

# A South African Perspective on Inclusive Education Conceptualisation and Impact on Practices

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

*Teacher Perceptions,  
Differentiated Instruction,  
Educational Policy*

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of primary school principals and Foundation Phase teachers' conceptualisations of inclusive education on their teaching practices in South Africa. The importance of these conceptualisations is emphasised because they have a direct bearing on the daily teachers' practices in the classroom and, in the end, define the degree of inclusion that learners encounter. The goal is to find out how primary school principals and teachers perceive inclusive education and examine how their perceptions influence the pedagogical decisions they make. A qualitative transformative approach was employed using individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from thirteen Foundation Phase teachers and three primary school principals from Johannesburg South government schools. Data were analysed through inductive and deductive thematic analysis, drawing support from the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach (IPA) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The findings reveal three distinct stages of pedagogical development toward inclusivity among participants, elaborating on Black-Hawkins' (2017) model of a single required shift. These stages range from "no shift", "little/emerging shift" to "established shift," with each stage characterised by specific conceptualisations that influence teaching strategies. The study concludes that these varying levels of development contribute to the challenges of implementing inclusive education effectively. Consequently, the study recommends targeted support based on a teacher's identified developmental stage. Those with no shift require awareness training on IE policies and practices, while those exhibiting an emerging shift benefit from encouragement and support to achieve full inclusivity. Teachers with an established shift can further refine and maintain their inclusive practices.

## 1. Introduction

Inclusive education, a global initiative aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4 on Quality Education is designed to ensure that all learners, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities, are welcomed, valued, and supported within general/mainstream classrooms. This initiative has gained substantial momentum in recent years. Despite notable

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### Cite this article as:

Dewa, N. N. (2025). A South African Perspective on Inclusive Education Conceptualisation and Impact on Practices. *European Journal of Teaching and Education*, 7(1): 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ejte.v7i1.1480>

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advancements, a number of challenges continue to deter progress in various countries, including South Africa. Given its complex legacy of inequality and social injustice, South Africa has enacted several policies and frameworks, such as the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education, to advocate for inclusive education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Murungi, 2015; Ramaahlo, Tönsing & Bornman, 2018). Nevertheless, the effective implementation of inclusive education remains a multifaceted issue (Mpu & Adu, 2021), shaped by factors including teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices.

A critical determinant of the successful implementation of inclusive education is the conceptualisations and practices of teachers in their teaching spaces. Teachers are instrumental in shaping the educational experiences of diverse learners, including those with disabilities (DeMatthews et al, 2021). Their knowledge and understanding of inclusive education and their readiness to embrace inclusive practices can profoundly influence the educational outcomes for their learners. However, a more nuanced understanding of how teachers conceptualise and practice inclusive education within their classrooms is essential for informing effective policy and practice. To address this knowledge gap, this study seeks to investigate teachers' conceptualisations of inclusive education and how that conceptualisation translates to their classroom practices.

## **2. Purpose/Objectives**

This study aims to investigate how South African primary school principals and Foundation Phase teachers conceptualise inclusive education and how these conceptualisations influence their teaching practices. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- Explore the different ways in which South African Foundation Phase teachers conceptualise inclusive education.
- Investigate the relationship between teachers' conceptualisations of inclusive education and their pedagogical practices.
- Identify the factors that influence teachers' conceptualisations and practices.
- Develop recommendations to support the implementation of inclusive education in South African schools.

The inclusive education policies endeavour to promote a model of inclusive education that transcends mere enrolment, providing epistemological access through effective participation, access, and achievement for all learners (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Ramaahlo et al, 2018). To gain a comprehensive understanding of how teachers conceptualise and enact inclusive education within their classrooms, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do South African primary school principals and Foundation Phase teachers conceptualise inclusive education, and how do these conceptualisations vary across different levels of experience and training?
2. What are the specific pedagogical practices employed by South African Foundation Phase teachers to create inclusive learning environments, and how do these practices relate to their conceptualisations of inclusive education?
3. What are the primary barriers and facilitators to the implementation of inclusive education in South African Foundation Phase classrooms, as perceived by principals and teachers?

