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# WHAT ARE TEACHERS' BELIEFS, VALUES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

## ABSTRACT

*This study examined teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms. The study implemented the quantitative descriptive design. Sixty-three Foundation Phase (grades 1–3) teachers were recruited through the convenient sampling strategy from the Capricorn District in Limpopo Province in South Africa. Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from the Teaching for All (Department of Basic Education, 2019) student support materials for inclusive education commissioned by the British Council. Analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 for descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that overall, teachers were well disposed to include learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms. However, the teachers expressed concerns regarding some teachers' abilities that are required in inclusive settings for inclusion of these learners to happen. The study has some important implications for teachers, policymakers and researchers. The study may help to solidify teachers' positive attitudes as the creators of knowledge rather than always assuming the role of transmitters of information from the government. Policymakers may be informed about how to involve teachers in their development of policies on inclusive education. Lastly, for researchers these findings may help further research on how to understand problems related to the implementation of inclusive education.*

**Keywords:** Teachers; attitudes; learners; barriers; primary school; inclusive education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education was officially introduced to South Africa in 2001 through the White Paper 3 (Department of Education, 2001). Despite its apparent value to the transformation agenda, its implementation has been slow

(Walton & Rusznyak, 2019). Researchers have attributed this lack of progress to numerous factors, including lack of resources and teachers not trained in inclusive education (Themane & Thobejane, 2018). However, information about how teachers' attitude contribute to this lack of progress has received inadequate attention, especially in rural areas such as the Limpopo Province in South Africa (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2015). Such studies are found elsewhere in the world, though scattered. In Saudi Arabia, a study by Alnahdi (2020) found that teachers' attitudes played its role in the success of inclusive education. In Song, Sharma and Choi (2019) in South Korea also found that teachers' attitudes played a major role in the implementation of inclusive education. In Germany, Krischler and Pit-ten Cate (2018) found that teachers' attitudes are critical in the success of the implementation. Such information is important for the improvement of the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. Teachers' attitudes are key to any initiative to take root.

## 2. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The concept inclusive education is not new and studies (Maguve, 2016; Phasha, Mahlo & Dei 2017) reveal that it has been explored extensively in South Africa; as in other parts of the world for the benefit of those who were previously side-lined or disadvantaged, such as students with disabilities and women. The genesis of inclusivity in the teaching of young people is traceable from such efforts as the Salamanca Statement of 1994, United Nation's Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989), The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as well as the UNESCO (1994) guidelines on inclusion of learners in all matters of tuition (Florian, Young & Rouse, 2010; Lyons & Arthur-Kelly, 2014). It is against these measures that countries across the globe have adopted inclusive education.

However, the challenge to these noble ideas is at the implementation level. Its progress has been tardy. Teachers are at the cold face of the implementation of inclusive education (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018). If teachers are willing and ready to be inclusive in their classrooms, they are likely to be resilient in the face of trouble (Agbenye, 2011; Phasha, Mahlo & Dei, 2017; Sideridis & Chandler, 2009). Ballard (2012) summarises the importance of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education by calling them agents of change. Therefore, their attitude towards any initiative, including inclusive education, is central for any change to happen. To this end the purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in South African Grade 1 to 3 classrooms. To achieve this purpose, we were guided by three research questions. One, what are the teachers' beliefs about inclusive education and teaching in the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in grades 1 to 3 classrooms? Two, how significant is inclusive education and teaching in accommodating learners who experience barriers to leaning in these grades? Three, what are teachers' attitudes in using diverse teaching methods to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms? In the next section we discuss inclusive education with reference to pre-service and in-service teacher education.

## 3. TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

To gain a full perspective of teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to their learning there is a need to understand the role of teacher education in preparing teachers for inclusive education. So far, the focus has been on the factors that affect its implementation. Factors such as physical infrastructure (Tungaraza, 2014), support

services (Alborno, 2017), exclusionary legislations and practices (Walton, 2012), resources (Materechera, 2014), same curriculum and untrained teachers (Walton & Rusznyak, 2017). Of these identified factors, teacher education training for inclusive education has received little attention especially in South Africa. There is a paucity of studies that provide such information. This points to the remaining unresolved questions regarding their readiness, willingness and commitment to make schools inclusive.

Multiple studies (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Walton 2012; Sobchuk & Mykytenko, 2020; Materechera, 2020; Aldani, 2020 Walton & Rusznyak, 2017; Pablo *et al.*, 2018) provide converging evidence for the same conclusion that teachers struggle with the implementation of inclusive education. Surprisingly, there is no compelling evidence that this problem is receiving attention by teacher education institutions. Specifically, literature on what the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning are. We agree with Walton and Rusznyak (2014) that one of the challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is the effective training of teachers to meet diverse learning needs in their classrooms.

Teacher education locally and internationally is concerned with how best to prepare and equip teachers to be pedagogically responsive to an increasingly diverse learner population. This concern is echoed in South African classrooms that represent diverse learners and learning styles especially after the dawn of democracy (Mamabolo; 1998; Walton *et al.*, 2014; Burke & Sutherland, 2004). Knowing about the attitudes of teachers is crucial in entrusting teachers with children who have diverse needs. Such information is valuable, especially when one is attempting to link together many studies on this topic, either for purposes of reinterpretation or interconnection. Unfortunately, there are few studies on teachers' attitudes on the inclusion of all children regardless of their diversities or their additional needs globally, but particular in developing countries such as South Africa. Thus, it is difficult to know the problems, weaknesses, contradictions and controversies such studies would provide on this topic. Teacher education in South is certainly hard pressed to grow a body of knowledge on how teacher attitudes and commitment is delivering an inclusive education for social justice (Mamabolo; 1998; Alnadi, 2020).

The purpose of this brief literature review on the state of knowledge on the topic was to backtrack these particular moments, review key perspectives that dominated the debates as well as the underlying assumptions and discourses, in order to reconceptualise our current curriculum theoretical and methodological approaches for an inclusive teacher education. In the next section, we discuss the theory that framed our study.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning, we employed Scaccia's (2014) readiness theory. He asserts that the willingness and ability of an organisation determines its readiness for the implementation of an innovation (Scott *et al.*, 2017). Literature has proven that readiness is an essential part of successfully implementing an innovation (Hall & Hord, 2011). In addition, readiness is a construct that encompasses the conditions that are necessary to ensure quality implementation through the entirety of the innovation lifespan like exploration, preparation, implementation and sustainment (Aarons, 2011). These necessary conditions have a direct impact on the successful implementation of any innovation.

In our study, teachers' levels of readiness in implementing inclusive education have been explored to understand their willingness and readiness towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning. To measure their readiness and willingness to accommodate these learners, we independently explored each component of the theory. The theory of readiness' three components; motivation, the general organisational capacity and the intervention-specific capacity. The theory describes motivation as the cognitive and affective perceptions of an innovation that draws or pushes an organisation towards the use of an innovation. The general organisational capacity is referred to as the human, technical and fiscal conditions that are necessary to successfully implement a particular innovation. And, the intervention-specific capacity is explained as the skills, characteristics and the overall functioning of the organisations that are associated with the ability to implement or improve an innovation.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We followed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive cross-sectional research design recommended by various scholars (Creswell, 2009). In so doing we hoped that the quantitative research approach would give us an impetus to engage in an ongoing critical reflection, negotiation and verification factors that underpin the teachers' attitudes. We felt that a survey design would give us a window to gaze into the teachers' views.

### 5.1 Sampling

A total of 63 teachers teaching Grade 1 to 3 were conveniently selected from a population of 100 in-service teachers from the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education. The teachers were recruited from five districts (Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe and Waterberg) in the province by the Provincial Department of Education to participate in the Short Course on Inclusive Education. They came from different schools (full-service schools, piloting schools and special schools).

### 5.2 Data collection

Data were collected through a questionnaire, which was adopted from the Teaching for All Evaluation and Monitoring Study (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Section A is composed of biographical information about the participants. The biographical information included: age, gender and academic qualification. In Section B, the teachers were expected to express their views on seven statements about attitudes on a four-point Likert-type scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree). The statements were as follows: a) I feel it is important to create inclusive classrooms (B1.A); b) I feel that it is important to use diverse teaching methods to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning; (B1.B) c) I feel it is important to work with other teachers to make my teaching more inclusive (B1.C); d) Teaching learners with disabilities is rewarding (B1.D); e) I have high expectations and aspirations for all learners (B1.E); f) In my teaching, I will deal with difficulties/sensitive issues such as racism (B1.F); and g) I am familiar with the resources that learners with disabilities need in order to learn (B1.G).

### 5.3 Procedures of data collection

Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC/84/2019: IR). The nature and the purpose of the study was explained to teachers.

Further to this, we also clarified that those who did not want to participate in the study were free to disengage from participation in the research. Consent for participation was then obtained from teachers. The questionnaire was administered at the start of the programme.

## 5.4 Data analysis

Data were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V.22 for descriptive statistics. Data were analysed based on the three main categories, namely: statements about beliefs, statements about values and statements about attitudes. The data were further subjected to inferential statistics for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were conducted and Cronbach alpha value of 0.85 was set. An EFA provides information on each item's relationship to a single factor hypothesised to be represented by each of the items. EFA results here provided basic information about how well items relate to three constructs: 1 belief about inclusive education and teaching; 2, the significance of inclusive education and teaching, and 3, teaching strategies to be used in inclusive classrooms.

## 6. RESULTS

Tables 1–5 below present data for this study. Table 1 presents descriptive results about inclusive education and teaching. Table 2 presents inferential results (Correlation of regression) scores with factors 0.95. Multiple R square of scores with factors 0.90 for teachers' beliefs about inclusive education and teaching.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics on the significance of inclusive education and teaching in schools as a social justice project. Table 4 presents correlational results between the significance or value of inclusive education with factors of teachers valuing of inclusive education and teaching.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics on the teachers' attitudes towards the use of diverse teaching methods in classrooms for inclusive education and teaching. Table 5 presents correlational results between the diverse teaching strategies with factors of inclusive education and teaching. Table 6 presents results when item G in Table 5 is dropped.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics for teachers' beliefs (%) N=63

Item Beliefs	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Belief A	Including learners who experience barriers to learning in the mainstream classroom hinders the learning of other learners	18	2	30	27
Belief B	Respecting the sexual orientation of all learners is necessary for inclusion in South Africa	51	42	7	0
Belief C	Learners who experience barriers to learning are likely to do better academically in the mainstream school	10	44	40	7
Belief D	Learners who experience barriers to learning are likely to improve their social skills in the mainstream classroom	16	56	21	7

Item Beliefs	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Belief E	Most learners who experience barrier to learning lack skills to understand the content of a mainstream classroom	14	40	24	21
Belief F	Most learners with learning disabilities such as hearing or visual impairment should not be educated in mainstream classrooms	10	22	48	21
Belief G	Most learners with a physical disability should not be taught in a mainstream classroom	3	4	58	35

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics data on the teachers' beliefs variables as measured by the seven statements on a four-point scale. On the statement (Belief 1): "I feel it is important to create inclusive classrooms" 57% of the teachers did not feel that it was important to create inclusive classrooms. This is contrary to their response in Belief 2 where 51% strongly agreed and 42% agreed about the importance of using diverse teaching methods to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning. Whereas the teachers did not feel that it was their responsibility to create inclusive classrooms, they were nevertheless positive about using different methods of teaching to accommodate learners who experienced barriers to learning.

**Table 2:** Inferential statistics for standardised loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix on beliefs

Beliefs	MR1	H2	U2 com
Belief A	0.87	0.75054	0.25 1
Belief B	-0.26	0.06998	0.93 1
Belief C	0.20	0.04146	0.96 1
Belief D*	0.02	0.04146	1.00 1
Belief E	0.57	0.32814	0.67 1
Belief F	0.56	0.30850	0.69 1
Belief G	0.36	0.13034	0.87 1

\*Not related to belief

To understand whether these belief statements were related to belief, we conducted Exploratory Factor Analysis for all seven statements. The results thereof are presented in Table 2 above. Tables 2a and b present inferential statistics for teachers' beliefs and values about the inclusion of children who experience barriers to learning. From Table 2, of the seven statements related to belief, we found that belief D (Teaching learners with disabilities is rewarding) was not well related to a belief in including learners who experience barriers to learning because of its low score of 0.02 MR at the threshold of 0.90 Correlation of (regression) scores with factors and Multiple R square of scores with factors (0.81). In other words, the teachers in this sample did not believe that accommodating these learners was rewarding at all. Otherwise from the above results belief can be explained by factor A,B and F.

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics on the significance or value of inclusive education (%) N=63

Values	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Value A	I want inclusive education to address the problem of racism in schools	46	51	0	3
Value B	I want inclusive education to help promote social justice in schools	65	35	0	0
Value C	I feel that teaching about diversity and inclusive education is my professional responsibility	58	42	0	0
Value D	I feel that all teachers are responsible for inclusive education in schools	72	27	1	0
Value E	I value inclusive education as a right guaranteed by the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights	65	35	0	0

Table 3 above presents teachers' expression of values on the significance of inclusive education and teaching in accommodating all learners, especially those experiencing barriers to learning. The table shows that most participants strongly saw inclusive education and teaching as a vehicle to drive transformation and social justice in South Africa. The teachers also cherished the fact that inclusive education and teaching promote education as basic human right issue and that it was their responsibility to roll it out in schools (65% and 72%) respectively.

**Table 4:** Inferential statistics for standardised loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix on significance or value of inclusive education

Values	MR1	H2	U2com
Value A	0.50	0.25	0.75 1
Value B	0.83	0.69	0.31 1
Value C	0.83	0.68	0.31 1
Value D	0.85	0.72	0.28 1
Value E	0.72	0.52	0.48 1

The high MR1 values show that teachers had a high regard of inclusive education and teaching.

**Table 4:** Descriptive statistics on teaching strategies for inclusive education and teaching (%) N=63

Attitudes	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Attitude A	I feel it is important to create inclusive classrooms.	71	26	3	0

Attitudes	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Attitude B	I feel that it is important to use diverse teaching methods to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning.	74	26	0	0
Attitude C	I feel it is important to work with other teachers to make my teaching more inclusive	74	26	0	0
Attitude D	Teaching learners with disabilities is rewarding	51	38	11	0
Attitude E	I have high expectations and aspirations for all learners	52	48	0	0
Attitude F	In my teaching, I will deal with difficulties/ sensitive issues such as racism	46	46	1	6
Attitude G	I am familiar with the resources that learners with disabilities need in order to learn	27	47	26	0

Table 4 above presents descriptive results about the teachers' attitude regarding the use of diverse teaching strategies towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning. On the whole teachers were predisposed to inclusive pedagogy. The high values for items A, B, and C are indicative of this observation. However, item G raises eyebrows. These teachers given their profile described in the section under sampling. This may infer that structural and teaching and learning resources are lacking in their schools.

**Table 5:** Inferential statistics for standardised loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix on teaching methods

Attitudes	MR1	H2	U2com
Attitude A	0.61	0.37	0.63 1
Attitude B	0.84	0.70	0.30 1
Attitude C	0.84	0.71	0.29 1
Attitude D	0.59	0.35	0.65 1
Attitude E	0.77	0.59	0.41 1
Attitude F	0.34	0.12	0.88 1
Attitude G	0.32	0.10	0.90 1

When we realised that item G has lower loading and we deleted it our Cronbach alpha increased to 0.78 (and standard Cronbach alpha to 0.82) as reflected in Table 6 below. We found this quite interesting that the teachers in this sample were not aware of the resources that could help them teach better for inclusive classrooms.

**Table 6:** Inferential statistics for standardised loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix on teaching methods when item G is dropped

Values	Raw Alpha	Standard Alpha	G.6	G6 (smc)	r/S/N	se.var.r
Attitude A	0.73	0.78	0.81	0.37 3.6	0.049 0.038	0.35

Values	Raw Alpha	Standard Alpha	G.6	G6 (smc)	r/S/N	se.var.r
Attitude B	0.71	0.75	0.75	0.34 3.0	0.052 0.022	0.35
Attitude C	0.71	0.75	0.75	0.33 3.0	0.053 0.025	0.35
Attitude D	0.72	0.78	0.81	0.37 3.5	0.053 0.047	0.35
Attitude E	0.70	0.75	0.77	0.33 3.0	0.056 0.039	0.25
Attitude F	0.78	0.82	0.84	0.43 4.5	0.040 0.034	0.43

These six tables described above present a positive story, albeit there appears to be underlying misconceptions and perhaps errors above the worth of children who experience barriers to learning. This view is formed by the belief that learners who experience barriers to learning are unlikely to improve their social skills in the mainstream classroom (MR1 0.02). Another alarming observation is what we have already alluded to in table 5, item G (MR1 032). Perhaps these two observations could find their answers in the section, which discusses the literature review and the theoretical framework that guided this study with these results.

## 7. DISCUSSION

This study examined teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms. Specifically, the study was guided by the following three research questions: What are the teachers' beliefs about inclusive education and teaching in the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in grade 1 to 3 classrooms? How significant is inclusive education and teaching in accommodating learners who experience barriers to learning in these grades? What are teachers' attitudes in using diverse teaching methods to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms? To answer these questions, the study implemented a quantitative descriptive design. Analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Our study came up with three findings: on the positive side, teachers were generally positively predisposed to include learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms and teachers were willing to use diverse teaching strategies to accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning in the classrooms. However, the teachers in our sample expressed doubt about whether learners who experience barriers to learning could improve their social skills in a mainstream school (Table 1, item 4). Additionally, when asked about their familiarity with the resources that learners with disabilities need to learn, they indicated that they did know about such resources.

Our findings are consistent with other studies elsewhere in the world. Ismailos, Gallaghe and Bennett (2019) in Ontario, Canada, surveyed the attitudes of in-service teachers (N=739) prior to their implementation of a district-wide shift from a model of segregation to inclusive classrooms and found that elementary and female pre-service teachers held the most clearly defined inclusive growth mind-set and indicated a greater level of confidence in accommodating inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms. Similar findings were by Burke and Sutherland (2004) who sought to determine whether a relationship exists between pre-service and in-service teachers' experiences with disabled students and their attitudes towards inclusion. They found that teachers had positive attitudes toward inclusion. However, what is novel to us is that these teachers did not believe that learners who experience barriers to learning are unlikely to improve their social skills in a mainstream school. Also, what we found strange was that these teachers were not familiar with

the resources they needed to help learners who experience barriers to cope in a mainstream school (Bornman & Donohue, 2013).

The finding on their unfamiliarity with the sources needed to help learners with disabilities is somewhat surprising given the fact teachers in our sample came from schools that are targeted to roll out inclusive education. These include special schools, full-service schools and piloting schools. One possible interpretation of this could be that their schools did not have such facilities given that they are mostly from quartile 1 schools (poor schools). But what is of great concern to us is their disbelief that learners who experience barriers to learning will improve their social skills in a mainstream school. This could be interpreted through the readiness theory that we adopted in this study. The theory of readiness has three components: motivation, the general organisational capacity and the intervention-specific capacity. In our target sample, the teachers appear to be motivated as evidenced by items A, B and F in Table 2. However, it appears that this positive belief is not accompanied by the intervention-specific capacity. The intervention-specific refers to a situation where an organisation that wants to change has personnel that is skilled and knowledgeable about the initiative they desire to implement. This looks like it is not the case with the teachers in our sample. This may explain why they do not believe what they preach. They do not see themselves as change agents (Themane & Thobejane, 2018).

Contrary to our findings, other studies have found that generally teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusion due to a number of factors. For example, most teachers felt that issues around inclusive education did not concern them because they were more concerned with being competent in the subject they teach than anything else (Rose, 2010; Hong *et al.*, 2020; Alnahdi, 2020). Kaikkonen (2010) argues that this type of attitude emanates from the fact that most teachers have a narrow view of their work and responsibility. Thus, touching on inclusive education and special education could be regarded as an add-on. Undoubtedly, the quality of ongoing professional development they receive has an effect. Most teacher education programmes, it would appear, are not tailor-made to address the needs of teachers, including issues surrounding inclusive education (Paramit, Sharma & Anderson, 2020).

However, the interpretations and generalisations drawn from this study could be limited due to at least two reasons. One, the sample representing these teachers in South Africa, is negligible and therefore conclusions arrived at here should be treated cautiously. Given a vast number of uncoordinated trainings on inclusive education in Limpopo Province, the findings would be affected by variance in curriculum at each training institute, at other districts and other factors impacting the profile of these teachers (some are from full-service schools and others from special schools). Thus, caution should be taken when trying to apply the findings to a system with different characteristics than Limpopo Province. We acknowledge discrepancies that may arise from the decision to ignore the gender and type of teacher training received by these teachers.

## 8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Beside the limitations outlined above, the findings in this study have at least three implications. We conclude that lack of progress in successful inclusive education in our sampled schools could be improved by addressing the confidence issues among teachers, building of their positive beliefs, the valuing of inclusive education and teaching, and attitudes to include learners who require special assistance as well as collaborate with other teachers in doing so.

Additionally, these results may provide an opportunity to use the strength in attitudes to overcome the challenges relating to training (in-service and pre-service) and professional development as well as practise the skills and the variety of strategies available (Swart & Oswald, 2008). We conclude that the success of inclusive education is largely dependent on redesigning in teacher education provision that focus on making teacher agency and self-efficacy (Antoszewska & Bartanikowska, 2017; Forlin, 2012; Pantic & Florian, 2015). Such programmes should also focus on repurposing of teaching programmes to enable practitioners to work together and collaborate from time to time. Undoubtedly, the teachers need to master different methods of teaching to be skilful to cater for all learners in some diverse classrooms. We also advocate for teachers to be foregrounded in the value of inclusivity to prevent paranoia and pessimism in appreciating and embracing inclusive education. The in-service and pre-service providers should be underpinned by advocacy for inclusivity to enable teacher trainees to understand profoundly inclusive education to alter the attitude of teachers and to prevent possible stigmatisation of learners with barriers to learning (Agenyega, 2007).

Continuous professional development programmes should focus on life experiences of teachers, taking their context into consideration, where they could be involved in problem solving approaches in their real life experiences, such experiences could be leveraged on programmes such as Education for All, Children Friendly Schools and No Child-Left Behind (UNESCO, 1994), which can inspire teachers to advocate for the rights of children.

Finally, these findings also may imply that to solidify teachers' positive attitudes emphasis should be put on teachers being the creators of knowledge rather than always assuming the role of transmitters of information from the government. We argue, as others do (Florian & Spratt, 2013; Ahsan & Sharma, 2018) that teachers have the natural skills that they can use in classrooms. Such natural knowledge that makes them collaborate and network with teachers, parents and communities instead of working alone.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This article was aimed at investigating the attitudes of primary teachers towards inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning. While it is important to develop high-quality content for a teacher professional learning programme to equip teachers with skills and knowledge the findings of this study indicated that teachers' attitudes were required to produce the expected outcomes. Removal of impediments towards the implementation of inclusive education with direct classroom support may be useful for engendering positive attitudes towards the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning.

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