Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education in Some Selected South African Schools

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ABSTRACT The introduction of inclusive education (IE) into the primary school curriculum is faced with myriad of challenges and prospects. This empirical study therefore employed a case study design using a qualitative approach to investigate the problems and prospects of implementing inclusive education in primary schools in Mafikeng, South Africa. The study investigated practitioners' level of training, availability of infrastructure and resources for IE implementation in selected primary schools. Semi-structured interviews, observations and document reviews were used to elicit information from the participants. Results were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings from the study revealed that although participants were aware of the benefits of IE, majority of primary school teachers received inadequate training on Inclusive Education. Also, support in terms of infrastructure is grossly inadequate. The study therefore recommends that training programmes should be organized for teachers to assist in the classification and identification of disability types in order to assist learner who needs special academic needs.

INTRODUCTION

The education system in the world today is constantly evolving. Hence, Inclusive Education has become a commonly used phrase and a most sensitive on-going issue in the educational sector. Inclusive Education is a pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her full potential (Brunswick 2017). It guarantees physically challenged or learners with impairment an opportunity to be educated especially those in less developed countries where the problem is highly pronounced. The introduction of inclusive education into the school curriculum of less developing countries is to cater for the educational needs of the physically challenged learners with impairments and avail them with opportunities to be educated. In summarizing the findings of Slee (2013) from his studies, one can deduce that, despite the agitation across the world by well-meaning international bodies and various legal declarations and commitments to rid the society of discrimination against the physically challenged, it is yet to wholly achieve and get rid of exclusion in schools and this is evident in the current legislation of the UN disability discrimination Act and the convention on the rights of disabled persons and its optional protocol.

Defining Inclusive Education

There is no universal definition of inclusive education exists, but Mitchell (2014) contends, there is a growing international consensus as to the principal features of this multi-dimensional concept. With regard to students with disabilities, these include the following: entitlement to full membership in regular, age-appropriate classes in their neighbourhood school; access to appropriate aids and support services, individualized programmes, with appropriately differentiated curriculum and assessment practices (Mitchell 2014).

Full-service Schools

The Department of Education (2005) defines full service schools as normal primary or second-

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ary schools which are especially equipped to address the full range of barriers to learning within an IE setting. Such schools are accessible to most learners. In the initial implementation stages, these schools were viewed as models of institutional change, reflecting effective inclusive cultures, policies and practices**.**

The birth of democratic governance in South Africa in 1994 heralded a new beginning in the education system for learners experiencing barriers due to the segregationist policy of the apartheid regime that led to the lopsided distribution of resources and vast disparities in terms of funding, educational rights as well as opportunities and expectations. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has embarked on a mission to introduce IE in SA schools as a priority (DoE 2001). Savolainen et al. (2012) aver that special needs education (SNE) suffered a setback due to the existence of apartheid laws. The introduction of the Bill of Rights in 1996, ensured that every South African have access to education and this led to the introduction of the Education White Paper 6-EWP6: Special Needs Education; Building an Inclusion Education and Training System (DoE 2001), with the main focus on the affirmation that no learner, irrespective of the disabilities or barriers to learning which they confront, should be denied access to equal education (Dreyer 2017).

To a nation that recently shed the toga of racism, the concept of inclusion is relatively new, hence, the challenges of familiarization with the new concept. Human beings generally abhor change and as a result resistance becomes inevitable. Pottas (2005) describes change as something that is not easy, because it is a process in itself that takes time to unfold: it can sometimes linger for years beyond expectation, instead of been spontaneous, and it involves more than just programmes, material, technology or equipment. Subban and Sharma (2006) affirm that the experience, beliefs, values, knowledge and attitudes of educators who double as key policy executors in teaching and learning and also as agents of change should be considered at the early stage of policy implementation. They are responsible for creating an enabling environment for learning to take place which is a vital tool in promoting and developing inclusion within the education system. Changes within the schools and class-

rooms are difficult because it involves changing the curriculum, ensuring professional development, and putting in place learner support services and classroom management. This must be a gradual process in other to avoid dislocation in the process of teaching and learning. Hence, Successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which can include physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional (McManis 2017).

