

**TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING
DIFFICULTIES IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS: A CASE STUDY OF ONE
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN OSHANA REGION, NAMIBIA**

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ABSTRACT

The challenges teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms are matters of concern in many African countries, including Namibia, South Africa and Kenya. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of research on the challenges which teachers face in this regard in mainstream classrooms in the Oshana Region in Namibia. This study explored teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. Accordingly, a case study of one primary school in the Oshana Region was conducted using a qualitative case study as its research design. Social constructionist theory, based on Goldratt's theory of constraints (1995), underpinned the study. The criterion sampling method was used to select the participants. A sample of ten (10) out of the population of 18 teachers at the targeted school was selected because they were all experienced in teaching learners with learning difficulties. The requisite data was collected by means of semi-structured one-on-one interview during which the researcher used an interview guide. Field notes were also taken throughout the research process. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data. The results of the study highlighted the following challenges experienced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms: (1) insufficient time for individual support; (2) lack of teacher in-service education (3) learners' varying abilities (4) large class sizes and (5) inadequate teaching materials. Possible strategies for mitigating the teachers' challenges emerged from the study. In short, the study found that, despite the teachers demonstrating a positive attitude towards the inclusion of

learners with learning difficulties in their classes, it appeared that, in fact, they actually lack the requisite knowledge and skills on how to support learners with learning difficulties because they were not trained in line with the inclusive education discourse. Based on the study findings, the researcher concluded and recommended that there is a need for in-service training and sound advocacy that emphasises on the effective implementation of the Ministry of Education Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) in all schools in Namibia.

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DEDICATION

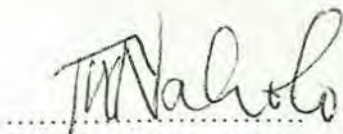
This study is dedicated to my son, Nelson Amenenge Haihambo, who was 6 months old when I was doing the course work. Balancing my life as a mother, a student and a full-time worker it was not an easy task and my son, I am sorry that I was not always there when you needed me the most during your infancy. This work is also dedicated to my daughter, Toini Meameno Haihambo, and my husband, Jason Shamena Haihambo, for their constant words of encouragement and wisdom, which enabled me to complete my studies.

DECLARATION

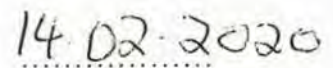
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Toini Maano N. Naholo



Date

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ACRONYMS

BED	-	Bachelor of Education
CBO	-	Community Based Organisations
CPD	-	Continuous Professional Development
EFA	-	Education for All
IE	-	Inclusive Education
IESP	-	Individual Education Support Plans
ILSP	-	Individual Learning Support Plans
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
MoEAC	-	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
NGOs	-	Non-governmental Organisations
NIED	-	Namibian Institute of Education & Development
IT	-	Information Technology
TA	-	Thematic Analysis
TOC	-	Theory of Constraints
UNAM	-	University of Namibia
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
QDA	-	Qualitative Data Analysis

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the orientation of the study, the statement of the research problem, research questions, significance of the study, the limitations of the study and the definition of relevant terms.

1.2 Orientation of the study

Current trends in the world call for inclusive systems, with learners with special needs being accommodated in mainstream schools. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines inclusion in a school context as a space for addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners through their increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion both within and from education. Thus, inclusion involves changes and modifications in content, support, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision, which includes all children. It is the responsibility of the education system to educate all children (UNESCO, 1994). Bayat (2014) argues that the movement towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in all areas of society had already started in the 1970s in the developed countries.

Chowdhury (2011) indicates that inclusion is a significant area of interest in the field of developing education policies and that everyone, regardless of physical, learning or any other disabilities, social status or gender, should have equal access to education. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE) Report (2012) on the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Namibia had a long history of special education prior to independence.

After independence, there were merely a few schools, such as the one selected for the purposes of this research, that were implementing integration by including learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms. The MoE (2012) further reported that after gaining independence in 1990, the Namibian government committed itself to establishing an inclusive education system by ratifying and putting in place a number of international agreements, national legislation and indeed policies such as the Salamanca Declaration (1994) and the MoE Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013). Breilling (2017) states that in 2016 there were a total of 1661 schools in Namibia including nine special schools and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture strives for the implementation of inclusive education at all schools where every child matters.

At the time of this study, Namibia had made significant progress in the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013), although there are obviously gaps in this process as many educators and parents have not witnessed a good inclusive education model. It is thus important that the lessons from those specific schools that are

practicing inclusion, such as the school selected for this study, should be learnt and understood. Despite the Namibian government's efforts with respect to the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) and other education policies designed to ensure a sound foundation of inclusive education in Namibian schools, there are many challenges that are curtailing the proper implementation of the inclusive education policy in the mainstream schools.

The MoE's Strategic Plan (2012–2017) recognizes that barriers to learning arises when learning needs are not met and educational support is not provided and also that learning needs arise from a range of factors such as learning difficulties, psychosocial disturbances, impairments, inadequate support from teachers and differences in learning abilities. In order to address these issues, the MoE (2013) is calling for an accessible and equitable inclusive education system and for support to be an integral component of the entire education system and provided in every school by every teacher.

The Ministry of Education Strategic Plan (2012–2017) also recognises some of the barriers to learning and some of the challenges faced by teachers in mainstream schools that are hampering the effective implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013). Taking cognisance of this and realising the crucial role which teachers play in the implementation of inclusive education, the researcher decided to explore the challenges facing teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms by using a qualitative case study design.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Inclusive education entails accommodating all learners in mainstream classrooms, irrespective of their diversity, including learners with learning difficulties. Walsh (2017) states that the inclusion of learners with special needs in the mainstream classroom has been a major topic of discussion in many years now. Inclusive education means that all students are part of the school community, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, therefore, students with learning difficulties do not need to be placed in a different classroom.

Although the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) stipulates that in the inclusive setting, support for all learners is mandatory, there are many teachers who are still facing the challenges involved in providing support for learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms.

Studies have shown that many teachers who have not been trained in the Inclusive Education discipline are likely to find it difficult to teach learners with learning difficulties alongside their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom.

Engelbrecht and Green (2011) affirm that children with special needs, including those with learning difficulties, are often neglected, ignored, abandoned and left unattended by teachers due to the limited time available.

In Namibia, a study by Zimba (2002), Haihambo (2010), and February (2004) revealed that many teachers in mainstream schools have not been trained in Inclusive Education (IE), hence, they are not able to provide support to learners with learning difficulties when they are taught alongside their peers without learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

Although teachers are key role players in the implementation of inclusive education, they are facing numerous challenges in this regard in mainstream classrooms, as they attempt to support learners with learning difficulties. This is frustrating for them and it is having an adverse impact on their morale, resulting in feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem as well as a decrease in productivity.

It is anticipated that the challenges faced by teachers in mainstream classrooms may hamper learners from achieving good academic results and may negatively affect class averages, as well as hinder the success of the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) in Namibia. Nevertheless, these challenges have, as yet, not been formally studied and documented.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study focusing on the challenges faced by teachers in mainstream classrooms that would inform the way in which the education system should approach the expansion of an inclusive and equitable education system in which learners with learning difficulties feel included and fully supported by teachers.

1.4. Research questions

In order to conduct an in-depth exploration of the challenges teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms?
2. What strategies do teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties when they are taught together with their peers with no learning difficulties in the same classroom?
3. What are the recommended strategies to mitigate the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms to ensure inclusive and effective school communities?

1.5. Significance of the study

Many studies, including those of Breilling (2017), Haihambo (2010) and Zimba (2002), have found that the issues surrounding the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms have not been adequately addressed.

Breilling (2017) further recommends that the challenges facing teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms require critical examination so that schools and teacher training programmes may be organised and based on both

research-based evidence and an understanding of such challenges within the classrooms context. Such an understanding could bring about improvements in both pre- and in-service educational programs with regard to the inclusion of learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

Moreover, it is hoped that the results of this study will inform the main stakeholders in education, such as education managers and education planners in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) devise strategies to mitigate the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms and, in turn, to ensure the effective implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) in Namibia.

1.6. Limitations of the study

It was anticipated that the participants of this study might either misinterpret or link the concept of learners with learning difficulties to that of learners with learning disabilities, despite the two concepts are actually different. This could lead to biases in the results of the study. Thus, the researcher made every effort to mitigate such misinterpretations during the data collection by explaining to the participants, when stating the purpose of the study, the distinction between the meaning of the concept *learners with learning difficulties* and that of *learners with learning disabilities*. The two terms; learning disability and learning difficulty are used interchangeably depending on the context because they differ in many ways. Namhadi and van der Westhuizen (2015) defined

learning disabilities as a neurological disorder and most children with learning disabilities have difficulties in reasoning, recalling and organising information while learning difficulties is associated with difficulties in cognitive development such as dyslexia (reading problem), dysgraphia (writing problem) and dyscalculia (problem with numbers) etc.

Moreover, a learning difficulty can be overcome, whereas a learning disability is a permanent impairment. It should be noted that this study focused on how teachers provide support to learners with learning difficulties only and it does not necessarily include learners with disabilities.

A further limiting factor observed was the fact that although the study targeted a sample of 18 teachers, only ten teachers participated as the others were unwilling to do so. The ideal of the study was to use focus group discussion; it did not happen. The respondents opted for one-on-one interviews. Another limitation was the absence of audio recording as an additional tool because the respondents refused to be audio recorded. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that this did not negatively affect the quality and depth of the study.

1.7. Definition of terms

This section aimed to define the terms and concepts used within the parameters of the study.

The word “*challenges*” in the context of this study refers to limitations or constraints that inhibit teachers from providing support for learners with learning difficulties when they are taught together with their counterparts with no learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

Mainstreaming in the context of the study refers to “the participation of learners with special needs in regular education without demanding changes in the curriculum or special classes for them” (Ngungi, 2010a, p. 2). Thus, in this study, mainstreaming means the teaching of learners with learning difficulties in the same classroom together with their peers without learning difficulties. In addition, in view of the fact that the two terms (mainstream and inclusive) are the same, they are used interchangeably throughout this study.

Learning difficulties- in the context of the study, refers to specific learning difficulties that affect an individual learner’s ability to learn at the same pace of other children of his/her age and this include inability to read, write and solve mathematical problems (Aro & Ahonen, 2011, p. 240). In addition, Gous and Mfazwe (2013) loosely define learning difficulties as the difficulties experienced when a child does not develop according to his/her age. In this study, the term is used to refer to those learners who

have difficulty in accomplishing tasks easily as compared to their peers in the same classroom.

Learners with Special Needs- in the Namibian context, the MoE (2013) has identified the following categories of learners who are regarded as learners with special needs.

Learners with learning difficulties are also included here. These are as follows:

- “Learners with learning difficulties or (specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia)
- Learners with learning disabilities
- Learners with visual and hearing impairments
- Learners with behavioural problems
- Learners with emotional problems
- Learners with households heading children
- Learners with chronic illness and in extremely poverty children
- Marginalised, vulnerable, street kids and children of farmers
- Learners with physical disability
- Learners with intellectual disability and Learners with intellectual impairment”

(p. 5).

Integration refers to the process of placing learners with special needs in mainstream schools, where they attend certain classes in the mainstream classrooms and others in special education classrooms at the same school (Miles & Singal, 2010).

Inclusive setting refers to an environment in which all learners, including those with special needs, participate in all the activities in a community that recognises and addresses the needs of each learner as far as possible. It also refers to the philosophy of ensuring that schools, centres of learning and educational systems are open to all children. Inclusive education is also aimed at identifying, reducing and/or removing barriers within and around the schools that may hinder learning. Ngungi (2010b) indicates that for an effective inclusive setting to happen, teachers and school systems need to modify the physical and social environment so that they can fully accommodate the diversity of learning needs that learners may have.

1.8. Summary

In this chapter the researcher presented the orientation of the study, the statement of the research problem, the research questions, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study and the definitions of terms relevant to the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher outlines the theoretical framework which underpins the philosophical assumption of the study as well as views about the origin of inclusive education and its regulatory framework. The researcher further presents a review of the literature or studies that were conducted in Namibia and elsewhere about the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The chapter further discusses relevant strategies to be used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. These may be seen as remedial strategies to mitigate the challenges experienced by teachers in this regard. The literature review is conducted based on the research questions and the theoretical framework underpinning the current study.

2.2. Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Goldratt's (1995) Theory of Constraints which is linked to Social Constructionist Theory and it has adopted it. Burr (2007) refers to social constructionism as a tradition of scholars tracing the origin of knowledge and the meaning and nature of reality to a process generated with human relationship (p.56). Goldratt's (1995) Theory of Constraints (TOC) is defined as management paradigms

shift that view that any management system can have some challenges in achieving its goals and there must be strategies to overcome those constraints (p.580).

As Collins (2008) indicates, Social Constructionist Theory has multiple functions, including the following: it is a method for finding personal truth, problem solving, the reduction of anxiety and guilt, symptom removal, gaining relationship skills, reduction of alienation from the self, others and society, finding reasons/causes and understanding others. The main focal point of this study was the challenges that teachers experienced in teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms, as well as finding possible solutions for mitigating these challenges as experienced by teachers. The TOC has been linked to social constructionism; with Agoabas (2012) highlighting that social constructionism has been applied widely in social research. Therefore, it has made significant contributions to studies of social problems or challenges, social movements, education, health, race and other areas where interactions occur and relationships form, thereby giving rise to the construction of reality.

Burr (2008) highlights the following features of social constructions that help to understand and narrate the origin of constructionism, namely: (a) the traditional positivist approaches; (b) the reinforcement of the influence of dominant social groups in the construction of knowledge; (c) the upholding of the conviction that the way we understand the world is a product of historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people; (d) the goal of research is not to produce knowledge that is fixed and universally valid but open up an appreciation of what is possible; and lastly (d)

social constructionism represents a movement toward redefining individual psychological constructs such as the mind, emotion, challenges and self into a social discourse.

The researcher in this study deemed it necessary to use Goldratt's theory which is based on social constructionism. Gergen (1985), the founder of social constructionist theory, defined it as a perspective which maintains that humanity exists as it does because of social and interpersonal influences. Gergen(1985) and May (2015) further explained constructionist theory as a field of interest which focuses on the constructed nature of reality and highlighted that it has been influenced by various psychological, philosophical and social perspectives such as analytical philosophy, the sociology of the knowledge, and rhetoric.

Kuhn (1996,) states that by centering on the process of the social construction of reality, social constructionism perspectives have been used to support a variety of practices in the fields of education, health care, community work, conflict resolution, and organizations. Furthermore, he highlights that reality is uniquely experienced, interpreted and created by people who have lived the experience in question. The main focus of constructionism is on the meaning of social fact, while it also takes into account how social phenomena operate in particular social settings (Conoldi, 2008). The meaning of a phenomenon is not discovered but may be constructed (Gergen, 1985). On the other hand, Harris (2010) and Sin (2010) claim that the meanings are constructed and interpreted by human beings as they participate in the world in which they live.

