

Learning Support Teachers' Views on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The policy of Inclusive Education (IE) in White Paper 6 (2001) acknowledges that all children can learn with support, and this paper emanates from research into the experiences of learning support teachers (LSTs) in supporting Foundation Phase teachers in implementing IE in Gauteng Province, South Africa. It is envisaged that the implementation of IE in South African schools would require well-planned district as well as school level support services, more than just accepting learners with different learning needs in mainstream classrooms. Many teachers have not had the benefit of being trained to teach learners who experience barriers to learning, hence most find it difficult. Although specialist teachers in the form of LSTs have been employed in the Foundation Phase to fill that gap and assist classroom teachers, the learners may not be receiving the assistance that they are hoping for. Based on an assumption that the failings may largely be systemic, the authors used Bronferbrenner's ecological systems theory and a qualitative research design to examine the implementation of IE in selected schools, with seven LSTs being interviewed and observed, while documents pertaining to the support rendered were analyzed. Analysis employed Creswell's method. Findings highlighted factors affecting implementation of IE, which include inadequate district support, socio-cultural issues, classroom and management factors, lack of resources and inadequate collaboration between the stakeholders. The study makes recommendations and suggests further areas of research.