Therefore, when planning to implement IE, issues ranging from inadequate support for educators, shortage of resources, dearth of skilled teachers and teacher – learner ratio must be properly addressed to forestall the efforts of educators being jeopardized (Khoaeane 2013). Many factors continue to affect and control the development and successful implementation of IE. Beyene and Tizazu (2010) view the lack of in-depth understanding of the concept of disability as inculcating negative attitudes towards people with disabilities, as well as resistance to change. Forlin et al. (2014) posited that educators face challenges in transforming their views and practices with respect to teacher preparation because schools and systems are shifting towards making the environment more inclusive. This position may not be unconnected with the study carried out by the trio of Allday et al. (2013) who observed from their study the paucity of inclusive training for general education teachers as part of their pre-service training. These and many more are the main obstacles to IE being successfully implemented. However, it should be noted that challenges of inclusion in classrooms is not peculiar to South African schools alone. For instance, the Malaysian government introduced an intervention programme called the Literacy and Numeracy strategy (LINUS) to assists students identified as 'at-risk' of developing numeracy and literacy problems. As part of the initiative, LINUS teachers receive government-supported continuing professional development, which enabled them to identify and support students with special needs as well as those at risk, because these teachers are expected to be better informed than other teachers in Malaysia about special educational needs (Bailey et al. 2015).

The level of training and support received by teachers on how to teach in an inclusive class-

room is inadequate (Kern 2006) and preparations for teachers to become inclusive practitioners currently lags behind policy (Armstrong et al. 2010). As a confirmation of the inadequate training and support for teachers, a study conducted in Manitoba Canada by (Sokal and Sharma 2014; Sokal and Katz 2015) revealed that 43 percent of the teachers who teach in Manitoba reported not having attended courses on how to teach students with diverse needs, while 38 percent were not confident of having the necessary skills in the area of inclusion. Wildeman and Nomdo (2007) averred that after over two decades of the declaration at the Salamanca conference and the establishment of democratic governance in South Africa, policy development and implementation of IE still remains a challenge. Two main factors were identified: the rapid transformation of the education system that placed a lot of demands on teachers given rise to pessimism and sense of hopelessness (Swart and Pettipher 2011; Chiner and Cardona 2013; Nel et al. 2013). Also, poor quality of education in South Africa due largely to inadequate training which teachers receive is further compounded by over bloated classrooms, where the ratio of teachers to learners in public schools stands at 1:32. (Matshidiso 2012).

According to Topping (2012), successful implementation of IE is dependent on the attitude of teachers and support staff towards training must improve, because they are the ones responsible for the day-to-day running of the schools and opinion shared by (Chopra 2008). Huber (2009) on the other hand emphasized that training in instructional strategies to improve the skills of teachers and providing specific training on the benefits of inclusion as needed to promote positive teacher attitudes. It is against this background that the present paper reports on challenges in implementing IE in schools in selected Mafikeng primary schools in South Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is underpinned by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen 1991). The TPB model, which is widely used to determine behaviour arising from attitudes, has been utilized in research involving attitudes towards individuals with disabilities (Hodge and Jansma 2000). The theory aimed to understand behaviour by looking at the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms and behavioural intentions. According to Ajzen (1991), attitude and subjective norms determines intention, hence, intention in most cases directly influences behaviour. The type of attitude exhibited by teachers who are to implement the IE determines the success or failure rate of the program. According to Hrubes et al. (2001), they posited that 'intention is assumed to be the immediate antecedent of behaviour'. Based on this assumption by TPB human behaviour is premised on facts and guided by logical thought processes, hence, the causal chain of the TPB implies that altering behaviour-specific beliefs can assist in correcting unhealthy behaviour (Knowlden et al. 2012).