One would concur with Gergen (1985), who affirms that people understand their own issues more than anyone else and, as such, they are therefore in a better position to explain their own issues, challenges, experiences etc. Accordingly, in this study, teachers are the ones who explain the challenges that they experience in teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

Burr (2008) argues that “for the social constructionism theory, each person has a unique view of the world in line with one’s perception and description of oneself and their reality. It also provides a deeper understanding of the determinants of human actions in society, which results from the construction of reality” (p.204).

In general, constructionist theory has been applied widely in social research; thus, it has made significant successful contributions to the study of deviance, social problems, social movements, the self, gender, disability, race, education, health, emotions, family and other areas (Boudry & Buekens, 2011).

In the context of this study, teachers in mainstream classrooms are teaching learners with complex or diverse needs, including learners with learning difficulties. As such, they are faced with numerous challenges, including learning pace, time management, overcrowded classrooms (class size) and a variety of learning abilities. The researcher is confident that this study would benefit from the above steps in Goldratt’s theory (1995) and could inform one of the research questions that focus on ways in which to mitigate

the challenges experienced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. Kuhn (1996) asserts that the reality is uniquely experienced, interpreted, and created by people who have lived the experience and the focal point of constructionism is to construct the meaning of social fact. The teachers at the target school who participated in the study were in the best position to express the reality of the challenges they were experiencing in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges faced by teachers in supporting such learners and to recommend possible solutions to such challenges in order to ensure effective teaching and learning in the least restrictive and inclusive setting where every learner matters (p.140).

2.3. Paradigm shift from segregation to integration to inclusion

Chowdhury (2011) notes that children who are excluded from general education through segregation do often feel hopeless and powerless as they feel isolated. Hence, the effectiveness and appropriateness of the segregated education system are being questioned in light of human rights and the principle of inclusive education. A study conducted by Armstrong (2011) in Canada recommended that the introduction of integration may be seen as an effective strategy in terms of the concept of education with special needs because the focus is on the child fitting into the school environment and not on adaptable school environments.

According to UNESCO (2005), several countries have made the change to inclusive education, which is not always an easy process, while some countries are still in the process. A study by Eklindth and Van den Brule-Balescut (2012) revealed that it is less a way of rethinking and transforming school environments and more a matter of the physical place of education, and the call for inclusion is about ensuring the child's right to participate in mainstream education.

From a Namibian perspective, the MoE (2013) perceives inclusion as demolishing exclusion and catering for all learners in a meaningful way by changing school practices to accommodate all learners. Thus, inclusive education came into being in Namibia as a paradigm shift from segregation to integration and, indeed, to inclusion. Inclusive education was preceded by processes such as integration and mainstreaming. The lessons obtained from these processes are crucial for the implementation of inclusive education in Namibia.

The target school has a history of integration and has moved on from mainstreaming to eventually become an inclusive school. The move of the target school from mainstreaming to an inclusive school was necessitated in order to apply inclusion practices as per the Salamanca Statement (2004) and to ensure the smooth implementation of the Sector Policy of Inclusive Education (2013) in Namibia.

2.3.1. The origin of inclusive education

The origin of inclusive education emerged way back during the period from 1850 to 1930 whereby many institutions were created in isolated places for people with disabilities, including deafness, blindness, learning disabilities and intellectual disability (Croft, 2015). People living with disabilities were segregated in state institutions and colonies that provided limited services to them. Therefore inclusive education was introduced to fight against such segregation. Of late, inclusive education has gathered momentum to include learners with special needs and disabilities in mainstream schools. Therefore, inclusive education has been embraced in many countries whereby segregation and discrimination practices have been rejected.

According to UNESCO (1994), about 92 governments and 25 international organisations articulated that regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover; education settings with these characteristics provide effective educational support to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and, ultimately, the cost effectiveness of the entire education system (p.2).

2.3.2. The meaning of inclusive education

According to Ainscow and Miles (2009), the definitions of inclusive education vary worldwide and even within countries. In some countries, inclusive education is conceptualised as the inclusion of children with disabilities within mainstream education while, in other countries, inclusive education is defined as making the schooling of children with disabilities possible (p.56). In Namibia, according to the MoE (2013), inclusive education at the school level involves ensuring that the physical and social environments are conducive to all learners and that all the necessary support, teaching and learning aids are in place. The MoE (2013) further indicates that inclusive education is to ensure that all learners are educated in the least restrictive educational setting and in schools in their neighbourhoods to the fullest extent possible (p.2).

Miles and Singal (2010) define inclusive education as a process of increasing participation in learning, and identifying and reducing barriers that inhibit the learning and participation of any learner. According to Chowdhury (2011), inclusive education is about demolishing exclusion because children that are excluded from general education feel hopeless and powerless (pp. 4-5).

2.3.3. Justification for inclusive education and its regulatory framework

There are various justifications for the move towards inclusive education, which can be discussed at three different levels:

Educational justification: The requirement of inclusive schools that all children are educated together means that it is incumbent on schools to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and, thereby, benefit all children.

Social justification: Inclusive schools are able to change negative attitudes to diversity by educating all children together and, thus, inclusive schools form the foundation of a non-discriminatory society

Economic justification: It is less costly to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together than to set up a complex system of various types of schools which specialise in educating different groups of children (UNESCO, 2008).

These justifications to a certain extent apply to mainstreaming too, although inclusive education take the issue of learning and socialisation space a step further.

The Sector Policy of Inclusive Education (MoE 2013) clearly stipulates:

“Namibia is determined to establish an inclusive education and training system as a response to the relevant national and international legal frameworks which Namibia has ratified. The legal frameworks include among others: Namibia Vision (2030), Namibia National Agenda for Children (2012–2016), National Policy on Disability (1997) Education Act (2001), Salamanca Statement (2004), UN Convention on the Rights of

the Child (1989) and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)” (p.6). In addition, it is important to mention that the abovementioned legal frameworks are fostering and advocating the practice of human rights in the provision of inclusive education that is based on the fundamental principles of Education for All. The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) also demands that all children shall be taught together whenever possible, regardless of any individual differences or difficulties that they may have. The mainstream schools are obliged to recognise the legal frameworks with regard to the smooth implementation of the (Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, 2013). Teachers are urged to understand the concept of inclusive education and the accompanying legal framework of human rights in order to ensure the acceptance of all learners, irrespective of their different learning abilities.

2.4. The challenges that teachers face for supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream settings

Studies have shown that teachers may encounter a number of challenges when teaching learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The study conducted by Fuchs (2010) in Britain on teacher challenges in inclusive schools highlighted the following themes from the data collected: (1) teachers’ negative attitudes, (2) uncondusive physical environment, (3) lack of administrative support, (4) lack of teachers’ support to learners with learning difficulties, (5) lack of teacher in-service teacher education programs and (6) lack of time to plan (p.48).

The above literature makes it clear that many teachers, not only those in Namibia but also in other countries, perceived the inclusion of learners with special needs as a burden. Many felt ill-prepared for inclusion, hence the multiple challenges they experienced. A study conducted in the United States revealed that most teachers lack an appropriate knowledge to educate learners with learning difficulties effectively (Hyunjeong, Tyler-Wood, Kinnison & Morrison, 2014, p. 17). Hyunjeong et al.'s study further showed that although teachers are prepared to have students with special needs in their classrooms, they did not feel prepared to teach these children and it became a challenge for them. Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2010) also indicate that teachers facing challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms have existed ever since the implementation of inclusive education in various countries and these challenges could be lack of support from school administrators, lack of in-service teacher training, class size, collaboration and inadequate time for planning (p.53).

Fuchs (2010b) further argues that despite the fact that learners with learning difficulties are accommodated in mainstream classrooms, their inclusion is not fully secured, and it is likely that they may not receive the same attention as that accorded to their counterparts (average and above average) in the same classroom. Ngungi's (2010b) study, which was conducted in Kenya, indicated some of the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream school as a lack of resources, lack of specialist teachers in Inclusive Education, limited time, inadequate support and overcrowded classrooms.

In the Namibian context, the MoE (2013) also recognizes some of the challenges of teaching and learning in mainstream classrooms as an uncondusive physical environment (school structure), overcrowded classrooms, lack of in-service teacher training in Inclusive Education, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and a lack of time to prepare and render support to learners with diverse needs. In addition, in his keynote speech at the Namibia Education Conference, Iiyambo (2011) indicated that some of the challenges facing teachers in mainstream schools are lack of understanding and poor internalisation of the concept of inclusive education; lack of teachers' support and skills; resources, attitudinal and infrastructural barriers as well as inadequate time to plan and provide support to all learners in the classroom.

2.4.1. Teachers' perceptions of inclusion

The literature has shown that, over the past decades, it was not possible for children with learning difficulties to be educated in the same classroom as the average gifted learners because the learning pace is different. According to Topping (2012,) *“despite all learners are required to be taught in the same classroom, some teachers in mainstream classrooms display apathy support towards learners with learning difficulties”*(p.24).

Winter and O'Raw (2010) suggest that many teachers became less positive and experienced anxiety and stress when the schools included learners with learning difficulties in their classrooms. Hence, they may resist such inclusion in the belief that

their presence may impact adversely on the pass rate. Mackey (2014) also found that teachers demonstrated negative attitudes or perceptions towards adapting the curriculum or including learners with barriers to learning in the general classroom. Florian, Kamens, Laprete and Silostad (2012) also noted that the way in which learners with learning difficulties are taught has undergone a significant change over the past decade and that teachers are faced with increased challenges in supporting such learners in mainstream classrooms. Haihambo (2010) identified the negative attitudes towards special educational needs as one of the main challenges in developing and expanding successful Inclusive Education programs in Namibia. Fuchs (2010) suggests that the issue of teachers' challenges in mainstream classrooms requires close examination so that the teachers may be prepared or trained on how to overcome such challenges within the context of classroom management, as well as to improve the implementation of relevant strategies on how to provide support to learners with diverse needs through pre-service and in-service education.

2.4.2. Unconducive physical environment

Emvula (2008), Haihambo, February, Brown, and Hengari (2009) and Mayumbelo (2006) noted that some of the challenges that teachers encountered in the effective provision of inclusive education were embedded in actual aspects of the school like an unconducive physical environment, overcrowding (class size), inaccessible classrooms

that do not take cognisance of learners' special needs, as well as a lack of both support and teaching and learning materials such as assistive devices.

2.4.3. Inadequate resources

In addition, Eleweke and Rodda (2011) revealed that the biggest teachers' challenge in mainstream schools seems to be a lack of resources for organising support to learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream schools especially in developing countries"(p. 230). The MoE (2013) in Namibia has noted that a lack of additional resources such as computers and other information technology supported learning devices for learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms may hamper the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy.

2.4.4. Insufficient time

Studies, for example, that of Eleweke and Rodda (2011), have shown that teachers are increasingly required to educate a broad range of learners in the mainstream classroom setting, because they sometimes feel that they do not always have sufficient time to plan for and support learners with different abilities. The gifted learners may become bored when they have to wait for the teacher to attend to the learners with learning difficulties because the pace of their learning is different.

Dyson and Willward (2010) also note that teachers face challenges in devoting enough time to supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms and that has a negative effect on these learners because they suffer from a feeling of being discriminated against because they are left unattended and they miss some activities (p. 14).

2.4.5. Lack of in-service education

The studies conducted by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2010) surveyed the in-service training needs of teachers in mainstream schools and found that there is a need for teachers to be trained on a regular basis in order to provide necessary support to learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms. A number of researchers have found that a lack of staff professional development and inadequate training for both novice teachers and qualified teachers who are not specialised in inclusive education are the ones who mostly experience challenges in supporting learners in mainstream classrooms (Eleweke & Rodda, 2011c).

Zimba, Mostert, Hengari, Haihambo, Nuugwedha & February, (2007) indicated that the majority of teachers in Namibia have very little or no training in the area of special needs and are thus not in a position to provide the necessary support for learners with special needs in mainstream schools. Moreover, Zimba (2011) contended that one of the

main challenges experienced by teachers in implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools effectively may be a lack of in-service training on how to provide support to learners with diverse needs. Namhadi and van der Westhuizen (2015) argue that some teachers lacked the necessary skills on how to assist learners with diverse needs such as learning difficulties, psychosocial disturbances and differences in abilities.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Meister and Melnick (2008) revealed that some teachers in mainstream schools had significant concerns about their ability to tolerate both the learners' diverse behaviours and provide support to all learners in the classroom setting (p.135). Haitembu (2014) indicated that teachers who are not trained in Inclusive Education often doubt the little knowledge and skills they have for providing support for learners with learning difficulties in mainstream education, resulting in a hesitancy on their part to support learners effectively. Masenga and Mkandawire (2007) found that most untrained teachers lacked the knowledge and skills required to support learners with different abilities but that such knowledge may be acquired through in-service training and capacity building. It is, thus, clear that teacher in-service training and development are critical and should not be compromised.

2.4.6. Classroom size

The education systems in many African countries are characterised (Brenner, 2010) by a high number of learners per teacher; a practice that is common in previously

disadvantaged areas. Studies have shown that large classroom size is regarded as one of the biggest stumbling block to effective teaching and learning in inclusive settings. The varying range of learners' abilities in an overcrowded classroom could prevent teachers from providing full support to all learners.

Breilling's study (2017), conducted in Namibia, revealed that both learners and teachers may feel frustrated by the large class sizes where learners with different abilities are taught. Teachers may not know how to create a successful learning and teaching environment that meets the needs of all learners and they often have less time to support individual learners.

2.4.7. Learners' different abilities

Mixed ability classes is a term used to describe classes made up of students with varying levels of proficiency. A study by Rieser (2012) revealed that some of the challenges experienced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classroom are learners' different abilities. However, it must be noted that all classes are, to some degree, made up of learners who differ in many ways. They have different strengths, weaknesses and approaches to learning while they may respond differently to various teaching methods and classroom practices (Ur, 2009).

In addition, Brenner (2008b) noted that teachers may feel frustrated by the challenges they face in their mixed ability classrooms while they may also not know how to create successful learning and teaching environments that meet the needs of all learners in a single class. According to Simanova (2010), teachers lack the knowledge of strategies to use in the classroom for a wide range of learners' ability; and teachers who are familiar with the different abilities and needs of their learners are much better equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of their learners.

Based on the aforesaid, it is evident that teachers are experiencing many challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. A study by Haitembu (2014), which was conducted in Omusati Region, found that teachers are overwhelmed by overcrowded classrooms in inclusive schools and this may impact adversely on both teaching and learning processes because teachers may not be able to give attention to all individual learners to cater for their diverse needs.

2.5. Relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

One of the objectives of this study was to identify relevant instructional teaching strategies that teachers may use to provide effective support for learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. It was, therefore, deemed imperative to learn from the literature the best practices of effective instructional teaching strategies which teachers may use in supporting such learners.