By exploring these research questions, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding inclusive education implementation in South

Africa and to inform the development of effective strategies to support inclusive practices, ultimately advancing SDG No. 4: Quality Education for all learners.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

This study employed a qualitative, transformative research design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm (Juta & Van Wyk, 2020; Kravia & Pagliano, 2015). This approach recognises the subjective nature of human experience and aims to understand the world from the participants' perspectives. By adopting a transformative paradigm, this study seeks to address inequalities and injustices in inclusive education, advocating for the rights of all learners to access, participate and succeed in teaching and learning (Kravia & Pagliano, 2015). The study relied on the principals and Foundation Phase teachers' experiences regarding how their conceptualisation of inclusive education has impacted the daily inclusive practices in their workspaces. A total of sixteen participants were purposively and conveniently recruited for this study. This criterion was used because of prior established relationships with the schools, facilitating collaboration and easier access. Critically, these schools have demonstrated a strong inclusivity commitment, a key aspect in ensuring representation of all learners within the study. This pre-existing inclusivity commitment within the school communities aligned with the study objectives, making the selected schools an ideal setting for exploring South African perspective on inclusive education conceptualisation and impact on practices. While convenience sampling played a role in the selection process, the purposeful selection of the specific schools, because of their inclusive ethos, was paramount to the design of the study (McGrath, 2021). Thirteen Foundation Phase teachers and three primary school principals from government schools in Johannesburg South participated in this study. Those who agreed to participate were asked to provide their informed consent by signing the forms and sending them to the researcher. All participants signed consent forms, which were dropped off in the principals' offices and emailed to the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. Each individual interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Semi-structured interviews permit interviews to be focused while still giving the researcher the autonomy to explore pertinent issues that may arise in the course of the interview, which can further enhance understanding of the phenomenon being assessed (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore participants' understandings of inclusive education, their classroom practices and the challenges or opportunities they faced. A reflective journal was used to document personal reflections, methodological insights and emerging themes during the data collection process (McGrath, 2021). This worked as a strategy of identifying potential preconceptions or biases that can influence data interpretation.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions (Ginja & Chen, 2020; Gundumogula & Gundumogula, 2020). Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set which often leads to new insights and understanding (Lochmiller, 2021). This involved both inductive and deductive analysis. Using inductive data analysis (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024), data was initially coded without preconceived themes. Emerging themes were identified through a process of constant comparison. Deductive data analysis allowed the researcher to use existing theory to examine meanings, processes, and narratives of interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena (Fife & Gossner, 2024). The three key principles of the IPA were used as codes to identify specific themes related to understanding learning difference, teachers' self-belief, and working with others. To ensure data accuracy, the

researcher engaged in member checking by sharing the transcribed data with participants to verify captured information.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was employed. This process involved sharing the preliminary findings with participants, simultaneously protecting their real identities through use of pseudonyms. Participants were named as AT1, AT2, AT3 from School A, BT1, BT2, BT3, BT4, BT5 from School B, and CT1, CT2, CT3, CT4, CT5 from School C, to validate their interpretations and ensure accurate representation of their experiences. The principals were named AP, BP and CP. Member checking is a rigorous validation method that requires thoughtful consideration and execution within the research process (Motulsky, 2021). This involved sharing the initial transcriptions with participants to validate their interpretations and ensure accurate representation of their experiences. Participants validated the prescriptions through member checking, confirming the accurate representation of their experiences and perspectives. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

This study equally utilised two theoretical frameworks to understand the complex factors influencing inclusive education: the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach (IPA) (Black-Hawkins, 2017) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1978). For the purposes of this study, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has been modified, substituting the child at the centre of the model with the Foundation Phase teacher. This allows for an investigation of the multiple influences that impact teacher development and practice. The IPA emphasises three key principles: dealing with difference, teacher self-belief, and working with others. Bronfenbrenner's theory posits that individual development is shaped by multiple intertwined systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. By integrating these two theoretical frameworks, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted influences on inclusive education. To illustrate the complex interplay between individual and environmental factors influencing inclusive learning and development, an *Integrated Framework for inclusive education* is presented, combining the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This framework highlights the importance of considering both individual and contextual factors in educational practices.

