

Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences of the support provided to them in a mainstream school

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree *Master of Arts* in Psychology at the Potchefstroom
Campus of the North-West University

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**Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences of the support provided to
them in a mainstream school**

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North-West University

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DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

This dissertation is presented in article format in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Manual for Postgraduate Studies, 2013 of the North-West University. The technical editing has been carried out according to the guidelines and requirements set out in Chapter Two of the Manual. The article will be submitted to the *South African Journal of Education*. The guidelines for the submission to the journal are attached in Addendum E, Journal Submission Guidelines.

I, Esteé Vlok, declare herewith that the dissertation entitled: *Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences of the support provided to them in a mainstream school*, which I herewith submit to the North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus, is my own work and that all references used or quoted were indicated and acknowledged.

Signature:

Date: 22/4/2015

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I hereby certify that I have duly edited the article by Esteé Vlok – *Learners with intrinsic barriers experiences of the support provided to them in a mainstream school.*

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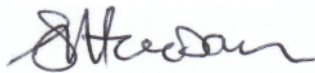
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LETTER OF PERMISSION

The candidate opted to write an article with the support of her supervisor and co-supervisor. We, the supervisors, declare that the input and effort of Estée Vlok in writing this article reflects research done by her. We hereby grant permission that she may submit this article for examination purposes in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister in Psychology*.



Dr. Shanaaz Hoosain



Dr. Izanette van Schalkwyk

PREFACE

The candidate, Esteé Vlok, opted to write an article with the support of her study leaders.

- The dissertation is represented in article format as indicated in Rule A.5.4.2.7 of North-West University Potchefstroom Campus Year Book.

The dissertation consists of:

Section A:

- Part 1: Orientation to the Study (Harvard referencing method).
- Part 2: Literature Study (Harvard referencing method).

Section B:

- The article (Harvard referencing method).

Section C:

- Summary, Recommendations and Reflection (Harvard referencing method) as well as the guidelines for the article format as prescribed by the South African Journal of Education.

Section D:

- Annexure

The *South African Journal of Education* has been identified as the possible journal for submission.

SUMMARY

Effective learning is related to the emotional and social well-being of each learner (Pieterse, 2010:174). The way learners experience their school environment influences their learning and their well-being. The focus of this study was the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support provided in a mainstream school in Centurion, Pretoria. Viewed in terms of a bio-ecological theoretical framework, the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning with regard to the support they receive are constantly influenced by their interactions with the environment. The aim of this study was to explore and describe the unique experiences of such learners with regard to the support they receive and how these experiences influence their well-being. The research question for this study was as follows: How do learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support provided to them in a mainstream school?

A research study of this nature was needed because, although there is an abundance of international literature on the subject, there is a noticeable scarcity of information about learners' experiences of the support they receive in the South African context. The experiences of such learners in terms of the support they receive in school influence their overall well-being and can negatively impact their ability to participate in classrooms (Pieterse, 2010:174).

The research question was addressed through the use of qualitative descriptive research (Sandelowski, 2010:78) that explored and described the experiences of learners. This research design allowed the researcher to gain rich and holistic data from the learners and the way in which they give meaning to their own experiences. Ten learners with barriers to learning were selected in a mainstream school in Pretoria, Gauteng. All the participants were between the ages of 8 and 13 years of age and were able to speak English or Afrikaans. These learners were selected by means of purposive sampling, thus enabling the researcher to include participants according to the relevant criteria. Ethical approval was obtained from the North-West University. Because learner participation was essential to the research, special attention was given to all ethical aspects regarding young learners throughout the research process.

Informed assent was obtained from the learners and informed consent was obtained from their parents or guardians. Parents were made aware that their children's participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without negative consequences. The aim of the study was explained to them, as was the assurance of confidentiality, what was expected of them, what the data would be used for and who would have access to the data. All records have been kept safe and confidential within the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

Collage work and semi-structured interviews were used as methods of data collection in order to gain a detailed picture of learners' experiences of the available support. Collages were used as a "draw-and-talk" technique to facilitate the rich exploration of learners' experiences and to support the interview process. These interviews were conducted following an interview schedule compiled in accordance with the literature study. The interviews were transcribed for the purpose of data analysis and were analysed to transform the transcribed data into meaningful information. The theme was divided into sub-themes, discussed according to relevant narratives from the interviews and controlled by means of literature.

The findings indicate that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning do experience support at the various levels they operate at and in the relationships they have. Learners were found to be experiencing support in their school environment through context, with specific reference to the meso level. Support experienced can serve as a protective factor while lack of support can imply risk factors in respect of scholastic success, overall development and well-being. Insight was further gained as to how the factors in each environment can influence other systems with regard to the support these learners receive.

Recommendations are made in accordance with the conclusions and findings of this study. The most important recommendation is that protective factors identified to provide learners with the experience of support should be nurtured and maintained.

An in-depth study investigating the experiences of learners with barriers to learning regarding the support they receive in other geographical areas is recommended. More

comprehensive studies are necessary and should encompass the various provinces of South Africa where resources and support structures may vary significantly. This will provide valuable data concerning how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience support elsewhere and will be useful for purposes of comparison and contrasting. This could in turn lead to the implementation of improved support structures in mainstream schools for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

KEY TERMS: Educators, inclusion, intrinsic barriers to learning, mainstream, South African Education, support

OPSOMMING

Effektiewe leer is ten nouste verbind met die emosionele en sosiale welstand van elke leerder (Pieterse, 2010:174). Die wyse waarop leerders hulle skoolomgewing ervaar beïnvloed hulle leerproses, asook hulle algehele welstand. Die fokus van hierdie studie is op die ervaringe van leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse in die leerproses aangaande die ondersteuning wat aan hulle gegee word binne 'n hoofstroomskool in Pretoria, Gauteng. In die lig van 'n bio-ekologiese teoretiese raamwerk, word leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse tot die leerproses se ervaring van die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang, voortdurend beïnvloed deur die interaksie met hulle omgewing. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die unieke ervaringe van leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse tot die leerproses aangaande die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang, te verken en te beskryf, en hoe hierdie ervarings hul welstand beïnvloed. Die navorsingsvraag van die studie is as volg verwoord: Hoe beleef leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse tot die leerproses die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang in 'n hoofstroomskool?

Alhoewel daar 'n oorvloed internasionale literatuur oor die onderwerp bestaan, is daar 'n duidelike tekort aan literatuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. 'n Navorsingstudie van hierdie aard was dus nodig. Die ervaringe van leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse tot die leerproses aangaande die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang, kan hulle algehele welstand beïnvloed, en, kan 'n negatiewe impak hê op hulle deelname in die klaskamer (Pieterse, 2010:174).

Die navorsingsvraag is aangespreek deur die gebruik van 'n kwalitatiewe beskrywende navorsingsontwerp (Sandelowski, 2010:78) wat die belewings van leerders verken en beskryf het. Hierdie navorsingsontwerp het die navorser toegelaat om ryk en holistiese data van die leerders te kry aangaande die manier waarop hulle betekenis aan hul eie belewings gee. Tien leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse in die leerproses is gekies uit 'n hoofstroomskool in Pretoria, Gauteng. Al die deelnemers was tussen die ouderdom van 8 en 13 jaar oud, en was Engels- en Afrikaans magtig. Hierdie leerders is gekies deur middel van doelgerigte steekproeftrekking wat die navorser in staat gestel het om die deelnemers in te sluit volgens die relevante kriteria. Etiese goedkeuring is verkry van die Noord-Wes Universiteit. Aangesien leerders se deelname noodsaaklik was vir

die navorsing, is spesiale aandag gegee aan alle etiese aspekte rakende jong leerders tydens die navorsingsproses. Ingeligte instemming is verkry van die leerders en ingeligte toestemming van die ouers vir die vrywillige deelname van hul kinders aan die studie. Ouers en leerders was bewus daarvan dat hulle op enige tyd aan die studie kon onttrek – ongeag die rede – sonder enige negatiewe gevolge. Die doel van die studie, vertroulikheid, verwagtinge, waarvoor data aangewend sal word en wie toegang tot die data sal hê, is aan hulle verduidelik. Alle rekords van data is veilig en vertroulik hanteer binne die navorser-studieleier verhouding.

Collage-werk en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik as metode van data-insameling om 'n gedetailleerde beeld van die leerders se belewings van die beskikbare ondersteuning te kry. Collage-werk is gebruik as 'n 'teken-en-praat' tegniek om die ryke verkenning van leerders se belewings te fasiliteer asook om die die onderhoudproses te ondersteun. Hierdie onderhoude is gevoer na aanleiding van 'n onderhoud-skedule wat saamgestel is in ooreenstemming met die literatuurstudie. Die onderhoude is getranskribeer vir die doel van data-analise, en die getranskribeerde data is ontleed en omskep in betekenisvolle inligting. Temas is verdeel in subtemas en bespreek aan die hand van gepaste narratiewe uit die onderhoude en in die lig van bestaande literatuur.

Die bevindings het aangedui dat leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse tot die leerproses, ondersteuning beleef op verskillende vlakke wat weer die interaksie van verskeie sisteme omvat. Leerders ervaar ondersteuning in hul omgewing wat die mesovlak insluit. Die beleving van ondersteuning wat leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse ervaar, kan dien as beskermende faktore, terwyl die gebrek aan ondersteuning risiko faktore impliseer tot skolastiese sukses, algehele ontwikkeling en welstand. Insig is verder verkry oor die wyse waarop die faktore in elke omgewing ander sisteme kan beïnvloed met betrekking tot die ondersteuning wat hierdie leerders ontvang.

Aanbevelings word gemaak in ooreenstemming met die gevolgtrekkings en bevindings van hierdie studie. Die belangrikste aanbeveling is dat beskermende faktore wat geïdentifiseer is om leerders in die leerproses te ondersteun uitgebou en beskerm behoort te word.

'n In-diepte studie wat leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse in die leerproses se ervaring van ondersteuning in hoofstroomskole ondersoek, word aanbeveel in ander geografiese gebiede. Meer omvattende studies is nodig, wat verskeie provinsies van Suid-Afrika insluit, waar hulpbronne en ondersteuningstrukture betekenisvol mag verskil. Dit sal waardevolle inligting lewer oor die ondersteuning wat leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse in die leerproses beleef, om te vergelyk en te kontrasteer. Dit kan op sy beurt lei tot die implementering van beter ondersteuningstrukture vir leerders met intrinsieke hindernisse in die leerproses in hoofstroomskole.

SLEUTEL TERME: Intrinsieke hindernisse tot leer, opvoeders, inklusiewe onderrig, hoofstroomskool, Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwys, ondersteuning

SECTION A

PART 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Learners with disabilities are faced with pre-existing barriers, and these barriers often hinder the process of their inclusion into mainstream schools (Clark, 2007:68). According to the South African Department of Education (2005b:10), the concept “barriers to learning” refers to all the societal, systemic and intrinsic factors (e.g. neurological disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders) that impede learning and development and can arise within the learner, the education system or the learning site (Department of Education, 2008:8). Intrinsic barriers to learning can prevent access to learning and development (Department of Education, 2008:8) and have an impact on the social, behavioural and emotional well-being of learners (Prinsloo & Gasa, 2011:490). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on intrinsic barriers to learning – that is, barriers situated within the learner – including neurological and developmental impairments, emotional disturbances, differing intellectual ability (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009:107), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Down Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorders (Clark, 2007:83).

According to Holtz-Frank (2013:xiv) the process of learning will be influenced by the environment created for learning. Wessels (2001:10) states that effective learning is directly related to, and dependent on, the social and emotional well-being of learners. When learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are integrated into a mainstream setting, they will need support (Clark, 2007:69). This support should focus on their overall well-being. Schools, therefore, should become supportive environments (Chambers, 2001:14). A supportive learning environment can be defined as “the intentional creation of a challenging, supportive, and relevant learning community that allows all learners to achieve at their highest potential” (Holtz-Frank, 2013: xiv). Access to and participation in inclusive education is the responsibility of the educational system (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey; 2005:2) that has to accommodate the learning needs of

diverse learners in mainstream classes (Stofile & Green, 2007:54) and make the education system more supportive and accommodating of the individual learner's needs (Swart et al., 2002:80). If the education system is to promote the development of an effective learning and teaching environment, overcome barriers to learning which may arise, and prevent learning breakdown, it is imperative to understand what support systems are available for learners (Clark, 2007:69).

The Department of Education (2001:15) defines support as any form of help, assistance and guidance given to learners who experience barriers to learning to enable them to overcome their barriers. Support can also be defined as all the activities which enhance the capacity of a school to cater for diversity and ensure effective learning and teaching for all learners (DoE, 2005:22). According to Pieterse (2010:13), supporting learners with intrinsic barriers to learning is an ongoing process of meeting social, educational, mental, spiritual and emotional needs, all of which are considered fundamental elements of meaningful and positive development in children. Pieterse (2010:4) states that support in an inclusive setting should not be viewed as a separate entity, but as an integral part of teaching and learning. According to Pieterse (2010:4), support available to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning and to the education system can include educator and learning support, career guidance, counselling and psychological services, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, social interventions, parental support, educator training and support and curriculum and learning content development. Landbrook (2009:39) identifies the best support for a learner with barriers to learning as assistance from a specialist in the field of the specific learning disability. This suggests that inclusive education should be a multi-disciplinary, school-wide approach (Walton et al., 2009:108). Professionals such as remedial educators, educational psychologists, language and speech therapists, occupational therapists and social workers can provide valuable support for educators and parents who work with learners with barriers to learning on a daily basis (Scott, 2005:16). The information the school receives from these support networks supplies them with insight into the learning process and enables them to identify these learners' strengths and weaknesses (Wienand, 2011:56). According to Wienand (2011:61), the expertise, input, and actions

of many professionals and psychosocial support networks are needed in order to enhance the growth of mainstream schools towards becoming supportive learning environments for all learners. Hays (2010:21) comments that there needs to be collaboration between the various professionals for successful inclusion of these learners into mainstream schools. Motshekga (2010:2) and Pieterse (2010:2) emphasise the point that, without a new approach and the correct support systems in place, inclusive education will remain no more than an unrealised ideal in the South African education system. South Africa is still growing and developing in the field of inclusive education and, as a developing nation, it might not be equipped with the resources and facilities required for it to meet all the needs of inclusion and to provide the necessary support to learners who experience barriers in mainstream schools (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009:493; Pieterse, 2010:2).

An environment that is accepting and inclusive of learners has a positive influence on their development of good self-esteem (Chambers, 2001:12). According to social psychologists, self-esteem can be conceptualised as the total attitude towards oneself and refer to the degree to which we perceive ourselves positively or negatively (Baron et al., 2010). Learners' with healthy self-esteem have been shown to have a positive self-concept and self-confidence in a school environment (King, 2002:23). According to Pieterse (2010: 5) learners' experiences of their school environment can impact their overall well-being. Naderi et al., (2009:27) also note that research has consistently shown a connection between how learners value themselves and their level of academic achievement. Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, who are not accepted, understood or supported in their environment, can be at risk for poor mental and emotional health, low academic achievement, poor self-esteem, dropping out of school or a poor employment history (Wilke, 2009:148). A study conducted by Selvam (cited in Mveli, 2009:21) in a South African mainstream school revealed that the majority of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning have negative experiences within the school environment generally, including feelings of isolation and loneliness, negative self-concepts, negative self-esteem, stress and anxiety. These negative experiences raise the question of how support is experienced by learners with intrinsic barriers to

learning in the South African mainstream school environment. In another research study conducted in South African schools by Pillay and Terlizzi (2009:493) it was revealed that learners who experience intrinsic barriers to learning can also benefit on the psychological, social, and academic levels if they are placed in an environment that provides valuable and necessary resources to meet their learning needs.

According to the inclusive education approach to schooling, the learner is at the centre of the educational system. Inclusion implies that mainstream schools have taken the responsibility of changing and improving the delivery of education to provide that which is necessary for learners with barriers to learning and to facilitate access to and participation in the education system (Pieterse, 2010:4; Walton et al., 2009:105). According to Pieterse (2010:47), inclusive education assumes that mainstream schools and classrooms are usually the most appropriate environment for all learners – irrespective of their learning barriers – and that they should be included in the mainstream classroom where educators should be able to accommodate all learners' needs. Internationally in this regard, the Special Education Needs and Disability Act (2001) in the United Kingdom states that it is every learner's right to be educated in the mainstream classroom while, locally, South Africa's new Constitution (RSA, 1996a), introduced a Bill of Rights that secures the right of all South Africans to basic education (Stofile & Green, 2007:52). However, educating learners with barriers to learning requires more financial resources and more human resources than mainstream education (Hays, 2010:26). The Department of Education (DoE, 2001) admits that accommodating and supporting learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools has funding implications relating to the provision of necessary physical and material resources, as well as in respect of staff and essential professional development.

In most areas in South Africa, professional services are not readily available (Bizos, 2009: 36 in Teaching and ADHD) due to limited financial and educational resources, as well as matters of convenience and accessibility. Scott (2005:34) and Spies (2013:112) both found in South African studies that, even when support is available, it might come at a high cost. According to Wienand (2011:2) the weak economic situation in which

countless parents in South Africa find themselves rendered unable to obtain privately-offered specialised help for their children. The presence of specialist support personnel at schools suggests wealth and privileged circumstances – both in terms of the additional salaries paid and venues provided by the schools, and in terms of the cost of therapies to parents (Walton et al., 2009:115). There is an advantage to having practitioners available on site in a special school (such as psychologists, remedial teachers and speech and occupational therapists). This could meet learners' needs if it were to be included in the school fee structure, thus relieving the pressure on parents to transport learners to and from therapy after school when many of them are at work (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009:493). Despite many attempts by the South African government and Education Department to train and support them, educators feel powerless and unequipped to provide support to learners with barriers to learning (Prinsloo, 2001:345).

Educators who are not trained to teach learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, and who are not supported in this endeavour, find it difficult to adapt the curriculum and learning material; they struggle to involve parents and communities in the learning process; they feel themselves inadequate in person and in training to deal with so much diversity amongst the large numbers of learners in their classrooms; and they suffer a lack of self-respect and self-assurance (Sethosa, 2001:169-192; Weeks, 2000:258-259). Many educators also feel unprepared for the challenges of inclusion (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). One of the key factors that help schools accommodate the needs of learners with barriers to learning is the availability of suitable teaching and personal support (Cheminais, 2004:15). Certain First World countries, such as the United Kingdom, have included teacher aids and special needs co-ordinators in inclusion policies as a means to assist in providing support to learners with barriers to learning. According to Walton et al. (2009:109), inclusive strategies in First World countries include co-operative instruction techniques, extensive educator training and support and assistance in the classroom. South Africa, as a developing country, has embraced inclusive education, but has not yet incorporated strategies such as teacher aids and co-coordinators into its education legislation. Educators feel that the Department of Education puts pressure on them to accommodate learners with barriers to learning in

their mainstream classrooms and they find it difficult to support and include such learners in their teaching (Stofile & Green, 2007:58). According to Oswald (2007:140), the increasing learner diversity, larger class sizes and demanding needs of learners in a mainstream classroom are very challenging for educators, and they need support to provide quality education for all their learners. According to Hays (2009:22), if educators have a negative experience of learners with barriers to learning in a mainstream environment, the overall experience of these learners in their classrooms might also be negative.

Learners offer crucial and distinct perspectives and it is necessary take account of these in order to provide a complete account of their schooling (Masson, 2004:44). In addition, their voice could contribute to the improvement of education and to increasing teachers' understanding of their learners (Roaf, 2002:102). According to Walton (2011:86), research that describes the experiences, perceptions, beliefs and opinions of learners with regard to inclusive education are relatively neglected in South Africa. This lack of research supports the motivation for this research study which aimed to investigate the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning with regard to the support they receive in mainstream schools in South Africa. The knowledge gained about the experiences of learners can be used as a basis for further research which could lead to the development of support structures in mainstream schools, inform educators' practices and enable them to better support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

From the problem formulation the following research question was formulated: How do learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support provided to them in a mainstream school?

2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to explore and describe how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support provided to them in a mainstream school.

3. CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

According to Fleming (2010:7), learners may interpret their experiences of the world differently from the manner in which adults do. Children are “experts by experience” (Fleming, 2010:5) and listening to their unique voice and experiences is a way to understand their lives (Lewis, 2004:1). By exploring and describing how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support provided to them in a mainstream school we can offer essential information to role players that might assist the development and improved implementation of educational tools.

4. CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

The following section clarifies the terms and concepts central to understanding the objectives and purpose of this study.

4.1 Intrinsic barriers to learning

According to the South African Department of Education (2005:10), the concept “barriers to learning” refers to all the systemic, societal and intrinsic factors that obstruct effective learning and learners’ development. These barriers can arise within the education system as a whole, the school, or within the learner him/herself (Department of Education, 2008:8). Intrinsic barriers to learning are situated within the learner and include neurological disabilities and developmental impairments, psychosocial disturbances, differing intellectual ability (Walton et al., 2009:107), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Down Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorders (Clark, 2007:83).

4.2 Learner support

The Department of Education (2001:15) defines learner support as any form of help, support, assistance and guidance given to learners who experience any barriers to learning – to enable them to overcome their barriers. Support can also be defined as all the activities which enhance the capacity of a school to cater for diversity and ensure effective learning and teaching for all learners (Department of Education, 2005:22).

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:19) define support as help "from within schools as well as to schools in areas such as health, social work, psychological and learning support, speech and hearing and physio/occupational therapy; and from other community resources".

According to Weeks and Erradu (2013:4) this support can be at a low, moderate or high-intensity level – depending on the needs of the individual learner. Wienand (2011:37) is of the opinion that support can be seen as a continuing process of meeting educational, social, emotional, mental and spiritual needs, all of which are considered crucial elements of meaningful and positive development in learners.

4.3 Mainstream schools

According to White Paper 6 (Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System), mainstream schools now have a responsibility to meet the educational needs of all learners. Schools have to state that every effort has been made to accommodate a particular learner in the mainstream before any alternative provision may be proposed. In mainstream schools there is a practice of educating learners with special needs in regular classes and during specific time periods, based on their abilities and skills. In other words, regular mainstream classes are combined with special education classes. Exclusion from education on the grounds of disability does not fit inclusive policies.

4.4 Inclusion

Inclusion has emerged as a key international educational policy, in particular since the Salamanca Statement called on governments to recognise diversity and “adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education” (UNESCO, 1994). According to Scott (2005: 91-94) and Wienand (2011:45-47) extensive efforts are being made by the Department of Education to identify barriers to learning and development, and to provide learners with equal access to quality education. Inclusion also involves ensuring that all the necessary support systems are available to those who need such support.

According to Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton (2000) the essence of inclusive education and schooling is based on the important themes concerning “human rights”, “equal opportunities” and “social justice”. Pieterse (2010:33) and Scott (2005:79) both state that the inclusion of learners with “special education needs” or “learning barriers” in mainstream classes is part of a universal human rights movement. According to Pieterse (2010:80) it has therefore become vital for all countries to create "equal opportunities for all learners to learn and succeed". The Bill of Rights, contained in the South African Constitution, (RSA, 1996a), stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education. In line with international trends in education, South Africa has embraced inclusive education as the means by which learners who experience barriers to learning will be educated (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009:502; Walton et al., 2009:105). Inclusion is defined by the Department of Education (Education White Paper 6, 2001:6) as “an acknowledgement that all children and youth can learn and all children and youth need support”. The White Paper is also committed to “enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners” (Education White Paper 6, 2001:6). For the purpose of this study, inclusive education means that all learners – irrespective of their learning barriers – should be included in the mainstream classroom, and educators should be able to support and accommodate all learners’ needs.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Literature study

The following themes were investigated in the literature review: inclusion, intrinsic barriers to learning, learner support, learning support, and mainstream schools.