Studies have shown that teaching and learning will be effective only if teachers apply relevant teaching strategies in order to respond effectively to learners with different abilities. Globally, as Westwood (2013) cites, there are numerous instructional strategies that are used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. It is my view that, in many cases, the challenges experienced by teachers in mainstream classrooms may be attributed to a lack of awareness on the part of teachers about the correct use of adaptive teaching strategies as well as a lack of training in inclusive education. These factors are likely to contribute to teachers' failing to provide support to learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

According to Tomlinson (2014), the use of instructional strategies such as co-teaching; differentiated teaching, individualised teaching and collaborative teaching strategies in mainstream classrooms is believed to be relevant, especially in teaching learners with different abilities (gifted learners and non-gifted learners) in the same classroom" (p.50). Unfortunately, teachers in Namibia do not make use of such strategies despite their relevance to inclusive education.

Simanova (2010) highlights the following relevant instructional teaching strategies for teaching mixed abilities in classrooms in mainstream schools:

1. Supportive learning environment– it is important to create a supportive learning environment in the classroom, where learners feel confident and able to perform to the best of their abilities.

2. Classroom management– by managing their classrooms effectively, teachers can ensure that learners will be involved as much as possible in the lesson. Classroom management techniques include organising the classroom layout for maximum learning potential, involving all learners and cultivating a positive attitude by giving good instructions, using group work, setting time limits and give feedback on each activity.

3. Pace – teachers must be mindful of the pace of the lessons. Teaching a class too slowly or too quickly may lead to boredom and frustration. A teacher must be aware of his/her learners' abilities and pitch the pace of the lesson accordingly (pp. 4–5).

2.5.1. Co-teaching

Co-teaching may be defined as the partnering of a general education teacher with a specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to learners with diverse needs in a way that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs (Friend & Cook, 2010). Stein (2016) defined co-teaching as *“the practice of pairing teachers together in a classroom to share the responsibilities of planning, instructing and assessing learners and it is often implemented with general and special education teachers paired together as part of an initiative to create a more inclusive classroom”*(Stein, 2016 p.8).

Co-teaching is commonly used in the USA, after the movement towards inclusion has introduced and it has its roots in the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law providing rights and protection and ensures that students with disabilities

have access to a free and least restrictive environment to the maximum extent of their abilities (Morin, n.d).

In my view, co-teaching is effective when used in a mixed ability class with knowledge and skills being imparted through joint instruction in order to meet the learners' individual needs.

Ferguson, Desjarlais and Meyer (2000) highlighted some of the benefits of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms include:

- More opportunities for one- on -one interaction between students and teachers leading to stronger relationships.
- Students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum as required by law, which includes the classroom community and activities they otherwise would not take part in.
- All students can benefit from additional supports, resources and diversity in the classroom.
- Increased independence for students with disabilities-
- Teachers are able to support one another by complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses and dividing the workload in the classroom (p. 64).

In Namibia, it is evident that teachers do not use co-teaching strategy because it is regarded as costly in terms of remuneration; having two teachers in one classroom as double action. In my view, there is a need for the implementation of this strategy in

Namibian schools because it benefits both teachers and learners with diverse needs especially in mainstream classrooms.

2.5.2. Differentiated teaching

Tomlinson (2014) describes differentiated instruction as the most widely cited and visible approach because it reflects a philosophy of teaching and learning grounded in the belief that learning, diversity is both inevitable and positive characteristics that each learner should have equitable access to excellent teaching.

In differentiated teaching, teachers work daily to reach out to individual learners at their varied points of learning preference, intellectual capacities, readiness and interest. There is no right way of teaching effectively in differentiated classrooms and, thus, it is incumbent on teachers to find out what matches their teaching and the learners' individual needs. Over the years as an education practitioner in Namibia, the researcher of this study has noticed that teachers tend to rely heavily on teacher-centered lecture methods and barely explore other methods such as co-teaching and differentiated teaching. Differentiated teaching may thus be a relevant strategy for supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

2.5.3. Remedial/compensatory instructional teaching

According to Ministry of Education Learning Support Training Manual (2010) defines remedial teaching as an approach or program that was put in place by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with NIED in Namibian schools; of which through assessment identifies specific areas of concerns in learners with learning difficulties especially in reading, writing, calculations etc. by offering remedial interventions to learners with special needs. It later became known as compensatory teaching (p. 17).

As of recent in Namibia, as per the MoE Sector Policy of Inclusive Education, (2013), the remedial teaching is replaced by Learning Support which is compulsory for all schools in all phases. Learning Support is offering an individual learning support to learners with special needs in the mainstream classroom and involves planned extra support in teaching methods and materials that enable learners with learning difficulties to reach essential basic competencies and skills.

Limbu (2012) indicates remedial instruction improves the skills or ability of each learner by using techniques such as more practical or clear explanations, repeating the information and devoting more time to working on specific skills. For example, a learner with a low reading level may be given remediation to help him/her reach his/her potential.

However, teachers in Namibian schools usually employ group work and pair work as Learning Support strategies in order to allow slow learners to learn from fast learners.

2.5.4. Individualised teaching

Individualised instruction is one of the teaching strategies that are used in the mainstream classroom to respond to learners' individual needs. Limbu (2012) defines an individualised instruction strategy as referring to those classroom practices of teaching which recognise the uniqueness of each learner and, thus, provide for adequate guidance and support services suited to bring about a wholesome development in the person (body, mind and spirit)(p.26).

Limbu (2012) further emphasises that individualised instruction is an instructional theory that allows teachers to face this challenge by taking diverse learners' factors into account when planning and delivering instruction with the ultimatum goal of maximising the potential for learners' success.

Based on the researcher's observations, it is evident that, teachers in Namibia do not use an individualized teaching strategy because of the large number of learners in a class which means that the average teacher cannot apply such a method due to the nature of a large classroom. Nevertheless, the researcher fully agrees that individualised teaching is

a relevant strategy that may be used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools to realise their potential.

2.5.5. Collaborative teaching

Collaborative teaching is one of the teaching strategies used in inclusive settings (Brenner, 2011). It involves the participation of all bodies (stakeholders), namely, teacher to teacher, learner to learner and, indeed, teacher to learner and vice versa. Brenner (2011) further indicates that in collaborative teaching, learners develop autonomy and learn from their peers, rather than always being reliant on the teacher, with learners who collaborate on tasks learning how to compromise and negotiate and developing self-evaluation skills. This strategy requires teachers to know their strengths and reach out to their colleagues, learners, parents, community members and professionals and para-professionals to complement them.

Based on the above, it would be advisable for the teachers in mainstream schools in Namibia to use relevant instructional strategies such as co-teaching, peer-teaching, individualised teaching and collaborative teaching to meet the learners' individual needs.

By so doing, teaching and learning can be realised for all learners, including those with learning difficulties.

2.6. Critical elements for creating inclusive and effective school communities

The MoE (2013) recommends eight critical elements to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education and effective school communities. These eight strategies recommended by the MoE for effective inclusion education include the following:

- “Strategy 1: Integrate the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into all other legal frameworks and policies of the educational sector.
- Strategy 2: Raise awareness of the constitutional right to education and foster attitudinal change.
- Strategy 3: Support institutional development by developing human and instructional resources.
- Strategy 4: Implement the National Curriculum for Basic Education to reflect the diversity of learning needs of all learners.
- Strategy 5: Widen and develop educational support and services.
- Strategy 6: Develop teacher education and training for paramedics and support staff.
- Strategy 7: Strengthen and widen in-service training for stakeholders.
- Strategy 8: Develop mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education” (p. 14).

This study adopted the above mentioned strategies to serve as critical elements of the creation of inclusive and effective school communities. These eight critical elements

will inform the results of this study in responding to one of the research questions on the strategies that may be used to mitigate teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. These strategies were deemed to be relevant to this study for informing teachers about the way in which to create effective school communities, so that teachers will have better insight into how to keep abreast of the challenges they face in supporting these learners.

The eight strategies are briefly discussed below.

2.6.1. Strategy 1: The integration of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into all other legal frameworks and policies of the educational sector

The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education was implemented in 2013 with the aim of ensuring that inclusive education practices should be released at all mainstream schools in order to cater for all learners' needs, irrespective of their differences. However, the study conducted by Breilling (2017) revealed that despite the Namibian government having implemented the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education in 2013, the majority of teachers were still not aware of such a policy at the time of the study. Others were aware of it, but had not yet implemented it in their schools. Many schools applied integration and mainstreaming as a way of accommodating learners with learning difficulties, while others simply excluded such learners by advising them to seek admission to special/resource schools. There is, therefore, a need to disseminate information on the

inclusive education policy to ensure that all stakeholders in the community and school levels and in other institutions understand the policy.

According to the MoE (2013), “the integration of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education in Namibia and its legislation and policies should be implemented and should include, in the first place, the following aspects:

- The articulation of Inclusive Education principles and rights.
- Establishment of procedures and practices that facilitate inclusion throughout the education system (e.g. flexible curriculum and assessment).
- Provide clear, detailed legislation on class size and staffing norms.
- All relevant education forums should promote the implementation of inclusive education at all Namibian schools” (p. 16).

It was hoped that this study would inform stakeholders on how to provide management support for teachers with regard to class size by clearly stipulating the legislation on teacher-learner ratio. It is vital that teachers understand the policy holistically so that the challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties are minimised.

2.6.2. Strategy 2: Raise awareness of the constitutional right to education and foster attitudinal change

Mackey (2014) stresses teacher education as a key to the effective implementation of inclusive education because this is largely dependent on the attitudes and skills of the

teachers. It is noted that inclusive education may be a challenge if teachers are not trained in the inclusive education, discipline and lack an awareness of the constitutional right to education for all. Accordingly, the MoE (2013) recommends that sensitisation workshops, meetings and other gatherings should be organised regularly in order to:

- Develop awareness of Inclusive Education in the Namibian context.
- Align and harmonise language used in addressing educational challenges.
- Provide support for all learners.
- Initiate collaboration and involvement of parents and caregivers.
- Engage non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBO) in the promotion of Inclusive Education” (p. 20).

It is the recommendation of this study that teachers in mainstream schools should be sensitised and well informed about accepting learners’ diversity irrespective of their differences in mainstream classrooms. In addition, it is incumbent on teachers to foster attitudinal change, avoid prejudicing learners and promote inclusion in school communities.

2.6.3. Strategy 3: Support institutional development by developing human and instructional resources

Research indicates that the success of inclusive education depends primarily on the availability and quality of the educational support that is offered in mainstream schools (Forlin, 2010). It must be pointed out that teacher training alone does not change practices in schools unless schools and teachers are regularly and continuously supported. The MoE (2013) recommends that careful preparation of a plan to support teachers and schools through a range of means is necessary and the necessary resource allocation must be secured (p.22).

This strategy was deemed relevant to the purposes of this study, because to ensure effective teaching and learning in the school communities, teachers must be supported in order to provide effective instructional strategies to mitigate the challenges that teachers face in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms.

2.6.4. Strategy 4: Review the National Curriculum for Basic Education to reflect the diversity of learning needs of all learners

According to NIED (2012) all national curricula for education have to be guided by the inclusive education approach. Additionally, parents, children and the school community

should accept and appreciate diversity through the media, textbooks, teaching aids and educational resources. The MoE (2013) indicates that the current curriculum advocates differentiation and learner centered approaches. Teachers must employ various teaching approaches that respond to diversity and those approaches are powerful tools for inclusion (p.25).

In addition, it is important to note that teachers must use the current national curriculum. This is accommodating and promotes the least restrictive environment in which teachers in mainstream schools are able to employ various teaching strategies, such as differentiated teaching, when teaching learners with learning difficulties together with their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom.

2.6.5. Strategy 5: Widen and develop educational support services

The provision of special education needs is being reorganised and decentralised, while the barriers to teaching and learning are constantly being addressed. Learning support teams should be established at each school and should comprise teachers and other professionals who provide assistance to the regular teacher and help children with learning and behavioural difficulties to cope (MoE, 2013).

According to the MoE (2013), an Individual Learning Support Plans (**ILSP**) for learners with diverse needs in mainstream schools or an Individual Education Support Plans (**IESP**) for learners who need intensive educational support (in resource schools) should have to be developed so that learners can be placed in schools accordingly. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) maintains that support is mandatory in inclusive education, with all learners needing to be supported in order to reach their maximum learning potential. Moreover, if teaching and learning materials are available and teachers are supported through various support services, then the teachers' challenges in supporting learners with diverse needs are likely to be minimal.

2.6.6. Strategy 6: Develop teacher education and training for paramedics and support staff

Inclusive education approaches are being introduced and taught in all teacher training programs. All teaching staff must be trained in differentiated teaching methods and in how to provide learning support. Moreover, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs in inclusive education for teachers are being devised and provided by the Ministry of Education through the NIED and in cooperation with the University of Namibia (UNAM) (MoE, 2013).

The MoE (2013) further recommends that there is a need to train teachers in inclusive education approaches in a way that portrays the values and beliefs of inclusion so that all teachers need to have a general understanding of inclusive practices in the classroom and to develop a high level of expertise for dealing with learners with learning difficulties or disabilities in mainstream classrooms (p.30).

2.6.7. Strategy 7: Strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers and other stakeholders

Studies have shown that in-service education is the most crucial component of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for both teachers and administrators in the inclusive education setting. In addition, Haihambo, February, Brown, and Hengari (2009) suggested that information on inclusive education should be disseminated to both novice and experienced teachers through teacher education institutions and in-service training.

It is noted that teachers who are not trained in inclusive education are likely to demonstrate negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms. This concurs with the recommendation by the MoE (2013) that all teachers need to have a general understanding of inclusive practices in the classroom and need to develop a high level of expertise for dealing with learners with learning

difficulties and disabilities and that all teaching staff need to be trained in differentiated teaching methods and how to provide learning support to all learners (p.30).

2.6.8. Strategy 8: Develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education

The Ministry of Education is in the process of integrating the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into all other legal frameworks and policies of the educational sector. All stakeholders concerned are involved in revising education legislation and standards and putting systems in place for all relevant ministries and other stakeholders to cooperate on Inclusive Education (MoE, 2013).

In light of the above, this study should be guided by the mentioned strategies in order to respond to one of the research questions; that is, what strategies should be employed to mitigate teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, the findings of this study will inform all stakeholders involved in how to implement the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education policy in all schools smoothly. Hence, the eight strategies are deemed relevant to this study.

2.7. Summary

In this chapter, the researcher outlined the theoretical framework that underpinned the philosophical assumptions of this study. The chapter also discussed the origins and insights of inclusive education and the paradigm shift from segregation and integration to inclusion. In this chapter the researcher further reviewed existing literature based on

studies that were conducted in Namibia and other countries with regard to the challenges that are faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The relevant strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with diverse needs as well as the critical elements for creating inclusive and effective school communities were also discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research methodology that was employed in the study. This chapter discusses the linkage of the theoretical framework of Goldratt's Theory of Constraints (1995) that underpins the current study to the qualitative data analysis approach that was used in this study. The researcher also indicated in this chapter that she initially planned to use the two research instruments namely focus group discussion and audio recording tools; however the participants were not willing to be interviewed via the said tools; hence they opted the use of one-on-one interviews without being recorded. This chapter also discusses the research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection procedures as well as the research instruments and the data analysis methods used. Finally, the chapter also discusses ethical issues observed in the process of carrying out this research.