As regards the context of this paper, the behavioural beliefs and attitudes of the educators towards the implementation of IE in classrooms cannot be detached from the challenges and the likely prospects of implementing the program in schools. According to Zemore and Ajzen (2014), a person's attitude towards behaviour is defined as his/her personal evaluation of that behaviour based on the positive or negative outcomes expected to be associated with it. Attitude variable consists of three components, namely affection, cognition, and behaviour. The affective component usually collects all the emotions and feelings that stimulate an object or person to display subjective reactions of trust/distrust or like/dislike, amongst others. This particular component is reflected in the attitude of some of the educators towards the physically challenged learners and this obviously affects them emotionally. The cognitive component reflects someone's factual knowledge of a person or object and finally, the behavioural component involves someone's open or close behaviour directed towards a person or object.

Ajzen (1991) avers that perceived behavioural control depends on the degree to which someone sees him /herself as sufficiently knowledgeable, skilful and able to perform a certain act, and on the extent to which s/he feels that other factors (resources, time constraints, personal past experience, the past experiences of acquaintances, second-hand information about the behaviour, the views of friends, the cooperation of colleagues) could inhibit or facilitate the behaviour.

Perceived behavioural control varies across situations and actions, and as a result the individual ends up with different perceptions of behavioural control, depending on the situations. As a component of the theory, perceived behavioural control reflects the fact that the performance of many or any individual's actions may be beyond his/her control (Kothe et al. 2011). Further incursion by Ajzen (1991) revealed that behavioural control and its influence on intentions are deemed more of psychological interest than the actual control. This Perception of Behavioural Control (PBC) plays an important role in the TPB, such that it necessitates that PBC be distinguished from other concepts relating to control.

According to Sharma and Mannan (2015), two categories within the field of IE have applied TPB: the first comprises of studies that apply the TPB in its entirety, that is, all key determinants (attitude, PBC and subjective norms) are examined. In the field of IE, the use of this approach in examining teachers' behaviours is limited. The second category comprises studies that apply aspects of the theory (that is, examine only one determinant of the three). Sharma and Mannan (2015) found out that the number of studies in this category is significant (particularly hose examining educators' attitudes). Kuyini and Desai (2007), who undertook one of the studies, examined Ghanaian teachers' attitudes towards IE along with their knowledge of the approach. The TPB determinant examined in that study was PBC. The current study falls into the second category, since only one determinant of the theory is examined, by asking four research questions during interviews with educators and principals at the selected full-service schools which make up the study population. The study did not include the subjective norm determinant, because the research was carried out at full-service schools which are inclusive in nature, meaning the entire teacher participants had experience of practicing inclusion. According to Jackson (2015), there are two assumptions within the TPB which must be true for the theory to apply to human behaviour. The first alludes to the fact that humans are rational and reasonable beings, who use the available information to assess any behaviour in an action. The second assumption relates to the likelihood of action being undertaken out of free (elective) will. This meant no one at these schools needed to seek approval or permission to practice inclusion.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to explore the challenges and the prospect of Implementing Inclusive Education in primary schools in Mahikeng province of South Africa. In addition, the study investigated teachers' level of training and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Inclusive Education in the selected primary schools.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative approach using the case study research design. According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), case study research design gives a researcher a broader insight on a case which also makes for a more precise solution to a problem. Hence, case study design was employed to probe in details the challenges that confronted the educators while implementing IE in schools and to also ascertain the success rate of inclusion in classrooms. Case studies excel at helping researchers understand complex issues or objects, by generally answering one or more questions which begin with "how" or "why" (Rossman and Rallis 2012). These questions are targeted at a limited number of participants, yet offer an in-depth investigation without generalizing about a specific aspect/unit/programme, individual/school/classroom or group (in this study the spotlight was on teachers) (Maheshwari 2011; Gary 2012).

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprises of all school teachers in Molema district of Mafikeng in South Africa. A sample of the total of forty-four (44) participants: thirty-nine (39) teachers comprising of 16 males and 23 females and five (5) Principals purposively selected were involved in the study. Participants were purposively selected because they had the requisite characteristics, which included them currently practising inclusion in their general education classroom, or having been exposed to inclusive practices with-

in the past 12 months. There were five (5) focus groups with about 7-8 teachers in each group. Five (5) teachers in all were interviewed, that is, one (1) teacher per group and one (1) principal from each school. This sample size is representative of the population in the study.