The literature under review included websites, government policy documents, books, articles, research reports, statistics and applicable journals. In order to ensure that the literature review would be comprehensive, key words and concepts were identified and an extensive literature search – involving a variety of databases such as EbscoHost, Nexis, ProQuest, SAePublications, SACat and Google Scholar – was undertaken.

5.2 Empirical investigation

5.2.1 Research approach and design

The researcher used a qualitative research approach (Sandelowski, 2010:78) to gain a better understanding of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support they receive in a mainstream school. Qualitative research approaches are especially well-suited to studies that explore the unique experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009:69; Henning et al., 2005:25; Johnson & Christensen, 2004:76; Welman et al., 2005:188). According to Sandelowski (2010:80), the aim of qualitative descriptive research is to summarise specific events experienced by individuals. An interpretive descriptive design was selected for this study. According to Thorne, Kirkham and O'Flynn-Magee (2004:3), an interpretive descriptive design makes use of data collection methods such as interviews to give a meaningful account of the experiences of participants. The researcher decided on this approach as it would provide an opportunity to gain rich and holistic data to explore how individuals experience and interact with their social world, as well as the meaning it holds for them (Tracy, 2010; Merriam, 2002:4). This study focussed on the beliefs, views, feelings, perceptions and assumptions learners had with regard to their experiences of support within school. Information-rich data was attained through each learner's own comprehensive descriptions of his/her experiences in respect of the support received. The questions posed to the participants focused on gaining an understanding about how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning perceive their experiences subjectively and what their experiences mean to them. The researcher's objective was to explore and describe the experiences that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning have of the support they receive in a mainstream school.

5.2.2 Participants

The target population for this study consisted of learners in middle childhood, aged 8 to 13, attending Grades 2 to 7, and with intrinsic barriers to learning, all enrolled in one

mainstream primary school in Centurion, Pretoria. Ten learners participated in the study.

The mainstream primary school was selected on the basis that it included middle childhood learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in its mainstream environment. The school and the participants for this study were identified by means of purposive sampling (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392; Pieterse, 2010:15). Purpose sampling enabled the researcher to include participants according to the relevant criteria (Cohen et al., 2007:114; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004:14) and to maximise the depth of data collected. Given that the participants in this study were young learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, the researcher was fully aware of the ethical implications of conducting such a study and of the injury and psychological difficulties, such as, anxiety, shame, loss of self-esteem and disrespect to participants that may have resulted when the research was carried out (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:142). Gallagher (2009:26) suggests “that ethical process might be seen as an ongoing process of questioning, acting and reflecting, rather than straightforward application of general rules of conduct”.

Due to the research requiring children – namely learners – to be able to express their experiences and to be clearly understood, it was appropriate for the sample to consist of learners in middle childhood. This is because the cognitive and verbal abilities of children in middle childhood are well developed (Berk, 2006:241), in particular their ability to reflect on their experiences (Clark, 2007:73). Because learner participation was essential to the research study (South Africa, 2013:6), particular attention was given to all ethical aspects (discussed in 5.2.6) regarding young learners throughout the data collection process, as well as to the vulnerability of learners in the dependent learner-educator relationship (South Africa, 2013:7). The educator who works with learners with special educational needs (referred to hereafter as LSEN) in the school served as a gatekeeper (Campbell, 2008). She was asked to identify learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in the school. Learners were specifically selected with the help of the LSEN educator because they possessed information-rich data that would be valuable for the

current research. Permission to include the participating learners was obtained from their parents or guardians and the assent of the participating learners themselves was also obtained (South Africa, 2013:6).

Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning were selected in a mainstream primary school according to the following inclusion criteria:

- Learners were enrolled in the identified mainstream school in Centurion.
- The participants were fluent in either Afrikaans or English.
- The gatekeeper (LSEN educator) identified learners as learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.
- Learners had the verbal and cognitive ability to express their experiences.
- The participants were in middle childhood, specifically ages 8 to 13 (Grades 2 to 7).

The sample was not drawn in advance but was instead adapted as the investigation continued. A minimum of six participants were selected at the mainstream school in Centurion, and data collection proceeded until data saturation was reached (De Vos et al, 2011:393) after 10 participants were interviewed.

5.2.3 Research procedures

The procedures below were followed during the data collection process:

- After ethical approval (see Addendums 1 and 2) had been received from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU 00060 12-A1) and permission had been received from the Department of Education (Gauteng province), the researcher discussed the process of data collection with the principal of the school able to give the researcher access to learners in middle childhood with intrinsic barriers to learning. This was done in order to answer any questions and address any concerns that she might have had.

- A literature study was conducted.
- The researcher explained the purpose of the study and the process of data collection to the gatekeeper (LSEN educator). The LSEN educator contacted the parents of the learners identified and forwarded to them a letter from the researcher explaining the purpose and processes of the research, as well as consent forms. The parents signed the consent forms and the researcher obtained written assent from the learners (8 to 13 years old) who would participate in the study.
- The researcher arranged for a suitable venue in which to collect data and set up appointments with the participating learners. (The data was collected in a private therapy room behind closed doors on the school premises.)
- The data was gathered and transcribed.
- Data was analysed and themes and sub-themes were identified.
- Findings were then compiled and summarised and possible limitations and recommendations were reflected upon. The findings are discussed in Section B.

Feedback on the study will be given to the school after the examiners have approved the report arising from the study.

5.2.4 Data collection

Following the precepts listed by Pieterse (2010:16), the data collection process was approached with careful consideration and was designed, planned and implemented cautiously and thoughtfully. The researcher was the main instrument of data collection in this research and was dependant on the ongoing cooperation of the participants. Collage work (Mitchell et al., 2011:19) and semi-structured interviews (Wienand, 2011:13) were used as the method of data collection in order to gain a detailed picture of learners' experiences with regard to the support available to them. Questions for the semi-structured interviews were compiled with the help of the literature and previous studies on the subject. Collage work is a creative process of data collection deemed

suitable for children and has been found to reveal new connections and understanding that learners might otherwise find difficult to express to the researcher (Butler-Kisber, 2007:2008). Due to the uniqueness of each learner's experience, a qualitative research approach using collages and semi-structured interviews gave the researcher the opportunity to collect information-rich data. Each session with a learner was one hour long and was conducted during school hours because of transport constraints faced by learners. The researcher began by using an interactive visual icebreaker to explore some of the different role players making up the learners' school environment. This involved pasting stickers next to pictures of the people working at the school – among them, some of the educators, sports personnel and administrative staff. Some spaces were left blank and the learner was encouraged to add other important people not mentioned by the researcher. The researcher took great care not to lead learners in any specific direction. The purpose of the icebreaker was to make the learners more comfortable and to give them inspiration to make their own collages.

After the icebreaker, the researcher encouraged each learner to make a collage illustrating their own experience of support in their school and depicting the people who helped them. This task was to be completed in the presence of the researcher. Collage work can be seen as a “draw-and-talk” technique to facilitate the rich exploration of learners' experiences (Mitchell et al., 2011:19) and it served here as a research tool to complement the semi-structured interviews (Mitchell et al., 2011:25). Collage work involves the creation of a visual representation of the data using shapes, colours and pictures. Each learner was given a variety of material to use including pens, crayons, pictures, glue and scissors. It was important for the learners to give meaning to their own collages (Mitchell et al., 2011:20) and, to give effect to this, each learner was asked to tell the researcher more about their picture. The researcher explored the collage including context, choice of colour and pictures, negative spaces and the meaning that specific parts of the collage held for the learner (Mitchell et al., 2011:25).

The collage was then used as a tool in a semi-structured interview to assist in asking questions, probing participants, elaborating on answers, clarifying meanings and

discussing the interpretations of the learners (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:204). Questions for the semi-structured interview (Addendum 4) followed directly after the creation of the collage and were based on the data obtained from the collage work. The aim here was to determine how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support provided to them. Questions were arranged from simple to more complex and allowed for learners to relax, gain confidence and explain their answers in more detail. Themes for exploration included tangible, scholastic, emotional and peer support. The researcher used the questions in the interview schedule as a guideline and did not stick to the format dogmatically. Each learner was encouraged to tell their own story. The researcher made use of voice recordings and field notes during the discussion of the collage and the semi-structured interview as a means of improving the collected data and to capture thoughts, comparisons and connections made while investigating each learner's experience of support provided within the context of an inclusive mainstream primary school. Data collection took place in September 2014 during the third school term of the year and spanned a period of two-weeks.

5.2.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of organising and making meaning of the mass of collected data (De Vos et al., 2011:397). A thematic data analysis, as described by Creswell (2006), was conducted. According to Pieterse (2010:25-26), the aim of data analysis is to break the information down into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. This is a method of discovering patterns and involves searching for themes and categories across the obtained data set (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:96). The visual data collected from the collages provided a more holistic and descriptive image of the environment, the participants and the experience of the support they received than might otherwise have been possible. The analysis of the collage during the data collection session was a collaborative meaning-making process between the researcher and the learner and allowed each learner to give a voice to his creation and convey its meaning (Mitchell et al., 2011:20). The researcher recorded and transcribed the meaning that learners gave to their collages, including body language and non-verbal behaviour. The researcher identified key concepts and developed themes.

Transcripts, taken verbatim from the interviews with the learners, were read in a detailed manner to familiarise the researcher with their content and to create understanding before codes for the data were produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006:88) and grander statements and theories moved on to (Tracy, 2010:19). The researcher organised the data from the collages and interviews into meaningful groups and themes. Final themes were identified and reviewed and this process allowed the researcher to give names to the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92). Field notes, according to Greeff (2005:298), include empirical observations as well as the researcher's interpretation during the interview and are critical in exploring the interview process as well as in minimising data loss. The researcher recorded all her thoughts and observations regarding participants' non-verbal communication throughout the data collection process (Braun & Clarke, 2006:86) as this forms an important part of the data analysis.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical practices were taken into consideration for the purpose of this study:

- The researcher took the special needs of vulnerable populations into account when conducting this research (Creswell, 2009:89).
- The researcher treated the learners as stakeholders in the research process. This was done by developing a well-designed project and executing the research with care (Bless et al., 2008:145).
- The particular research design was chosen so as to pose minimal risk to learners and because it would yield knowledge about the support that learners receive (South Africa, 2013:6).
- The research was done under the supervision of the North-West University and the researcher did not begin research until ethical approval had been obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (Ethics No: NWU-00060-12-A1).

- Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education and the principal of the selected school.
- The researcher did not fabricate false data (Bless et al., 2008:145), change observations, report information that was not directly observed or change data in any way.

For this study, the following aspects will be discussed in greater detail:

- the review of literature
- avoidance of harm
- voluntary participation
- information and consent/assent forms
- privacy
- anonymity
- confidentiality
- benefits and compensation
- feedback to participants and parents
- the expertise of the researcher
- possible subjectivity on the part of the researcher.

6.1 Literature review

When dealing with literature, special care was taken to ensure that authors used as sources were acknowledged by citing their names and dates of publication so as to identify the source of each idea. For this study, Sections A and C used the Harvard referencing style (NWU: Referencing Guide, 2012), and Section B used the Harvard referencing style in line with the requirements of the journal identified for possible submission (Addendum 9).

6.2 Avoidance of harm

The rights, safety and well-being of the learners in this study were respected at all times (South Africa, 2013:5). According to Pieterse (2010: 17), harm to participants can be direct or indirect and may include disrespect to learners dignity, wrongful conclusions drawn from the information or having their reputation publicly undermined. The best interest of the learners was taken into consideration. The method of data collection focused on safe, inclusive and engaging opportunities for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning to express their views and their experience of support in the mainstream school concerned. The researcher ensured that the learners were not “labelled” during the research process by keeping their participation in the study private and confidential. Information about the learners participating in the study was not discussed with staff from the school or with other learners. The researcher approached the learners included in this study with respect and a positive attitude and steered away from words and phrases that could possibly cause them any harm. As a precautionary measure, if the psychological or emotional well-being of a learner had appeared to be compromised in any way as a result of participating in the research, the learner would have been referred appropriately at no cost to them. In addition, if the participants in this study had experienced any emotional discomfort they would have been referred to a social worker or psychologist at the school for counselling and help, as deemed appropriate. Although none of the participants or their parents made use of this service, they understood that

they could contact the researcher if they had the need to do so. This service was available to them for three months after the interviews were conducted.

6.3 Voluntary participation, information and consent

The researcher contacted the parents/guardians with the help of a gatekeeper (LSEN educator) to explain the aims and nature of the study. The parents/legal guardians of the identified learners received a letter in which their child was invited to participate in the research. The parents/legal guardians gave their informed written consent (Addendum 3) and learners gave their verbal and written assent to participate in the study. The information imparted was made as clear as possible for the parents and the learners (Forrester, 2010:100). The researcher made sure that parents/legal guardians and learners had sufficient information, a full understanding of the purpose of the research and what would be done with the data collected in the course of the study (Green & Thorogood, 2011:69). Participants should take part in research only when they have made an informed decision to do so and when they have given their consent free from coercion (Pieterse, 2010:18; South Africa, 2013:6). The researcher also explained to the parents/guardians and learners that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so (De Vos et al, 2011:115) without any need to give an explanation and without any subsequent consequences. They could also request that any information already provided not be used in the study (Forrester, 2010:112). Deception of respondents by withholding information was avoided.

6.4 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Although confidentiality and anonymity are often difficult to preserve in qualitative research (Forrester, 2010: 110), the researcher had a responsibility to the participants in this regard (Green & Thorogood, 2011:72). According to Pieterse (2010:18) and Botma et al (2009:17), research findings should ensure that the participant's privacy and identity are protected. This was explained to the participants and parents/guardians in person, as well as on the assent and consent forms as described above (Addendum 3).

Data collection took place behind closed doors in a private room on the school grounds. There was no probing into participants' private lives and the questions asked related to the research questions only. The researcher was careful not to report on research findings in an intrusive or embarrassing way (Pieterse, 2010:18).

Confidentiality, according to Botma et al (2009:17), includes protection of personal information, medical history, biographical details, personal characteristics and sexual practices. To ensure the confidentiality of learners, the following guidelines, as set out by Botma et al (2009:18), were taken into consideration:

The content of data-capturing forms

This study ensured that all the content was handled confidentially and, to this end, the data transcriber signed a declaration that data would be kept confidential (Annexure 6). An example of a transcript is submitted as an annexure to this dissertation (Annexure 7).

Access to the data

Information was kept on the researcher's personal password-protected computer to which only the researcher had access.

Safe and secure storage of data

The data is in safekeeping in a locked location at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies offices and will be shredded after five years.

The anonymous reporting of data

No identifying details of participants are evident in the research report based on this study. Anonymity of information was maintained by keeping all information in all material

arising from the study anonymous (Green & Thorogood, 2011:69) and pseudonyms were used (Forrester, 2010:100) on all data records, analysis sheets and result records. Participants will not be recognisable in the discussion of results. The name of the school was also kept secret. In the transcript annexed to this dissertation (Addendum 6), all names and other identifying information of participants have been blacked out. Having been assured that this would be the case, the participants were able to contribute with confidence. This allowed participants to contribute more confidently. The researcher explained to the parents/guardians as well as to the learners that the information that they would be providing would be confidential, as stated in the consent form (see Addendum 3).

6.5 Benefits and compensation

The researcher was obliged to maximise the possible benefits for the participants and their families, and eventually the population of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. This study might have benefited the participants in the following ways:

- Participants might have gained insight into their own experiences, school environment and personal resilience, leading to improved psychological functioning.
- Participants could find that participating in the research gave them the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences of support, allowing them to acknowledge their own protective factors and strengths.
- Participants could have felt that they had the opportunity to share their own unique experiences and thereby to contribute to the understanding of parents, educators and other professionals who work with learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

No compensation or remuneration was given to participants.

6.6 Feedback to participants and their parents/ guardians

Feedback to the participants and their parents/guardians will be given in the form of a child-friendly visual flowchart and letter accompanied by a printed copy of the article manuscript as the participants do not have access to e-mail. Also included with the letter will be an invitation to the parents/guardians to contact the researcher should they have any further questions or concerns regarding the findings, or should they wish to discuss the content.

6.7 Expertise of the researcher to conduct the research

The researcher is an educator working with preschool learners on the autism spectrum. In addition, for the last eight years, she has worked at a different school that caters to learners who have intrinsic barriers to learning. She is comfortable working with learners with special educational needs and has experience in building rapport with them. She does not know the learners, parents or teachers at the school where the study was conducted. The researcher's studies covered research methodology and research in practice. The researcher conducted the research under the guidance and supervision of two research supervisors at the North-West University. In addition, she was supervised by a social worker with 20 years' experience of working with children and young people and by a co-supervisor with both extensive teaching experience and extensive research experience.

6.8 Possible subjectivity of the researcher

Limitations related to the researcher's role are greater in qualitative research (Forrester, 2010:114) and can, according to Scott (2005:103), lead to subjectivity and bias. This study was a direct result of the researcher's personal experiences with regards to support structures available to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in a mainstream school. The researcher works with learners with intrinsic barriers to learning on a daily basis and experiences the necessary support from parents, families, peer groups and

the wider community as lacking. Although the researcher was not an educator at the school the study was conducted in, she had to ensure that her own assumptions and beliefs did not shape or taint the data or data analysis process. Special consideration was given to the vulnerability of learners in the dependent educator-learner relationship (South Africa, 2013:7). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the researcher maintained a state of continuous ethical awareness. This active process involved constant self-questioning, personal responsibility and bracketing of personal feelings, perceptions and beliefs through regular contact with the researcher's supervisor and by doing member checking. According to Mouton (2006:240), it is important for the researcher to strive to maintain honesty, objectivity and integrity at all times.

7. TRUSTWORTHINESS

During this study every attempt was made to maximise trustworthiness. According to Pieterse (2010:23), trustworthiness in qualitative research is an approach to clarify the notion of objectivity. To ensure trustworthiness in research, Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:419) refer to the norms of trustworthiness as described by Lincoln and Guba. These four norms are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These norms, according to De Vos et al (2011:351), establish the "true value of the research in relation to its applicability, consistency and neutrality".

7.1 Credibility

Credibility, according to Golafshani (2003:597), demonstrates that the research was conducted in a way to ensure that the participants' views were accurately identified and described. Botma *et al* (2009:234) describe the criteria to achieve credibility as a prolonged engagement in the field, the reflexivity of the researcher, member checking and the interview technique. In terms of this research, credibility was ensured by conducting the enquiry in a manner that accurately identified and described the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support they

receive. This was achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews in a safe quiet environment with no time constraints, by allowing the learners to give a rich description of their experiences and continual observations (field notes, observational notes and collaborative collages). The credibility of this study was improved through the use of a variety of interviewing techniques during the interviews with all the participants, including probing, verbal and non-verbal expressions, member checking, re-starting and summarising. The guideline questions for the interviews (Addendum 4) were piloted before the researcher conducted the interviews. To minimise subjectivity, the researcher remained aware that personal feelings and beliefs had to be bracketed.

7.2 Transferability

According to Botma et al (2009:233), transferability in research refers to the degree to which findings can be transferred to other settings or applied to other contexts. Shank (2006:115) views the adequate and detailed description of all the relevant details of the research process as essential elements of transferability. Transferability allows findings to be compared or generalised to other settings or contexts and possibly yield similar results (Pieterse, 2010:23). With reference to this study, the researcher engaged in a thick and detailed description of the research methodology, clearly stating and describing the parameters of the study.

7.3 Dependability

Dependability, according to Botma et al (2009:233), refers to whether findings would be consistent if the enquiry should be replicated with the same participants in another context (Pieterse, 2010:24). The ability to know where the data originates from and how it was collected will influence the dependability of findings. This study attained dependability through documenting and giving detailed descriptions of the process of data collection (procedures and methodology were described in detail, notes were taken) and it adhered to the strict procedures previously discussed. Findings were

verified and validated through member checking. The research was also conducted under the guidance and supervision of study leaders.

7.4 Confirmability

The concept of confirmability, according to Shank (2006:115), entails the details of the methodology used in the study. Schurink et al (2011:421) stress the importance of results being confirmed by other studies and authors. It is imperative that the findings of the study be shaped by the participants and not by the researcher's own bias, motivation, ideas or interests (Pieterse, 2010:24). According to Pieterse (2010:24), all bias and prejudice has to be declared at the beginning of the research in order to enhance confirmability of the study. Confirmability in this study was obtained through verifying data with participants (member checking) and by the researcher being aware of her own thoughts and feelings and then bracketing them to allow the participants to shape the data. The researcher distanced herself from her everyday beliefs, attitudes and suspended judgments on social issues while conducting the research (Pieterse, 2010:24) by following a well set out research design under the supervision of study leaders. The researcher also made use of a variety of sources throughout the research process and when conducting the literature review, including articles, books and studies. In addition, she made use of, for example, resources such as EBSCOhost, SA ePublications and Google Scholar.

8. CHOICE AND STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH ARTICLE

The dissertation follows the article format as prescribed by the North-West University.

The dissertation consists of the following sections:

Section A:

Part I: Orientation to the research (Harvard referencing style)

Part II: Literature review (Harvard referencing style)

Section B: Article (Harvard referencing style)

Section C: Summary, evaluation, conclusion and recommendations

Section D: Addenda

The South African Journal of Education has been identified as a possible journal for submission.

9. SUMMARY

Although a wealth of literature on learners with intrinsic barriers to learning and inclusive education exists (Charlesworth et al, 2007; Ebersohn, 2005; Mahlo, 2014; Pieterse, 2010; Prinsloo, 2001; Wienand, 2011), there is a noticeable absence of information about these learners' own experiences regarding the support they receive in South African schools. The information for this study regarding learners' experiences was acquired using a bottom-up approach and could possibly contribute towards further research. Further research could lead to the development of improved support structures in mainstream schools, inform educators' practices and enable them to better support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. In this section, an overview of the rationale and method of the study was described, the problem formulation, aims and objectives and research question were discussed, and key concepts were briefly defined and described. Part II will consist of the literature review, followed by the research study in Section B.

PART 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

The knowledge gained from a literature review can, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:75-76), help the researcher to state the significance of the research problem, develop an appropriate research design and relate the results of the study to prior knowledge. A literature review can therefore define the research problem, support readers and writers' understanding of the phenomenon under study, place the study in historical perspective and suggest further research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:76). According to De Vos et al (2005:263), the literature study undertaken by the researcher should identify gaps in previous research and that the study carried out by the researcher will fill this need. In this study, the scarcity of information and knowledge on this problem reveals that not enough research has been done into the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support they receive in mainstream schools in South Africa.

The literature highlighted in this chapter will deal with education in South Africa and the move towards inclusive education; learners with intrinsic barriers to learning; the developmental phase of middle childhood; support for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning; and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological perspective as a theoretical framework for this research.