3.2. Research design

A research design is a plan that directs the way in which the research study will be conducted (Kothari, 2014). This study adopted a qualitative research approach that resonates with a qualitative case study design. Qualitative case study design was employed in order to explore the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms; by providing them with an

opportunity to express their views on the challenges they were experiencing in supporting such learners. A qualitative case study design (Mertens, 2013) is appropriate when the research topic warrants exploration in order to develop a complex, detailed understanding of the topic in question and when the voices of individuals involved the issue at hand will illuminate such understanding.

According to Mertens (2013) many studies of qualitative kind had applied qualitative case study design and it has made significant contributions to studies of social problems or challenges, social movements, education, health, race and other areas where interactions occur to make meaning to the construction of reality. Hence, qualitative case study design was carefully selected to be used in this study and deemed relevant. To be specific in this study, the case study involved one primary school that had a history of integration started way back in early 1990s; and of late the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms and that culminated into the uniqueness and inquisitiveness of the case to be studied.

3.3. Population

The population for this study consisted of all 18 teachers employed at one school with a long history of mainstreaming of learners with learning difficulties. The school was purposefully selected for this unique characteristic.

3.4. Study sample

In the research's context a sample refers to individuals selected from a population for a study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 11). In this study, all the teachers at the school were deemed information-rich and, thus, being suitable respondents to the research questions posed in the study. However, from the population of the 18 teachers, only ten teachers formed part of the final sample because eight of them declined to participate in the study.

3.5. Sampling procedure

A criterion sampling technique was employed in the study. According to Patton (2011, p. 48), criterion sampling involves picking all subjects (participants) who meet a certain criterion and they are picked because they have the same characteristics and are found in the same environment. In this study, criterion sampling was employed to select all teachers at the target school because they have the same experience of teaching learners with learning difficulties at such school.

The school was selected with the idea that it had a history of integration and mainstreaming as a forerunner of inclusive education and, because of this experience, they were able to easily adapt to inclusive education and to ensure effective

implementation of the Sector Policy of Inclusive Education (2013) compared to schools that practiced segregation. Therefore, because of the nature of the target school, criterion sampling was deemed relevant for the purposes of the study.

3.6. Research instruments

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the ideal of this study was to use two instruments to collect qualitative data, namely focus group discussion and audio recordings; however the participants refused to be interviewed into focus groups because they did not have time to be interviewed in groups despite the researcher pleaded permission from them beforehand. They have only opted to be interviewed through one-on-one interview with off recording. Therefore, this study employed one-on-one interviews only with guided questions that were asked. The interviews were conducted in English. The researcher also took field notes at the research site during and after the research-related visits to the school.

A one-on-one interview was used due to its capacity for yielding rich data and providing immediate feedback. In addition, it allowed room for issues to be clarified on the side of both the interviewees and interviewers. However, one of the disadvantages of one-on-one interviews was that such interviews are extremely time consuming.

3.7. Research procedure

After the researcher had received an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Namibia's (UNAM) Research and Ethics Committee, she sought permission to conduct the study from the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. This permission was granted. The researcher also obtained permission from the Director of Education, Arts and Culture of the Oshana Education Directorate that allowed her to collect data at the target school. The letter from the Director was also copied to the principal of the target school to confirm that the research was being carried out with the approval of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture at the regional level.

After the researcher had obtained permission from the Regional Director, she went personally to meet the principal of the target school and presented the ethical clearance certificate and an approval letter from the Regional Director to the school principal. The school principal was already aware that she would be conducting a study at the school because he had been informed of this by the Inspector of Education responsible for the circuit. The principal and the researcher agreed on the dates on which the interviews would be conducted because, at the time, the teachers were marking the learners' mid-year examination scripts. As agreed, the researcher visited the research site on 25 and 26 May 2017.

As stated earlier, this study was to use both focus group discussion and audio recording, however the participants were not willing to be interviewed in groups and refused to be audio recorded. Hence the researcher pleaded with them to agree to be interviewed individually (one-on-one interviews), without audio recording to accommodate their situation and they all agreed to participate in the one-on-one interview which is one of the features of qualitative research and this did not affect the yield of results.

3.8. Data collection

The study employed one-on-one interviews to collect the requisite data. As indicated earlier the interviews were conducted over for just two days. Prior to each interview sessions, the researcher introduced herself, stated the purpose of the study and its significance and requested the interviewees' consent to interview them. Although, the researcher also asked consent from them in order to be audio recorded, the participants refused to be audio recorded. Subsequently, the researcher respected the participants' rights to partake in or withdraw from the study.

The interviews were conducted after classes in order to avoid disrupting normal school activities. The interview was conducted in English. Each interview session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The interview guide contained a list of questions on the issues to be explained or clarified. There was good cooperation between the researcher and the interviewees during the interview sessions. The use of one-on-one interviews

provided the researcher with an opportunity to capture information that would be useful in developing accurate and credible results (Creswell, 2013). The requisite data were captured and organized through the taking of notes which were transcribed afterwards. No audio recordings were made.

3.9. Data analysis

Hatch (2012) indicates data analysis is an on-going process in qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (2011) also explain that Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) are the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of people and situation that are investigated. Therefore, this study employed qualitative data analysis - approach known as thematic data analysis to analyse data that were obtained from transcripts of the one-on- one interviews. Braun and Clarke (2016) describe Thematic analysis as “a widely- used qualitative data analysis method and it is one of cluster methods that focus on identifying patterned meaning across datasets” (pp. 77-101).

In addition, data analysis of this study was done in line with the theoretical framework of the Goldratt's Theory of Constraints ((1995) that underpinned this study. The Goldratt's TOC (1995) comprises of five developmental steps in finding a solution or panacea for the challenges experienced by individuals in a given institution, in this case teachers in mainstream classrooms. The Goldratt's' TOC (1995) five steps are : (1)

identify the challenges involved in the process of management, (2) decide how best to exploit the challenges, (3) subordinate everything else to the above decisions, (4) evaluate the challenges, and (5) remove the challenges and re-evaluate to ascertain whether the situation has improved (p. 202).

Specifically, the thematic data analysis was used in this study to analyse the data on the challenges that are experienced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The teachers responded to the research questions by providing descriptive information on the challenges they were experiencing. The researcher then critically analysed the teachers' responses by coding the emerged themes in order to make deductive meanings of the reality of inquiry.

The following are the main themes that emerged from the research questions and participants' responses:

- (1) The challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.
- (2) Relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom.
- (3) Recommended strategies for mitigating the teachers' challenges when supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools to ensure inclusive and effective school communities.

While Goldratt's Theory of Constraints (1995) argues that the power to adjust the constraints is dependent on the individuals' inner strengths, the findings of this study indicated that many teachers had the will to inclusion, but they still needed external support in order to be successful in mainstreaming with minimum challenges or with none, hence the linkage of Goldratt's Theory of Constraints (1995) to the data analysis of this study.

The Thematic data analysis was done in the following manner:

- After the researcher had conducted the interviews, the data were transcribed and arranged in an orderly way to enable the researcher to make sense of them. The researcher read the transcribed data repeatedly to derive meaning from the responses.
- This study had adopted Ibrahim's (2012) steps in analysing data in order to develop themes based on the research questions:
- The *first* step – The researcher read through all the transcriptions carefully (transcribed data) and then underlined the meaning of the information (*transcription*).
- The *second* step – The researcher read the transcriptions over and over again.
- The *third* step – The researcher made notes in the margin to form initial codes by assigning labels (names) to the themes (*coding*).
- The *fourth* step – Descriptive data were generated based on the themes by organising the information obtained from the interviewees.

- The *fifth* step – The themes which had emerged were linked to the research questions and the participants’ responses to derive meaning.
- The final *sixth* step – The results were interpreted and discussed, and recommendations made for further research (*analysis*).

This process yielded themes and categories based on the interviewees’ views on the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The emergent themes were described in conjunction with their related subthemes based on both the research questions and the interview responses.

Therefore, as it is indicated earlier in this chapter that this study has adopted some of the five steps of the of Goldratt’s Theory of Constraints (1995), based on the three themes and their subthemes that emerged from the research questions and the responses of the respondents.

3.10. Research ethics

In qualitative research the ethical principles are centered primarily on protecting the research participants and are the guiding foundation of research. Ethics may be defined as “conforming to the standards of conduct of a given professional group, in essence, it is the application of informed moral reasoning founded on a set of moral principles” (Braun, Clarke and Virginia, 2007, p. 528). This study observed the ethical considerations by seeking ethical clearance from the School of Postgraduate Studies at

the University of Namibia. Furthermore, approval to conduct the study was also sought from and granted by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. The permission of the Director of Education, Arts and Culture in Oshana Region that was communicated by the Circuit Inspector to the school principal of the target school was sought and obtained to collect data in the region concerned.

This study took cognisance of the critical research ethical aspects such as confidentiality and anonymity in its process of conduct. Evergreen State College (2019) indicates the terms anonymity and confidentiality are referred to conditions in which the researcher knows the identity of research subjects, but takes steps to protect that identity from discovered by others to ensure the protection of private information.

In this study, the participants' identity was kept confidential and anonymous, meaning their responses linked to codes only, for instance the use of code T1 - refers to the teacher who is coded with the number 1 (one), but not linked to his or her name. Whereas, the name of the target school was also kept anonymous to protect the school identity not be known by the public and other readers of this study as one of the schools chosen from many. In addition, the interviewees were assured that their names and views as well as the name of their school where the study conducted would be protected and treated with the highest degree of confidentiality and anonymity. Subsequently, the respondents' consent was fully sought from them at the research site and they were clearly informed before the interview that their participation in the study was voluntary

and that they were, therefore, entitled to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wished.

3.11. Summary

In summary, this chapter explained the theoretical framework that underpinned this study and its linkage to data analysis of this study. It also discussed the elements of research methodology, namely, research design, population, sample, sampling procedure, research instruments, research procedures and ethical issues that were used.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results that were obtained from the data collection procedures as explained in the previous chapter. The results are presented by firstly, indicating the biographic information of the participants and secondly, by providing descriptions and detailed information on the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom. The data are presented according to the categories and themes that are embodied in a series of subthemes that were generated by the research questions posed and the interviewees' responses.

4.2. Presentation of results regarding biographical information of the participants

The table below presents the biographical information derived from the teachers (interviewees) with regard to their age, qualifications, number of years of teaching experience and the current grade taught at the target school. It is also important to mention that, for the purposes of confidentiality and reducing bias, the respondents were given codes from T1 to T10 and their actual names were not used. These codes represent the number of teachers interviewed. Thus, the respondents were referred as T1, representing Teacher 1; T2 representing Teacher 2, etc.

These codes were used throughout the research in order to preserve participants' confidentiality and anonymity, as indicated in the preceding chapter.

Table 4. 1: The following Table shows biographical information for teachers

Characteristics	Category	No. of respondents
1.Age	20–29	1
	30–39	3
	40–49	4
	50 and above	2
2. Teachers' qualification	Certificate in Education	0
	Diploma in Education	7
	Degree in Education	2
	Other: BA in Education	1
	Master's Degree in Education	0
3. Teaching experience	0–1 year	1
	1–5	3
	5years and more	6
4. Grade currently taught at target school	Pre-primary education	1
	Grades 1–4	6
	Grades 5–7	3

Age

As indicated in Table 1, the age of the interviewees ranged between from 20 and 50 years and above, with the youngest teacher being 23 years of age and the eldest being 52 years of age. The majority of the teachers were aged in the range of between 36 and 48 years. However, only two teachers of those interviewed are in the range of between 50 and 52 years of age respectively.

Teachers' qualifications

The majority of the teachers were holders of a Diploma in Education, while two were in possession of a Bachelor's Degree in Education. One teacher had a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and had majored in English.

Teaching experience

Table 1, shows that most of the teachers had five or more years of teaching experiences at the target school and that only one had less than one year of teaching experience at the time of the interviews.

Current grade taught

Again, as indicated in Table 1, six of the ten teachers interviewed were teaching grades 1 to 4 while three teachers were teaching grades 5 to 7. Only one teacher was teaching the pre-grade class at the target school.

4.3. Presentation of data derived from one -on- one interviews

4.3.1 Presentation of results based on developed themes and subthemes

The data were obtained from one-on-one interviews and they are presented based on the themes and subthemes derived from the research questions and the teachers' responses.

The following emerged three main themes were developed alongside with their sixteen (16) subthemes namely:

(1) Challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

(2) Relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom.

(3) Recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools to ensure inclusive and effective school communities.

Subthemes are discussed under their related themes for instance theme one consists of five subthemes, theme two of six subthemes and theme three of five subthemes.

The following table illustrates the way in which the three main themes and their sixteen (16) subthemes in total were categorised based on the research questions and the teachers' responses. See the following table:

Table 4.2: Developed main themes and subthemes

MAIN THEMES	SUB THEMES
Theme One: Challenges which teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties	1 Insufficient time
	2 Lack of in-service training
	3 Learners' varying abilities
	4 Class size
	5 Inadequate resources
Theme Two: Relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties	6 Co-teaching
	7 Differentiated teaching
	8 Remedial/compensatory teaching
	9 Individualised/personalised teaching
	10 Collaborative teaching
Theme Three: Recommended strategies to mitigate teachers' challenges in mainstream schools to ensure inclusive and effective school communities	11 Peer teaching
	12 Integrate Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into other legal frameworks and policies in other educational sector
	13 Raise awareness about constitutional rights, attitudinal change
	14 Widen support of institutional development of developing human and instructional resources
	15 Expand and develop educational support services
16 Strengthen and expand in-service training for teachers	

4.4 Presentation of results based on Theme One and its five subthemes: Challenges which teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

The responses under this theme were derived from the following interview question. The participants' responses are given below:

Question: What challenges do you experience when teaching learners with learning difficulties together with their peers without learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms?

All the ten (10) interviewees responded, according to their knowledge and experience of teaching learners with learning difficulties alongside with their peers without learning difficulties in a mainstream classroom. In their responses they frequently mentioned the following aspects as the main challenges experienced:

- Insufficient time
- Lack of teacher in-service education
- Learners with different abilities in the same classroom – it is a burden
- Overcrowded classrooms (class size)
- Inadequate resources

Each of these challenges was discussed in the following sections:

4.4.1. Theme One: Subtheme 1– Insufficient time

Another question based on time management was posed as follows:

Question: How do you balance your time in giving learners with learning difficulties activities to complete and, at the same time, giving activities to fast learners in the same classroom so that they all reach the same level?

In response to this question the interviewees expressed the same views on how they balanced time in class. T1 clearly stated *“it is difficult to manage time effectively when teaching learners with learning difficulties alongside their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom because class activities are not completed in the timeframe as planned”*, while T6 indicated *“it is difficult to balance time when teaching fast learners and slow learners in the same classroom and I usually end up not giving activities to the whole class as planned because the slow learners are not able to catch up within the time allocated”*.

