explored. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with SBST committees to determine the phenomenon and level of support for teachers of inclusive education. The findings revealed that principals lack training and rely on the district for support and intervention strategies for teachers and learners in inclusive classes. This paper argues that inclusive schools do not only require the implementation of new policies but that on-going inclusive development support, in-service training and planning for differentiated learning methods are also important for the successful realisation of an inclusive system. Educators need exposure to inclusive teaching in order to coordinate efforts and understand the needs of the classroom in terms of developing skills and lesson plans.