Table 1. Integrated Framework for Inclusive Education

Framework	Key Principles	Relevance to Inclusive Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive Pedagogical Approach (IPA)</li> </ul>	Dealing with Difference Teachers' Self-Belief that they can teach all learners Working with Others	Provides a foundation for creating inclusive classrooms by focusing on individual differences, teacher efficacy, and collaboration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsystem</li> <li>• Mesosystem</li> <li>• Exosystem</li> <li>• Macrosystem</li> <li>• Chronosystem</li> </ul>	Offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the multiple factors that influence inclusive education, from the immediate classroom environment to broader societal and historical contexts.

Table 1 compiled by the researcher from the works of Bronfenbrenner (1978), Anderson et al. (2014) and Black-Hawkins (2017).

#### 4. Findings

The three pedagogical shifts (little or no shift, emerging shift, and established shift) demonstrate a direct correlate with the three types of thinking (separate schooling,

fragmented schooling, and inclusive schooling) about inclusive teaching and learning. These shifts are reflected in teachers' beliefs, knowledge and actions in the teaching spaces. The distinct pedagogical shifts exhibited by Foundation Phase teachers towards inclusive teaching are:

- **Little or no shift which** aligns with the *Separate schooling* perspective, characterized by a focus on learner differences, often leading to segregation.
- **Emerging shift** which corresponds to the *Fragmented schooling* perspective, where inclusion is acknowledged but implemented inconsistently.
- **Established shift** which aligns with the *Inclusive schooling* perspective, prioritising effective learning strategies for all learners within an inclusive and equitable environment.

## 5. Discussion

Although Black – Hawkins's (2017) IPA identified that there are three key principles that teachers require to teach inclusively, the findings of this study have revealed that currently in South Africa, Foundation Phase teachers are currently at three different stages of pedagogical shift in relation to each of the three IPA principles. Accordingly, this finding means that the required pedagogical shifts for Foundation Phase teachers to teach inclusively are in three different stages of development for individual teachers. The identified three different types of thinking (*separate schooling, fragmented and inclusive schooling perspectives*) are reflected in different types of knowledge and beliefs teachers hold about inclusive teaching (*focus on learner differences, fragmented focus, and focus on effective learning strategies*). The fact that Foundation Phase teachers are at different stages of thinking demonstrates that teachers are in different types of pedagogical shifts regarding inclusive teaching (*little or no shift, emerging shift, and established shift*), and these are reflected in the different ways of actions and responses that teachers make when they react to or manage challenges in teaching and learning (*responses that reinforce traditional ways of thinking, inconsistent responses, and responses that support inclusive pedagogical shift and development*). Remarkably, the differences in Foundation Phase teachers' pedagogical shifts are largely informed by what happens at the five levels of the Bronfenbrenner's' ecological systems theory. Consequently, the key finding of this study is that in addition to the identified IPA principles (Black-Hawkins, 2017), Foundation Phase teachers' pedagogical shifts are at different levels of development in each of the IPA principles as shown below.

Table 2. Three Different Conceptualisations of IE by Participants

IE Conceptualisation	Pedagogical Shift towards inclusivity	Influence on IE implementers
Separate Schooling	No shift or little shift	The focus is on learners' differences, leading to viewing different learners through the medical lens.
Inclusive Schooling	Established Pedagogical Shift	Focus is drawn away from learners' differences leading to embracing everybody, a shift toward the inclusive pedagogy.
Fragmented perspective	Emerging Pedagogical Shift	Inconsistent practices that sometimes work toward inclusion, but at times work against inclusive practices.

These different conceptualisations are reflected in teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices. On the one hand, Foundation Phase teachers with a separate schooling perspective may hold deficit views of some learners or those living with disabilities and may lack the knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices. This was revealed by several participants, one of them – CT2 answered when asked about separating learners according to abilities,

*I know they did it long ago they had the separate classes. But then they felt they were labeling those children in the classes. It is a very difficult question (she frowns) for me because I am thinking about it nicely. I would be okay for the separate classes if you take those learners out of the classroom, just because you can support them. It is better, the teacher is more qualified to teach that specific learner while in a mainstream school the teacher doesn't get the support that they need for children with barriers or whatever might be and so I feel if you separate them, yes, they might be labeling to the learner, but they're labeling in class as well if you have the learners, uh, will know that there's a problem with the child, even you don't even have to tell him so I would just feel it is better to take them out. The teachers are more qualified because the teacher wants to do honors in inclusive of education.*