Moreover, T5 stated *“whatever I plan for my lesson, I would try to consider the learners with learning difficulties in the everyday lesson. However, it requires a lot of time for me to prepare two lessons and, again, whenever I teach in the class I have to repeat and repeat again for the slow learners to understand the content of the lesson that requires some time for them to grasp. You cannot force a slow learner to be fast; hence time is a problem to manage”*. T3 noted in this regard *“time management is impossible when*

teaching learners with different abilities in the same classroom because the slow learners usually do not complete their tasks; hence some teachers ignore these learners with learning difficulties and leave them unattended”.

T4 and T7 echoed the same sentiment that the time requires the planning of two separate lessons intended for the fast learners and the slow learners (different abilities) is not sufficient, despite all the efforts made. T9 also indicated that it is difficult to provide support to learners with learning difficulties in the same classroom with their peers without learning difficulties because considerable time is required to prepare and plan activities according to the learners’ abilities. According to T10, *“in the current classroom situation, a single period lasts for 45 minutes only; and it is difficult to allocate activities to all the learners and, at some point, class activities are not always completed, and I will end up not giving activities to the slow learners because they cannot catch up in such given time.”*

Based on the above, it is evident that time is a major challenge in mainstream schools; with eight of the ten teachers interviewed confirmed that time is a barrier to supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with their peers without learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom.

4.4.2. Theme One: Subtheme 2 – Lack of in-service training for teachers

Question: Did you receive any in-service training or workshops on inclusive education?

The responses received to this question were discussed as follows:

T3 and T8 both informed the researcher that they had not been trained on how to support learners with learning difficulties in their teacher education training at the tertiary level. T2 also unequivocally indicated *“I did not attend any in-service training or any workshops with regard to inclusive education; hence, I am not able to support learners with learning difficulties in my class”*.

T6 expressed the view *“I did not get any in-service training; therefore it is difficult for me to provide support to learners with learning difficulties especially if there are more learners in the class. Obviously I am not able to reach every learner and, hence, in-service training is really needed in this regard as perhaps it will direct me as how to support such learners”*.

However, T9 responded in the affirmative by stating *“yes, I was trained in IE while at the tertiary level. However, there is a need for in-service training to enhance teaching skills because some of my colleagues did not receive any in-service training and this resulted in their being unable to support learners with learning difficulties in the same classroom with their peers without learning difficulties”*. T6 mentioned *“the lack of in-service training with regard to IE is a further challenge because some of us (teachers)*

do not know how to render support to learners with learning difficulties in the classrooms because we were not trained in Inclusive Education”.

It is evident that there is a need for in-service training because six out of the ten teachers interviewed indicated that they felt that in-service training was required. Even the teacher who had received training in inclusive education suggested that such training should be given to the others as well.

4.4.3. Theme One: Subtheme3 – Learners’ different abilities

Question: Please share some of the experiences you have had in teaching learners with learning difficulties together with their peers without learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

In response to the request for the teachers to share their experiences of teaching learners with learning difficulties alongside their peers without learning difficulties in one classroom, the interviewees expressed their views and shared their experiences as follows:

T1 had the following to say: *“Teaching learners with different abilities is also a challenge because one has to prepare one lesson plan that accommodates both slow and*

fast learners at the same time because learners have different abilities and learn at different paces."

In addition, T2 indicated *"it is challenging to teach learners with different abilities because it requires teachers to teach according to their level of understanding and this could result in the topic of each lesson being repeated over and over again"*.

According to respondent T5, indicated that *"teaching learners with varying abilities is extremely complex because at some point, fast learners find it so boring when you are repeating the topic for two days. They tend to lose interest in the lesson that is being presented for the second time, unlike others (slow learners) who see as it is the first time for them"*. In addition, T4 indicated *"sometimes, there is no enough time to attend to all learners because a single period lasts for 45 minutes only and you have two groups of learners with different abilities doing different activities; hence it is impossible for slow learners to complete activities"*. Similarly, T9 responded that *"teaching learners of different abilities is difficult because fast learners are able to complete their tasks within the given time and sometimes disturb others who are struggling with the activity"*.

T7 also indicated that *"learners with learning difficulties disturb others by making others laugh at them, while fast learners may get bored. It requires a lot of time and thorough preparation to ensure that each learner understands the content of the lesson or the instruction before one proceeds to the next topic, hence it is a challenge"*.

T5 indicated that *“some of the learners with learning difficulties often feel that they are being left out because they think the level of the curriculum is too complex for them and that they are unable to cope. T9 stated that “teaching learners with different abilities is a challenge because, sometimes, I try to allocate different activities according to their abilities and this requires a lot of time to balance and, at some point, the slow learners do not finish their tasks because the period is too short”.*

It is evident in this study that based on the eight of the ten interviewees (majority), indicated that they experienced various challenges when teaching learners with different abilities in mainstream classrooms.

4.4.4. Theme One: Subtheme 4 – Class size

On the issue of classroom size, the respondents commented as follows:

T3 indicated that *“overcrowded classrooms hampered the provision of effective support for learners with learning difficulties because it is not possible to provide support to all learners in a large group and this frustrates many of the teachers in mainstream classrooms.”* T5 stated that *“the learners’ varying abilities increased the teachers’ workloads because it required teachers to attend to all the learners individually, which is usually impossible due to lack of time and the class size.”* T6 confirmed that *“teaching learners with diverse needs in a big class is a challenge because it is not possible for one teacher to attend to all the learners in the class.”*

T7 indicated that in an overcrowded classroom, teaching will only be effective if there are two teachers in the class to share the teaching workload (co-teaching). In addition, T5 stated that one teacher in an overcrowded class is not able to attend to all the learners in class, especially if there are learners with different abilities. T10 expressed the same sentiment with the comment that *“big class size has negative effects on learners with different abilities because teachers cannot attend or give the necessary support to each learner as required due to time limits and the workload”*.

It is clear from the above that one teacher on his own was simply not able to give attention to all the learners in an overcrowded classroom. Hence, the teacher–learner ratio of 35 of learners per teacher in the primary phase is recommended by the MoE (2012) as per current curriculum. However, the class size of more than 35 learners in a classroom is regarded as too big class and this obviously impacts negatively on teaching and learning.

4.4.5. Theme One: Subtheme 5 – Inadequate resources

The interviewees expressed their views on the lack of teaching materials in mainstream classrooms as a challenge and responded as follows:

T4 stated in this regard: *“I am concerned that many teachers use only textbooks due to a lack of other teaching materials such as computers and others alike”*; while T7

indicated “*that the lack of teaching and learning materials hampers effective teaching despite learners with learning difficulties learn more through visual teaching materials (pictures) for them to grasp.* Of the ten teachers interviewed, only two clearly expressed their views on the lack of teaching and learning materials, although the majority recommended the use of computers in the mainstream classroom to assist learners with learning difficulties who learn better through visual activities (pictures).

4.5. Presentation of results based on Theme Two and its six subthemes: Relevant instructional strategies that are used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

The findings are presented in accordance with the interviewees' responses to the research questions. Therefore the question posed is presented below, followed by the responses to the question.

Question: What strategies do teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties and those without learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms?

The interviewees responded to the question above, stating that they use various instructional strategies to support learners with learning difficulties when teaching them together with their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom. The following strategies were mentioned during the interviews:

- Co-teaching strategy
- Differentiated teaching
- Remedial/compensatory teaching
- Individualized/personalized teaching
- Collaborative teaching
- Peer teaching

Each of these is discussed in detail below.

4.5.1. Theme Two: Subtheme 6– Co-teaching

On the use of a co-teaching strategy by teachers in mainstream classrooms, the respondents responded as follows:

T10 and T7 expressed similar sentiments relating to how difficult it is for one teacher to teach both slow learners and fast learners in the same classroom and the fact that it tended to increase the workload. They also mentioned that there was not enough time for teaching in this way; thus, they recommended the use of co-teaching in mainstream classrooms. One of the respondents (T1) clearly indicated that *“currently we do not use co-teaching in Namibian schools because it is regarded as costly to have two teachers in the same classroom at the same time in terms of remunerating them.”* Whereas, T4, clearly recommended that *“the government of Namibia to allow two teachers in the same classroom whereby they teach concurrently (co-teaching) – one teacher should be responsible for the slow learners; while the other teacher should be responsible for the fast learners so that the learners should be taught at the same time but moving at different pace due to varying learning abilities.”*

Further, T5 and T8 also recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should introduce co-teaching in mainstream classrooms where learners with different abilities are taught, in order to relieve the burden placed on the teachers’ shoulders due to overcrowded classrooms.

Based on above it is evident that half of the teachers interviewed suggested the use of co-teaching as an effective teaching strategy for supporting learners with different abilities in mainstream classrooms.

4.5.2. Theme Two: Subtheme 7– Differentiated teaching

According to T3, *“if you have learners with different abilities in your classrooms, they should be taught according to their abilities, for instance, learners with learning difficulties should be taught separately while those learners without learning difficulties should be taught in a different classroom.”*

On the other hand, T6 responded that *“I used to separate learners based on their abilities for instance I give easy tasks or special activities to slow learners and give challenging activities to fast learners (differentiated teaching)”* while T5 stated that *“I break learning tasks into series to accommodate learners with learning difficulties by placing them in their own group in order to learn at their own pace; while I group those learners without learning difficulties in their own group as well because they do their activities faster.”*

T9 responded that: *“I use concrete material during my lesson presentation in order to allow learners with learning difficulties to learn by seeing the practical materials when I group them separately from the fast learners so that they can recall more easily what they have learned in their group”* while T10 clearly stated that *“I separate the learners*

according to their abilities and give them separate activities according to their level of understanding (differentiated teaching) but sometimes the time is always a challenge, the tasks cannot be completed as planned”.

In addition, T3 indicated that *“I used to separate learners according to their abilities in the classroom; when teaching or setting any examination or test to make sure that I include some questions for learners with learning difficulties according to their abilities but by so doing, it is time consuming”.*

4.5.3 Theme Two: Subtheme 8– Remedial/compensatory teaching

All of the ten (10) teachers interviewed suggested the use of remedial teaching as a relevant strategy for supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

Specifically, four teachers expressed similar sentiments regarding the use of remedial/compensatory teaching to support slow learners. T4 indicated in this regard that *“I give slow learners simple classwork to do during the remedial sessions and at some point I use one size fits all due to overcrowded classroom and limited time”.*

T5 and T7 similarly indicated that they give learners with learning difficulties a remedial support plan in accordance with the Individual Learning Support Plans (ILSP) developed by the MoE in collaboration with NIED (MoE -Learning Support Training Manual,

2010). However it is not easy to attend to learners individually due to limited time. While, T6 clearly stated in this regard that *“I always intend to provide learning support for learners with learning difficulties as remedial support by using one- size- fits all strategy due to overcrowded classrooms and equally lack of technical know-how.”*

It is evident in the findings of this study that many teachers lack knowledge on how to apply individualized teaching in mainstream classrooms and indeed were not prepared for teacher education training or through in-service training.

4.5.4. Theme Two: Subtheme 9– Individualised versus personalised teaching

The results of the study revealed that only two of the teachers interviewed indicated that they use individualised teaching as a strategy to support learners with learning difficulties in the classroom.

Respondent T7 stated that *“I have to give instruction to fast learners first and then I have to walk with the group of slow learners to give them individual instruction one by one; however since the class is overcrowded I cannot attend to all learners individually”*. T4 indicated that *“Since there are few learners with learning difficulties in my class, I am always putting them in one corner and giving them a simple activity to do*

individually, but time is always a limiting factor thus I cannot support them individually as required.”

On the same note the MoE (2013) has introduced the intervention support plans known as Individual Learner Support Plan (ILSP) specifically to support learners with diverse needs in mainstream schools and Individualized Education Support Plans (IESP) for learners with severe intellectual impairment which cannot be catered for in Mainstream schools; but they are taught in Resource schools only (MoE, 2013).

It is clear from the aforesaid that teachers use one- size- fits all strategy in mainstream classrooms. In rare instances, they use small groups, pair work and individualized methods as remedial teaching, but due to limited time and overcrowded classroom, they end up as one- size- fits all strategy.

In anticipation of the Ministry of Education’s (2013) plan for the effective implementation of Sector Policy on Inclusive Education in all schools, learning support in mainstream schools is mandatory and teachers should devise various teaching strategies in supporting learners’ diverse needs.

4.5.5. Theme Two: Subtheme 10– Collaborative teaching

T1 clearly stated that *“I used to ask my colleagues who were trained in IE to assist me on how to handle learners with learning difficulties, because I was not trained, while T5 indicated that “If I fail to use any strategy to support learners with learning difficulties in my class, I always ask my colleague to help me... networking”.*

In light of the above, only two of the ten respondents indicated that they used collaborative teaching when they ask each other as colleagues as to how to handle learners with learning difficulties in their classrooms. It was thus evident that the majority of teachers were not using collaborative teaching simply because they lack skills on how to use such a strategy; although studies have shown that collaborative teaching is the best strategy to use in inclusive settings.

4.5.6 Theme Two: Subtheme 10– Peer teaching

T5 had the following to say regarding peer teaching: *“I mix learners with learning difficulties with the best ones so that they can learn from each other (peer teaching)”* while T6 stated that *“peer teaching is the best strategy to use when teaching learners with different abilities because it allows fast learners to teach others and by so doing, the slow learners may also benefit from their peers”.*

In a nutshell, it was evident from the findings of this study that teachers mostly use one-size-fits-all strategy instead of using various teaching strategies that are deemed relevant in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. Equally, it appeared that teachers do not know when and how to use, which instructional strategy effectively, hence they are clearly in need of in-service training in this regard.

4.6. Presentation of results based on Theme Three and its five subthemes: Recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools

The researcher posed the relevant research question to the respondents and they replied, according to their knowledge and understanding about the strategies they recommended as effective in mitigating the challenges they face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.

Question: What strategies may be recommended to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) for mitigating the challenges teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms and ensuring inclusive and effective school communities?

The respondents generally concurred with the eight strategies recommended in the MoE's Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) and that were enacted by the MoE

for implementation in all Namibian schools. However, the respondents specifically highlighted the following five recommended strategies in their responses:

- Integration of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education and other legal frameworks and policies in other educational sector should be strengthened.
- Raise awareness of the constitutional rights and attitudinal change to ensure inclusive and effective school communities.
- Widen and develop educational support services.
- Strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers.
- Widen Support for Institutional development of developing human and instructional resources

The suggested recommendations are each discussed in detail as follows:

4.6.1. Theme Three: Subtheme12– Integrate the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into all other legal frameworks and policies of the educational sector

With regard to whether the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) is integrated into all Education and all other legal frameworks and policies of the education sector, the respondents recommended as follows:

T1 clearly stated that *“The Ministry of Education must integrate Sector policy on inclusive education into all other ministries, agencies and other stakeholders involved.”*

T7, T9 and T10 felt the same sentiment that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture must ensure that all stakeholders concerned must be involved in revising educational policies and curriculum and legal frameworks of all educational sector.