Background

According to Themane and Osher (2014:1), schools are important settings for development and such settings influence personal well-being. Effective schools create strong conditions for learning where learners experience physical and emotional safety, as well as a positive sense of belonging (Themane & Osher, 2014:1). These positive conditions are always associated with learners' lived experiences of interconnectedness and support within the school community (Ebersohn, 2014).

A study by Selvam (2004) in a South African mainstream school revealed that the majority of learners who experience learning difficulties have negative experiences within the school environment. According to Ebersohn (2005:28), these unwanted experiences entail that learners are not only ridiculed by their peers, but are also labelled and excluded from peer group tasks and activities in the classroom. The incidents mentioned above violate the rights of learners as mandated by the South African Schools Act (1996), which states that all learners not only have a right to quality education, but also that they should be respected. A recent South African study indicates that learners with special educational needs benefited on psychological, social, and academic levels from placement in an environment that provided the valuable and necessary resources to meet their learning needs – resources which might be lacking in the mainstream school environment (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009:491). The provision of support services forms part of the realisation of a child's right to education, including a child who has barriers to learning and who may require higher or different levels of support. In addition, Hays (2009:27) states that support services became a compulsory element of inclusive education practice that accommodates the diverse needs of learners with barriers to learning.

2. EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African model of education supports the main principles of the Salamanca Statement that was signed in 1994 by South African representatives at the conference on inclusive education in Salamanca, Spain (Wienand, 2011:57). According to Wienand, (2011:58) the purpose of this conference was to address the rights of learners with barriers to learning. The Statement shifts the responsibility of including learners with barriers to learning to the mainstream school and classroom (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994) and stresses that all learners should have access to quality education with the needed support (Oswald & De Villiers, 2013:3). The Statement calls for respect to be shown to learners with different educational needs and for enabling educational systems, structures and

learning methodologies to support and meet the needs of all learners (Wienand, 2011:58).

2.1 THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusion can be understood as the process by which learners who experience barriers to learning are included in regular mainstream schools that have taken the responsibility of adapting and improving to provide the support necessary to facilitate access and participation (Pieterse, 2010:10; Walton et al, 2009:105). Inclusion is defined, by Engelbrecht and Green (1999:6), as: "A shared value which promotes a single system of education dedicated to ensuring that all learners are empowered to become caring, competent and contributing citizens in an inclusive, changing and diverse society". According to Pieterse (2010:34) and Polat (2011:53), the ideology and values of inclusive education require all schools to be accessible to all learners and to seek to respond to diversity and the needs of all learners.

In other words, access without quality in an education system would negatively affect a learner's scholastic achievement. According to Nel et al (2011:40), one of the central aims of inclusive education is to identify and reduce barriers. Barriers to learning – which prevent access to learning and overall well-being and healthy development of learners – may arise within the education system as a whole, the school and/or within the learner him/herself (Department of Education, 2008:8). Barriers to learning refer to any obstacle that may hinder the learner from accessing educational provision and that may contribute to factors causing learning breakdown. These barriers may be located within the learner, such as learning impairment and emotional breakdown; within the school, such as the language of instruction; or within broader family, social, economic or political contexts (Erradu, 2012:10). More recently, Winter and O'Raw (2010:4), state that the concept of inclusion should expand to embrace those who are at risk of marginalisation or exclusion for whatever reason. Inclusive education can be thought of as an approach that seeks to address "barriers to learning and participation", and provide "resources to support learning and participation" (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Inclusive education encompasses both the rights of learners and how education systems can be changed to respond to diverse groups of learners. According to Kokot (2005), the focus in the education system has thus moved from separate and specialised education for learners with barriers to learning to inclusive education, with all learners having access to the same curriculum, with the same content, standards and achievement, and to the same educators, all within an inclusive classroom (Du Toit & Forlin 2009:647; Nel et al., 2011:40). Inclusive education requires a system-wide approach that is dedicated to making schools accessible to and amenable for all learners. Inclusion involves regular schools and classrooms fully adapting and changing to meet the needs of all learners, as well as celebrating and valuing their uniqueness (Loreman et al., 2005:2). According to Pieterse (2010:35), in an inclusive system of education there is a need to develop a set of skills to effectively respond to the increasing diversity of learning needs in the classroom environment. Inclusion is thus the process by which all learners, and in particular learners with barriers to learning, have access to, and participate in, the mainstream schooling system in a non-discriminatory and supportive environment.

The South African Schools Act of 1996 states that all learners should have access to learning and to equal opportunities in education (Wienand, 2011:46) and, according to White Paper 6, schools now have a responsibility to meet the educational needs of all learners. Inclusion implies that schools should not refuse access to learners with barriers to learning (Chambers, 2001:16). According to Farrell (2004:94), the following three conditions must be adhered to before mainstream education can be considered an appropriate and supportive inclusive environment for learners with barriers to learning:

- Mainstream schools should be able to ensure that learners receive the educational provision their barrier to learning requires.
- Mainstream schools should be able to ensure that other learners, who are educated with the learner who experience barriers to learning, receive efficient education.
- Resources must be used efficiently.

Despite policy development, Ainscow et al. (2006) argue that the development of inclusive practices in schools is not well understood, and, despite the ideology of inclusive education, learners with barriers to learning continue to be excluded and marginalised (DFID, 2000a). Reid (2005:14, 99-100) states that inclusion is a process that develops over time. The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is an evolving process and the success of inclusion depends on the preparation, support and foundations that are in place (Wienand, 2011:69).

2.2 WHITE PAPER 6

In November 1997, the report of the National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Educational Support Services (NCESS), entitled “Quality Education for all: Overcoming barriers to learning”, identified the need to integrate the separate systems of education into a single, inclusive system to accommodate the needs of all learners (Naiker, 2005:241). This recommendation led to the development of Education White Paper 6: “Building an inclusive education and training system” which was launched by the late Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, in 2001 (Department of Education, 2001:4). The main aims of White Paper 6 are to transform South Africa’s education system, to ensure quality education for all learners and to confirm South Africa’s commitment to inclusive education (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009:492). This shift correlated with the international move away from the medical model that individualises barriers to learning only as individual loss or impairment (Naiker, 2005:241).

White Paper 6 advocated learners’ rights and an inclusive approach to education (Erradu, 2012:1). In inclusive schooling according to the inclusion policy described in White Paper 6 (2001:11), the focus in inclusive schooling should be on finding the means and an environment that will accommodate value and celebrate learners’ diversity (Dyson & Millward, 2000). White Paper 6 legislated that no learner should be prevented from accessing and participating, regardless of any barriers. Thus, all learners should have access to education, to the curriculum and to support when

needed so that the full potential of each learner can be actualised (Pieterse, 2010:95; Erradu, 2012:2). The South African Schools Act provides a broad framework for schooling in South Africa. The needs of learners with barriers to learning have been advanced through the provisions of government's Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001) one of the most important aspects of which is the need for government to provide the necessary support for learners who require high levels of support (Erradu, 2012:2). One of the intentions of White Paper 6 is to improve the process of making mainstream schools inclusive while also protecting and enhancing specialist provision for those who need it (Farrell, 2004:89).

White Paper 6 recommends a shift in thinking about "special needs and support services" in South Africa towards a commitment to the development of an inclusive education and training system (Polat, 2011:51). Furthermore, Naiker (2005:230) argues that the transformation of education will be a complex and long-term task as national and provincial governments implement new policy in education. It seems that the implementation of these recommendations – and not the decision-making regarding the new policy – is the real challenge faced by South African education.

White Paper 6 outlines its strategic intentions towards building an inclusive schooling system, where the existing system is transformed to accommodate the full range of learning needs within the population, including where those needs arise from impairment and associated barriers to learning. The policy states that substantial transformation is needed within the system to meet the learning needs of all learners, and that the key to this is finding ways to address barriers that prevent all children from being able to learn to their full potential in the classroom (SADPD, 2012:43). In other words, inclusive education must not only aim to accommodate learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, but must also create a learning environment where all learners can succeed.

3. LEARNERS WITH INTRINSIC BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Since South Africa's commitment to inclusion and the drafting and implementation of White Paper 6 there has been a paradigm shift away from the medical model. The medical model understood barriers to learning as being situated within the learner – and understood learners as being disadvantaged and therefore deficient and beyond support (Spies, 2013:21). The medical model, views learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in isolation and ignores systemic factors and the influences of broader social-economic factors (Engelbrecht, 2006). UNESCO views inclusion of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools as "a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning" (UNESCO, 2005:12). Donald et al. (2010) describe a barrier to learning as any factor that is a hindrance or obstacle to a learner's ability to learn, and that affects how individuals with normal or above-average intelligence take in, retain, or express information (Mash & Wolfe, 2005: 318). The term "barriers to learning" also refers to any obstacle that may hinder the learner from accessing the educational system, and that might contribute to learning breakdown. Barriers to learning manifest themselves in different ways and sometimes become obvious when learning breakdown occurs and learners are excluded in the classroom. Learning breakdown occurs if the education system fails to meet the needs of different learners and where the learner or the system may be prevented from being able to engage in or maintain the process of learning. In other words, barriers to learning can be conceptualised as factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate learner diversity, lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners from accessing quality education.

While the right to education is broadly accepted as a fundamental human right, and while important initiatives have taken place internationally over the last twenty years to increase access to educational opportunities for learners with barriers to learning, it is estimated that 27 per cent of South African school children are learners with barriers to learning (Sightsavers, 2007). White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:9) states that the World Health Organization has calculated that between 2.2 per cent and 2.6 per cent of learners in any school system could be identified as having a barrier to learning. Barriers to

learning have an impact on the personal, emotional, behavioural and social well-being of the learners (Nel, et al., 2011:40). Unfortunately, due to both extrinsic and intrinsic circumstances, a large number of South African learners are struggling to overcome barriers to learning and continued exclusion from mainstream schooling.

According to Erradu (2012:10), factors that can create barriers and lead to exclusion may be located within the school, within the learner, within the educational system and/or within the broad socioeconomic and political context. The National Committee on Education Support Services (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) issued a research report in 1997 identifying the following as barriers to learning in the South African context that can cause learning breakdown: socioeconomic deprivation; barriers which arise from impairments such as physical, cognitive, sensory, emotional, developmental and learning impairments; negative attitudes; inflexible curriculums; inappropriate language of instruction and support services; policies and legislation; and lack of parental involvement (Swart & Pettipher, 2011:21-22). The African National Congress (ANC) Discussion Document (1994:67) defined learners with special academic problems, learning problems, physical health problems, emotional problems and sensory problems, as learners with barriers to learning. Barriers to learning are referred to as intrinsic barriers (barriers within the learner) and extrinsic barriers, such as barriers located in the school-community (Landsberg et al, 2008:382).

Intrinsic barriers are those barriers situated within the individual (Landsberg et al, 2008:382), and can include physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psychosocial disturbances, and differences in intellectual ability, with particular reference to life experiences (DoE, 2001:17). Neurological problems include epilepsy, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome disorders and muscular dystrophy. Other conditions, such as diseases, chronic illness and trauma, as well as emotional and behavioural problems, can also be included under the umbrella of intrinsic barriers (Department of Education, 1997:28). Intrinsic barriers include:

- **Emotional and behavioural barriers**

The term “emotional and behavioural barriers to learning” refers to the negative level of self-esteem experienced by learners with barriers to learning.

- **Physical impairments**

According to Smith (2005:260-261), learners with physical barriers to learning are physically impaired and experience problems with mobility and physical vitality. This description includes learners with poor eyesight, learners who have auditory difficulty, or learners in wheelchairs who struggle to access schools. Such learners may also experience negative feedback and reactions from other people due to their impairments, and this might lead to social problems.

- **Chronic illness and disease**

Learners’ daily functioning and their ability to participate in their own education can be affected by chronic illness and disease. Most of diseases affecting learners in this way are permanent or long-term diseases, for example HIV or cancer (Kunneke & Orr, 2005:428). Children who spend long periods of time in hospital often feel isolated from their family and peers, and this could lead to adjustment problems when these learners return to school. Such learners might also experience a backlog in their school performance. Furthermore, certain medications used to treat chronic diseases might influence the learners’ school performance – for example, a certain drug might make the learner drowsy in class or might lead to the learner causing a disturbance (Kunneke & Orr, 2005:431).

A study by Nel, Müller and Rheeders (2011:38) showed that the most widespread barrier to learning is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This commonly diagnosed disorder is a behavioural disorder impacting learning in the school environment (Charlesworth et al., 2007:215). Estimates of the prevalence of ADHD among school-age children range from 3 per cent to 12 per cent, with the highest incidence of ADHD diagnosis occurring between the ages of five and ten and, in addition, boys are significantly more likely than girls to receive a diagnosis of ADHD

(Schneider & Eisenberg, 2006). ADHD is associated with school failure or academic underachievement (Schneider & Eisenberg, 2006).

Learners diagnosed with intrinsic barriers to learning are extremely diverse and vary in terms of intellectual, cognitive, social and communicative abilities, as well as in the severity of barriers they face within the education system (Charlesworth et al, 2007:115). The findings of the studies mentioned above imply that specialised, inclusive education support is essential for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning (Landbrook, 2009:39).

Extrinsic barriers are those barriers situated in the environment and outside or “external” to the individual (Landsberg et al, 2008:382). Extrinsic circumstances in South Africa that can cause barriers to learning include socioeconomic factors, unsafe environments, lack of healthcare facilities, negative attitudes, an inflexible curriculum, inappropriate and inadequate support services, non-involvement of parents and factors in the school, such as overcrowded classrooms, untrained teachers and an inappropriate language for learning and teaching (DoE, 2001:18; Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006:121). According to Naiker (2006:2-3), these extrinsic factors are connected with learners in disadvantaged environments (Naiker, 2006:2-3). Extrinsic barriers include:

- **Societal factors**

Societal factors include severe poverty caused by unemployment and economic circumstances, poverty and underdevelopment, learners without adult supervision, late enrolment at school, lack of basic services, and discrimination on the grounds of race, language and impairment (Themane & Osher, 2014:1). Poverty in South Africa might lead to ill-health, undernourishment, backlogs in education, unsupportive environments such as informal settlements, communication and language deficiencies and a negative view of the future (Prinsloo, 2005:29). Desperately poor families find it hard to meet their most basic needs, such as shelter, food, medicine and clothes while undernourishment leads to a lack of concentration in the class. Learners, who are raised in severe

poverty and in families without the support of an adult or caregiver, are subject to emotional stress and low levels of self-esteem, which can negatively affect learning, well-being and development (Department of Education, 1997:13). Also, learners with a chronic illness and who do not receive medical treatment or who spend long periods of time in hospital often find it difficult to progress scholastically (Department of Education, 1997:13).

- **Curricular matters**

The curriculum is fundamental to the teaching and learning that takes place in schools. However, according to Weeks and Erradu (2013:9), the curriculum in schools is one of the most significant extrinsic barriers to learning. Barriers to learning can arise from various aspects of the curriculum, such as the content, the language of instruction, classroom organisation, teaching style, methodology, pace of teaching, learner and teacher-support materials, and assessment practices (Department of Education, 2001:19; 2005:109). Learners, who experience extrinsic barriers to learning, have to be evaluated against the same curriculum outcomes as their mainstream peers. For example, deaf learners, who make use of sign language as their first language, can be at risk of exclusion from accessing the curriculum in a mainstream classroom (Department of Education, 1997:30-31). For mainstream schools to include every learner, Chambers (2001:27) states that there must be equal access to the curriculum. This may mean modifying and adapting the curriculum and assessment standards to provide quality education for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. Furthermore, Wienand (2011:56-66), also notes that it is imperative that the learning preferences and learning styles of learners with barriers to learning be included in the planning and delivery of the curriculum (Wienand, 2011:66).

- **Societal attitudes and prejudice**

Negative attitudes and prejudice in society lead to the labelling of learners with barriers to learning and, in the past, also led to unnecessary divisions in the education system. According to Hall (1998:36), during the time that learners did

not have equal access to education, there was a shortage of properly trained professionals to provide for the needs of the learners with barriers to learning. Schools, especially those in the rural areas are faced with large classes with high learner/educator ratios and inadequate learning materials. In the absence of government support for these learners, educators have been left to create and implement their own innovative means of accommodating the needs of learners with barriers to learning. Stofile and Green (2007:59) state that the morale of educators is generally low and that this will not improve until the conditions under which they must work improve and until they receive appropriate training.

Although extrinsic barriers to learning can have an influence on all learners, the learners in this study all have intrinsic barriers to learning, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Autism Spectrum Disorders. A recent study by Nel et al (2011:45) in mainstream schools in Gauteng indicates that the most common intrinsic barriers to learning are emotional disabilities and hyperactivity. The results of the study by Nel et al (2011:45), correspond to findings by Holz and Lessing (2002:103), specifically that hyperactivity is one of the most commonly occurring intrinsic barriers to learning. The identification and potential diagnosis of barriers to learning, including issues such as ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders, typically peak during middle childhood (Charlesworth et al., 2007:188). Early identification of barriers to learning is important in order for them to be addressed and remediated timeously.

4. DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE OF LEARNERS IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

This study focused on learners in middle childhood – specifically at ages eight to thirteen and who are in Grades two to seven in South African schools – and how they experience intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools. Erik Erikson stresses the importance of middle childhood as a time when children move from the isolation of the home environment into wider social contexts such as a school environment (Erikson, 1968). In other words, during this developmental phase, children are exposed to certain

experiences, such as becoming part of a school environment, which strongly influence their development. Erikson views the ages between seven and eleven as the time when children should develop what he called a "sense of industry" and learn to co-operate with their peers and adults, acquire new skills and do meaningful "work" (Charlesworth et al., 2007:195). Subsequently, this developmental stage became categorised as the "school age" as it marks a child's entry into the formal education system (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2006:325). According to Charlesworth et al. (2007:201) children entering school must learn to navigate this new and challenging environment, where educators and peers shape learners' personalities, dreams, aspirations and sense of self. In the school environment, learners are evaluated on the basis of how well they perform on tasks. Middle childhood development is described as the concrete operational stage, with the focus on logical thinking, intellectual competencies and psychosocial development. According to Bronfenbrenner (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:244), the development of learners does not occur in a vacuum, but instead emerges from the interaction between the individual and their context. In other words, the context in which learners develop will have an important influence on their experiences of the support they receive.

Learners, as part of families, have their own experiences of daily living. The family, as a system, is important and can be defined as "the basic context in which human beings are transformed into persons – participants in complex social systems who retain autonomous identities as individuals" (Catherall, 2004:370). Experiences in the workplace, school and other extra-familial settings affect individual family members and, hence, the interactions that occur within the family unit (Minuchin, Colapinto & Minuchin, 2007:15). The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, as cited by Blume & Zembar, 2007:45) as well as the field theory (Woldt & Toman, 2005:26; Yontef, 1993:295), supports the above-mentioned by clearly stating that the environment has a powerful impact on the family (Berk, 2002:27). Parents, of a learner with intrinsic barriers to learning, may experience a wide range of emotions, including denial, guilt, blame, frustration, anger and feelings of hopelessness. According to Mash and Wolfe (2005:335), siblings can often feel annoyed, jealous, embarrassed or resentful of the

attention their sibling receives. It can therefore be argued that a learner with intrinsic barriers to learning's experiences of their school environment can have an impact on the family system, and vice versa. Besides the learner and family reciprocal relatedness, it can be stated that the personal well-being of learners is dependent on the relationships between the child, i.e. the learner, the learner's family, the community and society (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007).

Personal well-being includes many different aspects of the learner's life, among them: the physical, material, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual. These facets can be referred to as comprising "holistic" development. According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:246), none of the aspects that contribute to a learners' well-being can be seen as a separate entity, but instead are interconnected. Each system is interdependent and interactive. In other words, when a learner does not experience support in one system, this will have a widespread effect on other systems (Aucamp, Steyn & van Rensburg, 2014). The learner's experience of his/her context will influence the way that he/she responds to other people and situations in his/her environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:12). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, as already mentioned, could be offered as being consistent with the establishment of a holistic, integrated educational support structure. It acknowledges the important role that parents, educators, peers, the extended family, the community and wider government structures can play in providing support, not only to individual learners, but also to all other systems that may impact on the development and maintenance of intrinsic barriers to learning and development. Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development, according to Rosa and Tudge (2013:253), places learners in the centre of an interactive system that consists of the microsystem (activities and interpersonal relationships in immediate settings of learners, including family, peer groups, school), mesosystem (interactions between different microsystems that can affect the learner, for example school and home), exosystem (workplace of parents), macrosystem (the South African government's policy and implementation of inclusion) and chronosystem (including the learner's developmental phase and the history of education in South Africa). This theoretical framework

accentuates the need for educational support services to deal with all barriers to learning and development as part of a comprehensive and integrated approach in order to ensure that quality support is provided to learners at various levels of the system (Pieterse, 2010:8). This means that the understanding of nurturing relational patterns and support is of central importance, particularly within the learning environment, since schools could harbour either enabling or limiting conditions for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

Learners' experiences at school have a profound influence on their social, cognitive and emotional development (Charlesworth et al., 2007:202; Hanvey, 2002). The experiences of the challenges of middle childhood may foster or spoil the child's attempts to acquire an enhanced sense of mastery and self-efficacy. According to Charlesworth et al. (2007:202), learners rate their success and failure based on the feedback of parents, educators and peers and rate these as the most important influences in their lives. In other words, learners evaluate themselves against the feedback they experience from these individuals in their academic and social environment. Positive experiences may encourage learners to search for opportunities to demonstrate personal skills, abilities, and achievements. (Charlesworth et al., 2007:194-195). Then again, negative experiences can manifest in frustration, anxiety, aggression, social withdrawal, task avoidance, and poor self-efficacy (Ebersohn, 2005:28). Apart from the importance of the school environment as a resource for the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social tasks of middle childhood, school success is important to the development of healthy self-esteem. (Charlesworth et al., 2007:202). Feelings of low self-worth can be understood as arising from the child's interaction with the environment and/or from within the child him or herself (Newman & Newman: 2003). A positive self-regard is of the utmost importance for learners with barriers to learning and can be an important indicator in scholastic success (Ebersohn, 2005:35). In addition, learners' definitions of self and of accomplishment vary greatly according to interpretations in the surrounding environment. In other words, the positive development of learners is facilitated by support at multiple levels to promote the experience of self-competence and independence (Charlesworth et al., 2007:219). Clearly, the role of

immediate settings must be underlined, since family, peer, and community support may enhance learners' growing sense of competence, while lack of such support could seriously undermine this sense.