This perspective was supported by BT3 who demonstrated concerns about having different learners in mainstream classroom, because they slow down the progress of others, in her view,

*I think they do slow down the progress of others. I'm talking from experience. So, like I said I've got this little boy in my class, so he's had a brain damage. I mean he grasps concepts very slowly. And you know what? A lot of my time is focused on him and trying to help him and trying to support him and trying to remediate. You don't spend as much time with your average and strong learners, and I feel they do demand a lot of your time, even though they're not demanding, but like you just feel like you need to help them to try and help them achieve something because you don't want them to get this picture. And it does take away from the other children.*

This participant demonstrated a deficit model view toward learners who are taking more time, compared to their counterparts, to understand concepts (brain damage), as if there is something wrong with the learner, not as a challenge to their profession. The second IPA principle encourages teachers to view learning challenges as challenges to their profession, rather than finding the learners as problematic (Black-Hawkins, 2017). This view helps teachers to try various teaching strategies that would respond to the learner's needs (differentiated instruction), hence developing their professionalism and embracing diversity. AT1 echoed the sentiments that demonstrate that although they did not initially embrace diversity, they have accepted it,

*I'm at a government School, so to include everybody you have no choice. Oh, trying our best to facilitate everybody I mean it is difficult. But you know, you do have to try and include everybody that's in the in the classroom, so I'd stay being calm being prepared and we do have very good, good resources. So, whether they have issues with learning, we need to be able to include all of them. Absolutely doesn't matter any whatever differences we have, it's all up we'd be all different and I think that's what makes the world go around. If we were all the same if all my children came*

*to school and will have robots, I could just go home because what's the point in being...?*

This perspective was revealed by one teacher who explained what they as a school did during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

*So, because of COVID-19 restrictions, our school has divided learners into two groups. Group A consists of slow learners and Group B is for fast learners, of course, learners do not know this information, we have seen that it makes teaching very easy as you know what kind of learners you are dealing with per week.*

This demonstrated that the teachers, or rather school as a whole, still operate along the remnants of the medical model of viewing difference. Although nine out of the sixteen participants were of the separate schooling perspective, there were those who clearly aligned themselves with the inclusive schooling perspective.

On the other hand, teachers with an inclusive schooling perspective are more likely to embrace diversity and to use differentiated instruction and other inclusive strategies. Teachers with an inclusive view expressed positive views for diversity, one of them, AT3, in a focus group responded in relation to the view that different learners slow down others' progress,

*I don't agree with that they slow others' progress in the sense that you know it's more like the teacher's job. Unfortunately, again, like I mentioned, they might sometimes go by the wayside, but you know we can't say that they slow down the progress, for instance Learners with special educational needs (LSE) learner can only do five sentences, as opposed to 10, allow them to just do five, if they're well-constructed sentences. Again, it's more about your understanding than just having the work in the book, so the rest of your class must do ten sums or change sentences. Tie your fast and your slow learners in groups/pairs, stronger than your average children are usually capable of sitting and working independently for X amount of time. Where you will be able to just go and assist that child and support them winning so I don't feel that they hold back other learners.*

These sentiments were supported by several teachers who revealed that different learners cannot slow down the progress of others. Teachers need to use different strategies, such as pairing, grouping learners using mixed ability grouping. One teacher was supported by several of the teachers under this perspective when she said,

*We should teach all learners well, it is our duty as teachers to include all learners, in our school we are inclusive, we include everyone because we need to respect the rights of every child to access education.*

Participants under this category expressed a determination that they can teach all learners by providing equal opportunities to all and demonstrated that they reject the belief that there are learners who can derail the progress of other learners. In this line of thought, CT2 argued,

*I don't agree with that they slow others' progress in the sense that you know it's more like the teacher's job. Unfortunately, again, like I mentioned, they might sometimes go by the wayside, but you know we can't say that they slow down the progress, for instance of an ELSEN learner can only do five sentences, as opposed to 10, allow them to just do five, if they're well-constructed sentences. Again, it's more about your understanding than just*

*having the pumpkins in the book, so the rest of your class must do ten sums or change sentences. Tie your fast and your slow learners in groups/pairs, stronger than your average children are usually capable of sitting and working independently for X amount of time. Where you will be able to just go and assist that child and support them winning so I don't feel that they hold back other learners.*

This participant explicitly demonstrated that she can teach all learners and showed strong evidence that LSENs cannot derail others in mainstream classes. Furthermore, she gave examples of inclusive practices that demonstrate that it is practical to teach learners of different capabilities. In her response, she mentioned the importance of achieving the set objective (s) for all learners using different avenues, which Tomlinson & Jarvis, (2023) explain as differentiating curriculum through the process. Interestingly, CT4 raised a valuable point of variations amongst LSENs,

*The thing that I have found with the separation even within this separation it also depends on what support they need. I am finding that some still need more support. That happens and even a little time, little more time they will catch up with everyone.*

This participant showed that separating learners according to capabilities does not mean that the separated group can be taught using one method. This participant showed that even amongst LSENs, diversity still exists, for instance, two ADHD learners do not have the same needs, and as such, they respond differently to different methods of teaching. This indicates that nothing justifies the separation of learners in teaching and learning because even under those segments/units, different methods of teaching are still needed, which is more reason why teachers should assume responsibility to teach all learners. Teaching all learners together was welcomed by BT4 who explained the benefits of diversity and said,

*What I like about diversity, it gives children awareness of what is out in the world. They're not staying in the little box. Yeah, I think children definitely need to learn more about what is out there so that they know how to interact with other children who might have a disability. You might think that there's something wrong with them or that they can't be included in the games that they play, yeah. it would help those who are normally separated.*

However, besides the two opposing groups (separate and inclusive schooling), there were teachers that demonstrated a fragmented perspective, and these struggled to maintain consistently in their implementation of inclusive practices. These teachers mentioned influences, such as resource constraints, lack of support, and negative attitudes as factors that constrain teaching inclusively. CT1 stated the following during a focus group discussion,

*I know I should not treat those with challenges differently, but we lack knowledge about inclusive education, I mean we are not sure how to deal with such learners. Like when you provide them with something differently – they are discriminated against, and when you don't – they are excluded from learning. We really need to be taught because we did not cover this during our training.*

Such sentiments demonstrated a will to embrace diversity and fear of not being sure of how to teach inclusively. This resulted in teachers being caught in between the two opinions, if they say they are inclusive, they should be able to demonstrate inclusive practices, if they are not able to do so, they fall under separate schooling, which they know that the education



system has transformed from it. Interestingly, some teachers falling in the fragmented perspective acknowledged differences in humanity but failed to embrace differences amongst learners, demonstrating the confusion in this perspective. CT3 stated,

*Yes, I do believe difference is part of humanity, can you imagine, if we were all the same well, no, I don't know that you would want lots of me around. So yes, we all have to be different, we are different in different ways. And our personalities are different. Our intellects are different. Everything is different, so yes, it's a very important thing. And yeah, you must have people with strengths, you must have people with weaknesses in all areas and that's just how we work, so yeah, definitely.*

Another teacher echoed the same confused sentiments when she stated,

*As much as I said I would prefer to have learners taught together, if LSENs are taught on their own, teachers get the opportunity to simplify work, make it easier compared to what is done in mainstream classes so that these learners can manage. This is possible as they will be learning at their own pace, but the problem comes when it is assessment time because assessment is not inclusive, all learners write the same paper, and these ones usually fail.*

These sentiments indicated that the participants are limping between the two opinions, therefore, failing to take a firm stand between separate and inclusive schooling perspectives. These are the teachers who are at an emerging stage toward an inclusive pedagogical shift toward inclusivity.

Conclusively, this study found that teachers' pedagogical development is influenced by various factors, including their personal beliefs, experiences, and the broader educational context. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory provides a useful framework for understanding these influences. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem all play a role in shaping teachers' beliefs and practices. The findings of this study highlight the need for ongoing professional development and support for teachers to develop their understanding of inclusive education and to implement effective inclusive practices. By addressing the challenges associated with different conceptualisations and pedagogical shifts, South African schools can move towards creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all learners.

## **6. Implications for Practice**

The study's findings have important implications for practice in South Africa, and potentially other contexts grappling with the implementation of inclusive education.

### *Targeted Professional Development*

The need for teacher differentiated professional development is the study's most significant implication based on teachers' identified stage of pedagogical shift towards inclusivity. A one-size-fits-all approach is not effective as it does not consider teachers' individual differences. Teachers falling under *Little or No shift* group need foundational training on inclusive philosophy, inclusive policies, and practical strategies for differentiated instruction. The main focus should be on creating awareness regarding diverse learning needs, thus, shifting the deficit-based thinking. Exposure to exemplary inclusive classrooms and interaction with skilled inclusive teachers could be helpful. Teachers under the *Emerging shift* group require ongoing support and mentorship to refine their inclusive practices.

Professional development for this group should focus on specific inclusive strategies for collaborative teaching, differentiation, and adapting curriculum. Opportunities for peer observations and feedback would be important support strategies to allow teachers to raise their concerns and have them addressed. Although teachers under the *Established shift* demonstrated strong inclusive practices, they can immensely benefit from continued professional growth. This could involve opportunities to take leadership positions in promoting inclusive practices, sharing their expertise with colleagues, or engaging in action research to further refine their inclusive practices.

#### *Addressing Systemic Barriers*

The study highlighted the influence of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems on teachers' practices. Consequently, interventions must extend beyond individual teacher development by addressing systemic barriers. At the microsystem level, schools need to foster a culture of support and collaboration for inclusive practices. This involves providing adequate resources, managing class sizes, and creating collaborative opportunities for teachers to share best practices. At mesosystem level, collaboration and communication between families, schools and support services (specialists, therapists, psychologists) should be strengthened. At the ecosystem level, funding structures and policies should align with inclusive education principles. At the macrosystem level societal beliefs and attitudes about difference and disability should be addressed to create a truly inclusive society. At the chronosystem level, the historical context of segregated education in South Africa should be acknowledged to understand current challenges and shape future directions.

#### *Further Research*

Further research is needed to explore the specific needs and challenges of teachers at different stages of pedagogical development. This could be achieved through longitudinal studies that would enable tracking teachers' progress over time and identify the best approaches for supporting their growth. Further research should also investigate the impact inclusive practices has on learner outcomes.

### **7. Conclusion**

This study has shed light on the complex interplay between South African primary school principals' and teachers' conceptualisations of inclusive education and their subsequent classroom practices. By analysing these conceptualisations through the lens of the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach (IPA) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this study revealed significant variations in pedagogical development, which ultimately impact the extent to which inclusive education is realised in South African schools. A key finding of this study is the identification of three distinct stages of pedagogical development towards inclusivity among teachers: "no shift," "little/emerging shift," and "established shift." These stages are characterized by specific conceptualizations that influence teaching strategies. Teachers at different stages require different levels of support to effectively implement inclusive practices.

The study's findings have important implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers globally. The identification of distinct stages of pedagogical development and the influence of contextual factors on teacher practices can inform policy-makers, educators, and researchers in countries worldwide. By understanding the barriers and facilitators of inclusive education in the South African context, international audiences can gain insights into potential challenges and opportunities in their own educational systems.

## 8. Recommendations

To promote the effective implementation of inclusive education globally, it is essential to provide comprehensive teacher training programmes that address the theoretical underpinnings of inclusive education, as well as practical strategies for creating inclusive classrooms. Ongoing professional development opportunities should also be provided to support teachers in refining their skills and knowledge. Fostering collaborative partnerships between teachers, parents, and other stakeholders is crucial for creating supportive learning environments. Additionally, advocating for policies that support inclusive education and allocating adequate resources to schools is essential. Conducting further comparative research to explore the similarities and differences in the implementation of inclusive education across diverse contexts can inform effective policy and practice. By addressing these recommendations, countries can move towards more inclusive and equitable education systems that benefit all learners.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the development of this paper. Her insightful feedback and encouragement significantly contributed to the quality of this work.

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