In light of the above, it is evident that there is a need to integrate Sector Policy on Inclusive Education Policy into other ministries and stakeholders to ensure joint funding arrangements for Inclusive Education and this must be a responsibility for everyone; not only for the Ministry of Education as a sole custodian in this regard.

4.6.2. Theme Three: Subtheme 13 – Raise awareness of constitutional rights and attitudinal change to ensure inclusive and effective school communities

The respondents expressed the following views on raising awareness of constitutional rights and attitudinal change to ensure effective school communities:

According to T3, *“some teachers have a negative attitude towards the inclusion of learners with diverse learning needs in mainstream classrooms, hence they need to change and understand that inclusive education means including all learners, irrespective of any differences”*.

T5 recommended that *“teachers and the community at large need to be informed about the constitutional rights in regard to education policies and legislation, for instance the Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution, Education for All (EFA) and the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) that foster inclusion for all to avoid discrimination against learners with special needs”*.

T7 recommended that *“the Ministry of Education must educate teachers and the community at large about the policies and acts that are guiding the principles of inclusion through workshops, seminars and the media to change negative attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream classes so that teachers accept diversity”*.

Three of the ten respondents interviewed stressed that all teachers should be educated about constitutional rights and an attitudinal change and should be encouraged to accept diversity in classrooms and attend to all learners equally.

4.6.3. Theme Three: Subtheme 14– Widen support for institutional development of developing human and instructional resources

Based on the suggestion to widen support for institutional development of developing human and instructional resources, the respondents made the following recommendations:

According to T1, clearly recommended that *“to ensure inclusivity, all schools must become inclusive in order to cater learners with diverse needs in mainstream schools, while learners with special needs must be taught in Resource Schools such as an Ehuwa Special School in the region.”*

T3 and T5 recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should expand and improve infrastructure by building more classrooms, toilet facilities, and laboratories at all schools to enhance effective teaching and learning materials. T10 similarly recommended that *“more classrooms must be built to avoid overcrowded classrooms because teachers are not being able to provide support to individual learners in such conditions”*.

Thus, the study found that seven of the ten teachers interviewed recommended that the Ministry of Education must develop human and instructional resources and also to increase infrastructural resources and teaching materials to support effective teaching and learning in mainstream schools. They further indicated that teachers must be fully capacitated with relevant skills in order to provide support to learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms.

4.6.4. Theme Three: Subtheme 15 - Widen and develop educational support services

With regard to widening and developing educational support services, the respondents made the following suggestions:

T3 recommended that *“teachers need to be supported and there must be a mutual cooperation between teachers and school management because the effective implementation of inclusive Education cannot be achieved in isolation.”* T2 and T8 had the same idea, stating that there is a need for the government to provide Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, for instance, each school should be provided with computers because learners with learning difficulties learn better through audio-visual equipment and through software presentation (PowerPoint).

4.6.5. Theme Three: Subtheme 16– Strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers

In terms of a strategy for strengthening and widening in-service training for teachers, all the ten (10) respondents recommended that there is a need for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers in all schools.

T7 specifically recommended that *“teachers must be trained through regular information sharing such as seminars, workshops and meetings regarding how to provide psychosocial support for learners with special needs and also to be updated on curriculum change.*

Generally, T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, T8 and T10 voiced the need for in-service training because some teachers did not receive any background in inclusive education during their studies at tertiary institutions. These participants further recommended that teachers should participate in continuous professional development and in-service training for capacity building.

Based on the above, it is evident that on-going in-service training is needed for all teachers to enable them to keep abreast of advances related to the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) at inclusive schools in Namibia in order to support learners with diverse needs effectively.

4.7. Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study based on the main themes and their related subthemes that emanated from the research questions and the teachers' responses.

The following main themes were discussed concurrently with their subthemes in detail in this chapter namely:

- (1) The challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms.
- (2) Relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with learners without learning difficulties in the same classroom.
- (3) Recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools to ensure effective school communities.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results that were presented in the previous chapter and the three main themes that emerged from the research questions, namely: the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms; the relevant teaching strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms; and the recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms to ensure effective school communities.

The three main themes are discussed in conjunction with their subthemes and the respondents' views. The following three research questions guided the study:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms?
2. What strategies do teachers use to support learners with learning difficulties when taught alongside learners without learning difficulties in the same classroom?
3. What are the recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms to ensure effective school communities?

5.2. Discussion on the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

The findings of the study revealed the following as the most prevalent challenges that are experienced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when they are taught together with those learners without learning difficulties in the same mainstream- classrooms:

- Insufficient time
- Lack of teacher in-service education
- Learners' different abilities
- Overcrowded classrooms (class size)
- Inadequate teaching and learning resources.

Based on the findings, it is evident that teachers do experience challenges in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream schools. The findings of this study concur with those of a study conducted by Ngungi (2010b) in Kenya, which revealed that some of the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with diverse needs are a lack of resources, lack of teacher training, limited time, inadequate support and classroom size factors.

It is thus evident that the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream settings are apparent not only in Namibia but in other

countries as well. The results of this study were also substantiated by the findings of Emvula (2008), Haihambo (2009) and Mayumbelo (2006). These researchers found that the challenges faced by teachers in the effective provision of inclusive education are embedded in an uncondusive physical environment, lack of in-service teacher training and professional development, large class size, the curriculum choices available and a lack of support, as well as a lack of assistive devices and teaching materials.

Each of these challenges faced by teachers is discussed in detail below.

5.2.1. Insufficient time

The results in relation to insufficient time revealed that most teachers in mainstream classrooms are challenged by the time factor because of the limited time available, means they are not able to provide support to all learners who need it. This was evident in the view expressed by T10 that *“in the current classroom situation, a single period lasts for 45 minutes only; and it is difficult to allocate activities to all learners and, at some point, class activities are not always completed and I will end up not giving activities to the slow learners because they cannot catch up in the given time”*.

The results of this study concur with the findings of Eleweke and Rodda (2012) that although teachers are required to educate a broad range of learners in the mainstream classroom setting, they sometimes feel that time is not always sufficient to plan and

support learners with different abilities. Dyson and Milward (2010), argue that teaching learners with learning difficulties in the same classroom together with those learners with no learning difficulties in one classroom is indeed a challenge because considerable time is required to plan for providing support for all learners at the same time.

In light of the above, the researcher is convinced that the time factor remains a major challenge in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools and that this factor is not only prevalent in Namibia but in other parts of the world. It is evident that learners with learning difficulties can only be supported by teachers who accept learners' diversity and this requires commitment and indeed proper training to use relevant instructional strategies within allocated time- framework; to enable learners to reach their individual's potentials.

5.2.2. Lack of in-service training

The results of the study revealed that a lack of in-service training, specifically in terms of the inclusive education discourse, remains a challenge for teachers. This was evident in the following comment made by T10, *"I did not attend any in-service training or any workshop with regard to (IE) inclusive education; hence I am not able to support learners with learning difficulties in my class"*.

Based on teachers' qualifications as indicated in the preceding chapter, it would appear that because some teachers were not trained in the inclusive education discipline and had not even attended any workshops on inclusive education, most teachers lacked knowledge on the use of inclusive education strategies.

The findings of this study further concur with the results of a study conducted in the United States, which revealed that "most of education teachers lack an appropriate training to educate learners with learning difficulties in mainstream effectively" (Hyunjeong et al., 2014, p. 17). The study indicated that although teachers do try to accommodate learners with learning difficulties in their classrooms, the challenge remains as they lack knowledge and skills on how to provide support for learners with diverse needs in general education and sometimes they do not feel fully prepared for teaching this category of learners.

Studies by Avramidis (2010), Masenga and Mkandawire (2007) and Haitembu (2014) found that most untrained teachers lack the knowledge and skills required to support learners with different abilities in mainstream classrooms. They further argue that owing to a lack of in-service training, teachers are always sceptical about their knowledge and skills when it comes to providing effective support for learners with diverse needs.

In support of such evidence, a study by Zimba (2011) reveals that one of the main challenges experienced by teachers in mainstream schools is a lack of in-service training

on how to provide support for learners with diverse needs in inclusive settings. Moreover, the MoE (2013) reported that a lack of teacher pre-service training on inclusive education may impede the effective implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) in Namibia.

In light of the above, it is evident in this study that a lack of in-service training in Inclusive Education among teachers constitutes a major barrier to effective teaching and learning and in the provision of support to learners with diverse needs and this shows as a serious concern in mainstream schools in Namibia that requires immediate intervention. Therefore, it is evident in this study that teachers need to be provided with in-service training and professional development on a regular basis to update their professional skills.

5.2.3. Learners' different abilities

The findings of this study revealed that the varying abilities among learners is one of the challenges experienced by teachers that impede teachers to provide learning support for learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. This was confirmed by T2 who clearly indicated that *"it is challenging to teach learners with different abilities because it requires a teacher to teach according to their level of understanding and this could result in the topic of each lesson being repeated over and over again"*.

Brenner (2008) and Silverman (2015) studies also revealed that teachers may feel frustrated by the challenges they face in their mixed ability classrooms and they may not

know how to create successful learning and teaching environment that meet the needs of all learners. In addition, Simanova (2010) clearly states that “most teachers in mainstream schools lack the knowledge of using effective strategies in supporting learners in the classroom for a wide range of ability; only a few teachers who are familiar with managing mixed abilities and they are much better equipped to meet the learners’ diverse needs” (p. 48).

The researcher in this study concurs with Simanova’s (2010) view that teachers in mainstream schools need to be equipped with relevant instructional strategies in order to respond to learners with mixed abilities in classrooms and enable them to provide effective teaching and learning support to all.

Based on that, the findings of this study adopted Limbu’s (2012) useful strategies of teaching a mixed ability class. Limbu (2012) stresses that:

- Teachers should create supportive learning environments. It is important to create a supportive learning environment in the classroom where every learner feels confident and able to perform to the best of their abilities (inclusivity).
- Classroom management – by managing classes effectively teachers can ensure that learners will be involved as much as possible in the lesson.
- Teachers are encouraged to identify essential concepts and instructional focuses to ensure all learners understand.
- Use assessment as a teaching tool to extend and measure instruction through observation, questioning, self and peer assessment.

- Emphasis and stress more on critical thinking while designing a lesson in order to cater for learner's individual needs.
- Engaging all learners is essential; hence we should engage and make learners participate in all activities.
- Provide a balance between teacher and assigned learner selected tasks.
- Each learner learns differently, hence needs to be treated as such.
- All learners are talented in different ways and they need to be attended to individually (p. 43).

In this study, the findings revealed that the majority of teachers interviewed indicated that they do not know how to manage the classroom with a wide range of learners' varying abilities especially in overcrowded classrooms, hence it is a challenge.

In light of the above, it is clear that the issue of teaching learners with different abilities in overcrowded classrooms should not be overlooked in Namibian schools; because it needs qualified teachers in the field. Moreover, if the teacher is not trained on how to manage a class with learners of mixed abilities effectively, hence it is a problem that requires immediate interventions.

5.2.4. Overcrowded classrooms

The respondents in this study had various views and opinions on the issue of overcrowded classrooms in mainstream schools. This was affirmed by (T3) who stated

that *“overcrowded classrooms hamper effective support to learners with learning difficulties because one cannot manage to provide support to all the learners in a larger group and this frustrates most of the teachers in mainstream classrooms”*.

Studies have shown that many African countries are characterized (Brenner, 2008) by a high number of learners per teacher – a practice which is common in previously disadvantaged areas and that class size (overcrowded classrooms) is regarded as one of the biggest obstacles to effective teaching and learning. Studies by Breilling (2017), Zimba, Haihambo and February (2004) and Rieser (2012) revealed that one of the challenges experienced by teachers in supporting learners with mixed abilities in mainstream settings is overcrowded classrooms. In such classrooms, teachers are unable to provide effective support for learners with diverse needs.

Haitembu’s (2014) study also revealed that a varying range of learner abilities in a large classroom could result in teachers not being able to provide full support for all learners. Moreover, the findings of this study are in line with those of a study by Breilling (2017) who found that teachers may feel frustrated by larger class sizes and this may affect the teaching and learning negatively.

In light of the above, it is evident that the overcrowded classroom has a negative effect on the provision of support to learners with learning difficulties because the teachers are not able to attend to each individual learner as required as a result of their workload especially in overcrowded classrooms.

5.2.5. Inadequate resources

On the issue of inadequate resources in mainstream schools, the majority of teachers interviewed mentioned the lack of teaching and learning materials such as computers and other ICT especially in more remote schools as one of the challenges they face.

T4 clearly stated that *“I am concerned by the fact that many teachers use only textbooks in the classroom due to the lack of other teaching materials such as computers and other assistive teaching technological devices”*. Eleweke and Rodda (2012) also found that *“the biggest teachers’ challenge in mainstream schools seems to be a lack of resources for organizing effective support to learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, especially in developing countries”* (p. 230).

In addition, the MoE (2013) has also noted that lack of resources such as computers and other assistive learning devices for learners with special needs can adversely hamper the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy especially in rural-schools. It is anticipated that the equal distribution of teaching and learning materials in inclusive schools in the country should be realized.

In light of the above, it is evident that the lack of the use of ICT’s equipment such as computers, audio-video assistive devices in mainstream classrooms may hamper the effective implementation of the inclusive education policy whereby support is

mandatory for all learners (inclusivity). Therefore, studies have shown that learners with learning difficulties learn better through visual presentations such as power- point presentation rather than through lecture and rote –learning in a conventional classroom.

5.3. Discussion on relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

On the issue of the relevant instructional strategies identified that may be used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties; the findings of this study revealed that the majority of teachers interviewed used only one-size- fits all strategy in mainstream classrooms.

The results of this study further revealed that since teachers are always fatigued by teaching learners with mixed abilities in overcrowded mainstream classrooms, they suggested the use of co-teaching to be introduced in Namibia; although it is regarded as costly in terms of remunerating two teachers per class. The respondents indicated that co-teaching would be of great help to have two teachers to teach parallel in an overcrowded classroom to ease the burden of single handed teacher which is currently happening in Namibia.

Further, the results of this study revealed that most of the teachers interviewed do not know how to use other relevant teaching strategies used in inclusive settings in supporting learners with learning difficulties. The majority of teachers in general education in Namibia are only used to a renowned one -size- fits all teaching strategy, even if they are teaching learners with varying abilities in one classroom. Hence, one -

size- fits all strategy has been used in a traditional classroom; which is not relevant in inclusive settings.

Therefore, this study has adopted some of the relevant strategies used by some countries that had implemented an inclusive education policy before and these strategies deemed as relevant in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms. These are:

- Co-teaching
- Differentiated teaching
- Remedial/compensatory support
- Individualization
- Collaborative teaching
- Peer teaching

Each of these instructional strategies is discussed in detail below.