Along with physical development and psychological competencies such as emotional capability and acquired cognitive competence, the learner gains access to the widening world during this period (Berger, 2005:316; Berk, 2006:6). During middle childhood, the learner's social world expands dramatically, giving him/her more opportunities to master important new skills (Charlesworth et al., 2007:182). This process of mastering various abilities implies that, for healthy development, learners must be given opportunities to both fail and succeed, along with sincere feedback and support. Charlesworth et al (2007:194) found that learners in middle childhood can be vulnerable to emotional and mental health issues that threaten healthy development and that support is critical. According to Hanvey (2002:10), Erikson (1968) stressed the importance of the wider social contexts in middle childhood, as well as their significant influence on the learner's development, in the light of learners at this age starting to develop more complex emotional capabilities. Goleman (1995) refers to these emotional skills as a person's ability to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations. This coping skill can assist learners when they encounter frustrations or stressful situations (Charlesworth et al., 2007:193). Berk (2008:516) states that, during middle childhood, learners begin to understand the realities of the wider world and can become troubled by them, implying that they possess the ability to understand their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others (Louw & Louw, 2007:244). In other words, the interactions learners have with their external world, namely in their immediate settings, such as family and school, influence the "self" (intra functioning) and social (inter functioning), as well as school functioning. According to Charlesworth et al. (2007:183), the learner in middle childhood is shaped not only by events and individuals explicitly evident in present time, but also by those events and individuals that have more directly influenced the lives of their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and beyond. Influences, including those familial, cultural, and historical in nature, shape all aspects of each learner's development in an abstract and intricate way (Charlesworth et al., 2007:183). Ultimately, the intellectual and moral lessons children learn in middle childhood serve as

the foundation for challenges faced in adolescence and adulthood (Newman & Newman, 2003). Evidently, these lessons involve dealing with good experiences as well as with difficulties in relational functioning.

Peer groups play a very important role in middle childhood and impact on social behaviour, norms, activities and appearance (Charlesworth et al, 2007:197). According to Osterman (2013:361), learners in this phase of development have a very strong desire for belonging and for being included in the group and peer acceptance can be a very important predictor for psychological adjustment. Learners with barriers to learning are at particular risk for being singled out by their peers in middle childhood (Charlesworth et al., 2007:218). According to Alerby (2003), relationships between friends are of paramount importance and can have positive or negative influences on childhood development. Learners in middle childhood become socially more aware and can be very sensitive to the standard set by the peer group for behaviour, appearance and attitudes (Charlesworth et al, 2007:197). While all learners should be made to feel that they belong (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009:506), learners with barriers to learning who feel misunderstood by their peers are particularly likely to feel alone or isolated in the school setting (Ebersohn, 2005:39). The significance of a sense of belonging is of crucial importance, since learners who are socially excluded by their peers often develop a dislike of school per se. Learners who are teased, isolated, or harassed on a regular basis may begin to withdraw or act out in order to cope with unpleasant experiences (Charlesworth et al., 2007:219). On the other hand, positive peer relationships reflect and support social competence as they potentially discourage egocentrism, promote positive coping strategies and, ultimately, serve as a protective factor during the transition to adolescence (Charlesworth et al., 2007:198). Protective factors can be defined as those elements in either the learner or in his environment that can enable him/her to cope effectively and reduce stress (Davies, 2011:61). Protective factors (external or internal) can be biological, psychological, social or spiritual and empower learners to overcome difficulties (Van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2013). When learners are experiencing barriers to learning, the goal must be to facilitate positive

external support and to enhance the person/environment fit in order to maximise protective factors and minimise risk factors (Charlesworth et al., 2007:222).

Early identification and intervention, or provision of appropriate supportive services, are key protective factors for a learner with barriers to learning (Charlesworth et al., 2007:218). Wienand (2011:69) states that the younger a learner is when this process of inclusion develops, the more successful the outcome will be. According to Reid (2005:106), learners with barriers to learning might benefit from inclusive education, but they still require some additional structures and processes to meet their educational, social and emotional needs. This means that the availability of a support system for the developing and implementing of inclusive education should be ensured (Department of Education, 2001:48; Wienand, 2011:56). This process of inclusion should include appropriate multilevel prevention and intervention efforts to support the healthy development of each individual learner with intrinsic barriers to learning (Charlesworth et al., 2007:194).

Then again, different combinations of these factors will manifest differently in individuals and will affect their level of functioning in a unique way (Charlesworth et al., 2007:215). Barriers to learning require various interventions or strategies to prevent them from causing learning breakdown or from excluding learners from accessing education in a mainstream classroom. Learners with barriers to learning need social support and special educational services to carry out the normal tasks of everyday living (Sebastian, 2002:2). Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning may require different levels and forms of support at different times during their lives and are affected in different ways by a range of external factors that influence their participation in the classroom (Howell, 2007). In other words one must be cautious of a “one size fits all” model of inclusive education, seeing that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning must be educated in the optimal educational setting and that support must be tailor-made according to their specific needs. Briefly put, support must be thorough and individualised.

5. SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH INTRINSIC BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The support discussed in White Paper 6 for the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning into a mainstream schooling environment includes physical and material resources, as well as the development and support of staff (Department of Education, 2001:22). Inclusive education, according to White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:11), focuses on the importance of providing support to learners, educators, schools and the education system as a whole. Inclusive education emphasises the need for equal participation opportunities for any learners with barriers to learning in the education system, preferably in a mainstream environment. According to Pieterse (2010:10), the successful inclusion of learners is largely dependent on effective support structures. Etschiedt (2007:9) and Hay (2003:135), are of the opinion that including learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms can succeed only if an adequate and effective system of support is available and all the role players cooperate with the necessary support systems in place. This means that intrinsic barriers to learning can impact learners in different ways and have a multi-faceted effect on learner's lives, thus requiring a multi-level support.

Support is defined, according to the Education White Paper 6 (2001:29), as all activities that increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:19) describe support as help "from within schools as well as to schools in areas such as school, health, social work, psychological and learning support, speech and hearing and physio/occupational therapy, and from other community resources". For the purpose of this study, Steyn and Wolhuter's (2008:8) definition "support services can be defined as the services needed to improve the quality and effectiveness of educational activities" will be used. This suggests that inclusive education should be characterised by a sense of community within the school environment (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009:506). Support systems in inclusive education include professional persons – other than educational experts – who use their advice and skills to promote inclusive education. Learner support services include those non-educational services required to assist the learner to gain the maximum possible from the available teaching and learning activities, such as school psychological services, school social work services,

remedial and special education services, career counselling services, school transport services, school-feeding schemes, medical and dentistry services, and accommodation services.

Exclusion from education on the grounds of barriers to learning does not fit inclusive policies. Schools have to state that every effort has been made to accommodate and support a particular learner in the mainstream before any alternative provision may be proposed (Wienand, 2011:46). For learners with intrinsic barriers to learning to benefit from support systems – such as the institutional-level support teams, the district support teams, special schools and resource centres and specialist support within a mainstream school – support services need to be accessible.

5.1 Support available to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools.

One of the tasks of the Department of Education is to successfully change the character of our schools and to ensure the establishment of inclusive education, which is due to be fully implemented by 2019, with the necessary support systems in place to accommodate learners with barriers to learning (Nel et al., 2011:38).

5.1.1 Support from the Department of Education to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning

There are numerous challenges facing inclusive education in the South African context and, to overcome these, the Department of Education proposes the placing of support systems in mainstream schools (Nel et al., 2011:38). White Paper 6 outlined a number of strategies which now guide the implementation of the policy at the national, regional and local level (SADPD, 2012). As part of the Department of Education's strategy for implementing support effectively within inclusive education, institutional-level support teams were introduced in mainstream primary schools (Nel et al., 2011:41). As part of their task, they are required to find solutions and approaches to problems, develop multilevel teaching in the classroom, provide training and support of educators and develop a policy regarding the diversity of the school community (Nel et al., 2011:41).

This institutional support team is required to study reports regarding barriers identified in learners, as submitted by educators, follow these up by helping to develop a programme for the educators and the parents and, where necessary, by also implementing support in the classroom. In addition, all support provided must be noted in a formal report by the institutional support team for further follow-up action.

The Department of Education has instituted district support teams to evaluate other programmes and in order to diagnose their effectiveness and to suggest improvements (Nel et al., 2011:41). The district support team's support staff is trained to provide support to all educators working in mainstream classrooms and who face learners with barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2005a:19). It was proposed, in White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:24), that adequately including learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools will require changes through appropriate support from district-based support teams. These district support teams are also expected to follow up all cases that are referred to them by the institutional-level support teams, and to provide the appropriate feedback (Nel et al., 2011:41).

White Paper 6 advocates the establishment of full-service schools in which provision is made for all types of education needs that, if left unfulfilled, may hamper learners' progress at school. Central to the provisions of White Paper 6 is the designation of all special schools in the country as resource centres in order to support learners with barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001:29). Special schools are being supported by the Department of Education in order to provide both a service to the learners who attend the school and to surrounding schools, offering specialist support to educators in mainstream schools and greater specialised support to learners with barriers to learning where necessary (Wienand, 2011:55). White Paper 6 proposes that the experiences of educators and other trained staff in special schools or resource centres would be used to train and equip educators in the surrounding mainstream schools to support all learners in their classrooms (Department of Education 2005b). Specialised schools and their personnel are recognised as being part of district-based support teams intended to provide a full range of education support services to all

schools in their district, such as professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbouring schools. (DoE, 2001:49).

In addition to strategies set out by the Department of Education, much attention has been given to developing guidelines that can be used to assist educators in addressing the learning and teaching requirements of the diverse range of learning needs. According to White Paper 6, classroom educators will be the primary resource for achieving an inclusive education system (Wienand, 2011:67).

5.1.2 Educator support to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools

Classroom educators have been identified as the primary resource for implementing educational strategies and achieving the goal of inclusive education (Wienand, 2011:67). The Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: District Support Teams (DoE, 2005a) clearly outlines the need for training of educators to support learners in overcoming barriers, thus representing the shift from treating barriers to learning as residing in the learner to seeing the curriculum and teaching methods as the problem. Educators must “improve their skills and knowledge and also develop new ones” in order to accept ownership for the learning of all learners (DoE, 2001:18).

Educators must be equipped with the skills necessary to identify learning barriers, the knowledge as to how to address these barriers, and the ability to grade tasks to provide for mastery and achievement of the learner, regardless of his/her level of ability. Educators need to develop the capacity for diversity, and for effective use of learning support and material resources, to enable the full participation of all learners (UNESCO, 1998). According to the goals set out in White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:22), special attention should be given to the development of flexible teaching practices and styles through training and the provision of support to learners and educators in mainstream schools to assist in developing their capacity to provide for the full range of learning needs and address barriers to learning. Support provided to

educators is aimed at helping them to address barriers to learning that arise from language and the medium of learning and instruction; teaching style and pace; curriculum flexibility; time frames for the completion of curricula; learning support materials and equipment; classroom management and assessment methods and techniques (DoE, 2001:49).

According to Ebersohn (2005:20-21), additional support provided to educators through in-service training, workshops, school governing bodies, special needs co-ordinators and educator assistants can affect the morale of educators and have a positive influence on their commitment to being part of an inclusive education system. An educator assistant is an individual who assists the teacher with class-related duties and who gives additional attention and instruction to learners. Educator assistants are particularly necessary in the mainstream school environment where class sizes are much bigger than in the LSEN environment (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009:506). Special needs co-ordinators advise how schools can meet an individual learner's additional requirements. Hopkins et al (1994:93) found that helpers in the classroom worked very effectively, lessening educators' workloads, and that they supported both the educators in mainstream classrooms and those learners experiencing barriers to learning. Class helpers can be of great value when educators must adapt their lesson plans for learners who experience barriers to learning (Nel et al., 2011:42). The educator can then deal with the curriculum lesson with the class while the class helper covers the adapted lesson with the learners who experience barriers to learning – a solution that benefits the learners and produces better results (Nel et al., 2011:42).

Inclusive education requires investment in human resources – such as the training of educators, managers, educational psychologists and other professionals – in order to support learners and maintain an inclusive policy (Wienand, 2011:59). Educators maintain that, if the aim of inclusive education is to be achieved, support systems must be available (Nel et al., 2011:40). Professionals such as remedial teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and educational psychologists can provide valuable support to teachers who work with learners with barriers on a daily basis.

5.1.3 Specialist support to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools

According to Landbrook (2009:39), the best support experienced by a learner with barriers to learning is the assistance of a specialist in the field of the specific barrier to learning concerned. Remedial or special-needs teachers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech therapists, educational psychologists and social workers are the professional groups that constitute the specialised support most often used as inclusive education support staff in Gauteng's public primary schools (Nel et al., 2011:50). Such staff bring the advantage of having practitioners available on site to meet learners' needs as part of the school fee structure and of relieving the pressure on parents to transport learners to and from therapy in the afternoons when many of them are at work. However, according to Nel et al. (2011:51), the Department of Education does not have the human resources necessary to reach all schools and therefore cannot, in all instances, make use of the specialised services mentioned above to efficiently support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. Nonetheless, where they are available, these professionals can provide valuable support to educators and parents.

5.1.4 Support in the home environment for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning

The family as the basic context or immediate setting for learners is vital (Ebersohn, 2005:39). The relationship between school and home is very important, as the school environment reinforces rules and skills taught at home, and vice versa. According to Charlesworth et al (2007:205-206), learners perform better in the school environment when parents are positively involved and such involvement often predicts success. Parents and other family members can provide opportunities for learning in the home environment and help establish motivation for learning (Charlesworth et al., 2007:206). Specialised support, such as extra instruction or speech therapy, has financial implications and many learners with intrinsic barriers to learning may have to rely on support from the family in terms of additional instruction and therapy at home.

Family disruptions are an additional risk factor and can make it very challenging for families to support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. Family disturbances, such as divorce, domestic violence, parental death, trauma and economic problems are stressful for learners and impact on the family structure and relationships (Van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010). Depending on the resilience of the family concerned, domestic troubles can influence the ability of parents and other family members to support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

5.2 Experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in mainstream schools.

In South Africa's attempt to achieve social and economic transformation, emphasis is being placed on education as a primary site for achieving healthy development. According to Wienand (2011:175), learners who experience intrinsic barriers to learning also experience a lack of confidence, concentration, motivation and inferiority. This is in line with Erikson's fourth psychosocial stage and is applicable to the above-mentioned since he states that learners who are at risk in middle childhood develop a sense of inferiority, unproductiveness and incompetence towards their schoolwork (Santrock, 2004:71). Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can experience interpersonal problems at school, partly because they receive more negative than positive feedback from educators (Ebersohn, 2005:39).

5.2.1 Experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the educator support

Smith and Smith (2000) maintain that the perceptions, experiences and beliefs of mainstream educators are central to the successful inclusion of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. According to Reynolds (in Moolla, 2005), it is the educator's knowledge, beliefs and values that help create an effective learning environment for learners. It is presumed that, in order for successful inclusion to occur within the classroom, the educators must first perceive that they have the necessary knowledge and skill (Ebersohn, 2005:16). Where educators lack the necessary knowledge, skills

and expertise to understand and assist learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, this causes frustration, demotivation and feelings of inadequacy which may disrupt effective teaching and successful learning (Pieterse, 2010:117; Silberg & Kluff, 1998; Sethosa, 2001). The attitudes of educators towards learners can be an obstacle or a positive factor in the inclusion of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in a mainstream class (Pieterse, 2010:117). Engelbrecht et al (2006:128) and Green (2006:6) agree, stating that the negative attitudes of educators can be as much of a barrier to participation and learning as the lack of some basic resources and can hamper the progress of learners. For learners with intrinsic barriers to learning to be accommodated in a mainstream environment, it is required that educator's attitudes and assumptions regarding inclusive policies be positive (Green, 2006:6). According to Hays (2009:4), without the perception that they are skilled and able to cope, the educators have little self-efficacy or self-belief and will not be able to manage their diverse classrooms, regardless of the resources that they have at their disposal. Educators and school management teams speak of a lack of funding for training and a lack of resources for development and therefore, unfortunately, educators feel unprepared for the challenges of including learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in their classes (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

The lack of resources mentioned above is illustrated in a study by Nel, Muller and Rheeders (2011) of classrooms in Gauteng's public primary schools. They found that unreasonably large class sizes were indicated as pertinent, external obstacles or barriers within the inclusive education policy (Nel et al., 2011:51). The average number of learners per class – of whom a large proportion were identified as learners with barriers to learning – ranged from 50 to 60 (Nel et al., 2011:51). Large classes could therefore contain a high proportion of learners who experience barriers to learning and this could compound the negative influence on learning for these learners (Nel et al., 2011:51). In this regard, Powell and Caseau (2004:168) argue that, often, learners with intrinsic barriers to learning act badly in the classroom to save face in front of their peers when their needs are not met. It might be that they do not understand instructions given or that the work is too hard for them (Wienand, 2011:182). From the above, it becomes clear that overcrowded classrooms not only affect learning, but also influence the

experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning – and can create disciplinary problems in the classroom. The attention and input learners with intrinsic barriers receive from the educator in the classroom might not be sufficient, due to class size, and such learners might have to rely on the expertise of specialist support.

5.2.2. Experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of specialist support

Specialised support in inclusive education can be a very helpful resource in supporting learners with barriers to learning. Specialist support includes: speech therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists, social workers and remedial personnel. However, in most areas in South Africa, professional services are not always available due to limited financial and human resources, as well as the matter of accessibility (Bizos, 2009:36). According to Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009:493), South Africa, as a developing nation, is not equipped with the resources and facilities required to meet the needs of inclusion. School fees at mainstream schools may bring in sufficient funding to provide the facilities and resources that would be required to accommodate learners with barriers to learning (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009:493). The above findings indicate that, although important skills and specialised support might exist in the education system, these are not always sufficiently utilised. Educator assistants and special needs co-ordinators able to assist and support educators in including learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms were, unfortunately, not mentioned in White Paper 6 (DoE, 2005:17). Because of the shortcomings in the education system regarding the lack of available personnel and services, schools are still inclined to refer learners in need to more specialised environments to meet the learner's best interests in providing learning support, therapeutic interventions, and general learner support that cannot currently be provided within the mainstream school environment. Additionally, the weak economic situation in which countless parents in South Africa find themselves renders them unable to obtain specialised help for their children privately. For this very reason, it is of the utmost importance that support systems be implemented by the

schools themselves and that they be of such a standard that they function effectively to provide learners with barriers to learning with the best possible support.

Wienand (2011:178) found, in a study concerning learners with intrinsic barriers, that the parents of these learners indicated that they could not afford to pay the transport fees necessary to get their children to and from therapy sessions. The consequence of this was that the learners never got to see the therapists they needed and this led to their failing to overcome their intrinsic barriers to learning. Unfortunately, because of situations like this, many learners with intrinsic barriers to learning do not receive specialist support and must rely mainly on the support they receive in the home environment.

5.2.3. Experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support in the home environment

Research indicates that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning need more support from parents if they are to be successfully included in mainstream classes. In a study on educators' perceptions on support, Wienand (2011:177) found that parents are not always actively involved in their children's academic progress. This corresponds with the literature of Santrock (2004:78) who stated that a low level of parental involvement concerns educators because it is directly linked with learners' low achievement. Santrock (2004:197) indicates that it is important for educators and parents to work together to support learners with barriers to learning. Charlesworth et al. (2007: 206), are of the opinion that poor communication between parents, learners and the school can influence parental involvement. According to Wienand (2011:180), it is important to note that the educators also have a responsibility towards the parents of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning to guide, support and involve them in the education process. Schools must facilitate a meaningful relationship with parents to ensure open communication (2007: 206). Unfortunately, learners with intrinsic barriers to learning do not always have strong relationships with their parents and other family members. This statement should be viewed in the light of the fact that some learners' families live in

poverty; others are economically disadvantaged; and that some have parents who frequently work late. All these circumstances affect the learner's development and relationships and influence learners in and outside the classroom (Santrock, 2004:74; Wienand, 2011:186).

5.3. Challenges facing mainstream schools in becoming more supportive environments for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

If the education system is to promote effective learning and prevent learning breakdown, it is imperative to develop the capacity of the system to overcome barriers which may arise, prevent barriers from occurring, and promote the development of an effective learning environment. Central to the development of such capacity is the ability to identify and understand the nature of the barriers which cause learning breakdown and which lead to learners being excluded when in a mainstream classroom.

Eleweke and Rodda (2002) state that, although South Africa has a positive attitude towards the concept of inclusive education, in practice, the application of inclusive education values and support for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning does not happen in most schools. This lack of provision and support is also reflected in White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) which acknowledges the failure of the education system to respond to the needs of a substantial number of learners and to address the diverse needs of learners in South Africa. According to a study in Southern Africa (SADPD, 2012), the challenges in inclusive education are largely systemic in nature and have a major impact on the psychosocial well-being of learners with barriers to learning. Such difficulties are noteworthy, since they can affect the levels of confidence among learners with barriers to learning and thus also their effective participation in the education system. Therefore, while inclusive education may represent a way forward to ensuring quality education for all, it can be argued that the current South African socioeconomic environment does not necessarily allow for its successful implementation, as further access to resources and facilities needs to be made available (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009:493). The accessibility of necessary resources in the education system can be a way to support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning (Ebersohn, 2005:19).

According to Swart and Pettipher (2005), important characteristics of inclusive education are the effective utilisation of existing resources and the increasing of additional resources. Hays (2009), states that educating learners with barriers to learning requires greater financial resources and more human resources than mainstream education does. Unfortunately, many schools lack adequate instructional resources including space, chairs, desks, water and electricity (Ebersohn, 2005:19). Moreover, apartheid created a history in the education system, which reflects extreme neglect and lack of provision and support for the majority of learners in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2006). Owing to the legacy of apartheid and the unequal distribution of resources, both of which are still perpetuated by the differences between rich and poor in South Africa, many schools lack certain facilities and resources to support educators and learners, especially learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. The SADPD study report identified limited educational facilities, poor infrastructure, and insufficient learning materials as significant barriers to building an inclusive education system (SADPD, 2012:62). In addition, the lack of sufficient and adequate educator training in the South African context can be described as a barrier to resources in the education system (Ebersohn, 2005:19).

The Department of Education places much emphasis on educators being the primary instrument in successfully implementing inclusion and accommodating learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools. According to Dart (2006), evidence suggests that lack of educator training services and lack of qualified educators are two of the major obstacles to achieving inclusion of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools in South Africa. Prinsloo (in Moolla, 2005), points out that one of challenges educators face in implementing the principles of inclusive education is managing learning diversity. Hays (2009:2) agrees, stating that not all learners experience the same barriers to learning and that their individual learning styles have to be catered for. Learner diversity refers to the different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds of the learners. Educators therefore need to be skilled in multiple methods of teaching and to have knowledge of the different learning styles of the learners in their classrooms. This implies that successful inclusive education will be largely dependent

on the educator's ability to employ different teaching techniques and to manage the diversity in the classroom, thus highlighting the importance of the educator in the inclusion process (Hays, 2009:3). Educators are concerned that they will not be able to implement inclusive education in their classrooms – due to their lack of expert knowledge of issues relating to learners with barriers to learning (Wienand, 2011:46). Despite many attempts by the South African government and the Department of Education to train and support educators, educators still experience a sense of powerlessness (Sethosa, 2001:169-192; Weeks, 2000:258-259) and a loss in confidence (SADPD, 2012:60). Stofile and Green (2007:59) state that the morale of educators is generally low and that this will not improve until the conditions under which they must work change and until they receive appropriate training to enable them to include learners with intrinsic barriers in mainstream classrooms.

Many learners experience barriers to learning ultimately drop out of formal schooling, primarily due to the inability of the system to recognise and accommodate their diverse range of learning needs. Typical reasons for dropping out include inaccessible curricula, assessment, learning materials, inadequate educator training and instructional methodologies (Department of Education, 2001:24). According to statistics from the Department of Education (2014), only 55 per cent of learners who started their school career in 2003 finished their schooling in 2014. Learners who drop out of school before finishing their schooling do so for many reasons, including intrinsic barriers to learning. An estimated 476 000 learners of school-going age and with barriers to learning are excluded from school annually (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). The rate of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning who drop out of school is a major concern for stakeholders in education (Ogadho & Ajowi, 2013:125).

The extent of the “policy gap” between intention and practice is now acknowledged as a crucial factor in explaining why learners with barriers to learning are being excluded from the mainstream education environment (Sayed & Jansen, 2000). The SADPD study report (SADPD 2012:62) reflects that policy frameworks for inclusive education is not matched by the allocation of sufficient resources dedicated to supporting the

implementation of policy goals. Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009:507) support inclusive education in their study, but argue that its full implementation in South Africa requires greater economic investment. According to Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009:491), the policies, procedures and governance of inclusive education need to be based on South Africa's current socioeconomic reality, which means considering access to quality care (where the term “quality care” includes resources that provide learner support, adaptations to the curriculum, professional support) on a regular basis for learners who require intervention – at the same time taking into account transport costs as well as the availability and costs of resources.

The experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive will influence their development. These experiences influence not only the learner, but also the school, the home, parents, siblings, the community and other systems. Supportive learning environments can be effective only if all the experiences of support for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are taken into consideration. Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory is, therefore, very important to this study.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since it is a challenge to understand the complexity of the influences, interactions and interrelationships between individual learners and the multiple other systems that they are connected to, as well as to explain the effect of changes towards an inclusive education system, it is important to use a theory that can describe the process of change in terms of how it affects human development (Pieterse, 2010:8; Spies, 2013:28). Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory thus formed the theoretical framework for this study.

Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model of human development can be applied throughout the lifespan of human development. Using the Process-Person-Context-Time model as a theoretical framework, and experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning concerning the support they receive in a mainstream school as the unit of analysis, the experiences of these learners could be explored and described.

Bronfenbrenner's multidimensional model evolved from a blend of ecological and systems theories, and can be used to explain development and the complex, causal processes involved in change (Spies, 2013:29). The model postulates that there are different layers or levels of interacting systems that result in change, growth and development (Swart & Pettipher, 2011:10).

The theory of ecological systems underlines the person-environment interaction, emphasising the influence the reciprocal impact of immediate settings and the interrelatedness of these settings – and also taking account of the impact of change in the environment on the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 2005:51; Pieterse, 2010:9). This notion highlights the importance of the influence that a school environment and the quality of support can have on a learner with intrinsic barriers to learning. It is rooted in the insight that we cannot understand and explain a phenomenon, as a whole, by dividing it into smaller parts and then studying these in isolation (Pieterse, 2010:9). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is a holistic view of the interdependence between different settings and includes people and the physical environment in a nested system (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:36). The influences that these systems and sub-systems have on each other need to be acknowledged. Attempting not to do so would be reductionist and would not provide a true reflection of the learner's experience (Engelbrecht, Howell & Basset, 2002; Pieterse, 2010:9). In the study of the how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience support, it is important to study the child in all contexts of his/her life, because each context connects to others (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner, "an individual exists within layers of social relationships", and each layer has an impact on other layers in an interdependent and dynamic way (Visser, 2007:106). In addition, a small change at one level will potentially have an effect on the entire system (Pieterse, 2010:9). According to Pieterse (2010:10), Bronfenbrenner's model suggests that learner's experiences of support will be influenced by individual characteristics, time, contexts and change and impact each learner differently. It acknowledges the important role that parents, extended family, friendships, peer group, educators, community and wider government structures can play in providing support to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning (Pieterse,

2010:10). This forms a holistic perspective of the learner, which includes his/her environment, social world, relationships and school (Parlett, 2009:71).

Proximal processes

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory presupposes that the four elements of which it is formed (process, person, context, time) simultaneously influence human beings' developmental outcomes – and, that their effects are not merely additive (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:251). Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) referred to the importance of the relationships a learner forms with other significant people, sharing the different system levels within which he develops and learns. Bronfenbrenner referred to these as proximal processes and emphasised that, for this interaction to be effective, it needs to happen regularly over extended periods of time (Spies, 2013:33). The educator-child interaction is an example of a proximal process within the microsystem, so too are interaction between educators and parents, different educators within the school, and educators and management structures (Spies, 2013:33). Proximal processes produce two developmental outcomes, namely competence and dysfunction. Competence refers to the acquired knowledge, skill or ability to conduct and direct one's behaviour within situations or in any domains (intellectual, physical, motivational, socio-emotional, and artistic) of development (Spies, 2013:33). Dysfunction, on the other hand, refers to continuous difficulty to maintain control, as well as the integration of behaviour in different situations or domains of development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

Another important aspect of the proximal processes in which learners engage, according to Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000), is the so-called Corollary of Exposure, which refers to the extent of contact maintained between the developing learner and the proximal processes in which the engagement takes place. *Duration* refers to the time of the exposure and the length of the session; *frequency* refers to how often the sessions occur over time; *interruption* refers to the predictability of the interaction; *timing* refers to how long responses take and whether they are appropriately aligned with actions; and *intensity* refers to the strength of the exposure (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Spies,

2013:34). According to Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000), developmentally disruptive outcomes are more likely to occur when the proximal processes are brief, happen infrequently and when the occurrence is not predictable. In addition, he argued that the developmental power of proximal processes would also be increased if they occurred among people who developed a strong emotional relationship (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:252). This has significance for the experience of learners with internal barriers to learning in respect of the support they receive.

The proximal processes vary in form, power, content and direction because of the different contexts in which they take place, as well as the characteristics of the developing learner (Spies, 2013:34). Other aspects that affect the proximal processes will be the historic period the person lives in and the social continuities and change occurring over time during the individual's life (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

Person

“Person” in Bronfenbrenner’s Process-Person-Context-Time model refers to the individual and his/her characteristics. Person characteristics, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory, are mainly biologically based (Spies, 2013:34). They influence proximal processes and their developmental outcomes (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). In this study, the person characteristics for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can serve as either a protective or a risk factor. Bronfenbrenner describes three types of person characteristics, namely *demand*, *resource* and *force* characteristics (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:253). *Demand characteristics*, which can provoke or discourage reactions from the social environment: these either foster or disrupt the psychological processes of growth (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Examples are emotions, such as irritation versus happiness, motivation versus passivity, and so on (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). *Resource characteristics* are those that influence a person’s ability to engage effectively in proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Those that activate development “include ability, knowledge, skill, and experience,” whereas resources that limit or disrupt proximal processes “include genetic defects, low birth weight, physical handicaps, severe and persistent illness, or damage to brain function” (Rosa & Tudge,

2013:253). Any of these will influence the person's capacity to engage in proximal processes (Spies, 2013:34). Dispositions can mobilise, sustain, interfere in or limit proximal processes – for instance attitude, efficacy and open mindedness (Spies, 2013:34). Lastly, *force characteristics* refer to differences in temperament, motivation and persistence (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:253). Resilience, according to Charlesworth et al (2007:222), is an adaptive behaviour characteristic that produces positive outcomes. These person characteristics will differ for each learner with barriers to learning and will have a direct effect on how they experience the support provided to them.

Context

Context refers to the environment and involves four interrelated systems termed the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Rosa & Tudge, 2013: 253). According to Bronfenbrenner, child development occurs within these four systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem, all of which interact with the chronosystem (Donald et al, 2010:40).

The microsystem is also the smallest environmental system in Bronfenbrenner's theory of development (Hook, 2010:505). The microsystem represents learners' immediate context and is characterised by direct, face-to-face interactions on a daily basis – such as familial relationships and close friendships – which have a direct influence on learners' development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Duerden & Witt, 2010). This includes relationships between caregivers, parents, brothers or sisters, friends, peers, class friends and educators (Hays, 2009:14). It is here, in this physical and psychological environment that changes over time, that the proximal processes take place (Spies, 2013:31). Relationships have impact in two directions: Educators, for example, influence the behaviour and beliefs of the child; but the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the educators. This phenomenon is referred to as bi-directional influences and it occurs at all levels of the environments. At the microsystem level, these bi-directional influences are the strongest and have the biggest impact on the individual (Berk, 2000).

According to Spies (2013:32), it is within this microsystem of the classroom where the learner's feelings of belonging, love and support need to be encouraged in order for them to serve as a protective factor within the educational context. These feelings can, however, also serve as a risk factor should the opposite be true – that is when the learner experiences lack of support at school and/or little sense of belonging (Berk, 2000).

The learner-educator relationship is explored at this level, as is the educator's ability to manage the diversity in the class (Hays, 2009:14). The school's policy of inclusive education would be explored here too, as along with their management of the inclusive process. Educator training and school resources are taken into account (Hays, 2009:15). Examples of this would be the Bill of Human Rights (RSA, 1996) and White Paper 6 on special needs education (Department of Education, 2001).

According to Berk (2000), the mesosystem provides the connection between the structures of the learner's microsystems and consists of the interrelationships between two or more settings in which the developing learner actively participates. In terms of learners, this refers to relationships between settings, such as the home, school, neighbourhood and peer group (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). The mesosystem can therefore be described as a set of microsystems that continually interact with one another (Donald et al, 2010).

The exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the learner as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examples include the parents' place of employment and local community organisations. The learner is not directly involved at this level, but he or she experiences the result of negative or positive forces involved with the interaction with his or her own subsystem (Spies, 2013:30). Where a learner experiences barriers to learning, this can have an indirect influence on his/her functioning as a person. On the other hand, an inclusive education policy can have a direct positive effect on the life of a learner with intrinsic barriers to learning

because of the built-in support programming such a policy makes available to assist him/her (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). Issues such as poverty and being economically inactive (jobless) occur frequently in many South African households and, when the parents of learners with learning disabilities lose their jobs due to, for example, strikes, this is likely to have a serious impact on these learners, although the children themselves have no influence over such events and processes.

The macrosystem consists of the larger cultural world surrounding learners, together with any underlying belief systems, and includes aspects such as government policies, political ideology, cultural customs and beliefs, values, historical events and the economic system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duerden & Witt, 2010). The macrosystem is seen as the master model, in reference to the patterns of the culture and society concerned, such as the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems. The macro, meso and exosystem are definite manifestations of these (Hook, 2010:506). The macrosystem level looks at education policy and the policy makers and also sets the context, such as inclusive education (Hays, 2009:15). The school's policy of inclusive education would be explored, as would the school's management of the inclusive process (Hays, 2009:15). Educator training and school resources are taken into account. In the context of inclusive education, child-educator relationships might, for instance, negatively affect the learners' performance at school should he or she be misunderstood by the educator because of a disability or disorder. Conversely, positive social relationships and educator perceptions within the inclusive classroom can have a direct impact on the child's world view, as well as on his/her self-esteem.

The school that forms part of the micro and mesosystem will be the main system in which learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are directly involved. It is on this level where proximal processes are crucial, not only for the development of each learner but also for his/her experience of the support he/she receives. On this level, day-to-day interactions and reciprocal influencing take place continuously (Spies, 2013:45). It is important to note that Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model is based on circular causality, as in systems theory. This is, according to Swart and Pettipher (2011:15), the

opposite of the linear cause-and-effect frequently associated with the medical deficit model that is itself commonly associated with learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

Time

Expanding on what Bronfenbrenner earlier termed the chronosystem, time is now included in the bio-ecological model and broadened to include what happens over the course of an activity or interaction in addition to historical time (Rose & Tudge, 2013: 253-254).

The chronosystem represents the changes that occur over a period of time in any one of the mentioned systems (Donald et al., 2010; Hook, 2010:507). Berk (2006:29) describes the chronosystem, as the system encompassing both external changes, such as the timing of a parent's death, and internal changes related to time in the learner's environment, such as the psychological changes that occur as the child gets older. As learners become older, they react differently to changes within their environment (Spies, 2013:32). According to Spies (2013:32) the systems that the learners are involved in change and develop continuously and this means that these changes all interact with the individuals' progressive stages of development.

In the bio-ecological model, however, the concept of time was broadened to include what happens over the course of both ontogenetic and historical time. Inspired by Elder's (1974) research, Bronfenbrenner states, "The individual's own developmental life course is seen as embedded in and powerfully shaped by conditions and events occurring during the historical period through which the person lives" (Rosa & Tudge, 2013:254). At the chronosystems level, learners will be influenced by the adoption of inclusive education policy over time (Hays, 2009:15). This has significance for the learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in the new era of "inclusive education" (Spies, 2013:34).

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory provides a good fit for describing the phenomena under study, namely the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support provided to them in a mainstream school.

7. CONCLUSION

The second part of Section A provided the reader with necessary background information and an overview of available literature regarding learners with intrinsic barriers to both learning and the school environment. In addition, it described and discussed Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model that provides the theoretical framework for this study.

The next part of this document (Section B) presents the findings of the study in article format in compliance with the guidelines specified by the selected journal, the *South African Journal of Education*.

Thereafter, Section C serves to unite Sections A and B with a critical discussion of the research findings and details the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

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SECTION B: ARTICLE

Title:

**Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences
of the support provided in a mainstream school**

To be submitted to

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**Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences
of the support provided in a mainstream school**

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**LEARNERS WITH INTRINSIC BARRIERS TO LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THE
SUPPORT PROVIDED IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL**

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ABSTRACT

An important question concerning education in South Africa is whether including learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools is a solution or an illusion. This study explores the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning and their understanding of the support provided to them in a mainstream school in Pretoria. Understanding learners' experiences of their school environment can assist adults' understanding of what is required to support their successful inclusion and participation in a mainstream school environment. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development served as a theoretical framework for this study. A qualitative approach was used and ten learners participated in the study. Data was gathered through collages and individual interviews. The results revealed that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning do receive and utilise various forms of learning support for emotional, social and educational needs in their meso system through educators, school and peers. Although some support systems do exist, learners with intrinsic barriers to learning still experience certain barriers or challenges that may prevent their environment from being conducive to learning environment.

Keywords: Inclusive education, intrinsic barriers to learning, learner support, learning support, mainstream schools.

INTRODUCTION

Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning have greater difficulty in learning than do other mainstream learners of the same age (Wienand, 2011). The barriers they have prevent them from accessing educational facilities in the same way other learners do (Wienand, 2011). Barriers to learning can be situated within the learner, within his or her environment, or both. According to Wienand (2011), the successful inclusion of learners with barriers to learning in a mainstream school community depends on the preparation and foundations put in place in their environment to support them.

According to Green (2001), inclusive education assumes that local mainstream schools and classrooms must be able to cater for all learners. In the United Kingdom, the Special Education Needs and Disability Act (2001) states in this regard that it is a learner's right to be educated in mainstream classes. Similarly, in South Africa, the new (1996) Constitution introduced a Bill of Rights that secures the right of all South Africans to basic education (Stofile & Green, 2007). It is therefore the task of educators in mainstream classrooms to adapt in order to minimise barriers to learning and accommodate and respect the diversity of learners (Department of Education, 2001). Increasing learner diversity, educator training, larger class sizes and the demanding needs of learners in an inclusive classroom raise challenges for the system to provide support so as to ensure quality education for all its learners (Oswald, 2007). In this sense, the question could be asked whether including learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools is a solution or an illusion.

Background

According to Walton, Nel, Hugo and Muller (2009), an inclusive approach to education can be understood as the process by which learners who experience barriers to learning are included in regular mainstream schools that have taken the responsibility of adapting and improving in order to provide the support necessary to facilitate equal access and participation. Learners in middle childhood benefit from equal treatment and attention and suffer when barriers to learning deny them access to participation in classrooms (Charlesworth, Wood and Viggiani, 2007). Barriers to learning include

factors that may contribute to a learner being prevented from constructive and competent learning. Examples of such barriers to learning would be language barriers, poor educator training, an inflexible curriculum, too little individual attention provided in the classroom, or inappropriate and inadequate support (White Paper 6, 2001).

The Bill of Rights (in the Constitution of 1996; RSA, 1996) and White Paper 6 (Spies, 2013) both acknowledge education as a basic human right for every citizen of South Africa, and also acknowledge the right to education of all learners, regardless of their needs and differences (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin; 2006). In other words, all South African learners – and specifically learners with barriers to learning – must, according to law, be accommodated in a supportive mainstream school environment.

According to Charlesworth et al (2007), Engelbrecht et al (2006) and Walton et al (2009), schools mirror social systems with which they interact and are influenced by the historical, political and socioeconomic context. Unfortunately, however, they often fall short of the theoretical ideals of inclusive education. Factors such as poverty, poor training, unemployment and an unstable economy influence the development and implementation of inclusive education and make the provision of quality education and support for learners with intrinsic barriers difficult in a developing country such as South Africa (Prinsloo, 2001). According to Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla and Sylvester (2014), several challenges – including those associated with learners, schools, families and policies – characterise education in South Africa. Such challenges may include factors arising in the home, such as the economic status of the learner's parents, or a lack of support from family members (Nigidi & Qwabe, 2006). Factors arising in the schools may include educators being under-trained or having poor attitudes towards teaching, or may even extend to the management of the school. It is evident that factors or barriers such as these and many others are bound to affect learners' experiences of support and to influence their ability to learn successfully or to be included in supportive mainstream classrooms.

Learners with barriers to learning

One of the aspects stressed by the inclusive education policy is the provision of appropriate educational opportunities for all learners, including those with barriers to learning, in the mainstream education classroom (Spies, 2013). According to Walton et al (2009), barriers to learning may arise from factors intrinsic or extrinsic to learners, or from a combination of both. Intrinsic barriers arise from within the learner and include physical, sensory, emotional, neurological and developmental impairments, chronic illness and differing intellectual ability. Extrinsic barriers are factors that arise outside the learner. According to Walton et al (2009), extrinsic barriers can be located in the family, culture, social and economic context and can influence learners' ability to learn. While the social environment of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can serve as either a risk or as a protective factor, it must be stressed that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are in dire need of appropriate support at multiple levels in order to successfully overcome such barriers (Charlesworth et al, 2007).

Support

To be able to include and support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in a mainstream school, it is imperative to understand and accommodate each individual's specific needs (Spies, 2013: 22). According to the aforementioned White Paper 6, removing barriers such as language of instruction or educator training will allow learners with intrinsic barriers to learning to have the experience of a supportive and effective education. The White Paper also acknowledges the notion that every learner can learn with the needed and proper support (Department of Education, 2001). Support is defined, according to White Paper 6 (2001), as all activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity. Support services include services that provide help and assistance to the school structures, the educator and the learners. According to Landbrook (2009), specialised inclusive education support is thus essential. Where such support is provided, learners with barriers to learning can be accorded the

opportunity to develop, grow and succeed in an educational environment which is both supportive and understanding of their specific needs.

According to Charlesworth et al (2007), the support that learners receive in school is directly linked to their cognitive, social and emotional well-being. Providing support for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning is an important approach for strengthening mainstream schools' ability to enhance learners' scholastic success as well as their social and psychological well-being (Bojuwoye et al., 2014). In South Africa's efforts to provide equal access to education for all learners, great importance is being placed on the schools as being a primary site for achieving healthy development and the overall well-being of learners. According to Ebersohn (2005), the education setting, and thus the support available to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning is, however, influenced by factors in other systems.

Unfortunately, current social and economic conditions in South Africa, such as poverty, unemployment, poor education and training, as well as limited resources, make it difficult for mainstream schools to be supportive environments (Ebersohn, 2005). These accumulated risk factors have a negative impact on learners' experiences in school (Charlesworth et al, 2007). According to Wienand (2011), most learners who experience intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools, develop negative self-esteem, negative self-worth and a lack of self-confidence. Learners can feel alone and isolated and are scared that other learners might tease or harass them because they struggle to succeed in the classroom environment (Charlesworth et al, 2007). Ebersohn (2005) studied support in the educational setting and is of the opinion that any learner who grows up in an environment that is accepting and inclusive is provided with the freedom to develop a positive level of self-esteem. Ebersohn (2005) and Charlesworth et al (2007) maintain that mainstream schools have the responsibility, not only to accommodate learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, but also to create an environment that promotes positive development, that is conducive to learning, and that allows each unique learner to feel valued, understood and supported. It is thus imperative that the necessary support structures be in place to address the challenges

in the Education system faced by learners with intrinsic barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001).

According to Weeks and Erradu (2013:88), mainstream schools in South Africa accommodate a variety of different learners with different needs, including learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, advanced learners, learners who underachieve and learners from diverse economic backgrounds. Educators therefore experience challenges with the implementation of inclusive principles to accommodate a variety of different learning needs in one classroom (Spies 2013). Educators' negative attitudes and their lack of training and knowledge in respect of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can have a direct impact on the learning environment, on content delivery and on quality of learning and can also have a negative influence on the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning (Spies, 2013: 5). Without the necessary support from and understanding of an educator, learners with intrinsic barriers to learning would be at a serious disadvantage with regard to their educational experience (Mahlo, 2011:18). The experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in the classroom environment influence their overall learning experience. According to Charlesworth et al (2007), the facilitation of positive support structures in the learners' environment can enhance well-being and minimise risk factors.

Learners are embedded in social support systems, such as parents and peer groups, throughout multiple contexts of their lives. Bronfenbrenner's model, according to Rosa and Tudge (2013), demonstrates that there are multiple influences that impact on learners' experiences. It is important to learn about these influences and contexts in order to best understand each learner's development, because each influence and context connects with and impacts other parts of the learner's life (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). According to Bojuwoye et al (2014), learners are major role-players in a school and contribute to the facilitation of effective learning and academic success. Education is a two-way street and, without the participation and attention of both the educator and the learner, such efforts would be pointless. According to Mahlo (2011:55), a successful and effective education depends directly on both parties' experiences and participation. There is a shortage of research, both in South Africa and internationally, which includes

learners as participants. In addition, there is a lack of literature on the perspectives of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards educational issues (Mashau, Steyn, van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2008; Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006). It is clear that the experiences that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning have in their school environment – as well as the support they receive there – are important. To explore and describe the experiences of support that learners receive in their education system, the researcher must take into consideration the influences, inter-personal relationships and interactions that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning encounter in all systems in their environment.

Consequently, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model – a multi-dimensional model of human development – was applied to this study to contribute to the understanding of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards the support they receive in a mainstream school. Bronfenbrenner's model served as a theoretical guide as it acknowledges the influences that relationships in all spheres of learners lives, including the experiences of support in the school environment, have on the development and well-being of each learner.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory suggests that the learning environment is made up of multiple systems and sub-systems interacting with each other and contributing to the overall experience of the learner (Lau & Ng, 2014). According to Wienand (2011), Bronfenbrenner's framework emphasises the interaction between learners and their environment. Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model was applied to this research and can be used to explore and describe the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). According to Rosa and Tudge (2013), the *proximal process* is central to the bio-ecological model. This refers to reciprocal everyday interactions learners have in their environment – for example, learner-parent interactions. According to Spies (2013) the proximal process produces two major developmental outcomes for learners in various situations they find themselves in,

namely competence (obtaining new knowledge and acquiring skills and abilities) and dysfunction (struggling to maintain control). Bronfenbrenner incorporates personal characteristics (*person* in the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model) which each learner brings to any interaction. According to Rosa & Tudge (2013), *person* characteristics that will influence the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive include *demand* (internal barrier to learning), *resource* (past experiences, skills, education, opportunities) and *force* characteristics (motivation, resilience, persistence). The learner's environment, made up of four interrelated systems, the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem, is referred to as the *context* (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The *microsystem* consists of the immediate settings of the learner, including relationships and interactions with people in the immediate settings in which the individual lives. An important characteristic of the microsystem is its emphasis on the lived experience or phenomenological dimension of the learner (Lau & Ng, 2014). The microsystem of learners in this study consists of the immediate setting of the family environment (parents, siblings and other family members), the school environment (educators, principal, curriculum, school support staff) and the peer groups that interact daily with the learner at home and at school.

The *mesosystem* is a set of interrelationships between two or more settings (microsystems) in which the developing learner participates actively, for example school and home (Lau & Ng, 2014). Counted in the *exosystem* are events that do not directly involve the learner but that still impact on his or her life, such as parents' workplace, health professionals and their services and the general community (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). The exosystem is bi-directional which means that events that happen within the exosystem impact the microsystem (Lau & Ng, 2014). The learner is not directly involved at this level, but he or she experiences the result of negative or positive forces involved with the interaction (Spies, 2013).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the *macrosystem* “holds the overarching beliefs, attitudes, values, resources and customs of the specific culture or community”. These influence and may be influenced by any of the above-mentioned systems (Donald et al., 2010). The macrosystem is specific to a time and culture and can play an important role in the acceptance or rejection of policies and theories (Spies, 2013; Wienand, 2011). For this study, the macrosystem that indicates the attitude and perceptions of parents, educators and support personnel towards learners with intrinsic barriers to learning that will influence their involvement will be most important.

The micro, meso, exo and macrosystems are connected with the chronosystem and acknowledge that individuals’ learning and environments can change over time as they further develop (Lau & Ng, 2014). In Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model, the chronosystem was developed into the concept of *time* (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Time within the framework of this study represents the experiences, interactions and processes that will be influenced by the stage of development of the subjects of the study, namely learners in middle childhood (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). It is also noted that the stage of implementation of inclusive education will have an influence on the support available to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning at a given time (Wienand, 2011).

Furthermore, Donald et al (2010), as well as Swart and Pettipher (2005), state that an important part of Bronfenbrenner’s model is that the environment does not simply have an impact on the learner, but that learners are active participants in their own development. Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are stakeholders in education and their experiences of the support they receive have important implications in their educational environment. By identifying the interconnectedness between and within the systems, an understanding of the learners’ experiences in respect of the support they receive in an inclusive mainstream classroom is facilitated.

According to Joubert (2012) it is clear that learners are viewed as meaning-givers who interact with their school and whose experiences have the potential to influence and

change it. The context (the mainstream school environment) is in continuous process of balance and interplay with other systems in the life of the learner with intrinsic barriers to learning (Terhoeven, 2009). The support that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience in this context also influences the home, the parents, siblings, the community and other systems. According to Terhoeven (2009), a small change in one system has the potential to change and affect other systems in the learners' lives. In other words, the support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience in their meso environment (mainstream school) might have a positive influence or serve as a protective factor in other systems in their lives. In this regard, the study sought first-hand information and experiences from the learners with intrinsic barriers to learning themselves. From the problem formulation, the following research question was addressed: How do learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support they receive in a mainstream school?

METHOD

Research design

This qualitative study aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the personal experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school in Centurion, South Africa. Qualitative research, according to Newby (2010:92), deals with the processes that motivate behaviour and the experiences of life. The researcher was interested in how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). An interpretive descriptive design was implemented (McNabb, 2013) because interpretive descriptive studies lend themselves to an exploration of subjective perceptions and meanings. The researcher selected this design as the aim of the study was to explore and describe the unique experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in an educational setting where learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are included in a mainstream school. Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning were selected by purposive sampling by a gatekeeper (an educator working at the school with learners with special educational needs, hereafter “LSEN educator”). The gatekeeper identified learners with intrinsic barriers to learning according to criteria including age, language and their verbal and cognitive abilities to express their experiences. Purposive sampling was used because the learners represented good examples of the phenomenon being studied and were seen to be information-rich sources in the research field (Spies, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Learners participated in a warm-up exercise creating collages before moving on to semi-structured interviews that took place in a non-threatening environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Questions for the semi-structured interviews were compiled with the help of literature and previous studies on the subject. Semi-structured interviews worked well to gather rich data and contextual understanding through direct interactions between the researcher and participants (Bojuwoye et al., 2014). Also, these direct interactions are relatively inexpensive and effective with learners of lower literacy levels, and, especially for young learners who have English as a second language. The data collection process was supported by field notes and audio recordings of the interviews. Transcripts of the interviews were done by a professional transcriber and these transcripts were subjected to data analysis.

Participants

A minimum of six participants were selected by a gatekeeper (LSEN educator) according to the criteria and data collection proceeded until data saturation was reached (De Vos et al, 2011:393) after 10 participants were interviewed. These participants were between the ages of eight and 13 and were in Grades 2 to 7. Participants had different intrinsic barriers to learning, including ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders. The mainstream school in Centurion, Gauteng was selected on the basis that it includes learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in the mainstream learning environment. According to Scott (2005:107) the Gauteng Province is viewed among the more

advanced provinces in South Africa in terms of physical resources, capacitated human resources, child care services and academic performance.

Procedures

In order to commence with the research process, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of North-West University and written permission from the Gauteng Department of Education. The researcher liaised with the principal of the school in order to gain her consent to conduct the study on the school premises and interview the learners. Informed consent was obtained from parents/legal guardians who gave permission for their children (learners) to participate in the study. A quiet, private location was secured in which to conduct the collage activity and interview the learners. Before the formal data collection procedures commenced the researcher explained the nature of the research to the participants and outlined any foreseeable risks that the participants could encounter as a result of participating in the research. At this stage, the researcher also made the participants aware that their participation was voluntary. Before the commencement of each interview, the researcher provided the participant with clear and comprehensive information about the aim of the study and how the collected data would be used. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions in order to gain further clarity on any aspects of the research.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (Ethics No: NWU-00060-12-A1), and permission to conduct the research was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education, as well as the principal of the selected school. Ethical measures undertaken included clarification to the participants and their parents/legal guardians of the purposes and methods of the research, as well as informed consent/assent, assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses, the voluntary nature of participation, consent/assent to electronic recording of the interview and permission to withdraw at any stage of the study (Bojuwoye et al., 2014; Wassenaar, 2006). The interviews were

conducted in a quiet, private room during school hours. Given that the participants in this study were young learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, the researcher ensured that she remained fully aware of the ethical implications of conducting the research (South Africa, 2013). In this regard, she also remained aware that it was possible for injury and psychological difficulties – such as anxiety, shame, loss of self-esteem, becoming upset and experiencing disrespect – to result when the research was conducted (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The particular research design was chosen as it posed minimal risk to participants and while yielding knowledge about the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba's model of trustworthiness was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings for the particular participants and school context where the study was undertaken (Schurink, Fouché and De Vos, 2011:419) According to Lincoln and Guba (in Schurink, Fouché and De Vos, 2011) the four norms of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. In line with Golafshani (2003:597), credibility in a study can be ensured when the participant's experiences are accurately identified and described. For the purpose of this study, the researcher made use of prolonged engagement in a safe quiet environment, allowing learners to give rich descriptions of their experiences. The credibility of the study was improved through observations (field notes, observational notes and collaborative collages) as well as various interviewing techniques including probing, verbal and non-verbal expressions, member checking, restarting and summarising. The researcher was also aware of the necessity to bracket personal feelings and beliefs. Transferability, according to Botma et al (2009:233), refers to the degree to which findings can be transferred to other settings or applied to other contexts and still yield the same results. With reference to this study, the researcher engaged in a thick and detailed description of the research methodology, clearly stating and describing the parameters of the study. Dependability in research refers to whether findings will be consistent if the enquiry should be replicated with the same participants in another context (Botma, 2005:223). This study attained dependability through documenting and giving detailed descriptions of the process of

data collection (procedures and methodology were described in detail and notes were taken) and it adhered to the strict procedures previously discussed. Findings were verified and validated through member checking. In addition, the research was conducted under the guidance and supervision of study leaders. Confirmability in this study was obtained through verifying data with participants (member checking) and by being aware of the researcher's own thoughts and feelings and bracketing these in order to allow the participants to shape the data. In line with findings from Pieterse (2010:24), the researcher distanced herself from her everyday beliefs, attitudes and suspended judgments on social issues while conducting the research, achieving this by following a well set out research design under the supervision of study leaders. The researcher also made use of a variety of sources, including articles and books, throughout the research process and when conducting the literature review.

Data Analysis

In terms of the data analysis, a bottom-up strategy was adopted by segmenting the data into meaningful analytical units. Data analysis, according to Bojuwoye et al (2014), is an ongoing process. The researcher utilised the data analysis method as proposed by Creswell (2006). In this study, the process was started by organising the data and the field notes, engaging in multiple readings of interview transcripts and reviewing of data, and the identification of emerging patterns and themes in participants' responses to interview questions. Detailed descriptions were provided and significant segments of data were identified by means of categories and sub-categories and coded into themes and meaningful units (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework informed the themes which developed. This was done by intensive reviewing and revising the interview transcripts used for data analysis, as well as consulting research supervisors. The results of the data analysis are represented below in terms of theme, sub-theme and categories that emerged, with supporting verbatim quotations from the interview transcripts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Learners who participated in the study described the various forms of support they receive in their mainstream educational environment. The analysis of the interview transcripts revealed one main theme – namely the context – as well as subthemes and categories.

The theme is illustrated in Table 1, below to give insight into how context specifically refers to Bronfenbrenner's concept of Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT). The theme, subthemes and categories, will be discussed, illustrated with examples of interviews, and compared to relevant literature. For the purpose of this discussion, participants will be referred to as learners.

Table 1. Thematic presentation of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school.

Theme	Subtheme	Category
Context Experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in their environment	Meso level	Peer understanding Supplementary instruction Educator beliefs and attitudes Class size Language of instruction

Theme 1: Context

The experience of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in terms of support they receive in a mainstream school fits into the theme of *context* as described by Bronfenbrenner (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). According to Terhoeven (2009) the context of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning contains not only the learners and their actions, but also relationships shaped by individuals, tools, resources and intentions in a given space and time. In this study the given space was a mainstream school environment. The support that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience in the context should make the mainstream school environment conducive to learning. The

experiences of the support received by the learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive could be clearly noted on the micro and meso levels in this study because learners were directly involved through continual day-to-day interactions and reciprocal influencing was taking place continuously. Although the micro level of the learners is not the school environment, it does have the power to shape their experiences of support in the mainstream school. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the experiences of support received by learners at the meso level which is the mainstream school environment.

Sub-theme

Meso Level

The meso level forms part of the context as described by Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Rosa and Tudge, 2013). The experiences of support described by learners with intrinsic barriers to learning were found to be in the meso level in their context. Within the meso level, learners experienced support from peer groups and in the form of extra instruction in the school environment. According to Wienand (2011), peer groups play a very important role in the emotional and psychological support and well-being of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

Peer understanding

Peer understanding and attitudes were found to impact on the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. Friendships with peers can serve as a protective factor to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning and, in this way, increase the support that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning have, as stated by a participant: *"My friend is in Grade 8. We help each other. Like when someone... like maybe, even if me and him have bicycles and maybe when I fall he picks me up". (P2)*

According to Charlesworth et al (2007), close friendships in middle childhood are based on emotional support and understanding and promote mutual trust and reciprocity. The researcher is in agreement with Charlesworth et al (2007) that the experience of a

supportive friendship can serve as a protective factor for learners with barriers to learning.

Learners who feel that they do not have the support of their peer group can feel isolated and alone. One participant described her feelings of experiencing an unsupportive peer group as: *“Because it’s not nice. Inside you don’t feel well, and you don’t feel like you are in the light. Normally, I think like that. And you don’t, they don’t go get home and feel like crying”*. (P8) Also, some of these experiences indicated that participants were bullied on the playground. *Ma’am like he tells you... like he takes your lunch. It’s like hitting him and pushing him or holding his hair, grabbing.”* (P2).

According to Charlesworth et al (2007), direct bullying (physical) and indirect bullying (verbal, psychological, social) is a cause for concern in a mainstream school. It is important for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning to be treated the same as other learners in an inclusive setting (Wienand, 2011). According to Charlesworth et al (2007), the need for learners in middle childhood for group belonging is very strong and positive peer relationships have a very important impact on social competence, positive coping, social behaviour, acceptance, attitudes, social competence and, in addition, ultimately serve as a protective factor for learners in middle childhood (Charlesworth et al., 2007). Christensen (2001) proposes that learners will focus on learning and achieving when they feel they belong and are valued. Wienand (2011) agrees, stating that learners who experience their peer group as supportive will feel more secure and willing to take on challenges. Support from peers can also serve as a protective factor in a mainstream school and have a positive influence on the overall experience of support at the meso level. According to Bronfenbrenner, in Rosa and Tudge (2013), the experience of support, in this case from learner’s peer group, can also impact the experiences of support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience in other systems. When learners experience a lack of support in the classroom or from the educator, support they receive from peers can play an important role in the form of, for example supplementary instruction.

Supplementary Instruction

The findings indicated that supplementary instruction received by learners in the classroom influences their experiences in the classroom in a positive way. Positive experiences of peer mentoring are reported as: *“We’re sitting in groups. I ask the other children to explain it to me”*. (P7)

According to research (Ebersohn, 2005; Mahlo, 2014; Wienand, 2011), educators in mainstream classes find it difficult to support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. As found in this study, both the attitudes of educators and class sizes can influence the ability of educators to support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning at the meso level. Consequently, learners have to rely on their classmates to assist them with their school work. Support in the form of extra instruction from classmates supports learners who would otherwise fall behind in the class. Participants experienced this peer mentoring as having a positive influence on their experiences in a mainstream classroom. Peer support, viewed in Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model of human development, is an example of how the protective factors learners experience in one system can positively influence barriers to learning in other systems.

According to Mahlo (2011), learners with intrinsic barriers to learning place higher demands on educators in mainstream classes. In addition, the task of supporting learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can influence educator’s beliefs and perceptions.

Educator Beliefs

The findings indicated that *educator beliefs and attitudes* affect experiences of the support that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning receive in class. One learner’s experience of educators’ frustration was voiced as: *“And especially when a class is very naughty. They, some teachers, some teachers go out and cry over pupils. Because, like they get frustrated, then they feel like ‘If I can’t control these children, when I have my own children, they won’t listen to me.’”* (P8)

The educator's frustration was also explained as: *"Ma'am, she shouts so, so high. And then I don't like when she shouts. And then she gets, she turns red. Then you feel like crying because the way she shouts, you know?"* Another participant affirmed this and said: *"She explains it. Then I, sometimes I forget, then I'm scared to ask her because maybe she will shout at me, and say 'You don't understand, wah wah wah.'"* (P2)

Learners in this study reported experiencing feelings of frustration, fear and demotivation because of educators' attitudes. These findings are consistent with other research (Ebersohn, 2005; Mahlo, 2014; Pieterse, 2010; Prinsloo, 2001; Wienand, 2011) that has found that educators experience a sense of helplessness, feelings of inferiority, lack of motivation and enthusiasm and a sense of not being in control of educating learners with diverse learning needs in mainstream classes. According to Mahlo (2011), the quality of support that educators provide to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning is influenced by their attitudes towards these learners. Charlesworth et al (2007) state that the experiences in middle childhood may foster or thwart the attempts of learners with barriers to learning to acquire and enhance their sense of mastery and self-efficacy. According to Wienand (2011), if learners experience educator's beliefs and attitudes as caring and supportive, this can improve their self-esteem and sense of belonging and serve as a protective factor against barriers in other systems. The researcher agrees with Wienand (2011), Pieterse (2010) and Terhoeven (2009) that when learners experience educators' negative attitudes and frustration, the relationship between the educator and learner is not one of confidence, acceptance and support. It is clear that, when educators' attitudes are not positive towards learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, this could lead to negative experiences for those learners who are supposed to benefit from the inclusion policy. According to Mahlo (2014) and Pieterse (2010), educators' frustrations and negative feelings can influence their behaviour and attitudes towards learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in their class. This is very important because educators are considered as the most influential aspects in determining the successful inclusion and support of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. When, according to Mahlo (2011), educators are in the front line of implementing inclusive education, not only do their attitudes and perceptions impact the

experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards support in the classroom, but such educators also have the power to influence the overall experiences of support in the meso system. Consequently, educator's attitudes, perceptions and beliefs regarding learners with intrinsic barriers to learning impact the successful implementation of inclusion in the school context. Educators can also contribute to additional barriers to learning in the meso system, such as through the language of instruction in the classroom.

Language of instruction

Participants indicated that the *language of instruction* in school causes feelings of frustration and hampers participation in class by learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. The learners in this study are at a great disadvantage because English and Afrikaans are third, or sometimes fourth languages for them. This was explained by participants as: "*But the problem is Afrikaans. My dad does not speak Afrikaans and my mother only speaks a little bit. We speak Zulu and English at home*". (P2); this was affirmed by another participant: "*Sometimes when I speak with my mother, I speak Zulu. But when I speak with my Granny and my family, I speak Tswana*". (P8); and another participant added: "*My granny helps me with my Afrikaans homework, but she is Venda. She actually, actually can't write Afrikaans. I speak Setswana at home, English at school and Zulu to my friends*". (P7)

A study done by Charlesworth (2013), found that learners who are bilingual receive little support for their native language in the school context. The majority of the participants in Charlesworth's study who were regarded as having intrinsic barriers to learning were actually taught in a language other than their mother tongue – a situation that created problems because they were unable to understand or follow instructions. Similar results were obtained in a study by Mahlo (2014) who showed that the real problem might be that the learners are unable to follow the educator's instructions because they are issued in a language other than their mother tongue. Mahlo (2014) found that learners who are taught in a language that is not their mother tongue may appear slow and are often unable to follow instructions because they are unsure of what is expected of them.

In accordance with Mahlo's findings (2011), the perception that there are many learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms might be due to the fact that learners are labelled as "slow learners" when they do not understand or respond to the language of instruction. This additional barrier to learning can be understood, in terms of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, as the influence that the macro system has on the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards to the support they receive in the meso system.

Similarly to language of instruction, the number of learners and size of mainstream classes is also influenced by the macro system and can impact the way that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences support in the meso system.

Class size

Findings indicate that a learner's experience of support is affected by the size of the class he or she is in. Teaching and learning do not take place as planned if there are too many learners in a classroom, as identified by a participant: "*There are thirty-one children (in my class)*". Many participants indicated an unreasonably large *class size* as being a significant obstacle to experiencing a supportive learning environment. Overcrowded classrooms result in educators neglecting those learners who need support and paying attention only to those learners who are able to grasp the concepts more easily. A participant expressed this frustration in the following manner: "*If you can't understand, you must go home and ask your mother to help you. Because he (the teacher) doesn't want to talk twice. I'm asking him nicely but he says 'I can't explain twenty times.'*" (P4)

This indicates that educator practices need to be modified in order to accommodate learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in order for such learners to experience supportive learning environments. In a study done by Walton et al (2009:114), the research results indicated that the proportion of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream classes is high. White Paper 6 states that the high learner/educator ratios pose a problem for all professionals in the South African

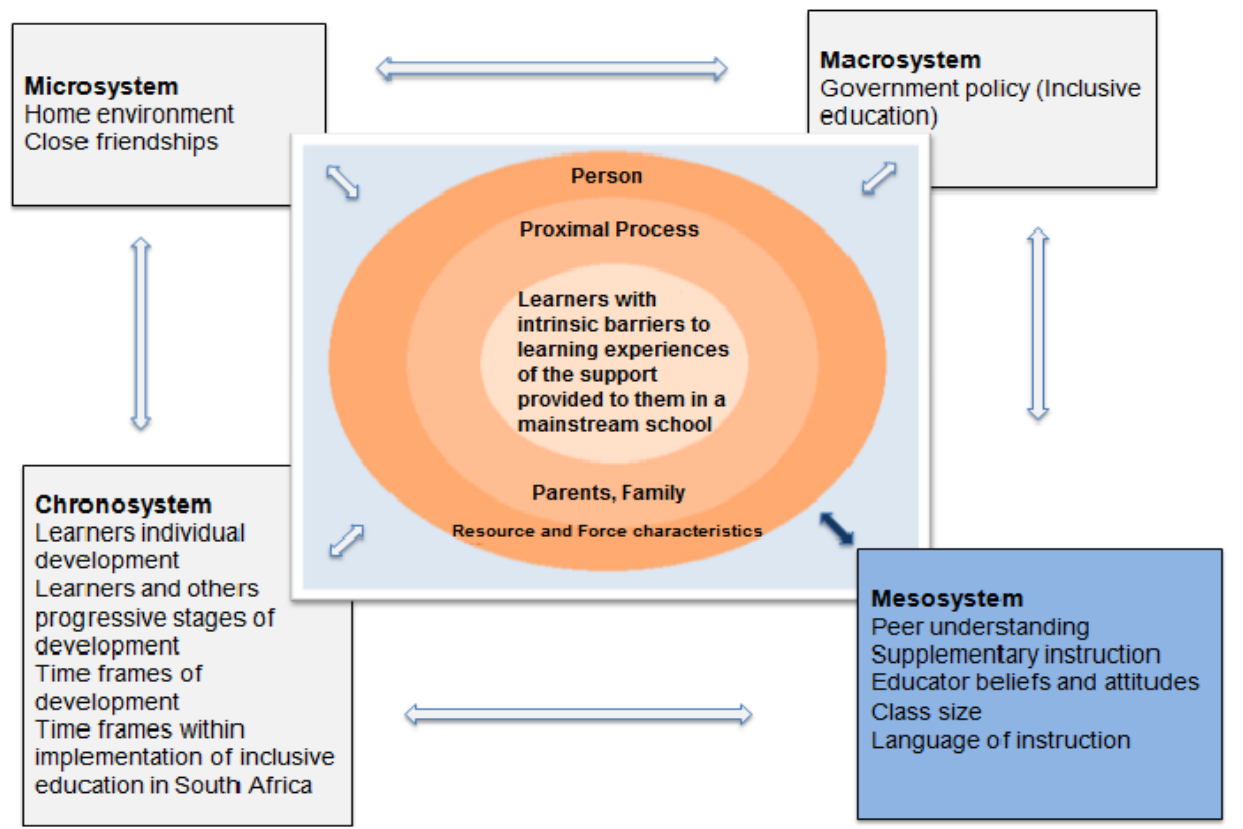
education system – in teaching, in management and in addressing the needs of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001). The literature refers to optimal class sizes as being in the region of 20 learners per class so as to ensure effective teaching (Nel et al, 2014). According to Ebersohn (2005), Mahlo (2011) and Pieterse (2010), educators struggle to provide individual attention to learners who require support. Pieterse (2010) and Wienand (2011) are of the opinion that educators would be able to assist learners with intrinsic barriers to learning more effectively if the classes were smaller. When learners feel that they are not being supported in the classroom because the class size is too big, this can have negative influences on their behaviour (Wienand, 2011). In this regard, Powell and Caseau (2004) argue that learners often act badly in the classroom to save face in front of their peers when their needs are not met. It might be that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning have not understood the instructions or that the work is too difficult for them – or that they do not fully understand the educators' interaction and instructions. The researcher is in agreement with Pieterse (2010) that large class sizes can lead not only to behavioural and emotional difficulties in learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, but that they can also be a barrier to effective teaching and learning. According to Bronfenbrenner in Rosa and Tudge (2013), change in one system will have both direct and indirect influences on other systems. In other words, negative behaviour in class on the part of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning will not only influence the relationships and interactions in the meso system, but will also impact on other systems, including the home, parents and the community. In accordance with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, large class size might be influenced by school and educational policies in the macrosystem, but in turn influences the experience of support in the learners' meso system. Consequently, changes in the macro environment will have a direct impact on the meso system where learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience support.

The experiences of the learners in this study of the support they receive in their mainstream school cannot be viewed in isolation. Although the focus of the study was on experiences in the school environment, it is important to note how other systems

influence and shape these experiences. According to Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory, each system and sub-system will influence the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support they receive in a mainstream school. In addition, the support that learners experience in one system can serve as a protective factor in other systems where learners experience barriers (Terhoeven, 2009).

Figure 1 constitutes the researcher’s schematic interpretation of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in the meso system (school environment). The schematic interpretation also indicates how all the systems influence each other as well as how, finally, they all influence the experience of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support they receive in a mainstream school.

Figure 1: Schematic representation of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support provided to them in a mainstream school.



The reciprocal nature of the relationships among all the systems and their sub-systems in Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory are indicated in the figure by the arrows pointing both ways between each system. This theory is relevant to the study of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive as it emphasises the interaction between the mesosystem (mainstream school environment) and the other systems in the learner's life, including the micro, macro and chronosystems. In other words, the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of support they receive in the meso system will affect and be affected by other systems and cannot be viewed in isolation.

Additional barriers to learning created in the micro and macro systems, including unsupportive home environments and educational policies (such as language of instruction and large class size), influence learners experiences of support provided in the meso system. It is important for the role players who provide support to learners in the meso system, including the school and educators, to understand and take into consideration the influences, interactions and interrelationships in the other systems the learner is connected to. For learners to succeed in the meso system, it is important to eliminate barriers to learning created in some systems and to identify and strengthen protective factors and support structures in others.

LIMITATIONS

While the findings are meaningful in understanding the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school, there are limitations to be noted. A limitation of the research is the small sample size, which, when considered from a statistical point of view, cannot be taken as a representative sample of the entire population of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. The mainstream school identified for the study was previously a so-called "model C" school in an urban area and, thus, the study did not take into account the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in rural areas. In addition, the study was limited to one geographical location in the Gauteng province. A further limitation of the study was that interviews with participants were conducted in English and not the participants' mother tongues.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

An in-depth study investigating the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools in all South African provinces is recommended. The current study described only the experiences of ten learners in one mainstream school. It is specifically important for educators and policy makers to take note of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning with regard to the barriers and challenges that arise due to the policy of inclusive education. An example would be that educators should become more aware of how their attitudes affect learners' development and experiences. These recommendations could aid the development and implementation of school-based intervention programmes to better support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of support provided in a mainstream school. The findings were presented within Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework and comprise the learners' experiences of support within the learning environment.

Based on the findings of the empirical investigation, the school environment (educators, principal, curriculum, school support staff) and close friendships (the peer groups that interact daily with the learner at school) are of key importance for learners to experience support. While the positive aspects with regard to support and encouragement must be highlighted and strengthened, the negative aspects must be viewed in a holistic and particular way so as to address specific issues – such as through the daily implementation of codes of behaviour, for example, respectful behaviour towards all learners at the school concerned. This is significant as it indicates that learners are strongly influenced by everyone in their lives. The study revealed the crucial roles of the school environment and classroom practices, as well as of the educator and peer behaviours that constitute support for meeting learners' academic, social and emotional needs, thus helping them towards school success. Such support systems – which serve as protective factors for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning – need to be protected

and encouraged by school authorities and by Department of Education officials at district and provincial level.

The question asked was whether including learners with barriers to learning in a mainstream school is a solution or an illusion. Although learners do receive some support from their environment, the participants of this research voiced real challenges and solemn difficulties. It seems, then, that a learner's right to be educated in mainstream classes can be understood as one of the measures of success for a holistic school system. Evidently, a learner's right to be educated in mainstream classes comprises the holistic understanding of school success.

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SECTION C

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The previous sections described the orientation and findings of the research study. This section provides a summary of the research conducted together with a discussion of the findings. Recommendations are also given for possible future research, as well as possible limitations of the current study.

The experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards the support they receive in a mainstream school influence their school environment and, more importantly, serve as a protective factor against other barriers to their development. The aim of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school. The research question was answered in a qualitative study using an interpretive descriptive research design and utilising Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory as theoretical framework. Collage work and semi-structured interviews were conducted, yielding information-rich data that was then analysed. The findings were discussed briefly in the previous section (see section B) and, in the context of previous literature discussed in section A of this dissertation, made it possible for the researcher to draw conclusions and make appropriate recommendations.

Section A provided an orientation to the research. Part 1 argued the need for South African literature, providing a brief discussion of the theoretical framework utilised for this study, explained the research methodology and considered the ethical aspects of the research. Part 2 provided a literature review and definitions in respect of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, with specific reference to the PPCT model, was reviewed as a theoretical framework.

Section B of this document contains the article that will be submitted to an academic journal for possible publication. In the article, the findings of the research were discussed comprehensively, together with a literature control. Brief conclusions and recommendations were also made.

Section C will now present the conclusions and recommendations. This will involve an evaluation of the research question as well as the goal and the objectives of this study. In addition, the conclusions that have been drawn will be summarised and possible future research recommendations will be discussed and a reflection on the research process will be provided. In closing, limitations identified in the course of this study will also be highlighted.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school. As stated in Section A, an understanding of these concepts would be of great value to all role players in the education sector. The problem statement expressed that an understanding of these experiences is important, as learners are key stakeholders in the education system. It was also mentioned that the experiences of learners offer valuable information about implementation of support strategies in education policy. The researcher expressed her desire that the exploration of this research problem may reveal valuable data regarding the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in a mainstream school. These important findings can be used to progressively equip mainstream schools as enabling spaces, and particularly to assist educators to create more supportive learning environments in mainstream schools for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

The research question was presented as “*How do learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support provided to them in a mainstream school?*” The study followed a qualitative research approach and an interpretive descriptive design was implemented. Ten learners participated in the study. The collected data provided sufficient material and rich information about how learners interact and experience their world and about the meaning they give to it. Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory offered insights into how each learner’s relationships and interactions in different settings can influence their experiences. The aim of the study was accomplished with a theme emerging from the collected data and revealing how learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experience the support they receive in a mainstream school.

3. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The researcher adopted a qualitative research approach to explore and describe the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards the support they receive in a mainstream school. This included a collage-making exercise and semi-structured interviews to gather data with which to address the research problem and to fulfil the aim of the research. The collage-making technique was used to encourage and assist the learners to share their experiences of the support they receive in a mainstream school. The researcher employed the technique of member checking during the open-ended interviews, and the participants were constantly asked to clarify the descriptions of their collage work and elaborate on their personal experiences. The participants' descriptions were read back to them to verify the meaning of their answers.

Thematic analysis was used to transform data into meaningful information. The identified theme was established to articulate the experiences of the learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school. The theme that emerged in the findings of the study focused on the experiences of support at the *meso* level in the *context* of each of the learners. Quotations were used to capture the experiences of learners (see verbatim transcripts in Addendum 6).

4. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning and their understanding of the support provided in a mainstream school. The findings were presented in terms of those ecological aspects, combined within Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework, that comprise the learners' experiences of support within the learning environment.

Based on the discussion of the findings of the empirical investigation, it can be concluded that:

- 1) the experiences of support, in particular the school environment (educators, principal, curriculum, school support staff); and
- 2) close friendships (the peer groups that interact daily with the learner at school);

are of key importance.

However, the lack of support learners experience in the school environment is viewed as a negative influence on the individual learner with intrinsic barriers to learning. While the positive aspects with regard to support and encouragement must be highlighted and strengthened, the negative aspects must be viewed in a holistic and particular way to address specific issues – such as through the daily implementation of codes of behaviour, for example respectful behaviour towards all learners at the school concerned. This is significant as it indicates that learners are strongly influenced by everyone in their lives. The study revealed the crucial roles of classroom practices as well as educator and peer behaviour that constitute support for meeting learners' academic, social and emotional needs, thus helping them towards school success. Such support systems – which serve as protective factors for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning – need to be protected and encouraged by school authorities and by Department of Education officials at district and provincial level.

The key findings and recommendations that follow are based on the theme that emerged from the study, and thereafter on the use of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory as a theoretical framework for the study.

4.1 Summary of key findings

A summary of the most significant findings and recommendations will be presented according to the theme that emerged from this study. At the end of this section, general recommendations will be made to professionals who work with learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools.

The findings confirm that each learner's experiences of support in his/her environment, has an immense influence on his/her overall well-being and development. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development is of vital importance to an understanding of how learners experience the support that they receive. The experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in each system will impact the experiences of support in other systems. For support

strategies to be successful, the learner cannot be viewed in isolation. Support has to be extended to all the other subsystems, including parents, family, friends, peer groups, educators and in the community context. In addition, families need information about intrinsic barriers to learning. An understanding of intrinsic barriers to learning can empower and guide parents and families to provide appropriate support to learners. In other words, a good working relationship between the school and home environment is essential. This relationship entails the (non-threatening) practical implementation of regular interaction, such as schools communicating with and including parents/legal guardians and caregivers in the education process of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning.

Theme 1: The experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of support they receive in their environment (Context)

The theme Context summarises the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of support they receive at the meso level of their environment.

At the meso level, the experiences with regard to support for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are evident in peer understanding, supplementary instruction in the class, educator beliefs and attitudes, language of instruction and class size. Close friendships with peers, especially during middle childhood, build on the experiences of support and understanding for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. Apart from supportive relating and interconnectedness, these relationships can give learners with intrinsic barriers to learning a sense of belonging and serve as a protective factor against other, less supporting environments. Peer understanding and attitudes have a big impact on the emotional support of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning and influence their feelings of competence, coping and acceptance. Unfortunately, the learners in this study did not experience their peer group as being a source of support and described feelings of being bullied and excluded. Learners described supplementary instruction as a positive experience of receiving support in classrooms. Learners experienced educator beliefs and attitudes negatively and described feelings of frustration, fear and demotivation. Educators have an important role to play in supporting learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream classes but,

unfortunately, due to educators' feelings of powerlessness, incompetence and lack of enthusiasm, they struggle for the most part to provide learners with caring and supportive environments conducive to learning. The learners involved in the study did not experience the classroom as a supportive learning environment because their educators could not support them with the individual attention they needed due to factors such as the size of the class. The language of instruction was, in certain instances, a learner's third or fourth language and this was seen to place learners with intrinsic barriers to learning at a disadvantage, even adding to their barriers to learning. This information about the negative experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning is alarming and should be addressed.

The experiences of support for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are most evident at the meso level. The education, support and empowerment of parents, caregivers, family members and the community can be of great value to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, as well as to the mainstream school. Regular meetings between parents and educators can create collaborative partnerships aimed at supporting learners. Encouraging more caring and tolerant school environments through providing informative programmes for educators and peer groups will sensitise them to learners who learn differently and enable the creation of supportive learning environments. This will also foster respect and tolerance towards diversity in schools. In addition, creating such opportunities will foster understanding and ultimately result in better experiences of support for learners. Sharing learners' personal accounts of the support they experience should help role players improve the quality of support that they can offer.

General recommendations about the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream schools:

It is important to note that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experienced support on all the different levels at which they interact as well as through all their relationships. The positive experiences of support in these interactions and relationships can serve as protective factors and should be reinforced, thus contributing towards improved school

performance and self-actualisation. However, the negative experiences of support regarding daily interacting and relating indicate risk factors and these are likely to influence the learners' development and overall well-being. It is clear that more money and time must be spent on training and empowering educators to successfully include and support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms. While inclusive education is associated with financial implications in the form of more resources, therapeutic interventions and money spent on training, some protective factors do not entail finances and can be experienced via daily positive relational functioning. Many of the supportive experiences in this study can serve as protective factors for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. These include family environment, parental involvement, community support, peer relationships and educator attitudes. Schools must find creative and cost-effective ways to include and support parents, families, peer groups and the community in the education process of learners with intrinsic barriers with regard to learning. These protective factors promote resilience, self-confidence and security in such learners and improving their experiences of support.

4.2 Conclusions regarding Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory as framework

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) was applied as a theoretical framework for this study. This model of human development is applicable not only to the development of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, but also to their experiences of support. Within the context of Bronfenbrenner's model, the success of support in an educational setting, such as the classroom, is reliant on the quality of support in other environments, such as the peer group. Thus, the support of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can be understood as the responsibility of everyone, at all levels of the system. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model is valuable for application to learners' experiences of support as it allows for an understanding of all the possible influences, interactions and interrelations between people and environments in the learners lives.

Using the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive as unit of analysis, the interrelatedness among the four PPCT concepts was emphasised. The theme, *Context*, that emerged from the study could be explained with reference to the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) concepts, which gave the findings a scientific grounding. The bio-ecological model was therefore a good fit between theoretical framework and the data produced by studying the phenomenon of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model allows educational support personnel the opportunity to evaluate the effect that the school, friendships, peers and educators have on the experiences of learner's with intrinsic barriers to learning in respect of the support they receive in a mainstream school.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study have important implications for school management who are interested in the influence of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school. The findings support the idea that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning do well in a supportive environment and that these experiences have a huge influence on their ability to learn, as well as on their development and overall well-being. The experiences of supportive environments serve as protective factor for learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as regards personal wellness and school success.

The findings highlighted the crucial role of educators in providing a supportive learning environment to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. Based on a consideration of the above finding, it is proposed that mainstream schools need to place a greater emphasis on training and empowering educators to offer better support in their classrooms to learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. The experiences of learners in the classroom highlighted the need for educator training to prepare educators for inclusive education and to equip them with the skills necessary to identify and support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning. It is clear, then, that knowledge and adequate support are needed and that there is a need for training in this regard.

Throughout the study, the researcher has learned that the environment and reciprocal interactions of learners play a major role in the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning with regard to the support they receive. Learners' experiences of support in their environment (context) serve as either protective or risk factors and shape the development and well-being of learners. Although risk factors must be clearly identified, it is equally important that protective factors be recognised, utilised and nurtured.

6. REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The initial literature study indicated that there was a gap in research regarding the personal experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning as to the support they receive in mainstream schools in the South African context. Although a variety of literature exists on education in South Africa, and on the experiences of educators, little is mentioned about the learners' perspective. The interacting and relating that takes place within schools are part of the meso level of learners' lives. These reciprocal processes and interconnectedness are important influential factors for learners' overall well-being. Therefore, a better understanding of learners' experiences of the support they receive in a mainstream school can serve as a protective factor in their development.

The willingness of the Department of Education, as well as of the principal, educators and parents at the identified school, to assist throughout the research process encouraged the researcher greatly. This indicated to the researcher that the needs and the well-being of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning are important and that new information could be helpful to all role players. The learners who participated in the research did so with enthusiasm and enjoyed the individual attention they received. The researcher found the interaction with the learners informative. The learners willingly shared their drawings and experiences, although prompting and encouragement was necessary for some of them. From the researcher's perspective, the learners appeared to feel safe within the context of the interview and some of them shared intimate details

of their positive and negative experiences of the support they receive in their school environment.

The researcher does have subjective experience regarding the research topic. As an educator working with preschool learners on the Autism spectrum, the researcher witnesses on a daily basis the kind of support that learners with intrinsic barriers to learning can receive. Thus, in conducting the research, great care was taken to ensure that any preconceived ideas and feelings regarding information that would emerge were “put into brackets” and the research was allowed to take its own direction. In addition to the bracketing process, member checking was also performed in order to verify the data. Finally, the researcher worked with the guidance of her supervisors throughout the process.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the findings of the study led to an increased understanding of the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school, some limitations in the study should be noted. The study was limited as the population size was small and can therefore not be generalised to other settings. The school that was identified to participate in this study was located in an urban area, and the experiences of learners are not representative of all learners in South Africa, such as schools in rural areas. Furthermore, the characteristics of participants with intrinsic barriers to learning such as age and specific diagnoses may have had an impact on their experiences of support. As the study did not take into account the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning in other geographical areas and provinces in South Africa, further research in this area is recommended.

8. RECOMMENTATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for future research. With regards to the meso environment of learners, a good working relationship between the school and the home is essential. Although this study did not focus on the support learner's receive in their immediate (home) setting, the support learners receive in their micro environment have a big influence on the meso level.

Schools should communicate with and include the parents in the education process of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning through regular feedback. Parent's and families need information regarding challenges these learners face and the skills to be able to support them. It can be the start of a collaborative partnership where learners feel valued and supported. Inclusive education can be implemented more effectively if educators and schools are equipped to render support to learners who experience intrinsic barriers to learning. It is clear that educators will have to adapt their teaching and curriculum planning in order to accommodate these learners. If educators are to be the front line of inclusive education, they need to be equipped with the particular skills to teach learners with barriers to learning in their mainstream classes confidently.

9. FINAL CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this study the researcher explored the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support they receive in a mainstream school. It is clear from the literature study that learners who experience intrinsic barriers to learning need support within an inclusive classroom. The findings of this study indicate all the relationships and interactions that these learners encounter across the various contexts, influence their experiences of support. These experiences can serve as either protective or risk factors for learners when encountering barriers to learning. The intentional protecting, promoting and nurturing of protective factors related to the external environment of learners with intrinsic barriers to the learning can build their resilience and cope effectively with present and future challenges.

Apart from the insight to families, schools and educators to improve the experiences of support learners with intrinsic barriers to learning receive, the significance of the research highlights the worth of scientific investigation. This researcher looked at an immensely important issue, and with the participation of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning, gold came forth via their valuable contribution.

SECTION D: ADDENDA

Addendum 1: Approval for research Gauteng Department of Education



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2015 / 272

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	20 August 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	20 August 2014 to 3 October 2014
Name of Researcher:	Vlok E.
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 54672
	Wierda Park
	0149
Telephone Number:	012 653 5718; 083 276 0529
Email address:	esteevlok@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences of the support provided to them in a mainstream school
Number and type of schools:	ONE Primary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

D. Makhado
2014/08/20

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards


.....

Dr David Makhado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2014/08/20
.....

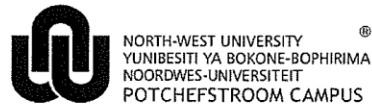
2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Addendum 2: Ethical approval from North-West University



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

To whom it may concern

Faculty of Health Sciences
Tel: 018-299 2092
Fax: 018-299 2088
Email: Minrie.Greeff@nwu.ac.za

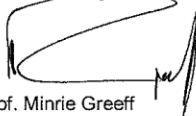
26 November 2013

Dear Mrs.Avenant

Ethics Application: NWU-00060-12-A1 "Developing sustainable support to enhance quality of life and wellbeing for children, youth and families in South Africa: A trans-disciplinary approach"

All ethical concerns have been addressed and your request to include the sub-study, entitled "Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning's experiences of the support provided to them in a mainstream school" under the above mentioned umbrella project has been approved.

Yours sincerely



Prof. Minrie Greeff
Ethics Sub-committee Vice Chairperson

Original details: Prof. Minrie Greeff(10187308) C:\Users\13210572\Documents\ETIEK\2012 ETHICS\NWU-00060-12-A1 Add request 6.docm
26 November 2013

File reference: NWU-00060-12-A1

Addendum 3: Consent forms

CONSENT FORM



Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies

Corner of East and College Street

Wellington

7655

Tel: 021 8643593

Fax:021

8642654

PARENT'S/GUARDIAN'S INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION OF A MINOR IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A research project of the North-West University

Title: Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning experiences with regard to support provided to them in a mainstream school.

Your child has been identified as a learner with intrinsic barriers to learning in a mainstream school and is hereby invited to engage in a research project to be conducted by the North-West University. The researcher intends to investigate the experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning with regard to support provided in a mainstream school in Centurion. The insights gained will be used to raise awareness in schools and to make recommendations to parents/guardians, educators and professionals working with these learners. Your child will be involved in a data-gathering session for approximately one hour. The researcher will explain the data-gathering process to each learner and engage them in an interactive warm-up exercise. Each learner will be asked to make a collage of their experiences of the support they receive. The making of the collage will be followed by a conversation where more in-

depth questions will be asked regarding the learners' unique experiences of support and, during this session, the completed collage will be used as a tool. Approximately ten children with intrinsic barriers to learning have been identified in this school and will participate in this study. All the data collection activities and interviews will be recorded in the form of voice recordings and field notes. These recordings will not be made public, will be kept in a safe place and will be accessed only by the researcher. All information collected in this research will be strictly confidential, except as may be required by court order or by law. Should any publication result from this study, the learners and school will be kept anonymous.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child when you agree for him/her to participate in the study. Every effort will be made by the researcher to minimise your child's discomfort. Some of the questions in the interview may, however, touch on sensitive areas.

Participation in the research project will not involve any direct cost. There is no guarantee that you or your child will benefit directly from this study and no compensation will be given for participating in this study. The researcher will send you feedback about the results in the form of a letter after completion of the research study.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at any stage without prejudice. In the event of discontinuation of participation in the research, you may request that the researcher does not use any of the information already provided. You are encouraged to ask questions concerning the study at any time and as they occur to you. Any significant new findings obtained during the course of the study that may influence your willingness for the further participation of your child will be provided to you.

Any questions you may have concerning this research or your child's participation, either before or after your consent, will be answered by the researcher of this study. As parent/guardian you may withdraw your consent for your child's participation in the

project and discontinue participating at any time of the research process, without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself or your child. Ethical approval has been obtained for the research project which is to be conducted by the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF), Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus.

In signing this form I declare that I have been informed about the nature of this research project. I have also read and understand the above information that has been given to me. I am aware that the results of and information about the study will be processed anonymously. I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent for my child to participate in this study. In signing this consent form, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights and remedies.

I declare that my child may participate in this study.

Child obtaining informed consent: _____
Date

Name and Surname
(Parent / Legal Guardian)

Signature

Date

LEARNER ASSENT FORM



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY[®]
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOMKAMPUS

Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies

Corner of East and College Street

Wellington

7655

Tel: 021 8643593

Fax:021

8642654

LEARNER'S ASSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A research project of the North-West University

Title: Learners with intrinsic barriers to learning: experiences with regard to support provided to them in a mainstream school.

You are invited to take part in a study about learners at school and the people who help them. About ten learners from your school will be part of this study, each in an individual session taking one hour.

Firstly, we will do a fun warm-up activity about different types of help. You will then be asked to make a picture about the people that help you and the way you feel about them, using different things such as pencils, crayons, pictures, glitter and glue. After you have completed your picture, the researcher will chat to you about it.

Some of the questions you will be asked may be hard to answer. However, the researcher will try very hard not to make you feel uncomfortable. If you feel you do not want to go on, you may stop at any time. If you want to stop, you may ask the researcher not to use any of the things you have already told her. You can ask the

researcher questions about the study at any time when she is at school or you can phone her. None of the children in this study will get anything for answering the researcher's questions or for making the picture. You can decide if you want to take part in the study or not. You do not have to take part in this study and no one will be angry with you if you don't want to. The researcher will use the things you tell her about your picture, but your name and the name of your school will not be told to anyone. All the pictures and things the researcher writes down will be kept in a safe place.

Your parents/legal guardians have been told about the study and they have said that you can be part of the study if you want to. You can talk to them about this before you decide.

Writing your name on this page means that you would like to be in the study and that you know what will happen in the study.

Name and Surname
(Participant / Child)

Signature

Date

Name and Surname
(Researcher)

Signature

Date

Addendum 4: Interview schedule

Issues identified in literature for interview schedule:

- Barriers to learning
- Personal experience
- Mainstream school
- Support
- Inclusion

Introduction to the interview:

- Purpose of the interview.
- Clarification of topic under discussion.
- Explanation of the format of the interview.
- Discussion of approximate length of the interview.
- Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.
- Explanation of the purpose of the digital recorder – asking of permission to use it. Explanation of who will listen to the recording.
- Assurance to participant that he/she may seek clarification of questions.
- Assurance to participant that he/she can decline to answer a question.
- Assurance to participant that there will be opportunities during the interview to ask questions.
- Interactive collage warm-up activity

Topic guide:

Everyone needs some help sometimes. Let's make a picture of the people you can think of, who help you at school. (Make a collage of support and the help the learner receives in the school environment).

1. Tell me more about your picture.

Follow up questions: ask about objects, space, colour, shapes, and context in the picture.

2. Are there any things you find hard to do in school?

Follow up questions: Do you think some of the other children also find that hard to do?

3. Tell me about the people in the picture.

Follow up questions: What is this person's job?

Why did you choose this person?

How does this person help you?

When does this person help you?

Where does this person help you?

How often does this person help you?

4. Emotional support (e.g. Who listens to you when you want to talk?)

- Intimate support
- Support that makes a person feel appreciated and valued
- Reassurance of self worth
- Attachment
- Intimacy

5. Instrumental support (e.g. Who takes you to the doctor when you are hurt?)

- Tangible support
- Practical support

6. Informational support (e.g. Who helps you find out interesting facts?)

- Advice
- Guidance
- Problem solving

7. Companionship support

- Belonging

- Socialising
 - Interaction
8. Cognitive support (Who do you learn things from?)
 9. Social support (Who do you go places with or do things with?)
 10. How does it feel when this person helps you?

Follow-up questions: How do you think they feel when they help you?

11. How did you feel when you made the picture?

Type of probes to be used in interview:

Silence: Interviewer remains silent and allows the participant to think aloud.

Echoing: Interviewer repeats the participant's point, encouraging him or her to develop it further.

Verbal agreement The interviewer expresses interest in the participant's views with the use of phrases, such as 'uh-huh', or 'yes, okay'.

'Tell me more' The interviewer clearly asks the participant to expand on a particular point or issue

Long question The interviewer asks a lengthier question that also suggests that a detailed response is sought.

Leading The interviewer asks a question that encourages the participant to explain his or her reasoning.

'Baiting' The interviewer gives the impression that he or she is aware of certain information. This might prompt the participant to explain further.

Addendum 5: Examples of collages



Addendum 6: Declaration of confidentiality by transcriber



C: 083 227 5966
F: 086 647 6813
P: PO Box 7827, Centurion, 0046
E: juliamb1@mweb.co.za

15 April 2015

To whom it may concern:

I hereby confirm that I was responsible for transcribing all audio recordings for the interviews conducted by Esteé Vlok, as part of her research for her dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Psychology, Potchefstroom Campus, University of the North West.

I, Julia Marianne Martinelli of Cyber Transcription, agree to hold any information contained in any audio recording/documents related to this research by Esteé Vlok, a student conducting her research as part of her dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Psychology, Potchefstroom Campus, University of the North West, in confidence, as well as regarding individuals and institutions involved in the research study.

I understand to violate this agreement would constitute a serious and unethical infringement on the informant's right to privacy.

Sincerely,

Julia M. Martinelli



Addendum 7: Example of transcript

- R That is a lovely picture of your class [REDACTED]! Tell me, at school, is there, in your class, how many, are there a lot of kids, or only a few kids? Is it a big class, or a small class?
- I It's just like a normal class, but we have thirty now.
- R Thirty?
- I Yes.
- R Okay.
- I And now, and now some boys are naughty. They say that [inaudible] always bosses.
- R Oh.
- I They call me [inaudible] bony [inaudible] skinny.
- R You're a skinny girl. Tell me, what does the teacher say to them??
- I Naughty, in Afrikaans.
- R In Afrikaans? And what does your teacher say when they do [inaudible]?
- I Ma'am, she shouts so, so high. And then I don't like when she shouts. And then she gets, she turns red.
- R Okay, so red in the face?
- I Ja, then [inaudible].
- R So she gets very angry?
- I Ja, especially when they write into the black ... And every time when ma'am, ma'am, when ma'am says, when they talk [inaudible] another time, the other starts talking with her.
- R Oh, interrupt her?
- I Ja. Then she says "Come up here, [inaudible]. Shut-up!"
- R Oh really?
- I Yes, ma'am, sjoe.

R Sjoe, she is very angry, hey?

I Yes, ma'am.

R And tell me, in your classes where ..., you said you don't like, English?

I Oh, English. [inaudible] sometimes there's, when I don't do my work, and I forget completing my work.

R Mm?

I "██████, I told you please complete your work." Then I say "Ma'am, I forgot." Then she said "No, you know [inaudible] homework every day."

R Mm hmm.

I And I said "It's not every day, ma'am. It's only, only sometimes." Then she say "[inaudible] of the family?" Then I say, then I keep quiet.

R Oh. And tell me, what does she say when you don't do your work? Does she say you have to remember, or what if it's wrong? What does she say then?

I Then, ma'am, and then when we have to exchange, then when she say "██████, I hope you've done your work." Then I said "Yes, ma'am, I've done my work."

R And how do you feel in your heart when you don't ...?

I I feel scared.

R You feel scared?

I Yes. I ...

R What do you feel when you need to do work in the class?

I I do my work very fast. Then I, then when the class starts talking and the ma'am is not there, then I go "Class, shhhh." And they don't want to listen. Then, and then I say "Ah," then I'm doing my work. Then sometimes I'm the second one or the first one.

R Oh, okay. And tell me, is there some of the work that you find hard to do, ...

I Yes.

R ... or some of the other kids find hard to do?

I For me, it's mathematics, dividing.

R Dividing? Oh, I'm also not good at maths, so I can [inaudible] with that. And if you struggle in class with your maths, who helps you?

I Miss [redacted].

R Miss [redacted]?

I [inaudible] [redacted].

R Oh. How does she help you?

I She explains it. Then I, sometimes I forget, then I'm scared to ask her because maybe she will shout at me, and say "You don't understand, wah wah wah." And then I get like ..., then I look at the [inaudible], then I go like, then I want to ask someone next to me, but I'm scared that she's going to "[redacted], I told you not to talk."

R Oh, so the [inaudible] girls [inaudible], hey?

I In front of, in front of the ..., just raise up my hand, then [inaudible] [redacted] says "What?" Then I say "Ma'am, I don't understand here." Then she says "Come here."

R Ah.

I [inaudible].

R Ah, that's nice.

I Ja, [inaudible].

R And tell me [redacted], how did it feel when she helped you to understand, and get your work right?

I Ma'am, I [inaudible] then she says, then she asks me questions. Then I say "Oh, now I understand."

R Now I understand.

I And she says "Okay, go and sit down.[inaudible]." Sometimes she makes a joke on other children. When, you know when that was, she said "Come. Come and sit next to me. You're my new [inaudible]." Woo.

R Ah ha.

I And then [inaudible] love. But me, I don't like it when she does, treats us like that.

R Ah, ja, sometimes it's not nice.

I Mm, because when they [inaudible] used, [inaudible] will be laughing at you.

R Ja, and how would you feel then?

I Then you feel like crying, ...

R Mm.

I ... because the way she shouts, you know?

R But what do you think, why is she shouting?

I Because the children are naughty and they don't want to listen and they don't want to keep quiet.

R And they don't want to keep quiet?

I Yes, ma'am.

R Is that why she gets angry?

I Yes, ma'am.

R And tell me, if you're, how many kids are in your class, you said thirty?

I Yes.

R If you are thirty kids in your class, how does she help everybody?

I She actually explain for everyone in the whole class. Then she says, then she, when she's finished explaining, then she says "Who does not understand? Then I can explain it for he or she."

R Mm?

I Then I say, then I say "I do understand." Then I sit down and do my work.

R Then you do your work in class. That's nice. And tell me, who helps you at home with your work if you have a question?

I If ever I can't understand a question, or read the difficult word, I go to my Granny. Sometimes she can't see properly, then she says I must ask the nanny.

R Mm.

I Then I ask the nanny to help me with [inaudible].

R So your nanny can read and write. That helps, hey?

I Maar she's a Venda.

R Oh, is she a Venda?

I Yes.

R Okay.

I She actually, actually can't write Afrikaans.

R Oh.

I And my Granny can speak it so well.

R Ah.

I I sometimes feel like I can speak it, because when I was in Grade R, I could ..., I, they took me to an Afrikaans school, then I could speak Afrikaans so well.

R Mm.

I Now I, now they took me to an English school, then I, sometimes I understand everything, ...

R Ja.

I ... mostly I don't understand.

R And tell me, this is not your first school, hey? You've been to other schools?

I Yes, ma'am.

R To how many?

I First when I was in Grade one, then I finished at school. Then I went to Grade two. Then my mother said I must change the school.

R Why?

I I don't know, they say, then they said I must repeat Grade one again.

R You must repeat Grade one?

I Yes, because ...

R Yes?

I ... maybe that school did not teach the, me, the proper English [inaudible].

R They did not teach you proper English?

I Then my, then my mother was so angry, she didn't want me to repeat the Grade again.

R Mm.

I She wanted me to go to Grade six. I was supposed to go to Grade six, actually.

R Oh, okay.

I Because I [inaudible] 2002.

R Oh, okay.

I Hey. One of my, my classmates is [redacted], ne? He failed, and he was supposed to go to Grade seven, and he's been in Grade five since 2001.

R Wow, okay.

I Yo.

R So, and next year, where are you going?

I Next year, I'll be in Grade seven [inaudible] school. And in Grade eight, I'm going to Girls' High.

R Girls High? That's a nice school.

I Because my mother says I can concentrate properly, because boys can even irritate you in class ...

R Mm.

I ... and they treat like you are their girlfriend and things like that. So she says I'm still young to go there. So I understand when she says that. Maar when I'm grown up, then ...

R Mm.

I ... a mother, and I still have [inaudible].

R Yes. And [redacted], tell me, you said you struggle to concentrate sometimes. Do you struggle to concentrate in class sometimes?

I Ja.

R What do you do then?

I I sit down. I listen [inaudible]. Then maar I, my eyes go [inaudible].

R Which way [inaudible]?

I Then ma'am says "That's why you don't concentrate. You look everywhere, and then now, then you want me to explain again." Then I said "Ma'am," then I said "Ma'am, I'm concentrating. But I can't keep my eyes open."

R Mm.

I That's the ..., they move around.

R Mm, and you can't help it?

I Ja. Because I see pictures on the wall, then I want to look there at them.

R And how do you feel when you struggle to concentrate in class?

I Then I like, when there are those [inaudible], and they are [inaudible], explain, then I [inaudible], then I [inaudible]. Then I can [inaudible]. "You understand? You're clever." And I say "Yes, ma'am." Then I just [inaudible]. [She whispers – inaudible]. "What should you do again? What should you do again?" Ja, ...

R You ask the friend that sits next to you in class for help?

I Ja, then she says "You were looking around again. Then I say "Yes, I was." Then she says "You must stop looking around." Then I said "Okay." Then, now I can stop looking around, because now I know. My mother told me if I start doing that again, I'm going to fail. So I don't want to fail.

R So you are afraid to fail?

I "You know some children like you who are ga, ga, ga, ga, you failed," whatever. Then they'll say you're dom, and things like that. But they don't know the truth.

R Do you think some of your friends treat you badly, ...

I Yes.

R You say some friends treat you badly? How do they do that?

I Yes, because let's say ...

R Because you struggle to concentrate?

I Ja. Then [inaudible], and yes, I know I'm not here, so and she went to the office to copy some papers. So [redacted] was not doing. Then I said "[redacted], can you please do?" Then she said "No, don't you talk another language." And I said "I'm not whatever you called me."

R Mm.

I ... Then the class said "Yo."

R Mm hmm.

I And I said "It's not funny, guys." I said, ah, then I said "It's not like I'm [inaudible], but I'm not, because I'm telling on the truth."

R Yes.

I Because it's not nice. Inside you don't feel well, and you don't feel like you are in the light. Normally, I think like that. And you don't, they don't go get home and feel like crying.

R Mm.

I They don't get angry. You're not yourself, and you're in your room and you're crying and [inaudible].

R Ah, that's not nice. And do you think they're mean to children if they get the answers wrong, or they can't do the work?

I No, because some of ..., because you also get something wrong, then you say "Oh, I knew this was wrong. I should've wrote this one."

R Yes?

I Then you say "Ah, maar it's not the end of the world."

R Ja, it's not. Good girl. Let's finish our picture.

I Okay.

R Pick some more of these that you like, and then you stick it.

I This one.

R Don't want to keep you out of your class the whole day. Do you like picking pictures and ...?

I Yes, ma'am.

R Mm. See boys are always, do it too fast. Girls take their time, and do it nice and neat. Wow, that little boy's standing there in front of the blackboard with lots of things, ...

I Yes, ma'am.

R ... looks like a man.

I Yes, it does, because [inaudible], then, whew, a lot of things.

R But it's so difficult, maths. Me, I don't even have that.

I Hey.

R It's not just division.

I Ja, I don't like those, those are when you say A plus what?

R Ah.

I I don't understand, because ...

R B?

I Ja. Then they, then I go like [inaudible]. It's still, others said they're talking about Madam. They saying it in English, they don't want [inaudible]

R Teacher?

I Ja. They don't want to [inaudible]. Then my mother says "You're going to understand it in a [inaudible]."

R Mm. [inaudible] for maths, that, hey?

I Ja.

R And tell me, what kind of job does your Mommy do?

I She goes places, and looks for other people to get work, where they can work, and what they like to do there. She asks the [inaudible]. She, when she finds someone looking for a job, then she asks what kind of job they want, and what they want, like, doing. Then, then my mother, then my mother, like when they want to be in a shop, working in shop ...

R Mm?

I ... then she, then she looks for a shop, ...

R Oh.

I ... and sometimes tells the boss, where can she find a job.

R Mm.

I Then they get.

R So they help people to get work, hey? That sounds like a very important job?

I Yes, and she, and the name of the work, is [REDACTED].

R Oh, okay.

I And ...

R [REDACTED], what do you want to be when you grow up?

I A doctor.

R A doctor?

I If I [inaudible] ...

R What kind of doctor?

I Helping grownups.

R Grownups? So you don't want to work with children?

I I do, I like children. But I don't know [inaudible] children [inaudible], ...

R Mm hmm?

I ... because when I heard people, old people, improve with age.

R Ah.

I When the children getting fever, then I give them the medicine, then I give a lollipop.

R Ah, nice. That sounds like a good job. Who do you ask for help [REDACTED] if you need advice?

I Teachers, a kind teacher, because I'm scared of [inaudible] teachers, ...

R Why?

I ... because then they say "Why don't you ask your parents?" They [inaudible], they say, they sound like that, something that ..., but they're actually speaking properly.

R So do you sound angry?

I Ja.

R Mm.

I And especially when a class is very naughty. They, some teachers, some teachers go out and cry over pupils, because ...

R Some cry?

I ... the class has got [inaudible] one period [inaudible].

R They go outside and cry a little bit?

I Ja. I mean, I don't know where [inaudible] that. She, I asked [inaudible] in a class, and I love to get ten out of ten, and five out of ten. Then she said "[REDACTED] is [inaudible]. You guys are busy talking and playing. You're going to [inaudible]." And then she [inaudible] again. Her face is so red.

R Red?

I Yes.

R Why did she have sad face? Because everybody's ...?

I [inaudible] turning around, and when she tries to [inaudible], I said "Ma'am, the class is busy ..., is very naughty."

R Mm.

I And now, and, kind of me, and lonely, and she [inaudible] we were the four only good students. The whole other of our class were very naughty, yo. And I felt sorry for her.

R Yes.

I And some, she used to hold [inaudible] like "I told you to sit down. Get out of my class!"

R Yo. And why do they go outside and cry, like you said?

I Because, like they get frustrated, then they feel like "If I can't control these children, when I have my own children, they won't listen to me." Then, maar maybe when they [inaudible], ...

R Mm.

I ... then maybe she was wrong.

R Ja. So why do you want to be a doctor, not a teacher?

I I don't know, because I want to help people not to get sick, ...

R Mm.

I ... and I don't like when people die.

R You don't like it when people die?

I Because some people cried so hard. They can't even believe it.

R Ja.

I They say "No, no. He's not dead, he's not dead."

R Ja, it's not nice.

I It's not nice.

R Yes.

I Especially when my grandfather died.

R Ah, shame, that is hard.

I I cried so hard.

R Ja. Me, too. Tell me, do you think it's an easy job to be a teacher?

I No, it is hard, because sometimes they have to tell the children what to not do, and what to do. And some others, I hate, I hate that, that one student, he's [inaudible] the child with a [inaudible] on top of his head.

R Shew.

I And they almost suspended him.

R Oh, wow.

I Because he wasn't supposed to do that.

R Do the kids sometimes fight?

I Yes. I don't like when they fight, because I had another [inaudible], he was spend [inaudible] watching a [inaudible]. And I say "What did you watch?" He didn't even see what is it like ...

R Ja.

I ... when they fight.

R Where did you get your pretty name?

I From my mother.

R Did she pick it?

I Yes. She wanted to call me [REDACTED], but my grandfather said "No, that is too [inaudible]."

R Your grandfather said it's too long?

I Ja. Then I said, then my mother said, she didn't know which one to pick. Then she said "Okay, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]." Then she said, then she, my grandfather said, "Ja, pick that name [inaudible]."

R Ah, good, it's such a pretty name, he did fine with it. A special name, not everybody's got it, hey?

I No

R Well, thank you [REDACTED] for helping me today. You did such a good job.

I Thank-you, Ma'am.

R I like it. Can I keep the picture, or do you want to take it?

I You can keep it.

R Can I keep it? Otherwise I'll just take a photo, and then you can keep it.

I No, I want you to keep it.

R Thank-you.

I Thank-you.

R I'm going to put it on my wall. Thank-you, [REDACTED], it's very pretty. Love it, thank-you. I'm going to walk with you. What class do you have now?

I I have [inaudible].

Addendum 8: Table of themes and subthemes

The table below shows how certain themes emerged:

Theme	Subtheme	Category	Quote
<p>Context</p> <p>The experiences of learners with intrinsic barriers to learning of the support provided in their environment.</p>	Meso level	Peer understanding	<p>“You know some children like you who are ga, ga, ga, ga, you failed,” whatever. Then they’ll say you’re dom, and things like that.”</p> <p>“Because it’s not nice. Inside you don’t feel well, and you don’t feel like you are in the light. Normally, I think like that. And you don’t, they don’t go get home and feel like crying.”</p> <p>“They call me bony and skinny.”</p> <p>“(When I can’t do the work) when they will be laughing at you. Then you feel like crying.”</p> <p>“Ma’am like he tells you... like he takes your lunch. It’s like hitting him and pushing him or holding his hair, grabbing.”</p>
		Supplementary instruction	<p>“We’re sitting in groups. I ask the other children to explain it to me.”</p> <p>“My friends help me.”</p>
		Educator believes and attitudes	<p>“They get tired and they say ah, nobody’s helping me, I’ll do it on my own. I don’t like helping you anymore.”</p>

		<p>“Ma’am, she shouts so, so high. And then I don’t like when she shouts. And then she gets, she turns red. Then you feel like crying because the way she shouts, you know?.”</p> <p>“Then I, sometimes I forget, then I’m scared to ask her because maybe she will shout at me, and say “You don’t understand, wah wah wah.” And then I get like ..., then I look at the [inaudible], then I go like, then I want to ask someone next to me, but I’m scared that she’s going to [redacted], I told you not to talk.”</p> <p>“But me, I don’t like it when she does, treats us like that.”</p> <p>“Then ma’am says “That’s why you don’t concentrate. You look everywhere, and then now, then you want me to explain again.”</p> <p>“They, some teachers, some teachers go out and cry over pupils.”</p>
	Class size	<p>“And especially when a class is very naughty. They, some teachers, some teachers go out and cry over pupils. Because, like they get frustrated, then they feel like “If I can’t control</p>

			<p>these children, when I have my own children, they won't listen to me."</p> <p>"If you can't understand, you must go home and ask your mother to help you. Because he (the teacher) doesn't want to talk twice. I'm asking him nicely but he says "I can't explain twenty times."</p> <p>"There are thirty one children (in my class)."</p>
		<p>Language instruction of</p>	<p>"My language is actually mixed with Afrikaans so I can at least speak a little bit of Afrikaans. I can't speak a lot."</p> <p>"Sometimes when I speak with my mother, I speak Zulu. But when I speak with my Granny and my family, I speak Tswana."</p> <p>"My granny helps me with my Afrikaans homework, but she is Venda. She actually, actually can't write Afrikaans. I speak Setswana at home, English at school and Zulu to my friends."</p> <p>"Mostly I don't understand."</p>

			<p>“But the problem is Afrikaans. My dad does not speak Afrikaans and my mother only speaks a little bit. We speak Zulu and English at home.”</p>
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Addendum 9: Technical guidelines for journal submission

Author Guidelines

Guidelines for Contributors: Editorial policy

The South African Journal of Education (SAJE) publishes original research articles reporting on research that fulfils the criteria of a generally accepted research paradigm; review articles, intended for the professional scientist and which critically evaluate the research done in a specific field in education; book reviews, i.e. concise evaluations of books that have recently appeared; and letters in which criticism is given of articles that appeared in this Journal. Indicate the relevance of the study for education research where the education system is characterised by transformation, and/or an emerging economy/developmental state, and/or scarce resources. Research articles of localised content, i.e. of interest only to specific areas or specialists and which would not appeal to the broader readership of the Journal, should preferably not be submitted for consideration by the Editorial Committee. Ethical considerations: A brief narrative account/description of ethical issues/aspects should be included in articles that report on empirical findings. All articles will be submitted to referees (national and/or international). The consulting editors/referees will have documented expertise in the area the article addresses. When reviews are received, an editorial decision will be reached either accept the article, reject the article, request a revision (in some cases for further peer review), or request arbitration. As a rule not more than one article per author or co-author will be accepted per year for refereeing and possible publication. Authors bear full responsibility for the accuracy and recency of the factual content of their contributions. A signed declaration in respect of originality must accompany each manuscript. On submission of the manuscript, the author(s) must present a written undertaking that the article has not been published or is not being presented for publication elsewhere. Plagiarism entails the use of ideas that have been published previously and are prohibited. Word-for-word copying of the work of others should be indicated by means of double quotation marks. When quoting, always provide the author's surname, year of publication and the page number e.g. (Brown, 1997:40-48).

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