Data Collection Methods

Instruments used to gather data for the study are interviews (focus group), observation and document analysis.

Interviews

Principals and teachers were interviewed on a one-on-one basis in a 30-45 minute interview session. Also, teachers were observed in the classroom during the delivery of instruction on how they implement the inclusion in classrooms. The choice of interview as an instrument for data collection for this study was to grant the respondents an opportunity to comment extensively on inclusive education and also have a deeper understanding of what constraints confronts the teachers in the implementation of IE in schools. A total of ten (10) participants were interviewed, that is, five (5) Principals and five (5) teachers. In each school, the Principal and a teacher (from a group) were interviewed. There were five (5) focus groups with about 7-8 teachers in each group, the interviews for the focus group lasted for about 30-40minute. Interviews were conducted in English because the participants were bi-lingual; hence there was no need to translate the questions or their responses.

Observation

Observation as an instrument on the other hand is to study over a period of time if inclusion program is yielding the expected results. Only five (5) teachers were observed in the classroom during the course of teaching the learners.

Documents

Documents analyzed were school records such as visitor's record books, mark books and class attendance register.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out at the same time as data collection in an iterative process, as suggested by (Merriam 2009). The data in the current study consisted of transcripts and notes taken during the interviews conducted for the purpose of the study which were transcribed and analysed into themes and sub-themes generated in the course of the interview with the participants. Firstly, each transcript was read to get an overall sense of the whole. Second, the transcripts were read to identify the transactions in the experience with each translation signifying a separate unit of meaning. This process was followed in other to find the deeper meaning in what the respondents are saying. Third, the redundancies in the units of meaning were eliminated and the remaining units related to one another. Fourth, the respondents' language was transformed into the language of science, and finally, the insights were synthesized into a description of the entire experiences of implementing inclusive education in schools. The analyzed data were then categorized into themes and sub-themes that emerged from the findings.

Ethical Consideration

Necessary ethical considerations were discussed with the participants before the commencement of the interview. Robson (2002), avers that ethics refers to rules of conduct, a code of principles adhered to in the course of conducting a study. The following ethical issues were discussed with respondents:

i.   *Privacy:* Acronyms were used to guarantee the confidentiality of the participants used in the study through the use of pseudo names.
ii. *Consent:* Participants consent was sought willingly sans coercion. A letter of permission from the relevant education authorities was obtained. Participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any point for any reason.
iii. *Information:* The participants were informed of the use that would be made of the data collected and it was explained why their participation is germane.

iv. Approval: To conduct research in schools, permissions were sought from the district manager of Ngaka Modiri Molema, the DBE of the North-West province in Mahikeng, as well as the different principals of the identified full-service schools.

Issues of Quality in Research (Trustworthiness)

Validity according to Wellington (2015) is the extent to which a test measures what it was designed to measure and performs as it is designed to perform. The current study is strong on validity – the use of more than one instrument to elicit information from the respondents in the study enhanced issues of validity. Since the researchers used Instruments which include semi-structured interview, document analysis and observation; triangulation of data sources was done in order to ensure the authenticity of the findings.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to five primary schools in Ngaka Modiri Molema district, Mafikeng due to time constraints and the distance between schools. Our worries include the small size of the sample used in the study that will make it difficult to generalize our findings on the problems and prospects of inclusive education. However, since this is a qualitative study there is no need of generalization. The purpose of qualitative research is to get under the skin of the organisations concerned, rather than generalization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings of the study and discusses the findings under the following sub-headings.
- Level of training received by teachers and its effects on the implementation of IE in schools;
- Level of District-Base Support and Infrastructural Facilities;
- Challenges faced by teachers' in the implementation of IE in schools.

Level of Training Received by Teachers and its Effects on the Implementation of IE

Level of training received by teachers and its effects on the implementation of IE in schools.

Training was a major source of concern for the teachers and principals of the selected four full-service schools. The principals complained about not being given any training on how to manage a school of this kind. Principals mentioned that they were using the teacher training skills they acquired at teacher training institutions, or information gleaned from the teachers at their respective schools. Thus, teachers and principals end up confusing one another when it comes to providing remedial support, and this resulted to a situation where a large chunk of the learners ended up in a remedial class, a situation that could have been avoided if extensive training had been given to the teachers before the integration of inclusive education into the school curriculum. This notion was echoed by a principal from Koti Primary, when s/he stated that:

"We need training because it is difficult for teachers to concentrate on those learners who need remedial, because they do not have the skill. They end up referring learners to the remedial class in large numbers and we end up having a full remedial class, and this means learners who can't cope and they make a class. It seems as if teachers ignore those learners who learn with a slow pace, so training of teachers on issues of inclusion is needed badly."

Teachers responsible for the teaching and learning of learners with different learning abilities also complained about inadequate training to properly handle such learners. This has therefore led teachers to believe they might at some point be doing injustice to those learners, hence their plea to the Department of Education to provide assistance that can help solve the problem. This much is evident in a comment made by T3 from Burgavilla Primary who stated that:

"Most of the challenges facing us as educators are that most of us are not trained to work with learners who are having problems or difficulties, so we end up not knowing whether we are on the right track to help the poor learner. Sometimes we end up misleading a learner instead of helping the child. So what I would say is that I think the government could maybe make at some point whereby it will give us some advice on how to handle learners with such problem, because we are just going astray, not knowing how to help these learners."

Findings revealed that principals and teachers saddled with the responsibility of educating learners with different learning abilities had challenges with learners of different abilities. Hence, they do not have a clear understanding of their role in implementing inclusive education. Findings from the study is in line with studies conducted in the Bahamas by Johnson et al. (2014) who stated that variables such as insufficient teacher preparation and training, lack of funding minimal administrative support and systemic barriers in terms of unclear policies play a vital role in hindering the successful implementation of IE. This apart, the level of interaction or social participation of learners with special needs in regular school is drastically reduced which may degenerate into complex and apathy among the learners. Therefore, providing principals and teachers with the opportunity to attend courses and other relevant training related to Inclusive education programme could assist in the successful implementation of IE. In addition, Vietnam (2010) stated that when developing human resources to support an inclusive education system three areas must be considered which includes the attitudes of teachers and education staff, pre-service training programs to help ensure that future generations of teachers enter the profession with the skills and knowledge to work in an inclusive environment, and in-service training to improve the capacity of teachers already working in the field.

Level of District-Base Support and Infrastructural Facilities

The findings of this study revealed that it is the responsibility of the DBE, through its district officials, to give them sufficient and relevant support. Both teachers and principals felt that although the district officials visit their schools, they do not provide adequate support to teachers. The officials were mainly concerned with monitoring rather than providing the necessary support when serious problems were encountered. Principal of Burgavilla Primary stated that:

".......even though the district officials visit schools, follow-up visits meant to resolve cases reported takes longer than necessary and this have a negative impact on the learners who remain static at the same grade level they tend to take a long time to make follow-up visits and resolve cases which have been reported. As a result, growing number of learners are kept waiting to be helped, and thus have to remain in the same grade longer than is necessary. In the end, they are promoted to the next grade thanks to the age cohort policy, without their learning barriers being attended to"

Some participants felt that the district officials' support was hardly noticeable, that in fact it amounted to little or no support because their visits to schools were mainly concerned with monitoring and checking whether the ILST/SBST was functional. Following that, they hand out information without getting to the root of problems encountered at schools or in classrooms. Both teachers and principals indicated that they had presented numerous issues to the district officials, but not only were solutions not proposed, no interventions took place. Amongst those issues was the post-provision model (PPM) of Koti Primary, where the remedial teacher who had been appointed to teach the remedial class was removed and used in other classes. The principal indicated that although the case had been reported as far back as 2013, by 2015 nothing had yet been done about it. The principal of Makoti Primary showed her dissatisfaction by indicating that:

"Although a building had been constructed on the school premises and had been completed, and despite the keys having been handed to the school, there are no directives from the district officials on what to do with the building"

The findings from the researchers' observations reflect the discontent voiced by the Makoti Primary principal, where a building – a so-called therapy room stands empty without any furniture. Looking at the PPM document of Koti Primary, it was indeed true that the school had been allocated a remedial teaching post, which was being used for learners other than those for whom it was intended. A perusal of the school's incident register/logbook revealed that district officials take a long time to visit some schools: at Makoti Primary there was an interval of two to four months, whereas at Burgavilla Primary it was three to six months. In addition, when reading what the purpose of the visit was at that point in time, in most cases it indicated monitoring and support, without explaining what kind of support was given or how that support was offered.

The findings and information obtained from the school's records corroborated the findings emanating from the interviews and focus-group discussions, which revealed a lack of adequate support on the part of the district officials. Lewis and Bagree (2013) and Bantwini and Diko (2011) therefore stated that follow-up training and support, as well as regular visits to schools, are vital duties of any district officials because the district has the capacity to be the fulcrum around which desired educational change and improvement revolve if it is to fulfils its core function which includes (among others) providing support. Therefore, District-based support team have to ensure that there is a clear understanding in schools about school support and their duties.

Furthermore, the shortage of classrooms in some schools poses a serious problem for teachers. Congested classes make it impossible for IE to be implemented successfully. Teachers are compelled to use every bit of available space they can find, as was the case at Tshipika Primary, where the HoD's office was used as a classroom. The shortage of teaching staff worsened the situation. In some schools, overcrowding seriously affected the teacher: learner ratio, which implies that effective teaching and learning are not taking place. In a full-service school, that renders the whole idea of inclusivity impossible. Some participants in this study felt that overcrowding had a negative effect on the support required by the teacher and by those learners who experience barriers to learning. This contradicts the main focus of the SIAS policy, which is to manage and support the teaching and learning process for learners who experience barriers to learning, within the framework of the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R–12 (DBE 2014: 12).

Due to overcrowding, some participants questioned whether the introduction of the full-service school model was indeed effective. A comment by the principal of Koti Primary attested to the fact:

"If they can supply us with classes, then we will know our standpoint as full-service school and we can implement inclusive education. Our class teacher: learner ratio is 1:60, 1:40 and 1:59. The lowest are in grade 3, with 1:40, 1:41 and 1:45 in one class. The circuit inspectors do not honour the post-position model (PPM), as the remedial teacher is being used in different classes. Therefore, the concept of full-service school has not yet yielded any positive results for us."

In addition, T3 from Tshipika Primary mentioned that enrolment figures at their school were too high, and it was therefore impossible to exercise proper time management. The teacher cited the example of a remedial class comprising 70 learners, which made it impossible to do remedial teaching. Participants were therefore of the view that in order for inclusive education to be implemented successfully in their schools, teachers need to be intensively trained and their schools need to be well resourced. The teachers and principals felt that it was unfair and time-consuming to expect them to practice inclusion without the proper knowledge, skills and resources. Some teachers stated that the district and the Institutional Policy Development Services (IPDS), which is the provincial office that liaises with the DBE nationally on all matters pertaining to IE in the North-West Province, should employ teachers who are qualified in IE to come to their schools and take responsibility for inclusion, to ensure that this task is accomplished well. This view is captured in the following statement by T3 from Koti Primary:

The policy can be implemented in the school, and it is a very good policy provided we are well trained, and well resourced, we can push, or they can hire a well-trained inclusive teacher to handle all-inclusive matters.

The above view, stemming from the teachers' interviews, correlates with the findings of Lewis and Bagree (2013), who contend that many countries do not have enough well-trained teachers to teach children with disabilities. As a result, teaching without the necessary training or support can be detrimental to the education of an already marginalized group.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in the Implementation of IE in Schools

Findings from the participants on the challenges faced in implementing IE in schools revealed that teachers' and principals' had their own way of practising IE, but mainly it was a way that suited them, because each had their own take on what IE entails. This finding is consistent with those of Johnson et al. (2014), who did a study

amongst high school teachers in the Bahamas, and Chaula (2014) who did the same in Tanzanian inclusive primary schools. They found that teachers understood IE to connote a variety of meanings, which led to them (teachers) developing different attitudes towards implementation.

Participants in the study indicated that they involve parents as stakeholders in an endeavour to make their schools more inclusive. Three of the four principals and the majority of participants stated that they worked satisfactorily with the parents as well as other stakeholders. For instance, the parents are invited to school to discuss their children's progress. This was confirmed by the principal of Tshipika Primary:

"We call the parents and they do support us, because they come for intervention, we also have the clinic staff that also DBEs help, and we also have a social worker, who is stationed at the school. We also have a librarian who is also stationed at the school, so they do assist us in keeping the learners, and the parents attend the intervention session, when the learner has a problem."

In the same vein, Mahlo (2011) maintained that participation by parents and other stakeholders helps to improve a school's capacity to respond to diversity, and this helps teachers recognise and react appropriately to the needs of all learners, thereby promoting effective learning. Extending this line of thought, the Department-of-Education (2001: 19) emphasises the training of personnel in order to focus on "supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met". For the successful implementation of IE, it is essential to create a supportive environment in which there is collaboration amongst teachers, sister departments, district officials, principals and parents.

A principal and several teachers who participated in this study were not satisfied with the level of parental involvement, arguing that even though the parents responded to invitations to come to the school they were selective in attending events/meetings. This was iterated by a teacher in Koti Primary who stated that:

"Some parents don't come for meetings and events because some parents are illiterate, and may not be able to read or understand the content of a letter of invitation. Also, another contributing factor is that most learners have been left in the care of their grandparents due to fa-milial poverty, with the parents having relocated to find work. Some young parents have passed on due to diseases such as HIV/AIDS."

The participants also indicated that many parents are in denial as regards their child's inability to cope with some of the schoolwork, which leads them to ignore any letters inviting them to attend a meeting called by the school. Several participants mentioned that they implement IE by looking at the previous grade results to guide them in terms of rendering support. A teacher in Tshipika Primary stated that:

"I do a "baseline" assessment after admission, to group learners into categories (high, middle, average and slow achievers). The focus is mainly on language acquisition (English, Setswana) and mathematical ability. Regardless of whether the results are good or bad, the parents are informed."

Many teachers mentioned that they implement IE by identifying learners with barriers to learning, and giving them extra classes after school. While highlighting the challenges encountered in a classes, a teacher in Koti Primary stated that:

"I asked those learners who are struggling to stay behind after school for a few minutes, since it is difficult to teach achieving and slow learners in the same class at the same time because those who learn fast tend to disrupt class when the teacher is still busy with the slower learners."

This scenario presents teachers with a serious challenge: they are unable to adhere to time allocations as per the lesson plan, and sometimes fail to complete a planned activity. For that reason, some teachers were of the view that policy and reality do not complement each other. The teachers referred to the EWP6, which urges that all learners, regardless of learning ability, should be taught within the same environment. Unfortunately, issues related to time management and overcrowding tend to interfere with the correct and successful implementation of IE. The teacher from Koti primary elaborated further that:

"Overcrowding is the result of the high enrolment of learners from neighbouring schools, which leads to a high learner- teacher ratio, which even makes remedial classes ineffective in many instances. Also, the shortage of classrooms poses a serious problem for teachers. Therefore, congested classes make it impossible for IE to be implemented successfully."

Teachers are therefore compelled to use every bit of available space they can find, as was the case at Tshipika Primary, where the HoD's office was used as a classroom. The shortage of teaching staff worsened the situation. In some schools, overcrowding seriously affected the teacher: learner ratio, which implies that effective teaching and learning are not taking place. In a full-service school, that renders the whole idea of inclusivity impossible. Some participants in this study felt that overcrowding had a negative effect on the support required by the teacher and by those learners who experience barriers to learning. This contradicts the main focus of the SIAS policy, which is to manage and support the teaching and learning process for learners who experience barriers to learning, within the framework of the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R–12 (DBE 2014: 12). Due to overcrowding in classrooms, some participants questioned whether the introduction of the full-service school model was indeed effective.

In addition, T3 from Tshipika Primary mentioned that:

"Enrolment figures at the school are too high, and it was therefore impossible to exercise proper time management. For example, remedial class comprises of 70 learners, which made it impossible to do remedial teaching."

When asked why the school had enrolled so many learners, the participant elaborated further by stating that:

"As a full-service school, the DBE expects us to admit learners from neighbouring schools, which use the opportunity to send away those learners who are struggling, as this enables the school to obtain a better aggregate result at the end of the year. Hence, such learners are sent over to full-service schools under the pretext of struggling with barriers to learning."

In a study carried out by Thaver and Lim (2012) in Singapore, they were of the opinion that, learners with physical disabilities, sensory impairment and other forms of disabilities should not be lumped together in mainstream settings since this arrangement is at the detriment of the physically challenged learner. T1 and the principal of Tshipika Primary highlighted that no learner from a neighbouring school was denied admission to their school. The response of T7 from Tshipika Primary confirmed the importance of after-school extra classes:

"Learners take long time, you plan a lesson, that I want to do this and looking at work that will differentiate their capabilities in the class, but you don't even have time to reach those who are good, because of the learners who are unable to do their work properly, if you give them work now and attend the slow ones, those who are good, finish quickly and disrupt the whole class. Our learners are hyperactive, that is why we don't have a special time to attend to those who are experiencing barriers. However, we try to identify those learners and make time so that those learners attend after-school extra classes."

Meanwhile, T1 from Burgavilla Primary confirmed the gap between policy and reality:

"I agree and also disagree with Education White Paper 6, when coming to taking all learners on board, because practically it is not happening in class due to workload we are having as teachers. Our period lasts for 60 minutes (1 hour), but learners with learning barriers need 3 hours, and that can disadvantage."

Even though the after-school extra class arrangements seem to be a solution in certain schools, in others it did not materialise as expected. The major problem was a time clash between the learners' transport and the afternoon classes. Teachers were consequently left with little time to try to cover the work that those learners with learning barriers could not finish during class (normal period/allocated time). According to the principal of Tshipika Primary, teachers are of the view that despite trying their best to implement IE, the approach was not yet fully functional. Despite the myriad of challenges in the implementation of IE in primary schools, yet, opportunities abound that are derivable from the implementation of IE in primary schools. Therefore, a good inclusive education is one that allows all students to participate in all aspects of classroom equally or close to equal. Hence, to meet the challenges, the involvement and cooperation of educators, parents, and community leaders is vital for the creation of better and more inclusive schools (Singh 2016).

CONCLUSION

The current study looked at the challenges and the prospects of implementing inclusive education in South African primary schools. The results showed that an overwhelming majority of

the teachers emphasized on inadequate training they received which didn't augur well for their development as a teacher and thus affects how IE is being implemented. Findings also revealed a lack of quality support from DBST, lack of infrastructural facilities, lack of parental involvement in their children's education and overcrowded classroom situations. The study therefore concludes that the success of implementing inclusive education in any context depends upon many factors which include preparing teachers with essential knowledge and skills; and also the commitment of all actors from students, parents, District-base officials, teachers, school principals and other relevant stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusive education has been defined at various ways that addresses the learning needs of differently abled children. However, the term, Inclusive Education is still loosely understood by policymakers and practitioners including teachers who are chief implementers of educational policies. The study therefore recommends that development or training programmes should be organized for teachers to raise awareness of inclusive education, identification and classification of disability types. The study also recommends that support teams should develop strategies for schools to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs and also be a resource for teachers experiencing challenges in their classrooms. In addition, parents should be encouraged to see themselves as partners in the education process because where such cooperation exist between parents and the school; parents have been found to be valuable resources for teachers and the school.

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