5.3.1. Co-teaching

Studies have shown that many countries such as Finland, USA and England had used co-teaching in inclusive settings and regarded as convenient in mainstreaming.

The findings of this study revealed that most of the teachers interviewed indicated that they do not use co-teaching strategy in Namibian schools because it is regarded as costly by having two teachers do teach parallel in one classroom; in terms of remuneration of

both teachers (double action) rather than remunerating for only one teacher per class. As a result, most of teachers in Namibia use only one-size- fits all (lecture), even in inclusive schools where learners with diverse needs are taught in mainstream classrooms. This is asserted by one of the respondents (T4) who clearly indicated that *“we appeal to the government of Namibia to allow two teachers teaching synchronously in one classroom whereby – one teacher should be responsible for the slow learners while the other teacher should be responsible for the fast learners.”*

Further, T5 and T8 also recommended that although co-teaching is regarded as costly in Namibia, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should introduce it in mainstream classrooms where learners with different abilities are taught, in order to relieve the burden placed on single handed teachers in one overcrowded classroom.

It is evident that despite the fact that co- teaching is receiving attention in some countries in the world, it is not yet implemented Namibia hence there is a need to be introduced in inclusive schools.

Studies have shown that the principle of co-teaching is to pair teachers together as part of an initiative to create more inclusive classroom to share the workload in the classroom and this benefit both teachers and learners. Rosen (2007) argues that although co-teaching received momentum in the field of inclusive education recently, it is not a panacea for the effective teaching of learners with different abilities. It holds greater

promise if applied by qualified teachers in that field through effective collaboration and mutual understanding between teachers and individual learners; otherwise if not so, it could be a mere action without tangible results”(p.174).

Some studies argue in many countries that had implemented inclusive education system; they regarded co-teaching as favourable in mainstream classrooms. Friend and Cook (2010) indicate that co-teaching is effective when used in a mixed ability class where knowledge and skills are imparted through joint instruction to ensure that the learners' individual needs are met.

In addition, Stein (2016), Ferguson, Desjarlais, and Meyer (2000) highlighted some of the key benefits of co-teaching in an inclusion classroom include:

- It allows students to benefit from the shared support and resources
- Increase students' attention
- Improve students' performance
- Shared expertise among teachers
- Building camaraderie and dividing the workload in the classroom
- Increase independence for students with learning difficulties
- Teachers are able to support one another by complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses
- It develops stronger and creative lesson due to teachers' sharing plan processes with each other.

In light of the above; it is evident that there is a need to introduce co-teaching strategy in inclusive schools in Namibia in order to respond to the learners' diverse needs to urge stakeholders in education to emulate the aforesaid benefits of co-teaching that were outlined by Stein (2016), Ferguson, Desjarlais, and Meyer (2000) to serve as hallmarks to be emulated in Namibia.

5.3.2. Differentiated teaching

Tomlinson (2014) defines differentiated instruction as the process of “ensuring that what a learner learns should demonstrate how he or she learns and teachers can differentiate through content, process, product and learning environment based on the individual learner”(p.32).

The results of this study revealed that some of the teachers used differentiated teaching without knowledge on how to apply it correctly. According to T10, stated that *“I separate the learners according to their learning abilities and give them separate activities according to their individual level of understanding (differentiated) teaching but it is not always easy to manage because of limited time.* One of the respondents (T4) also affirms that *“I always allocate tasks to a group of fast learners and also to a group of slow learners to learn at their pace; however the group of slow learners never complete their task as required hence it is really difficult to support them.”*

In addition, Limbu (2012) indicates differentiated teaching is the instructional theory that allows teachers to structure the learning environment in such a way that it addresses the variety of learning styles and interests of diverse learners in a classroom setting.

Based on the aforesaid, the researcher of this study concluded that although differentiated teaching has gained momentum in education settings globally; teachers in Namibia do lack knowledge on how to apply this strategy effectively in terms of content, process and interest. Hence, there is a need for teachers to be trained on how to use differentiated teaching strategy effectively in inclusive schools in Namibia.

5.3.3. Remedial/compensatory teaching

On the question about the strategies that the interviewees used to support learners with learning difficulties in the classroom, the results of this study revealed that, because of the overcrowded classrooms, the majority of the respondents used a mainly remedial/compensatory teaching strategy as a “one-size-fits all” (teacher centered or lecture method) approach to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms instead of individualized teaching strategy.

Owing to the limited time available and the overcrowded classroom’s conditions, teachers are always not be able to provide effective remedial-teaching that was introduced by the Ministry of Education in Namibia known as Individual Learning Support plans. Provision of learning support is mandatory in Namibian schools as per

MoE (2013). Hence, the use of a one-size-fits-all by teachers in mainstream classrooms to be regarded as the way of providing remedies for learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms is pointless; and this can seriously disadvantage learners with learning difficulties in particular.

It was further revealed that other relevant teaching strategies including differentiated and individualized teaching strategies are not commonly used in mainstream classrooms in Namibia.

5.3.4 .Individualised versus personalised teaching

The results of this study revealed that the majority of teachers cannot use individualized teaching strategy due to overcrowded classrooms. Although individualized strategy is relevant to support learners with diverse needs and thus had to be addressed individually, teachers lack knowledge on how to use individualized teaching effectively in mainstream classrooms. It is evident from these findings that in many cases, teachers tend to opt for the one-size-fits-all strategy instead of individualized strategy that does respond to learners' diverse needs.

In anticipating this challenge, the Ministry of Education in Namibia in collaboration with NIED had developed a Teacher Learning Support Manual (2010) as intervention support plans known as Individual Learning Support Plans (ILSP) and Individual Education Support plans (IESPs). The ILSPs are specifically meant to support learners

with diverse needs in mainstream schools, while IESPs is intended to support learners with severe intellectual impairment who cannot be catered for in mainstream schools but are taught in Resource Schools (MoE - Teacher Learning Support Manual, 2010, p. 17).

In contrary, although individualized teaching strategy is regarded as relevant in inclusive settings, Tomlinson (2014) identified three main constraints to the use of individualized teaching in mainstream classrooms, namely:

(1) Time constraints – teachers could work better if they had longer blocks of time to spend with students in the class.

(2) Class size and work load are the biggest constraints.

(3) Teacher's unskilled and preparedness - lack of knowledge and unpreparedness on how to use individualised instruction could serve as a serious obstacle to individualising instruction in the classroom.

In light of the above, it is evident that teachers in Namibia lack knowledge on how to use individualized teaching in mainstream classrooms; despite the fact that the Ministry of Education had introduced mandatory support plans such as ILSP and IESP in mainstream classrooms. However, teachers usually opted for one -size- fits all strategy due to time and overcrowded classroom factors.

Therefore, individualized teaching will only be effective if teachers take cognizance of the fact that this strategy requires proper planning by skilled teachers to use it properly and if it is not well planned, it becomes a challenge in itself.

5.3.5. Collaborative teaching

The results of this study revealed that only two out of the ten teachers interviewed (T1 and T2) indicated that they used collaborative teaching in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms by using scenarios without knowing exactly which method they are referring to.

T1 clearly stated that *“I used to ask my colleague as how to provide learning support for learners with learning difficulties in my classrooms.”* In addition, T2 indicated that *“if I get stuck in how to handle learners with mixed abilities in my classroom; I usually consult my colleague who is trained in IE.”*

According to Rosen (2007), inclusive education is always successful if there is sound collaboration between the teachers themselves and other stakeholders in order to ensure good partnerships in education.

In light of the above, it is evident from the findings of this study that the majority of teachers lacked skills in the use of collaborative teaching in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, teachers should share expertise and emulate others through collaboration in the event there is a gap in teaching skills.

5.3.6. Peer teaching

The findings of this study revealed only T5 indicated the use of peer teaching in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms by giving the following scenarios: *"I sometimes mix learners with learning difficulties with the best ones in one group so that fast learners teach slow learners."*

In view of the above it is evident that the majority of teachers do not believe in peer teaching to support learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classroom despite it is regarded as one of the relevant strategy in inclusive settings.

The researcher in this study came to the conclusion that it appears that the majority of teachers opted only the use of a one-size-fits all strategy, which is not responding to the learners' diverse needs in mainstream classrooms. It is, therefore, advisable for the teachers in Namibia to follow Limbu's (2012) useful strategies in teaching a mixed abilities classroom by using relevant teaching strategies such as co-teaching and individualized teaching etc.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should provide in-service training for teachers on how and when to use relevant teaching strategies that are practical, providing clear explanations, seeking relevant information and devoting more time to working on specific skills required for teaching learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms to ensure effective teaching and learning.

5.4. Discussion on recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

The results of this study revealed that the respondents had recommended various strategies that may mitigate teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classroom to ensure inclusive and effective school communities. It is interesting to note that the respondents recommended five strategies that were similar to those of the MoE (2013). They stated that they found these strategies effective in mitigating the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in particular, and when rolling out the smooth implementation of Inclusive Education policy in general.

The recommended five strategies are as follows:

- The integration and implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education in all educational sector and schools.
- Raise awareness of constitutional rights and attitudinal change to ensure inclusive and effective school communities.
- Support of institutional development by human and instructional resources.
- Widen and develop educational support services.
- Strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers.

Each strategy is discussed as follows:

5.4.1. The integration and implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into all other legal frameworks and policies of Educational sector to be strengthened.

According to MoE (2013) with regard to the advocacy of the integration of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education and its legislation and policies into the entire education sector and the articulation of Education principles and rights at all levels; it has led to:

- “The establishment of procedures and practices that facilitate inclusion throughout the education system (e, g flexible curriculum and assessment).
- The provision of clear, detailed legislation on class size and staffing norms.
- All relevant education forums should promote the implementation of inclusive education at all Namibian schools” (p. 1).

Therefore, it is imperative that teachers must fully understand the integration of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education and its legislation, and policies into the entire educational sector and stakeholders, including schools; and funding for education should be a responsibility of all parties involved. Therefore, the respondents of this study recommended that the key role players in education, especially at management level; should support teachers taking cognizance of the fact that the issue of teacher -learner ratio and staffing norms should be adhered to as stipulated above to avoid overcrowded classroom.

5.4.2. Raise awareness of constitutional rights and attitudinal change to ensure effective school communities.

According to the respondents, they recommended teachers in mainstream must be sensitized and well informed about the rights to education for all children irrespective of race, gender and disabilities so that teachers can embrace diversity in inclusive classrooms. Further, the respondents indicated that it is indeed obligatory on teachers to foster attitudinal change and avoid prejudicing learners, but promote inclusion as stipulated in Article 20 of the Namibian constitution and Education for All as per MoE (2013).

5.4.3. Support of institutional development by developing human and instructional resources.

Forlin (2010) indicates the success of inclusive education depends on the available infrastructural resources, human and instructional resources as well as the quality of the educational support in mainstream schools in general. According to the respondents, they recommended that in-service training, especially in inclusive education should be provided by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to all teachers in inclusive schools through regular workshops and seminars for human capacity building to enhance teaching skills. They further recommended that enough classrooms should be built to avoid overcrowding and that all schools must be inclusive while special schools must

become resource schools. All in all, resources must be equally distributed in all schools, especially in remote areas to ensure inclusivity.

5.4.4. Widen and develop educational support services

UNESCO (1994) indicates support of inclusive education is mandatory, with teachers need to be supported from management level to provide necessary teaching and learning materials, and equally, all learners need to be supported in classrooms in order to reach their maximum potentials. Every child is unique and needs to be fully supported.

As Josua (2013) states, the school management plays an important role in ensuring that the school environment is safe; and by so doing teachers are supported through extrinsic motivation. Therefore, it is important to note that if teaching and learning materials are available and teachers are trained or capacitated to use relevant instructional strategies effectively in inclusive settings, then teachers' challenges in supporting learners with diverse needs are likely to be insignificant.

5.4.5. Strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers

The results of this study concur with Haihambo, February, Brown and Hengari (2009) and suggest information on inclusive education should be disseminated to both novice and experienced teachers through teacher education training institution and in-service training. The respondents of this study even recommended there is a need for in-service training, especially in the inclusive education discourse and principles that should be

provided to all teachers in inclusive schools to enable them keeping abreast with inclusivity and accept diversity holistically.

Based on the respondents' views by outlining five recommended strategies, it is anticipated that if those recommended strategies are implemented effectively in all inclusive schools, the challenges faced by teachers in mainstream schools currently could be the thing of the past. Finally, the researcher of this study also concurs with the respondents' views in this regard.

5.5. Summary

This chapter briefly discussed the findings on the themes that emanated from the research questions and the respondents' views. The themes were then discussed in conjunction with their related subthemes. The discussion in this chapter focused on the following aspects: the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms; relevant teaching strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms; and recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms to ensure effective school communities.

Subsequently, the findings of the study were supported by evidence from relevant literature and the researcher's own point of view.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This chapter summarises the overview of the research elements and findings that were presented in the preceding chapters.

The study is of qualitative research approach and qualitative case study design was employed because it was deemed relevant to the nature of qualitative approach and the topic of the study. Criterion sampling was employed to select all teachers at the target school because they have the same experience of teaching learners with learning difficulties at such school. The school was selected among others as a sample, with the idea that it had a history of integration and mainstreaming and as a forerunner of implementation of inclusive education in the region and because of this experience, teachers were taken to participate in the study in anticipation that they are able to easily adapt to inclusivity. Out of 18 teachers at the target school, only 10 teachers were willing to partake in the study, the study aimed to use both one- on-one interviews and audio recording, but they opted to be interviewed through one- on- one interview only without any audio recording due to the confidentiality.

Data was analysed through the use of thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis of this study was done in line with the theoretical framework of the Goldratt's TOC (1995) that underpinned this study that comprises of five developmental steps to serve as

hallmarks in finding a solution or panacea for the challenges experienced by teachers in mainstream classrooms. Goldratt's Theory of constraints (1995) consists of five steps, namely (1) identify the challenges involved in the process of management, (2) decide how best to exploit the challenges, (3) subordinate everything else to the above decisions, (4) evaluate the challenges, and (5) remove the challenges and re-evaluate to ascertain whether the situation has improved (Goldratt, 1995, p. 202).

Therefore, this study has adopted some of the five steps of the of Goldratt's Theory of Constraints (1995), to serve also as a yardstick to develop the three main themes that emerged from the research questions and the responses of the interviewees.

The following are the main three themes that emerged from the research questions and participants' responses:

(1) The challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. (2) Relevant instructional strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with their peers without learning difficulties in the same classroom.(3) Recommended strategies for mitigating the teachers' challenges when supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools.

While Goldratt's Theory of Constraints (1995) argues that the power to adjust the constraints is dependent on the individuals' intrinsic, the findings of this study indicate that many teachers had the determination, but they still needed external driving support

from management level in order to support learners successful in mainstreaming with minimum challenges, if none. It is hoped that the results of this study will inform stakeholders in education to take cognisance of the recommended eight strategies of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education by Ministry of Education to serve as yardsticks in addressing teachers' challenges in inclusive schools.

6.2. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

6.2.1. The challenges that teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

The findings of the study revealed that teachers in mainstream schools face numerous challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties when teaching them in the same classrooms as their peers without learning difficulties. The following challenges that emerged from the findings, which are deemed to be among the most serious, as they were identified by the teachers during the interviews:

- Insufficient time
- Lack of teacher in-service training
- Learners' different abilities
- Overcrowded classrooms (class size)
- Inadequate teaching and learning resources

Studies, for example, that of Fuchs (2010), on the challenges teachers face in supporting learners with diverse needs in inclusive schools also have themes such as (1) negative attitudes on the part of teachers, (2) uncondusive physical environment, (3) lack of administrative support, (4) lack of teacher support to learners with learning difficulties, (5) lack of teacher in-service education programs, and (6) a lack of time in which to plan (Fuchs, 2010, p. 48).

Studies have also found that a lack of staff professional development and inadequate training for both novice and qualified teachers, who have not specialized in inclusive education, it means that they are likely to experience challenges in supporting learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010).

The researcher in this study is convinced that, particularly if teachers are not trained in the principles of inclusive education at the tertiary level, there is an urgent need for on-going in-service training to equip both novice and experienced teachers with sound knowledge and skills on how to manage teaching and learning effectively in classrooms with diverse learners.

Moreover,imba, Haihambo and February (2004) and Josua (2013) also indicated that the majority of teachers in Namibia have very little or no training in the area of special needs education. Thus, they are not equipped to provide the necessary support for learners with special needs in regular schools. While the above-mentioned study was conducted more than fifteen years before this study, the status quo remains.

The findings of the current study have revealed that teachers in mainstream schools are continuing to experience challenges in supporting learners with diverse needs and that this may impact adversely on the effective implementation of the Namibian Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) at inclusive schools. Thus, the problem requires immediate interventions.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher of this study argues that, in as much as the status quo regarding the challenges that teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools remains without radical intervention, it is obvious that these challenges are the result of many embedded factors.

Firstly, if teachers do not receive proper orientation in inclusive educational discourse, through on-going in-service training, they will not be able to provide support to all learners in inclusive classrooms. Secondly, if the teacher-learner ratio, as stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001, that is, 35 learners per teacher in the primary phase, if it is clearly not being adhered to; overcrowded classrooms may still remain.

The findings of this study revealed that a teacher-learner ratio as seen at the target school of 43 learners per teacher during the interview, thus implying that overcrowded classrooms may hamper effective time management; because it is not possible for teachers to provide support for all individual learners in such conditions due to their excessive workload.

6.2.2. Recommended relevant instructional strategies to be used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

Studies have shown that the following instructional strategies were identified by the teachers in some countries as relevant in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms:

- Co-teaching strategy
- Differentiated teaching
- Remedial/compensatory support
- Individualisation
- Collaborative teaching
- Peer teaching

The researcher in this study agrees with Brenner (2008) that the use of various instructional teaching strategies by professional teachers within the inclusive education system is imperative because they share knowledge and create innovative options that are responsive to learners with diverse needs in mainstream settings. Thus, it is clearly incumbent on teachers to collaborate and network to share their knowledge and skills on how to support learners with learning difficulties. In-service training in specific strategies is an ideal solution.

In light of the above and judging from the respondents' views regarding the use of relevant strategies, the researcher in this study identified a gap in the teachers' knowledge of the use of relevant strategies in supporting learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom.

Firstly, not all teachers possess the technical expertise required to use the relevant instructional strategies effectively as they are meant to be used due to other factors such as a lack of time management in which one has to complete a task.

Secondly, overcrowded classroom is a barrier in itself and the novice teacher is obvious cannot be able to use, for example, individualization teaching strategy in a mainstream classroom due to the class size (inability to reach all learners).

Thirdly, being unschooled teacher specifically on how to use a specific relevant strategy in overcrowded classroom, the majority of the teachers were opting to use a one-size-fits-all approach that ultimately, does not meet the individual needs and aspirations of all learners.

Fourthly, even if teachers are trained to use relevant instructional strategies in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms; yet they are not using such strategies effectively, their teaching will remain pointless and time wasting, leading to frustrations on the teachers' part; hence, the challenges repeat themselves.

Therefore, each instructional strategy is only relevant if it is used by skilled teachers effectively at the right time and in the right place. Therefore, solutions to such

challenges must be sought through drastic interventions such as regular in-service training and staff development.

6.2.3. Recommended strategies to mitigate teachers' challenges in mainstream schools to ensure inclusive and effective school communities

The results of this study revealed that the respondents had recommended five strategies that are similar to those mentioned by the MoE (2013).

The five suggested strategies include:

- The integration and implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education and other legal frameworks and policies into all educational sector and school communities must be realized.
- Raise the awareness of constitutional rights and attitudinal change to ensure inclusive and effective school communities.
- Widen and develop educational support services.
- Widen the support of institutional development of developing human and instructional resources.
- Strengthen and widen in-service training for teachers.

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that there is a need to sensitise and mobilise teachers to be aware of the critical elements, as they highlighted them above, to ensure effective school communities at all Namibian schools. This may also facilitate and enhance the smooth implementation of the inclusive education policy in Namibia.

MoE (2013) advocated the integration of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education and its legislation and policies into the entire educational sector and the articulation of Inclusive Education principles and rights at all levels of education through the:

- “Establishment of procedures and practices that facilitate inclusion throughout the education system (e.g. flexible curriculum and assessment).
- Provide clear, detailed legislation on class size and staffing norms.
- All relevant education forums should promote the implementation of Inclusive education at all Namibian schools” (p. 1).

The researcher of this study concluded that if the recommended strategies are implemented effectively, this will assist in overcoming the challenges faced by teachers in mainstream schools completely, and inclusive and effective school communities will be realised holistically.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The teachers who participated in the study made the following overall recommendations:

- The MoEAC should implement the Sector policy on Inclusive Education at all schools effectively. At the time of the study, several schools had not implemented the policy, and this was one of the reasons why teachers were experiencing challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools.
- The MoEAC should disseminate information to schools and communities at large about the constitutional rights, education policies and legislation, for example Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution, Education for All and the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013), which promotes the inclusion of all learners in education.
- The MoEAC should implement co-teaching in inclusive schools because it has many benefits for both teachers and learners and to emulate from other countries which had implemented it such as Finland, USA and England.
- It is essential that co-teaching and other relevant strategies are implemented effectively by experienced teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools and, if possible, in-service training in this specific area should be organized by external experts from other countries which had implemented it such as Finland, USA and England.

- All stakeholders should be sensitised to the inclusive education policy guidelines through information dissemination via the media and the public at large to be involved and provide funds to meet the Ministry of Education half way.
- In-service teacher training, specifically in the inclusive education discourse and in classroom management, should be provided on a regular basis to orientate both novice and expert teachers on how to provide support to all learners in mainstream classrooms.
- The teacher-learner ratio should be considered and adhered to as stipulated in the Education Act 16 of 2001 to avoid overcrowded classrooms that may constitute a major barrier to effective teaching and learning.
- The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should provide sufficient teaching and learning materials, including computers, so that teachers do not have to struggle with a lack of teaching materials and to enable learners to learn more easily than appeared to be the case at the time of the study.
- Additional classrooms must be built to avoid overcrowded classrooms. Moreover, these classrooms must be friendly and least restrictive in order to accommodate learners with diverse needs and foster inclusive learning environment.
- Further, teaching and learning materials should be distributed equally to all mainstream schools including remote schools to ensure inclusivity.
- Finally, the regional education offices and school management should fully support teachers and motivate them to embrace diversity and advocate the notion of inclusivity in the school environment all the time.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was conducted in the Oshana Region, and involved a case study of one primary school in the region. Thus, further studies should be conducted in more schools in other regions of Namibia.

Therefore, this study recommends the following:

- Compare the findings of the current study with other studies to be conducted so as to fill the gap that might be left during this study. This would also ensure a better understanding of the challenges teachers face in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms, especially in Ohangwena, Oshikoto and Kavango West, to mention just a few regions that border the Oshana Region.
- Find ways in which to mitigate the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms and also implement the eight strategies recommended by the MoEAC to ensure the effective implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) in Namibia. If all eight of the recommended strategies by the Ministry of Education as adopted by this study were to be implemented as they are documented, then the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms would be minimised, if not eradicated.

6.5. CONCLUSION

The study used a qualitative approach and a case study of one primary school in the Oshana Region in Namibia, to answer the research questions and thereby realize the research objectives.

The results of the study provided insights into the challenges teachers experience in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. The results revealed that there is a need for the MoEAC to provide in-service training to equip teachers with the relevant knowledge and skills on how to use relevant instructional strategies and manage diverse classes effectively.

Further, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia should, by way of in-service training, ensure that teachers are trained on how to manage their time in the classroom effectively and also ensure that relevant teaching strategies are employed within a given time to allow all learners to learn at a different pace yet in the same classroom.

Teacher in-service training and continuous professional development are indispensable key areas and should not be compromised. It is, therefore, critical for the MoEAC to ensure that all teachers in mainstream schools are provided with in-service training on a regular basis to enable them to remain abreast of any changes or any new developments in the education fraternity.

A number of recommendations were made to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture based on the results of the study. Therefore, one would recommend that intensive teacher training and in-service training on the use of co-teaching and other relevant instructional strategies by experts from other countries should be organized for Namibian teachers to serve as a benchmark; to enable them to acquire co-teaching skills for application in mainstream settings and to collaborate effectively.

In conclusion, the study is expected to contribute knowledge to the limited body of literature on the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms not only in Namibia but also in other developing countries. The thesis has reliable information about the inclusive education challenges. This information will be useful, especially now at the time that the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education should be reviewed. The lessons learned through this research are valuable in planning teacher professional development courses for inclusive education as well as advocating for closer-school partnerships to enhance effective inclusive education in the country and beyond. Therefore, the researcher offered suggestions for future research in inclusive education discourse.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA'S SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FOE/70/2016

Date: 21 January, 2016

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS-A CASE STUDY OF ONE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN OSHANA REGION, NAMIBIA

Nature/Level of Project: Masters

Researcher: Toni .M. Naholo

Student Number : 9512020

Faculty: Faculty of Education

Supervisor : Dr. C. Haihambo

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i). withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii). request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Kapenda', is written over a horizontal line.

Dr. H. Kapenda
Director -Centre for Research and Publications
ON BEHALF OF UREC

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN
OSHANA REGION FROM THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS & CULTURE



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: - 264 61 - 2933200
Fax: - 264 61 - 2933922
Enquiries: C. Muchila
Email: Cavin.Muchila@moe.gov.na

Luther Street, Govt. Office Park
Private Bag 13186
Windhoek
Namibia

File no: 11/1/1

Ms Toini M. Naholo
P/Box 268
Ondangwa

Dear Ms Naholo

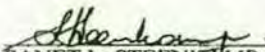
SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN OSHANA REGION

Kindly be informed that permission to conduct research for your Master's Degree in Oshana region is herewith granted. You are further requested to present the letter of approval to the Regional Director to ensure that research ethics are adhered to and disruption of curriculum delivery is avoided.

Furthermore, we humbly request you to share your research findings with the ministry. You may contact Mr C. Muchila at the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) for provision of summary of your research findings.

I wish you the best in conducting your research and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours


SANET L. STEENKAMP
PERMANENT SECRETARY

17.3.16
Date

All official correspondences must be addressed to the Permanent Secretary

APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA IN
OSHANA REGION



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
Aspiring to Excellence in Education for All

Tel: 065-230057
Fax: 065 – 230035
E-mail: otre_physical_science@yahoo.co.uk
Enquiries: Maria Udjombala
Ref 12/2/1

Private Bag 5518
Oshakati, NAMIBIA

24 March 2016

Ms Toini M. Naholo-Haihambo
P.O.Box 268
Ondangwa
0812736551

Dear Ms. Naholo-Haihambo

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA IN OSHANA REGION

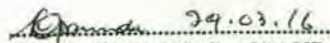
Your correspondence dated 23 March 2016 regarding the above mentioned subject has a reference.

The Office of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture has granted you permission to conduct research study at Hashiyana PS, Ompundja Circuit, Oshana Region.

However, please kindly take note that the research activities should not interfere with the normal programmes of the school and the participation should be on a voluntary basis. Please present this letter to the school principal.

We wish you the best of luck with your research and hoping that your findings will be shared with other stakeholders at school, in the Region and beyond.

Yours Sincerely


MR IMMANUEL S. AIPANDA
ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR



Cc: Inspector of Education, Ompundja Circuit and Principal of Hashiyana PS

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

My name is Toini Maano Ndalina Naholo (9512020); I am a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of Namibia. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research. The purpose of the research is to explore the challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. I assure you that your names will not be mentioned either in the research report or in academic presentations. You will not be directly linked to the information that you will share with me. The information to be collected from the interviews will be kept confidential and it will not be shared with unauthorised parties. It will be used for the purposes of this study only. Please respond to the questions as honestly as possible as I am interested in your individual experiences and ideas.

Guidelines for the interview

- There is no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be posed during the interview. Please feel free to respond freely to the interview questions.
- In order to guarantee confidentiality, your responses will remain anonymous and measures will be taken to ensure that your views are not linked to the answers you provide to the research questions.

- Although you may be required to give your name to the interviewer for the purposes of follow-up, be assured that only the identification code numbers will be used in the research reports not your own names.
- Please answer all the questions to the best of your ability. Your personal views and opinions are highly valued.

APPENDIX E: LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW GUIDE:

SECTION A: Biographical information

1. **Code number (T1 - T10)** were referred to teachers interviewed
2. Can you please state how old are you?
3. Number of years of teaching experience
4. Number of years teaching at this school?
5. What grade/s do you currently teach at this school?
6. State your academic and professional qualifications
7. Which qualification does you poses that include inclusive education discipline?

SECTION B: Questions regarding to challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom

- Have you had learners with learning difficulties in your classroom in the past four years?
- Can you share some of the experiences you have had in teaching learners with learning difficulties together with those who do not have learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms?
- What challenges do you experience when teaching learners with learning difficulties (slow learners) together with learners without learning difficulties (fast learners) in mainstream classroom?

- How do you handle the challenges that you have experienced in teaching learners with learning difficulties together with those without learning difficulties?
- How do you balance your time by giving activities to learners with learning difficulties and, at the same time, giving activities to the fast learners in order for as they all learn at different paces?

SECTION C: Questions regarding to relevant strategies used by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties when taught together with those without learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

- What strategies do you use to support learners with learning difficulties and those without learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom? (Please specify the steps you follow).

SECTION D: Questions on the recommended strategies for mitigating teachers' challenges in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms

- What could be done by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to address the existing challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms, particularly respect of the implementation of the Sector Policy of Inclusive Education in Namibia of 2013?

- What are your suggestions and recommendations?

END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME